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About the European Migration Network

The European Migration Network (EMN) is an EU network of migration and asylum experts. The EMN plays a key role in providing policymakers and the wider public with up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum. This is essential for the EU to better respond to the challenges in these areas. The EMN was legally established under Council Decision 2008/381/EC. The European Commission (Directorate- General for Migration and Home Affairs) coordinates the EMN, supported by a Service Provider , in cooperation with National Contact Points (EMN NCPs) appointed by EMN Member (EU Member States except Denmark) and Observer Countries (NO, GE, MD, UA, ME, AM, RS, MK, AL, UK). EMN NCPs are located within ministries of interior and of justice, specialised government agencies dealing with migration, universities, research institutes, non-governmental organisations or national offices of international organisations. In their own countries, the EMN NCPs form national networks with a wide range of relevant stakeholders.

Explanatory note

The European Migration Network Asylum and Migration Overview (AMO) is prepared in accordance with Article 2(1) (d) and Article 9(1) of Council Decision 2008/381/EC establishing a European Migration Network. **The European Migration Network Asylum and Migration Overview (AMO) name was updated for the 2024 and following editions, to clearly distinguish it from the European Annual Asylum and Migration Report (EAAMR), issued by the European Commission under Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 (AMMR) each year.** The 2025 EMN AMO does not include implementation reporting related to the Pact on Migration and Asylum**.** It retains the structure and content of previous annual reports from the European Migration Network, covering eleven migration and asylum topics, as indicated on the contents page. The AMO provides an overview of legal and policy developments at both EU and national level under these thematic headings, complemented by Eurostat statistics and national data, for the period January to December 2025.

This EMN Asylum and Migration Overview (AMO) 2025 was prepared on the basis of national Asylum and Migration Overviews covering 2025 from 30 EMN NCPs (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia) according to a common template developed by the EMN and completed by EMN NCPs to ensure, to the extent possible, comparability. More detailed information on the topics addressed in this EMN Asylum and Migration Overview 2025 may be found in the available national Asylum and Migration Overviews for 2025, and it is recommended that these are consulted as well.

The national Asylum and Migration Overviews provided by EMN NCPs describe the migration and asylum situation and developments in their respective countries specifically for the calendar year 2025. National overviews are largely based on analysis of existing legislation and policy documents, reports, academic literature, internet resources and reports and information from national authorities and practitioners.

Statistics included in the EMN Asylum and Migration Overview (AMO) 2025 are sourced from Eurostat, national authorities and other (national) databases. EMN Observer Country NCPs in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania provided statistics for the tables in the report.

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1. OVERVIEW OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION AND ASYLUM IN EMN MEMBER AND OBSERVER COUNTRIES IN 2025

1.1. KEY POINTS

- In 2025, geopolitical instability continued to characterise parts of the European Union (EU) Eastern neighbourhood due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, shaping migration and displacement dynamics across those regions. In spite of this volatility, irregular arrivals to the EU and applications for international protection continued to drop, as in 2024, including a significant decrease in applications from Syrian nationals in 2025.
- Following the adoption of the Pact on Migration and Asylum (the Pact) and the publication of the Common Implementation Plan in 2024, in line with the obligations under Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 (the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, AMMR), the European Commission adopted its first European Annual Asylum and Migration Report in November 2025, providing a comprehensive overview of the asylum, reception and migration situation across EU Member States, and an update on the state of play of Pact implementation. The first annual migration management cycle was launched, with the adoption of the Commission implementing decision determining EU Member States under migratory pressure, at risk thereof or facing a significant migratory situation, and the Council implementing act establishing the first Annual Solidarity Pool.
- 2025 marked the 40th anniversary of the Schengen Agreement, alongside the full accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen Area. At the same time, the progressive rollout of large-scale EU information technology (IT) systems advanced, most notably the launch of the Entry/Exit System (EES) in October 2025 and continued preparations for the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).
- Legislative proposals were introduced and legislation was adopted in the areas of return, asylum, anti-trafficking and migrant smuggling. In March 2025, the European Commission proposed a Return Regulation to replace Directive 2008/115/EC (the Return Directive), with the objective of strengthening the efficiency and coherence of return procedures. Two legislative proposals on the application of safe country concepts were introduced, anticipating elements of the future Asylum Procedures framework. In December 2025, Regulation (EU) 2025/2611 (the Europol Regulation) was formally adopted, reinforcing the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) mandate in preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.
- Further EU developments included the revision of the visa suspension mechanism, targeted visa restrictions – notably concerning Russian citizens – and the partial suspension of the EU–Georgia Visa Facilitation Agreement for holders of diplomatic and service passports.
- At national level, migration and asylum policies in 2025 increasingly reflected parallel trends, combining the selective opening of legal pathways with tighter controls on admission and stay. While countries introduced targeted measures to attract specific categories of third-country nationals (highly qualified workers, students, other talent groups), they simultaneously reinforced safeguards against misuse. This included stricter eligibility criteria, enhanced monitoring, and adjustments to visa frameworks.
- Domestic political changes and the implementation of the Pact were key drivers of strategic and governance reform across reporting European Migration Network (EMN) Member and Observer Countries. New government programmes often set out comprehensive policy priorities covering migration, asylum and integration. Legislative reforms and institutional reorganisation were introduced to align with evolving EU requirements and address national priorities.
- Persistent challenges related to managing capacity and administrative burden on asylum and reception systems remained a central driver of policy developments in 2025. EMN Member and Observer Countries introduced measures to improve the efficiency of asylum procedures, including faster processing and strengthened identification of unfounded applications. In parallel, efforts focused on managing reception capacity, including adjustments to housing support and restrictions linked to system constraints. These developments were closely linked to both fluctuating arrival trends and structural capacity challenges.

- 2025 saw a strong focus on strengthening the operational effectiveness of migration management systems, particularly in border control, return, and the fight against irregular migration. Measures included enhanced police and cross-border cooperation, investments in border infrastructure and implementation of European Integrated Border Management (EIBM). EMN Member and Observer Countries reinforced legal and operational frameworks to combat migrant smuggling and to improve the identification of persons in irregular situations. Return reforms aimed to increase both the efficiency and enforceability of return decisions.
- Digitalisation continued as a key cross-cutting trend, supporting the modernisation of migration and asylum systems. National developments spanned multiple policy areas, including legal migration, integration, international protection, border management and return, including related to the implementation of large-scale EU IT systems such as the Entry/Exit System (EES), launched in October 2025, and progress on the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and the Visa Information System (VIS).
- Integration policies were developed further in 2025, with a strong emphasis on labour market participation and early integration. EMN Member and Observer Countries introduced measures to enhance access to education and training, strengthen skills recognition and support language acquisition. Labour market-oriented measures included employer-migrant matching, targeted upskilling and simplified access to employment. These developments reflected the dual objective of addressing labour shortages while promoting sustainable integration outcomes.
- The situation of persons displaced from Ukraine remained a priority in 2025, with a growing focus on sustainability and transition beyond temporary protection. EMN Member and Observer Countries adapted their regulatory frameworks to facilitate longer-term solutions, including transition to other residence statuses based on, for example, work or study. Measures also addressed access to housing, healthcare and social welfare, balancing integration objectives with concerns about system capacity and financial sustainability. This marks a gradual shift from emergency responses towards more structural approaches.
- EMN Member and Observer Countries reinforced measures to protect vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors and victims of trafficking in human beings. Developments included improvements to identification and age assessment procedures, reforms to guardianship systems and adjustments to reception conditions. Legal and policy frameworks were strengthened to address labour exploitation and ensure access to rights and protection. These measures were in part driven by the need to align with EU standards and obligations under the Pact.
- International cooperation functioned as a differentiated and strategic migration policy instrument, as also seen in previous years. EMN Member and Observer Countries concluded agreements with third countries to facilitate labour migration, strengthen return cooperation and address root causes of irregular migration. Cooperation frameworks covered areas such as anti-trafficking, capacity-building and diaspora engagement. These developments reflected a continued emphasis on targeted, multidimensional partnerships, in line with the external dimension of EU migration policy.

1.2. INTRODUCTION

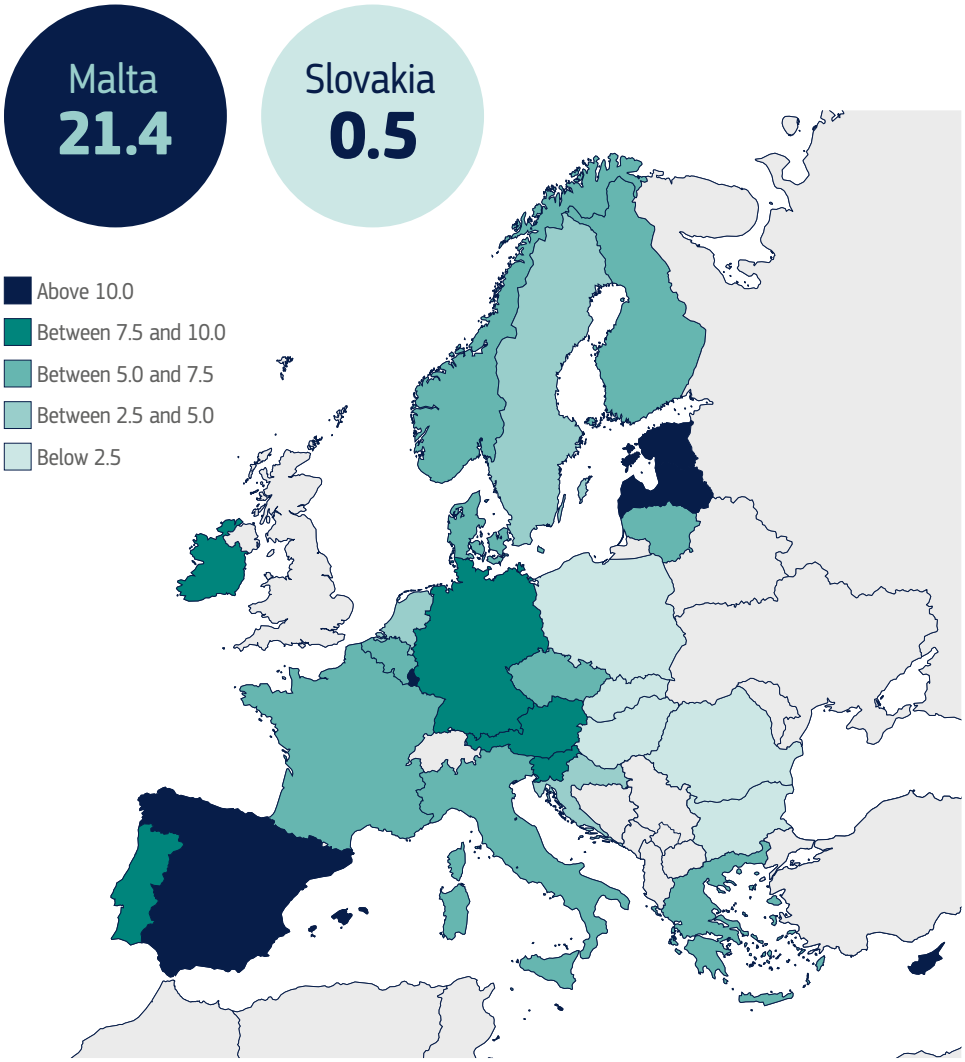
In the majority of EMN Member Countries and Norway, the share of third-country nationals in the total population as of 1 January 2025 was between 5% and 10%, while five countries – Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia (including recognised non-citizens), Luxembourg, Spain – had shares of 10% or more (see Figure 1).

Mirroring recent years, 2025 was characterised by persisting instability in the European Union (EU) Eastern neighbourhood, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the volatile geopolitical context, irregular arrivals to the EU were significantly lower than the previous two years. Overall, over 180 000 illegal border crossings[1] were detected at the EU's external borders, 25% less than 2024 (240 286) and less than half of the crossings recorded in 2023 (381 372).[2] The Central Mediterranean route was the main point of entry, with well over one-third of reported apprehensions (around 66 500, roughly on par with 2024), followed by the Eastern Mediterranean route (around 52 500, down from 70 000 in 2024), the Western Balkan route (13 000, down from 22 000 in 2024) and the Western Mediterranean route (19 000, up from 17 000 in 2024).[3] The top nationalities detected included Bangladesh (24 500, 14% of the total), Egypt (18 500, 10%) and Afghanistan (16 500, 9%), accounting together for one-third of all arrivals.[4]

First-time asylum applications continued to decline in 2025 compared to 2024 and 2023, with the EU27 total decreasing from 912 425 in 2024 to 669 710 applications in 2025 (-27%) including a significant decrease in applications from Syrian nationals. This downward trend was evidenced across EU Member States and Norway, including the main destination countries – Germany, Spain, France and Italy all recording lower volumes of first-time asylum applications. The scale of the decrease varied, with particularly pronounced reductions in countries such as Bulgaria (-69%), Cyprus (-58%), Germany (-51%), Romania (-49%) and Austria (-44%). This points to a broad contraction rather than a regionally isolated trend. Only a limited number of countries reported increases, notably Hungary (+320%) and Latvia (+61%), although these changes reflect relatively small absolute numbers.[5]

1 Source: Frontex data as of June 2026.
2 Ibid.
3 Source: Frontex data as of July 2026.
4 Ibid.
5 Eurostat (migr_asyappctza), date of extraction 28 May 2026.

Figure 1: Share of third-country nationals in the total population (%), EU and Norway, 1 January 2025



	Number of third-country nationals	"Share in the total population (%)"
EU27	30 654 926	6.8
Austria	914 679	9.9
Belgium	662 770	5.6
Bulgaria	116 384	1.8
Croatia	130 308	3.4
Cyprus	144 259	14.7
Czechia	784 988	7.2
Denmark	401 394	6.7
Estonia	223 135	16.3
Finland	301 413	5.3
France	4 847 178	7.0
Germany	8 041 352	9.6
Greece	622 933	6.0
Hungary	167 262	1.8
Ireland	507 629	9.3
Italy	3 997 381	6.8
Latvia	225 744	12.1
Lithuania	146 090	5.1
Luxembourg	76 317	11.2
Malta	123 167	21.4
Netherlands	826 096	4.6
Poland	392 787	1.1
Portugal	866 122	8.1
Romania	299 896	1.6
Slovenia	193 498	9.1
Slovakia	25 740	0.5
Spain	5 154 016	10.5
Sweden	516 152	4.9
Norway	284 770	5.1

Source: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)

Note: Portugal, 2024 data. Estonia and Latvia, the number of third-country nationals includes recognised non-citizens.
Administrative boundaries © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap.
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE 04/2026.

First-time asylum applications were concentrated among a limited number of citizenships, notably Venezuela (13%), Afghanistan (10%) and Syria (6%) together accounting for 29%.[6] Spain received the highest number of first-time applications (over 141 000), followed by Italy (around 127 000), France (116 000) and Germany (113 000).[7]

Following the adoption of the Pact and the publication of the Common Implementation Plan in 2024, in line with the obligations of the AMMR, the European Commission adopted its first European Annual Asylum and Migration Report in November 2025,[8] providing an overview of the EU's asylum, migration, and reception situation.[9] The Report provided information used in determining whether EU Member States were under migratory pressure, at risk thereof or facing a significant migratory situation, based on quantitative and qualitative criteria set out in the Regulation. The European Commission also published the methodology underpinning the pressure assessment.[10] Subsequently, the Council Implementing Decision was adopted in December 2025 establishing the first Annual Solidarity Pool.[11] In 2025, the European Commission continued to monitor Pact implementation with the adoption of the two reports on the state of play of Pact implementation in June 2025 and November 2025 (as part of the Annual Report).

2025 marked the 40th anniversary of the signature of the Schengen Agreement and the accession of Bulgaria and Romania as full members to the Schengen Area. The gradual implementation of EU-wide, large scale IT systems

6 Eurostat (migr_asyappctza), date of extraction 10 April 2026.
7 Eurostat, migr_asyappctza, date of extraction 1 July 2026.
8 European Commission, First Annual Migration Management Cycle, 2025, accessed 20 April 2026.
9 The Commission shall use the Annual Report and the information provided in Article 10 AMMR to determine whether Member States are under migratory pressure, at risk thereof or facing a significant migratory situation. Member States identified as under migratory pressure can access the Solidarity Pool.
10 European Commission, Methodology for the purposes of Commission implementing decision pursuant to Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council, 2025, accessed 23 June 2026.
11 Council of the European Union, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2642 of 22 December 2025 on the establishment of the Annual Solidarity Pool for 2026, accessed 23 June 2026

such as the EES[12] (launched in October 2025) and the approaching launch of the ETIAS[13] required technical preparations across a majority of EMN Member Countries.

Significant legislative proposals were submitted and legislation adopted in the areas of return, asylum, and anti-trafficking and smuggling of migrants. In March 2025, the European Commission published a proposal for a Return Regulation[14] to replace the Return Directive[15] and ensure swifter and more effective return procedures across the EU. In spring 2025, the European Commission introduced two legislative proposals on the safe country concept, anticipating the application of certain provisions of Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 (Asylum Procedures Regulation). In December 2025, the Europol Regulation was formally adopted, strengthening Europol's support mandate and enhancing police cooperation for expanding Europol's mandate preventing, detecting and investigating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.[16]

During the year, the EU approved a reform of the visa suspension mechanism[17] and introduced visa restrictions for Russian citizens.[18] It also partially suspended the Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the Facilitation of the Issuance of Visas, reintroducing visa requirements for holder of diplomatic and service passports.[19]

Across EMN Member and Observer Countries, developments in 2025 point to interrelated and, at times, counterbalancing trends shaping migration and asylum governance. Some countries pursued the selective opening of legal pathways, particularly in response to labour shortages and competition for talent, alongside efforts to strengthen integration and long-term inclusion. At the same time there was a trend towards tighter controls on admission, stay and status, reflecting security concerns and the desire to limit misuse of legal channels. Measures sought to improve efficiency across asylum, return and border management systems, while cross-cutting priorities such as digitalisation, operational effectiveness and enhanced international cooperation with third countries further shaped national responses.

These trends were driven by a combination of domestic political shifts, persistent operational pressures, evolving EU legislative requirements and broader geopolitical developments, including displacement dynamics and security considerations.

1.3. OVERARCHING DEVELOPMENTS ACROSS MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

Overarching developments in EMN Member and Observer Countries[20] were driven by domestic government changes, systemic pressure on existing migration management and asylum systems and new legislation adopted at EU level in the framework of the Pact. Those developments mainly comprised new government programmes,[21] comprehensive or cross-cutting legal reforms on migration and asylum,[22] strategies adopted[23](other than the national strategies required as part of the Pact implementation, or a combination of both) and reorganisation of ministerial or agency competences.[24]

In Ireland, the new government programme covered migration, international protection and integration, setting out a strategic multiannual roadmap for the entire term in office. Some of the key measures envisioned a dedicated division of the High Court to handle all immigration cases, developing a border security strategy, enhanced effective returns, and investing in integration programmes. The new federal government programme in Austria called for close alignment of its legal migration policy with national labour market needs, a gradual reduction of applications for international protection in Austria to zero, a mandatory integration programme, and comprehensive partnerships with third countries to increase returns and prevent irregular migration. In its Coalition Agreement, the Belgian government announced stricter action against irregular migration, greater emphasis on return, stronger protection of the social system against misuse, and increased expectations regarding integration and access to nationality.

Three EMN Member Countries, Georgia and Ukraine[25] reported overarching legislative changes. In Italy for example, reforms were introduced in response to pressure on the reception and asylum system and to labour market needs. A decree reformed rules on detention, the management of irregularly staying third-country nationals and the organisation of return facilities, affecting both the post-decision phase in international protection cases and return procedures. Another decree introduced provisions relating to labour migration and prevention of irregular migration. Georgia undertook comprehensive reform of its migration and asylum framework, including a new Law on International Protection and amendments to legislation governing return procedures for foreigners.

12 European Commission, Entry/Exit System (EES), 2026, accessed 20 April 2026.
13 European Commission, European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) n.d., accessed 20 April 2026.
14 European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC, COM(2025) 101 final, 11 March 2025, accessed 17 February 2026.
15 European Union, Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals, accessed 24 April 2026.
16 European Commission, Regulation (EU) 2025/2611 amending Regulation (EU) 2016/794 as regards the strengthening of Europol's support and enhancing police cooperation, for preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, accessed 18 February 2026.
17 Council of the EU, Council greenlights new EU rules for the suspension of visa-free travel for third countries, Press release, 17 November 2025, accessed 11 June 2026.
18 European Commission, Commission Implementing Decision establishing rules on the issuing of multiple-entry visas to Russian nationals, 7 November 2025, accessed 10 June 2026.
19 Council of the EU, Georgia: Council suspends visa-free travel for diplomats and officials, Press release, 7 January 2025, accessed 10 June 2026.
20 AT, BE, ES, IE, IT, LT, MT, PT, SK and GE, UA.
21 AT, BE, IE.
22 IT, MT, PT, SK and GE, UA.
23 IE, MT, SK.
24 ES, IE, LT, PT.
25 IT, MT, PT.

In line with the AMMR, EU Member States were required to develop national strategies to implement their asylum and migration systems. In addition, Ireland's Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration published its Statement of Strategy 2025–2028 covering its strategic goals across the six policy areas within its remit, while Malta introduced a Labour Migration Policy. The statement of strategy from Ireland sets out high level objectives covering both migration and asylum, whereas Malta's policy focuses on addressing labour market needs while protecting third-country nationals' rights and supporting integration. To replace the outgoing national migration policy, the Slovak Republic adopted a new migration strategy that includes the European Commission's template, as well as other chapters related specifically to legal migration, emigration from the country and communication on migration topics.

Ireland, Lithuania and Spain reported institutional changes. Ireland transferred competences from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, appointed a junior minister for "migration for the first time" and moved immigration registration functions from the police to a civilian service. Lithuania addressed fragmentation in the reception system by renaming the Refugee Reception Centre as the Reception and Integration Agency and consolidating reception responsibilities under a single authority. Spain established a new Deputy Directorate-General for Migration Strategy, in response to growing strategic and reporting requirements.

1.4. OPENING LEGAL PATHWAYS FOR SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF MIGRANTS IN RESPONSE TO LABOUR SHORTAGES AND COMPETITION FOR GLOBAL TALENT

Developments in legal migration in 2025 reflected a trend towards opening targeted legal pathways for specific categories of third-country nationals in response to persistent labour shortages, the need to maintain competitiveness in a global economy and, in some cases, the transposition or implementation of EU legislation, primarily Directive (EU) 2021/1883 (the Blue Card Directive).[26] Developments focused on creating more attractive pathways for highly qualified workers and other talent categories, alongside labour-market-oriented measures to improve retention and integration after admission.

Six EMN Member Countries[27] introduced measures to attract highly qualified workers, including in sectors facing critical shortages. Eight EMN Member Countries,[28] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine implemented measures to attract international students and support their transition into the labour market, while six countries[29] simplified recruitment procedures to strengthen the attractiveness of national research systems. Nine EMN Member Countries[30] and the Republic of Moldova targeted other categories, including digital nomads, investors and workers in cultural and creative sectors, and seasonal workers. Croatia, Italy and the Netherlands facilitated the admission or stay of entrepreneurs and self-employed migrants. Visa policies in the Slovak Republic and Ukraine introduced exemptions to facilitate major strategic investments. For example, the Slovak Republic adopted measures to facilitate the granting of national long-stay visas to strategic investors from the People's Republic of China to support trade and investment. France adopted a new shortage occupation list that covered 80 occupations facing recruitment difficulties and replaced some more highly qualified occupations with less qualified ones.

Admission frameworks for other labour market segments were adjusted to better match demand. Six EMN Member Countries[31] introduced or adjusted quota systems governing the admission of low- and medium-skilled workers, while nine EMN Member Countries[32] changed their seasonal migration frameworks to ensure orderly recruitment.

Regulatory and procedural adjustments supported the opening of pathways. Eight EMN Member Countries[33] introduced legislative or regulatory changes to transpose or implement the revised EU Blue Card Directive, while eight EMN Member Countries[34] and Georgia adopted measures to simplify admission and residence procedures.

Labour market needs[35] drove changes across several integration areas, including language training and digital literacy,[36] targeted upskilling in high-demand sectors such as tourism and shipbuilding,[37] expansion of educational access via school-based vocational hubs,[38] and recognition of skills.[39] Nine EMN Member Countries[40] reported employer-migrant matching and enhanced legal flexibility to connect jobseekers with vacancies through career platforms[41] and to reduce and simplify administrative processes to access the job market.[42]

26 European Union, Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment, and repealing Council Directive 2009/50/EC, accessed 24 April 2026.
27 CY, EE, FI, IE, LU, PT.
28 BG, CZ, ES, HR, IE, LT, SI, SK.
29 AT, PL, SE and NO, MD.
30 BG, EE, EL, FR, IE, IT, LT, PL, SI.
31 AT, EE, IE, IT, LT, SK.
32 AT, BE, BG, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, SK.
33 BE, CY, ES, FR, HR, HU, PL, SE.
34 BG, ES, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, SK.
35 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, NL, PT, SK and NO, GE, UA.
36 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IT, LT, MT, PT, SE, SK and NO, GE, MD.
37 EL, IT.
38 AT and GE.
39 AT, DE, EL, FI, HR, SK and NO, GE, UA.
40 AT, BG, CZ, EL, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, SK.
41 AT, EL.
42 CZ, HR, SK.

1.5. TIGHTENING POLICIES IN RESPONSE TO SECURITY CONCERNS AND MISUSE OF LEGAL AVENUES

Restrictive measures were introduced across legal migration, citizenship, visa policy, border management, family reunification and integration. These developments responded to security concerns linked to the geopolitical environment, secondary movements and misuse of legal channels, and domestic political pressure for stricter migration control.

Three EMN Member Countries[43] introduced restrictive admission measures in response to security concerns. Estonia introduced additional grounds for refusing residence permits in cases involving links to foreign security services or military structures. Lithuania extended restrictive measures applicable to the admission of citizens of Russia and Belarus. Finland shortened international protection permits and enacted stricter limits for rejected asylum applicants to secure a residence permit. Ten EMN Member Countries,[44] Norway, Ukraine and Serbia tightened their visa procedures, notably conditions for visa-exempt travel, reflecting geopolitical concerns, regional immigration trends and harmonisation requirements with EU law. Two EMN Member Countries[45], Georgia, Ukraine and Serbia introduced restrictions for certain nationalities, six[46] specifically restricted visa applications and travel for Russian nationals, and seven EMN Member Countries[47] and Norway introduced a visa requirement for service and diplomatic passports of Georgia.

Three EMN Member Countries[48] introduced temporary internal border controls and five[49] extended existing controls, citing increased irregular arrivals,[50] concerns about secondary movements,[51] trafficking in human beings,[52] security needs[53] and public health concerns.[54] Luxembourg considered Germany's implementation of border checks a violation of the Schengen Agreement[55] and, accordingly, filed a complaint with the European Commission.

Growing concerns about security, misuse and fraud in citizenship pathways,[56] as well as efforts to strengthen integration outcomes and civic participation, resulted in stricter conditions for citizenship acquisition in 11 EMN Member Countries,[57] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. France strengthened integration requirements through a civic exam, higher language thresholds and guidance measures, while Germany removed the possibility of accelerated access based on exceptional integration and reestablished a general requirement of at least five years of legal residence.

Several EMN Member and Observer Countries[58] reported measures to prevent irregular stay and address the misuse of legal migration pathways. Belgium revised a circular concerning the misuse of civil status procedures (sham marriages, sham legal cohabitations, fraudulent recognition of parentage). Nine EMN Member Countries[59] and Georgia strengthened the requirements for employers recruiting third-country nationals to ensure that employment offers correspond to genuine labour market needs. Four EMN Member Countries[60] introduced measures to prevent misuse of the study migration channel by strengthening monitoring of admission conditions, while three others[61] tightened eligibility conditions and increased financial requirements for family reunification.

1.6. MANAGING CHALLENGES IN NATIONAL ASYLUM AND RECEPTION SYSTEMS

Reported strain on national asylum systems continued to be a key driver of policy change across EMN Member and Observer Countries in 2025. Faced with an increase in arrivals from North Africa[62] and Belarus's instrumentalisation of migration,[63] Greece and Poland temporarily suspended the right to apply for asylum. To reduce the burden on the national asylum system, Belgium, Lithuania and Georgia introduced policies to improve early identification of unfounded applications and overall efficiency of asylum processing.

To support EU Member States to deal with applications for international protection more quickly, speeding up asylum procedures for people who are unlikely to receive protection within the EU, the European Commission published a proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 (the Asylum Procedure Regulation) establishing an EU list

43 EE, FI, LT.
44 CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IE, LV, NL, SE.
45 FR, IE.
46 CZ, EE, EL, FI, FR, LV.
47 CZ, DE, EE, FR, LV, NL, SE and NO.
48 FR, PL, SK.
49 AT, DE, NL, SE, SI.
50 AT, SK, PL.
51 DE, FR, NL, PL, SE.
52 FR, NL.
53 DE, FR, SE, SI.
54 SK.
55 European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, Temporary reintroduction of border control, n.d., accessed 23 June 2026.
56 CZ, DE, FI, SE and UA.
57 BE, CZ, DE, FI, FR, IT, LU, PL, PT, SE.
58 BE, CY, EE, HR, LV and GE.
59 BE, EE, FI, FR, HR, IT, LT, PL, SI.
60 BE, FI, LV, PL.
61 BE, FI, IE.
62 EL.
63 PL.

of safe countries of origin, clarifying the application of the concepts of "safe third country and safe country of origin".[64] This proposal aims to provide EU Member States with greater flexibility in designating and applying these concepts during the examination of asylum applications.

To ease the strain on reception systems, 11 EMN Member Countries[65] introduced measures decreasing reliance on private sector provision of reception,[66] strengthening housing-related support,[67] measures to increase safety in reception centres,[68] and institutional changes in the reception system.[69] Italy and Lithuania expanded housing-related support for beneficiaries of international protection (BIP), including measures facilitating transition out of reception systems and addressing risks of vulnerability and social exclusion. Austria, Finland and Sweden introduced restrictions to material reception conditions or decreased the amount of housing allowances to rationalise reception capacities. Family reunification was likewise restricted or suspended in five countries,[70] owing to capacity constraints and administrative pressures.

1.7. STRENGTHENING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EU AND NATIONAL MIGRATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Developments across the areas of Schengen governance, irregular migration and return focused on improving the operational effectiveness of the EU's migration management system. Measures reflected concerns about irregular migration and secondary movements, security at the external borders, alignment with EU legislative requirements and longstanding challenges in ensuring the effective return of irregularly staying third-country nationals.

As a way to enhance regional security, six EMN Member Countries[71] sought to strengthen internal and external border surveillance and reported new police cooperation agreements, while four other EMN countries[72] and Serbia increased cross-border cooperation with non-Schengen countries. As part of structural efforts to make border management capabilities more effective, countries within the Schengen Area reported measures to implement EIBM,[73] including large-scale IT systems for border and migration management[74] (see section 1.8).[75] Estonia, Ireland[76] and Georgia reported developments to modernise and strengthen border infrastructure, to improve identity verification capabilities and data-driven analysis,[77] to ensure better protection at EU external borders[78] and to support transfers[79] under the new AMMR.

Stepping up measures against migrant smuggling and focusing on the prevention of irregular migration remained high priorities. At EU level, the adoption of the Europol Regulation strengthened Europol's mandate to support EU Member States in preventing and countering migrant smuggling (as well as trafficking in human beings) through enhanced operational cooperation and intelligence-sharing.

Developments to prevent irregular stay included improving border-adjacent and internal controls,[80] introducing legislation strengthening criminal liability for migrant smuggling,[81] and deepening cooperation with third countries through memoranda of understanding (MoU) and readmission agreements.[82] The need to prevent cross-border crime and irregular migration led to the implementation of measure to combat the use of false documents [83], and the adoption of overarching legislation with provision on irregular entry, stay and removal.[84] France introduced legislation providing authorities with additional tools to remove foreign nationals presenting a public order risk and clarified procedures for administrative detention.

Developments in return reflected the aim to strengthen the effectiveness of returns of irregularly staying third-country nationals. On 11 March 2025, the European Commission published a proposal for a Return Regulation[85] to replace the Return Directive [86] with the aim of enabling swifter and more effective return procedures across the EU.

At the national level, eleven EMN Member Countries[87] reported measures on return policy including related to forced return, including legislative reforms in nine countries.[88] The changes responded to challenges related to

64 European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level, COM (2025) 186 final, 16.4.2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
65 BE, CY, CZ, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PT.
66 BE, FR, IE.
67 CY, IT, LT, LU, PT.
68 CZ, NL.
69 IE, LT, PT.
70 AT, BE, DE, LU, NL.
71 BG, CZ, HU, LT, LU, LV.
72 AT, HR, PL, SI.
73 BE, CY, DE, EE, LT, PL, SI and NO.
74 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK and NO.
75 LV, SE, SI, SK.
76 IE (non-Schengen EU Member State).
77 GE.
78 EE.
79 IE.
80 BE, DE, PL.
81 LT, SK (legislative process ongoing) and UA.
82 AT, BE, FR, IT, LV, SK and GE.
83 CZ, HU, LT, SI and GE.
84 EE, FR, IT, SI and GE.
85 European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC, COM(2025) 101 final, 11.3.2025, accessed 17 February 2026.
86 European Union, Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals, accessed 17 February 2026.
87 AT, BE, EE, FI, HR, HU, IE, NL, PL, PT, SE.
88 BE, EE, EL, FI, HR, NL, PL, PT, SE.

the identification of persons in an irregular situation[89] or sought to strengthen the prohibition of refoulement,[90] facilitating the removal of unsuccessful asylum seekers[91] and ensuring legal clarity.[92] For example, Estonia brought national legislation in line with current practice and the exact wording of the Return Directive.

Voluntary return and reintegration also remained a key area of policy development. Fifteen EMN Member Countries[93] and Serbia reported new initiatives in this field. Measures included expanding return counselling capacity[94] and modification to reintegration programmes.[95]

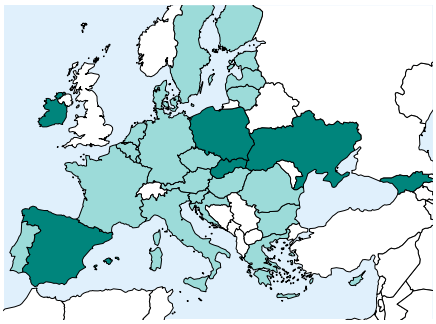
Seven EMN Member Countries,[96] Georgia and the Republic of Moldova reported developments concerning pre-removal detention, including legislative amendments to the framework of detention.[97] These changes reflected different national priorities: Finland introduced a new ground for detention based on a threat to public order (applicable in the future), while France extended detention by 90 days for individuals convicted of particularly serious offences and presenting a high risk of recidivism.

1.8. CONTINUED DIGITALISATION OF MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

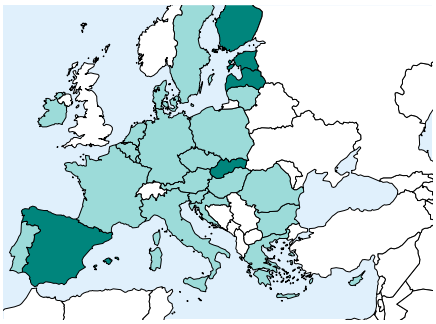
For a third consecutive year, digitalisation remained a cross-cutting trend, aimed at optimising migration and asylum systems, addressing administrative backlogs and long processing times, and improving overall efficiency and service delivery. Developments spanned legal migration, international protection, integration and return, often simultaneously across multiple policy areas (see Figure 2) (see Chapters 2, 3, 6, 11 for a detailed overview of national examples). Estonia adopted a reform of the Alien Act to enable applicants to communicate with authorities electronically and upgraded its national mobile app to allow foreigners with a valid residence permit to verify their identity digitally. Georgia introduced a dedicated electronic case management system to support labour migration processes, serving also as a shared database for authorities responsible for the issue of work-based residence permits and visas. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was also mentioned for the first time. Cyprus reported the preparation of content for AI supported government digital assistance.

Figure 2: EMN Member and Observer Countries introducing digitalisation in migration management systems or related legislation in 2025

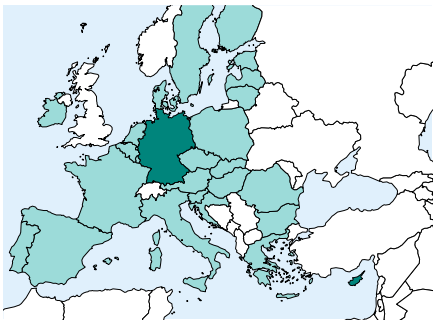
LEGAL MIGRATION



Digitalisation of administrative procedures/ the introduction of electronic application systems:
ES, IE, PL*, SK and GE, UA



Improved interoperability and data exchange:
EE, ES, FI, LV, SK

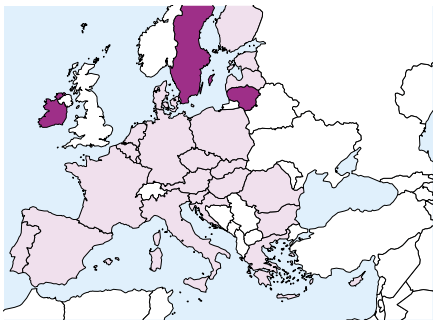


Improved digital access to migration information and services:
CY, DE, MT

* Legislation adopted

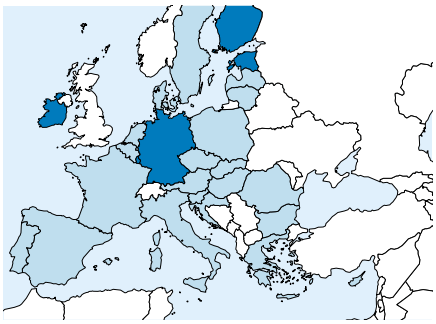
89 PL.
90 HR.
91 FI.
92 EE.
93 BE, BG, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, PT, SE, SI.
94 BE, BG, EL, HR, IT, LU, LV, SI.
95 BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, SE.
96 EE, FI, FR, HR, IT, NL, SE.
97 EE, FI, FR, HR and GE.

IN SEVERAL AREAS

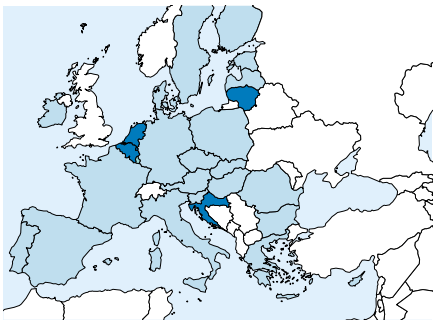


Digitalisation across several areas:
IE, LT, SE

INTEGRATION

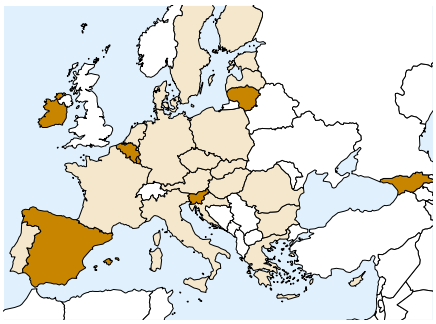


Increased administrative efficiency
DE, EE, FI, IE, LU



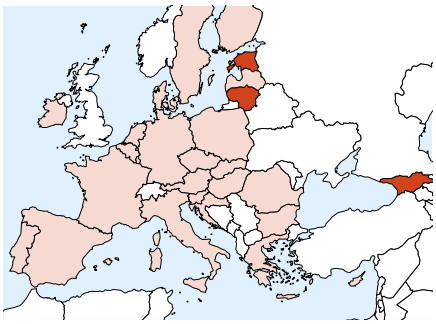
Provision of access to integration and employment services:
BE, HR, LT, NL

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

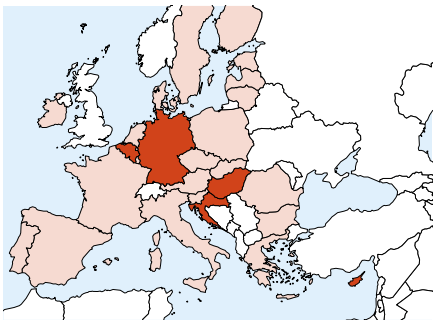


Improved/new IT applications for managing the international protection procedure:
BG, ES, IE, LT, LU, MT, SI and GE

IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND RETURN



Irregular migration:
EE, LT and GE



Return:
BE, CY, DE, HR, HU

Source: EMN National Contact Points.

Schengen and visa management was another area where digitalisation progressed at pace, driven by the development and integration of large-scale EU IT systems, including the launch of the EES in October. Twenty-nine countries[98] initiated rollout of the EES at national level, with four EMN Member Countries[99] reporting implementation of a fully operational EES[100] at all border crossing points. Nine EMN Member Countries[101] reported activities supporting the technical development and implementation of the ETIAS, while Belgium, Slovenia and Sweden reported developments linked to the VIS, and four countries[102] noted the digitalisation of national visa procedures.

1.9. PROMOTING INTEGRATION OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS

Nearly all EMN Member and Observer Countries reported strategic initiatives to foster integration and participation of third-country nationals in the host society and combat racism and discrimination. Sixteen EMN Member Countries,[103] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine strengthened their legal and policy frameworks to combat racism and discrimination, including the adoption of comprehensive national action plans (Croatia, Luxembourg, Malta) and the establishment of independent oversight bodies for victim assistance and offender sanctioning (Spain, the Republic of Moldova).

At EU level, the main developments included the mid-term review of the 2021–2027 Action Plan and the new Union of Skills proposal to address chronic labour shortages by

98 All EU Member States (except CY, IE) and NO, IS, LI plus CH.
99 CZ, EE, LV, SE.
100 Fully operational means at all border crossing points, for all relevant third-country nationals, with the full use of biometric functionalities.
101 AT, EL, FI, HR, LT, PL, SE, SI, SK.
102 BE, IE, LT and GE.
103 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IT, LU, MT, PT, SE.

simplifying qualification recognition and fostering multilevel governance (see section 2.2).

Labour market needs gave rise to policy measures spanning different integration areas, notably labour market and skills, education and training, and early integration. Reported measures included targeted upskilling in high-demand sectors,[104] enhanced access to education and training,[105] and strengthening of skills recognition,[106] all aiming to facilitate participation of third-country nationals in the labour market and respond to sector-specific workforce needs. EMN Member Countries introduced measures on employer-migrant matching,[107] including the use of career platforms and mechanisms to connect jobseekers with vacancies, as well as efforts to reduce and simplify administrative process to access the job market.[108]

National strategies and policies showed a notable emphasis on early integration. Several EMN Member and Observer Countries[109] reported the development of integration frameworks to foster early integration that is sustainable over time, highlighting a policy direction towards intervention at earlier stages of the integration process. Early integration approaches included the establishment of centralised integration services and the development of structured or mandatory integration programmes.[110]

The focus on language acquisition was a key development in education and training, with 15 EMN Member Countries,[111] Norway, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova introducing or boosting language acquisition support in both primary and secondary education (see Chapter 2). This was one of the main subjects of the reforms reported by 13 EMN Member Countries[112] and Norway, alongside wider pedagogical reform. Language acquisition measures for adults focused on language training[113] to facilitate labour market entry[114] and the introduction of mandatory training or proficiency levels.[115]

1.10. TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION OF DISPLACED PERSONS FROM UKRAINE

The situation of persons fleeing Ukraine remained a high priority at EU level and across EMN Member and Observer Countries. Reflecting a trend already visible in 2024, policy developments were shaped by continued displacement from Ukraine and the need to introduce sustainable and forward-looking solutions beyond emergency measures. Eleven EMN Member Countries[116] identified long-term integration and self-sufficiency of beneficiaries of temporary protection (BoTP) as a key objective, and/or stressed safeguarding the financial sustainability and integrity of national social welfare, healthcare and housing systems.[117]

In June 2025, the Council of the European Union extended temporary protection until 4 March 2027.[118] In response, some EMN Member Countries took specific administrative measures related to implementing the council decision including some automatically extending residence permits based on temporary protection,[119] while others set up specific procedures for permit holders to apply for an extension.[120] On 16 September 2025, the Council adopted a Council Recommendation on a coordinated transition out of temporary protection,[121] urging EU Member States to promote and facilitate the transition of BoTP to other legal statuses, such as those based on work or study, and to facilitate their sustainable return and reintegration in Ukraine when conditions allow. Six EMN Member Countries[122] introduced measures regulating the transition of BoTP to other legal statuses. Italy introduced the possibility for BoTP meeting the required conditions to change status from temporary protection to employment-based residence permits, while France introduced the requirement for prefectures to examine whether BoTP can be granted a more permanent residence permit.

To promote long-term solutions, encourage BoTP integration and alleviate pressure on housing capacity, 12 EMN Member Countries[123] modified or extended conditions for accommodation and housing support for BoTP. Four EMN Member Countries[124] restricted the scope of housing support to reduce or reallocate expenditure. Austria closed its initial reception centres due to a decline in the number of displaced persons arriving from Ukraine, while Italy reorganised the decentralised reception system put in place for BoTP and announced the expansion of ordinary housing projects.

On access to healthcare, Austria reported measures to include BoTP in existing healthcare systems, Latvia to

104 IT, EL, PT.
105 AT and GE.
106 AT, DE and UA.
107 AT, EE, EL.
108 CZ, HR, SK.
109 AT, BE, CZ, EE, FR, LT, MT, SK and MD.
110 AT (planning a mandatory programme for migrants), LT, MT.
111 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IT, LT, MT, PT, SE, SK.
112 AT, BE, CY, CZ, EE, EL, FI, FR, LU, MT, NL, PT, SK.
113 EE, FI, FR, SE.
114 AT, BE, BG, EE, FI, IT, LT, PT, SI, SK and MD.
115 EE, FI, FR.
116 CZ, EE, FI, IE, IT, LT, LV, NL, PT, SE, SK.
117 IE, LV, NL, PL, PT, SK and NO (provides temporary collective protection).
118 Council of the EU, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1460 of 15 July 2025 extending the temporary protection introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, 15 July 2025, accessed 17 March 2026.
119 ES, FI, IT, LT, PT.
120 EE, EL, HR, IE, LU, SI, SK.
121 Council of the EU, Protection of displaced Ukrainians: Council adopts recommendation about transition out of temporary protection, Press release, 16 September 2025, accessed 23 June 2026.
122 CZ, EL, FR, IT, NL, SI.
123 AT, BE, CZ, EE, HR, IE, IT, LV, PL, PT, SI, SK.
124 EE, LV, PL, SK.

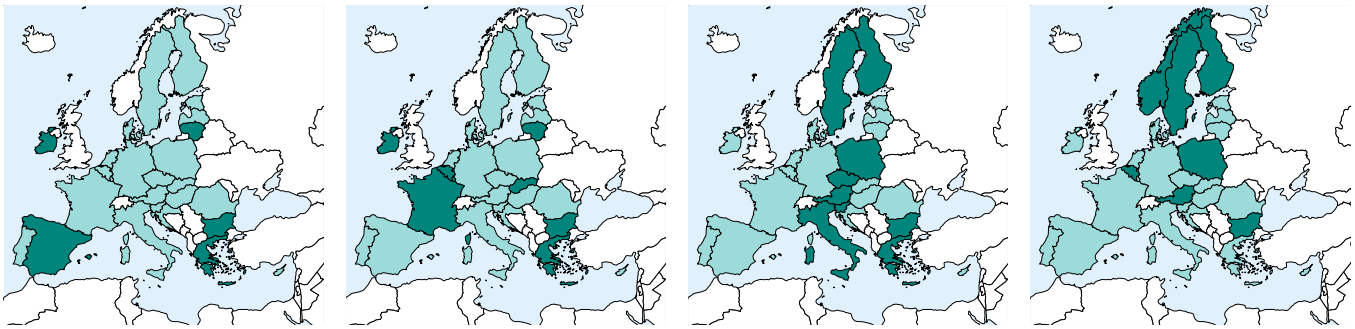
introduce patient co-payments and apply general rules for medicine reimbursement, and Poland to exclude certain healthcare services for uninsured BoTP. Six EMN Member Countries[125] reduced the size of social welfare supports or introduced stricter conditions for eligibility. Four EMN Member Countries[126] strengthened the social support offered to BoTP where there was sustained demand for early-stage reception or to prevent gaps in basic assistance for BoTP in need.

After the Council Recommendation[127] of 16 September 2025 on a coordinated transition out of temporary protection to EU Member States, Ukraine put in place several measures to facilitate support for citizens of Ukraine wishing to go back and to ensure the protection of children. These included establishing the Agency for National Unity, developing a state policy for return and reintegration, amending the procedure for guardianship and custody, and introducing financial relocation assistance for the child's legal representative.

1.11. ADDRESSING VULNERABLE GROUPS AND VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Policy developments addressing the situation of vulnerable groups (including unaccompanied minors, BOTP and applicants for international protection) responded to obligations to comply with fundamental rights and international protection standards.

Figure 3: Measures affecting unaccompanied minors in 2025



Source: EMN National Contact Points.

Six EMN Member Countries[128] reported measures to improve procedures for the identification and registration of unaccompanied minors, while seven[129] introduced changes to age assessment procedures. Five EMN Member Countries[130] updated their procedures to prioritise documentation evidence or adopt multidisciplinary approaches, integrating medical and psychosocial assessments.

Sixteen EMN Member Countries[131] introduced policy and legal developments on the reception and care of unaccompanied minors, reflecting arrival trends[132] and capacity management considerations,[133] as well as the need to promote integration,[134] ensure access to suitable accommodation,[135] mitigate protection risks,[136] eliminate inconsistencies and strengthen the legal basis in service provision,[137] and provide information on the accommodation of unaccompanied minors.[138] Belgium, France and Spain focused on adjusting and redistributing reception capacity, while Ireland and Luxembourg reported efforts to ensure access to suitable accommodation.

125 AT, BE, DE, FI, NL, PL.
126 BG, CZ, LV, SK (provided temporarily by international organisations).
127 European Commission, Commission proposes predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainian refugees in the EU, Press release, 4 June 2025, accessed 18 February 2026; European Commission, Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine, accessed 17 March 2026.
128 BG, EL, ES, IE, LT, LU.
129 BE, EL, FR, IE, LT, MT, SK.
130 BE, BG, EL, LT, SK.
131 BE, BG, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.
132 BE, BG, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT.
133 BE, ES, FR, HR, IT.
134 IT, SI, SK.
135 IE, IT, LU.
136 IE, PL, SE.
137 FI.
138 LV.

Ten EMN Member Countries[139] enhanced guardianship systems for unaccompanied minors to safeguard the best interest of the child,[140] standardise practices[141] and enhance national capacity,[142] as well as to prepare for relevant EU obligations under the Pact.[143] Six EMN Member Countries[144] and Norway reported changes to family reunification policies for unaccompanied minors, some introducing more restrictive or corrective measures (see section 1.5)[145] and others facilitating the process or clarifying existing measures.[146] New obligations under the Pact and gaps identified at national level prompted four EMN Member Countries[147] to take steps to strengthen procedural safeguards and improve early access to protection for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum.

To enhance the identification, protection and support of other vulnerable applicants in asylum and reception systems, 11 EMN Member Countries,[148] Georgia and the Republic of Moldova undertook initiatives to embed consideration of vulnerability in strategies and plans,[149] address legislative[150] and procedural gaps,[151] uphold greater consistency in handling vulnerable cases,[152] and mitigate persistent protection risks or needs affecting vulnerable groups.[153]

Fifteen EMN Member Countries,[154] Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine reported measures to tackle labour exploitation of migrant workers and strengthen safeguards for equal treatment in the labour market. Some measures focused on strengthening employer accountability and compliance mechanisms:[155] the Netherlands increased fines for violations of labour laws and introducing a licensing system for temporary employment agencies (to take effect in 2027), while Finland increased the minimum income thresholds to ensure adequate remuneration (to €1 600 per month). Other measures aimed to improve the protection of migrant workers and victims of exploitation,[156] including new rules regulating acceptable standards of employer-provided accommodation (Croatia) and the introduction of a new special residence permit for victims of labour exploitation (Italy). Estonia, the Netherlands and Spain introduced legal solutions to address irregular stay of third-country nationals, aiming to provide case-by-case regularisation under defined conditions and ensure access to legal residence. Spain introduced an exceptional residence and work authorisation for victims of sexual violence who are in an irregular situation and who meet the applicable requirements.

Most EMN Member and Observer Countries took further action to fight trafficking in human beings and protect its victims. Four EMN Member Countries[157] Norway, Georgia and Ukraine adopted comprehensive national action plans addressing trafficking in human beings, while four EMN Member Countries[158] and Georgia adopted national action plans to combat specific forms of exploitation or address specific vulnerable groups.

Seven EMN Member Countries[159] introduced, or were in the process of approving, legislative amendments to their respective criminal laws to add the new forms of exploitation foreseen under Directive (EU) 2024/1712 (revised Anti-Trafficking Directive). At EU level, as mentioned earlier, the Europol Regulation was formally adopted in December 2025, strengthening Europol's mandate to support EU Member States to combat trafficking in human beings (as well as migrant smuggling).

Most EMN Member and Observer Countries[160] adopted measures to enhance the detection and identification of victims of trafficking in human beings through training or awareness raising activities, targeting a wide range of actors. Fifteen EMN Member Countries,[161] Norway and Georgia adopted measures on cooperation between national authorities, including meetings and events,[162] creating new structures[163] or establishing interdepartmental or interagency working groups.[164]

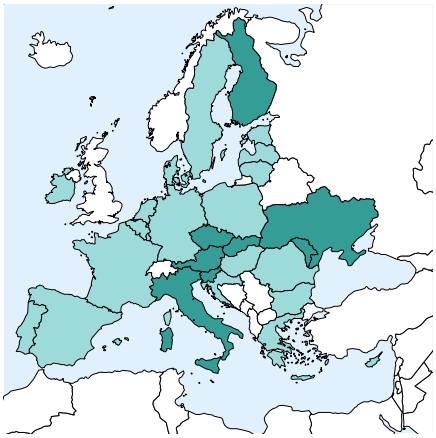
Malta, Spain and Georgia reported developments in the provision of legal residence for third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings. In Spain, temporary residence rights were expanded to include victim's children residing outside of Spain, supporting family reunification.[165] Five EMN Member Countries[166] and the Republic of Moldova adopted measures to ensure that (potential) victims of trafficking in human beings were informed of the types of support available and how to access their rights.

139 AT, BG, CZ, EL, FI, IT, PL, PT, SI, SE.
140 AT, BG, EL, FI, IT.
141 CZ.
142 BG, IT, SI.
143 SE.
144 AT, BE, BG, FI, PL, SE.
145 AT, BE and NO.
146 BG, FI, PL, SE.
147 BG, CZ, HU, SK.
148 AT, DE, EL, ES, FI, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, SE.
149 EL, IE and MD.
150 DE, FI, MT, SE.
151 EL, IE.
152 IE, SE.
153 EL, FI, IE, IT, MT, NL, SE.
154 BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FI, HR, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK.
155 BE, EE, FI, NL, MT, PL, PT, SK and UA.
156 ES, HR, IT, LU, PT.
157 LV, PL, PT, SI.
158 DE, IE, LU, SK.
159 BE, CZ, DE, HR, HU, IE, SK.
160 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK and GE, MD, UA.
161 BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, PL, SE, SK.
162 BE, BG, DE, EE, IE, IT, LU, PL, PT and GE.
163 FR, IE, LU and NO.
164 CZ, EL, IE, LV and GE.
165 According to RD 1155/2024, family reunification shall be facilitated for minor children, children under guardianship, as well as for adult children who have a disability requiring support, or who are objectively unable to provide for their own needs due to their health condition, provided that they are not present in Spain at the time the victim's exemption from liability is granted. The provisions of Organic Law 4/2000 of 11 January on family reunification shall apply. However, victims of trafficking in human beings shall be exempt from the requirements to demonstrate sufficient financial resources, prior residence, and the availability of adequate accommodation.
166 BE, EL, FR, PL, MT.

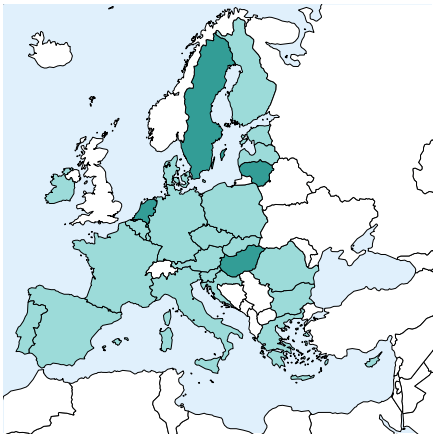
1.12. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AS A FLEXIBLE POLICY INSTRUMENT ADDRESSING DIFFERENT MIGRATION POLICY NEEDS

In 2025, EMN Member and Observer Countries increasingly approached international cooperation as a flexible policy instrument to address different needs, including labour shortages, the root causes of irregular migration, combating trafficking in human beings, and strengthening returns. This reflects a continued emphasis on targeted, function-specific partnerships with third countries, in line with the external dimension of the Pact, which emphasises comprehensive cooperation frameworks and the strategic use of cross-policy leverage.[167]

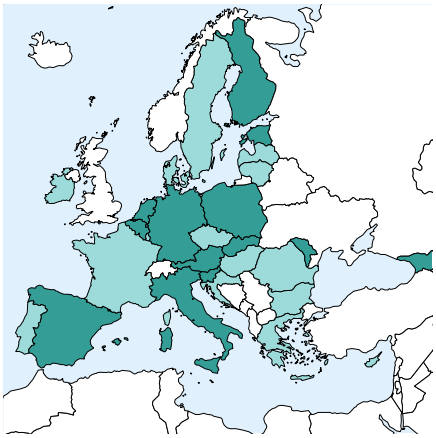
Figure 4: International cooperation across policy areas in 2025



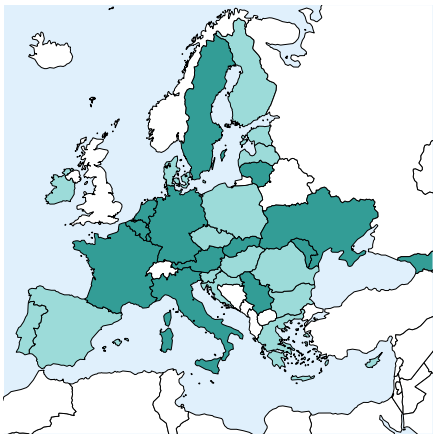
Labour migration:
AT, CZ, FI, IT, SI, SK and MD, UA



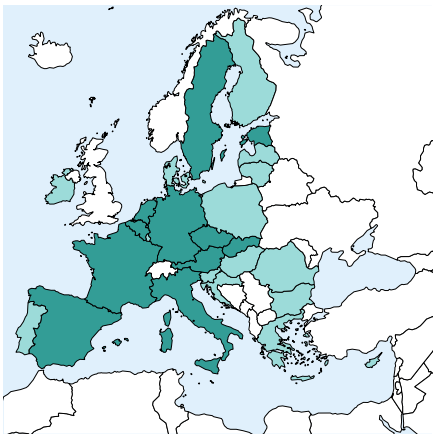
Irregular migration:
HU, LT, NL, SE



Trafficking in human beings:
AT, BE, DE, EE, ES, FI, IT, NL, PL, SI, SK, and GE, MD



Return:
AT, BE, DE, FR, IT, LT, LU, NL, SE, SK and GE, MD, UA, RS.



Migration and development:
AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, NL, SE, SK

Source: EMN National Contact Points.

Seven EMN Member Countries,[168] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine concluded agreements with third countries to facilitate labour mobility and create structured legal pathways for employment. Four EMN Member Countries[169] introduced or expanded circular migration schemes through bilateral or project-based arrangements, typically linked to specific skills needs and incorporating return components.

Eleven EMN Member Countries[170] combined development objectives with a wide range of migration management goals. These ranged from diaspora engagement and the

167 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Commission work programme 2025, COM(2025) 45 final, accessed 18 February 2026; European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, The European Annual Asylum and Migration Report (2025), COM(2025) 795 final, accessed 18 February 2026.
168 AT, CZ, FI, IT, PT, SI, SK.
169 BE, ES, IE, IT.
170 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, NL, SE, SK.

reintegration of returnees to circular migration schemes and skills mobility partnerships to address the root causes of irregular migration. Other interventions were driven by humanitarian considerations in response to armed conflict and displacement.[171]

Ten EMN Member Countries,[172] Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia reported cooperation with third countries on return, including 10 bilateral readmission agreements concluded by eight countries.[173]

On irregular migration, five EMN Member Countries[174] reported operational cooperation, expert deployments and capacity-building activities with third countries. Twelve EMN Member Countries,[175] Georgia and the Republic of Moldova cooperated with third countries to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, notably with countries in Eastern Europe[176] and Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC).[177]

171 AT, CZ, EE, SK.
172 AT, BE, DE, FR, IT, LT, LU, NL, SE, SK.
173 AT, BE, FR, LT, LU, NL and GE, MD.
174 HU, LT, NL, PT, SE.
175 AT, BE, DE, EE, ES, FI, IT, NL, PL, PT SI, SK.
176 EE, FR, SI, SK.
177 DE, ES, FR, PL.

2. LEGAL MIGRATION

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In 2025, legal migration policy at both EU and national level was primarily driven by the need to address labour shortages and strengthen the capacity to attract and retain talent. Another key focus at national level was changing admission rules to combat misuse of legal migration channels. Data on the numbers of first permits granted for legal migration reasons in 2025 were not yet available at the time of writing of this report.

EU-level developments in 2025 continued to focus on strengthening the EU's capacity to attract and retain talent from third countries and address labour shortages across the EU, notably through political agreement on the establishment of the EU Talent Pool and continued dialogue on talent attraction and labour market integration.

Policy developments in EMN Member and Observer Countries reflected continued efforts to address labour shortages across a broad range of sectors and skill levels, including highly qualified occupations, low- and medium-skilled employment and seasonal work. Driven by the growing need for skills and talent across key sectors, policy measures also aimed to attract and retain international students,[178] researchers[179] and highly skilled workers.[180] Similar considerations prompted policy changes affecting other economically active categories, including digital nomads, investors and workers in cultural and creative sectors.[181] Measures included the simplification of admission procedures,[182] adjustments to quotas,[183] and the introduction of new residence pathways or migration schemes to facilitate recruitment in sectors experiencing labour shortages.[184]

Digitalisation and the use of new technologies continued to play an important role in the management of migration systems,[185] with several countries introducing or adopting legislation on electronic application systems,[186] as well as digital platforms to improve the efficiency and transparency of migration procedures.[187]

Sixteen EMN Member Countries[188] and Norway introduced measures to strengthen oversight of labour migration schemes and protect migrant workers from exploitation, including the digitalisation of migration procedures,[189] improved interoperability between administrative systems,[190] and improved digital access to migration information.[191] Four EMN Member Countries[192] introduced more restrictive changes to their labour migration frameworks by limiting access for certain groups (particularly low-skilled workers) to give preference to high-skilled or priority category workers.

Developments in family reunification focused on tightening eligibility requirements,[193] clarifying admission rules,[194] and improving administrative procedures and facilitation measures,[195] often in response to concerns about misuse of family migration pathways.

Seven EMN Member Countries[196] signed bilateral agreements to facilitate labour mobility and create structured legal pathways for employment through cooperation with partner countries.

178 BE, BG, CZ, ES, HR, IE, LT, SK.
179 AT, BE, IE, PL, SE and NO.
180 AT, BE, BG, CY, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, LU, PL, PT, SE and GE.
181 BE, BG, EE, EL, FR, IE, IT, LT, NL, PL, SI, SK and MD.
182 BG, EE, ES, FI, HR, SI, SK.
183 AT, EE, IE, IT, LT, SK.
184 AT, EE, FR, HU, IE, IT, PT.
185 CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, IE, LV, MT, PL, PT, SK and GE, UA.
186 IE, PL, PT, SK.
187 CY, DE, EE, IE, MT, LV.
188 BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK.
189 EE, ES, IE, PL, SK and GE, UA.
190 EE, ES, FI, LV, PT, SK.
191 CY, DE, MT, PT.
192 BE, HU, LT, PT.
193 BE, FI, IE, LV (planned).
194 BE, FI, IE, LV, PT.
195 BG, ES, NL, PL, SI
196 AT, ES, FI, IT, PT, SI, SK.

2.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

In legal migration, 2025 saw continued EU-level efforts to strengthen the Union's ability to attract and retain third-country talent, with a particular focus on addressing labour shortages and encouraging fair recruitment practices. These efforts were reinforced by the launch of the Union of Skills (see Chapter 6),[197] an initiative aimed at strengthening Europe's human capital and global competitiveness, including measures to attract skilled third-country nationals. Relevant actions included improving EU-level talent attraction instruments, promoting international partnerships on skills, and developing pathways for skilled workers, researchers and students from third countries to contribute to the EU labour market.

On 18 November 2025, the European Parliament and the Council reached agreement on the creation of the EU Talent Pool,[198] marking a key milestone in the implementation of the European Commission's 2023 Skills and Talent Mobility package.[199] The EU Talent Pool will be the first EU-wide platform designed to facilitate the recruitment of skilled non-EU nationals by matching employers in participating EU Member States with jobseekers from third countries, particularly in sectors facing labour shortages.

The European Commission continued to engage stakeholders on talent attraction. On 11 December, the second 'Implementation Dialogue on Talent Attraction and Retention' brought together public authorities, employers, social partners and international organisations to discuss challenges such as lengthy procedures, fragmented implementation of EU rules, risks of unfair recruitment and inadequate working conditions, and limited integration prospects for family members. Stakeholders highlighted best practices, including one-stop shops, digital matching tools, trusted employer schemes and targeted information campaigns in third countries.[200]

Broader EU-level dialogue on labour market integration was advanced through the 10th European Migration Forum on 27–28 November in Brussels, co-organised by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Under the theme 'Harnessing migrants' skills in the EU', the forum brought together EU institutions and civil society to exchange good practices and discuss how improved recognition of migrants' skills, simplified and streamlined recognition of migrant's qualifications and skills, targeted training and stronger integration support can generate positive socioeconomic impacts.[201]

2.3. OVERARCHING AND CROSS-CUTTING DEVELOPMENTS

2.3.1. Overarching and cross-cutting developments

In 2025, 12 EMN Member Countries,[202] Georgia and Ukraine reported overarching and/or cross-cutting developments in legal migration, motivated by the need to streamline administrative systems,[203] security concerns and the changing geopolitical environment,[204] and alignment with EU law.[205]

Austria and Italy adjusted their (multi-) annual admission quotas. Austria reduced the annual quotas for 2025 due to an overall decrease in demand from third-country nationals for certain quota-based residence permits. Italy adopted legislation to strengthen and streamline the overall management of labour migration and family reunification, approving a new multiannual planning framework for labour migration flows for 2026–2028.

The need to streamline administrative systems drove a number of reforms to simplify procedures and improve the functioning of migration management frameworks.[206] Spain introduced a new regulation implementing its Aliens Act to clarify permit categories and simplify administrative procedures. Estonia amended its Aliens Act to clarify residence permit rules and improve the overall functioning of residence permit procedures.

Security concerns and the changing geopolitical environment influenced policy developments in four EMN Member Countries.[207] Estonia introduced additional grounds for refusing residence permits in cases involving links to foreign security services or military structures and strengthened requirements linked to integration and residence. Lithuania adopted measures linked to the ongoing war in Ukraine, including the extension of restrictive measures applicable to the admission of citizens of Russia and Belarus. Finland tightened the conditions for obtaining permanent residence by extending the required residence period and introducing stronger language and employment requirements. In Portugal, legal amendments strengthened security safeguards by introducing enhanced prior checks by central authorities for national visa and residence permit applications, including for citizens of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, that also sought to prevent misuse of visa categories.

To align national migration legislation with EU law following its candidate status for EU accession, Ukraine introduced the possibility for family members of foreigners and stateless persons residing in the country to obtain

197 European Commission, A Union of Skills to equip people for a competitive Europe, Press release, 5 March 2025, accessed 16 March 2026.
198 Council of the EU, Council and European Parliament agree to establish a platform for non-EU jobseekers ('EU Talent Pool'), Press release, 18 November 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.
199 European Commission, Commission proposes new measures on skills and talent, Press release, 14 November 2023, accessed 16 March 2026.
200 European Commission, Commissioner Brunner hosts Implementation Dialogue on Talent Attraction and Retention, News article, 12 December 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.
201 European Commission, The 10th European Migration Forum focused on harnessing migrants' skills in the EU, News article, 28 November 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.
202 AT, BE, DE, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, PT, SK.
203 EE, ES, IE, IT and UA.
204 EE, FI, LT, PT.
205 UA.
206 EE, ES, IE, IT and UA.
207 EE, FI, LT, PT.

an autonomous immigration permit after five years of continuous residence.

2.3.2. Digitalisation and/or use of new technologies

In 11 EMN Member Countries,[208] Georgia and Ukraine, digitalisation and the use of new technologies continued to shape legal migration systems. Countries reported digitalisation of migration procedures,[209] improved interoperability between administrative systems,[210] and improved digital access to migration information.[211] These initiatives generally aimed to improve the efficiency of migration procedures, reduce administrative burdens for applicants and national authorities, and support faster decision-making through improved data exchange and electronic services.

Several measures focused on the digitalisation of administrative procedures and the introduction of electronic application systems for third-country nationals.[212] Poland adopted legal provisions enabling electronic submission of residence permit applications and digitalised procedures related to access to the labour market. Spain expanded the mandatory use of electronic channels for submitting several types of residence permit. Georgia introduced a dedicated electronic case management system to support labour migration processes, enabling the processing of applications for labour permits and serving as a shared database for authorities responsible for issuing work-based residence permits and visas.

Box 1: Advancing digital migration management in Estonia

Estonia adopted amendments to its Aliens Act to streamline residence permit and short-term employment procedures through greater use of digital solutions. The reforms enable applicants to communicate with authorities electronically and support faster processing through enhanced data exchange between national registers. In parallel, Estonia upgraded its national mobile app to allow foreign residents with valid residence permits to verify their identity digitally, with the same legal effect as presenting a physical document. These measures form part of Estonia's broader effort to modernise migration management, improve accessibility of public services and provide more efficient, user-friendly immigration procedures.

Some developments aimed to improve interoperability and data exchange between authorities.[213] Finland expanded the use of automated checks in the processing and monitoring of work- and study-based residence permits. Latvia introduced new digital solutions allowing sworn notaries to update information on foreigners in the national Register of Natural Persons, ensuring that they are assigned a personal code that allows them to be consistently identified across state systems (e.g. land, cadastre, construction registers). These solutions also enable more efficient data exchange and administrative processes, including obligations such as municipal tax administration.

Cyprus, Germany and Malta improved digital access to migration information and services.[214] Cyprus began to develop new digital services for residence permit renewal and integrating residence permits into a national digital identity application, while also preparing content for an artificial intelligence (AI)-supported government digital assistant. Germany announced plans to establish a digital 'Work-and-Stay Agency' to create a fully digitised process chain for labour and study migration procedures. Malta enhanced its online guidance and digital platforms for work permit procedures.

2.4. WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

2.4.1. Cross-cutting developments affecting all migrant workers

Seventeen EMN Member Countries,[215] Georgia and Ukraine reported cross-cutting measures affecting migrant workers. Developments responded to challenges such as misuse of labour migration admission schemes, oversight of employers and recruitment practices,[216] labour shortages[217] and evolving labour market needs.[218]

Nine EMN Member Countries[219] and Georgia strengthened or tightened conditions for employers recruiting third-country nationals to prevent misuse of labour migration schemes and ensure that employment offers correspond to genuine labour market needs. Poland adopted a new law regulating access of migrants to the labour market, introducing stricter penalties, new refusal grounds for work permits and enhanced inspection powers. Slovenia introduced a rule preventing employers from hiring third-country nationals if they had terminated employment contracts for business reasons in the previous six months for workers who could have filled the same position, unless certain salary or labour market conditions were met.

Several EMN Member Countries[220] reported cross-cutting measures responding to labour shortages and sectoral labour market demand. In the Czech Republic, demand in the cultural sector resulted in legislation expanding free

208 CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, IE, LV, MT, PL, PT, SK.
209 EE, ES, IE, PL, SK and GE, UA.
210 EE, ES, FI, LV, PT, SK.
211 CY, DE, MT.
212 EE, ES, IE, PL, SK and GE, UA.
213 EE, ES, FI, LV, SK.
214 CY, DE, MT.
215 AT, BE, BG, CZ, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, PL, PT, SI, SK.
216 BE, EE, FR, HR, IT, LT, PL, PT, SI.
217 BE, CZ, EE, FR, HR, IT, LU, PT, SK.
218 AT, FI, FR, HR, PT.
219 BE, EE, FI, FR, HR, IT, LT, PL, SI.
220 AT, BE, CZ, EE, HR, HU, IT, LU, SK.

access to the labour market for specific groups, including third-country nationals performing artistic activities in public cultural institutions.

Austria, Hungary and Italy introduced new residence pathways responding to labour market needs. Austria and Hungary created new 'cross-border commuter' residence permits, enabling third-country nationals residing in neighbouring countries to work in companies located in border regions. Italy introduced a new admission channel allowing descendants of Italian citizens living abroad to enter and stay for employment outside the standard quota system. Five EMN Member Countries[221] introduced measures allowing workers greater flexibility in employment situations, including the possibility to remain in the country for a limited period following unemployment,[222] to change employer under certain conditions without losing their residence status,[223] and to maintain employment continuity during administrative procedures.[224] By contrast, reforms in Finland primarily introduced restrictions, including a reduction in the permitted period of stay following unemployment to three or six months, depending on individual circumstances. As part of its efforts to align national legislation as part of the accession process, Ukraine submitted a proposal for a single permit combining work and residence authorisation for foreign workers.

Eight EMN Member Countries[225] and Georgia adopted measures to simplify admission procedures and improve efficiency, often prompted by the need to reduce administrative burden on various actors[226] and long processing times due to a rise in demand.[227] The Slovak Republic amended its legislation to reduce documentation requirements and extend visa validity periods, as well as introducing measures to better manage application volumes.

2.4.2. Highly qualified workers and intra-corporate transferees

In 2025, 17 EMN Member Countries[228] and Georgia introduced or revised measures on highly qualified workers[229] and intra-corporate transferees (ICT).[230] Key drivers included the transposition of the revised EU Blue Card Directive[231] and growing labour needs.[232]

Nine EMN Member Countries[233] introduced legislative or regulatory changes, primarily to implement the revised EU Blue Card Directive[234] and align national legal frameworks with the updated EU rules. These reforms included adjustments to eligibility conditions[235] and salary thresholds,[236] as well as facilitating mobility for highly skilled workers.[237]

Other types of measures were introduced by eight EMN Member Countries[238] aimed at attracting and retaining highly qualified workers, addressing labour shortages in specific sectors and strengthen internal competitiveness. Ireland updated its Critical Skills Occupations List, expanding the range of occupations eligible for highly skilled immigration in the planning and health sectors. France simplified recruitment procedures in shortage sectors, particularly in healthcare, including streamlined admission procedures and the inclusion of certain medical and paramedical professions in the talent residence permit scheme. The Czech Republic expanded free access to its labour market to Taiwan to facilitate the relocation of highly qualified workers. Georgia introduced a temporary residence permit for IT sector employees and related professionals, valid for three years and extendable up to 12 years.

Five EMN Member Countries[239] focused on improving administrative procedures and facilitated the recruitment of highly qualified workers as a whole. Austria announced the further development of digital tools to lay the foundation for a fully digital recruitment process, while Bulgaria simplified administrative requirements for work permit applications by removing the obligation to provide proof of accommodation at the application stage.

Bulgaria and Estonia reported developments specifically related to ICTs. Notably, Estonia facilitated ICT mobility by exempting eligible ICTs holding permits from another EU Member State from short-term employment time limits.

2.4.3. Low- and medium-skilled workers (other than seasonal workers)

Thirteen EMN Member Countries[240] reported developments targeting low- and medium-skilled workers. These included adjustments to labour migration frameworks in response to labour market needs and sector-specific workforce demand.[241] The developments also pursued objectives related to administrative efficiency[242] and more restrictive regulatory approaches to labour migration.[243]

Four EMN Member Countries[244] introduced or adjusted quota systems governing the admission of third-country nationals for employment, driven by sector-specific labour shortages. Ireland increased the employment permit

221 CZ, ES, HR, IT, LU.
222 CZ, EE, FI, HR, LU.
223 EE, ES, FI, HR, LU.
224 IT.
225 BG, ES, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, SK.
226 IE (immigration authorities), IT (immigration authorities), LU, SK (police).
227 IE, IT.
228 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, PL, PT, SE.
229 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, PL, PT, SE.
230 BE, BG, EE.
231 BE, CY, ES, FR, HR, HU, PL, SE.
232 AT, CY, EE, FI, IE, LU.
233 BE, CY, ES, FR, HR, HU, LU, PL, SE.
234 BE, CY, ES, FR, HR, HU, PL, SE.
235 CY, ES, FR, HR, HU, PL.
236 FR, HU, LU.
237 BE, ES.
238 AT, CY, CZ, EE, FI, IE, LU, pT.
239 AT, BG, EE, FR, PT.
240 BE, BG, CY, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, PT, SK.
241 CY, HR, IE, IT, LT, SK.
242 BG, CY, FI, LT.
243 BE, HU, LT.
244 IE, IT, LT, SK.

quotas for care workers, mechanics, vehicle repairers, meat processing operatives, and dairy farm assistants. Lithuania set a quota of 24 830 foreign workers for 2025 to address workforce shortages in sectors such as manufacturing, transport and construction. Italy extended a pilot admission scheme for personal care workers outside the quota system to ensure continuity in the recruitment of carers for older persons and persons with disabilities.

Measures focused on simplifying procedures and improving the functioning of admission systems were adopted by five EMN Member Countries[245] Bulgaria removed the requirement for employers to provide proof of housing at the application stage for a first-time single residence and work permit in order to reduce the administrative burden. Similarly, Finland replaced the previous two-stage procedure for employee residence permits with a single-stage process managed by the Finnish Immigration Service.

Four EMN Member Countries[246] introduced more restrictive changes to their labour migration frameworks by limiting access for certain groups (particularly low-skilled workers) to give preference to high-skilled or priority category workers. Belgium (Flanders) adopted reforms to prioritise the recruitment of local and EU workers rather than third-country nationals in medium- and high-skilled occupations, restricting access to single permits for low-skilled workers and expanding the grounds for refusing or withdrawing work permits. Lithuania reformed its labour immigration framework by introducing stricter quota and salary-based conditions to regulate admissions and encourage the recruitment of high-value employment profiles.

2.4.4. Seasonal workers

Nine EMN Member Countries[247] introduced changes to their seasonal migration frameworks in response to labour shortages in seasonal sectors, the need to ensure orderly recruitment, and the objective of improving protection and working conditions for seasonal workers.

Responding to labour shortages, a number of measures facilitated the recruitment and admission of seasonal workers, including the adjustment of quotas,[248] creation of dedicated schemes[249] or expansion of sectors eligible for seasonal employment.[250] Austria increased the annual quota for seasonal workers in the tourism sector to 5 500 places and introduced a dedicated quota of 2 500 places for workers from selected Southeast European countries to respond to labour shortages. Ireland, which is not bound by Directive 2014/36/EU (the Seasonal Workers Directive), commenced regulations to implement its seasonal employment permit scheme (first provided for under its Employment Permits Act 2024). Under the regulations, approved horticultural employers can recruit workers for up to seven months per year within an overall annual quota of 200 permits. In response to labour market demand from businesses, the Slovak Republic extended the maximum duration of seasonal employment permits to 240 days and expanded eligible sectors to logistics and postal services.

Other measures sought to improve the functioning and legal clarity of seasonal migration systems and strengthen worker protections.[251] Croatia extended the maximum duration of residence and work permits for seasonal workers from six to nine months, allowing third-country nationals to remain employed in seasonal jobs for a longer period in response to growing labour demand in seasonal sectors. Spain introduced a new regulatory framework for seasonal migration, including a dedicated residence authorisation and strengthened safeguards in recruitment processes through collective recruitment schemes in countries of origin.

2.4.5. Self-employed workers and start-ups

Seven EMN Member Countries[252] introduced measures for self-employed migrants and start-ups, reflecting efforts to promote economic activity, entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as to strengthen regulatory oversight

Croatia, Italy and the Netherlands introduced measures to facilitate the admission or stay of entrepreneurs and self-employed migrants. Croatia extended the validity of residence and work permits for self-employed third-country nationals from one to two years to reduce administrative burdens linked to frequent renewals. Italy allocated 730 admission quotas for entrepreneurs, freelance professionals and founders of innovative start-ups. The Netherlands introduced a revised assessment allowing the first extension of start-up residence permits based on future viability and solvency of the business rather than past income alone.

Other measures strengthened regulatory oversight and clarity of admission frameworks.[253] In Finland, a ministerial working group outlined planned changes to residence permits for start-up entrepreneurs, aiming to streamline the pre-entry assessment procedures for self-employed persons into a single process. France introduced stricter checks requiring proof of the economic viability of self-employed activities, including those linked to platform work. Spain established safeguards allowing self-employed workers to renew their residence permits where contracts end due to circumstances beyond their control.

2.4.6. Other remunerated workers

Nine EMN Member Countries[254] and the Republic of Moldova reported policy changes concerning other categories of remunerated workers or other economically active categories, including digital nomads, staff to support targeted investment projects and workers in cultural and creative sectors. The measures facilitated admission of specific categories of workers.[255]

245 BG, CY, EE, FI, LT.
246 BE, HU, LT, PT.
247 AT, BE, BG, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, SK.
248 AT, IT.
249 ES, IE.
250 SK.
251 BG, ES, FI, HR.
252 EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IT, NL.
253 ES, FI, FR.
254 BE, BG, EE, FR, IE, IT, LT, PL, SI.
255 BE, BG, EE, FR, IE, IT, LT, SI and MD.

Most measures aimed to facilitate employment opportunities for specific categories of workers while introducing some administrative flexibility.[256] Bulgaria, Slovenia and the Republic of Moldova all took measures targeting digital nomads. Bulgaria created new residence categories for 'digital nomads' and 'trainee specialists', while Slovenia introduced a new temporary residence permit for digital nomads, extending the maximum duration of certain residence permits and allowing more flexible in-country applications. The Republic of Moldova allowed temporary residence for digital nomads.

Estonia simplified admission procedures for foreign film crew members participating in internationally significant audiovisual productions to support cultural and economic internationalisation. Lithuania introduced legal clarifications on temporary residence permits for high-performance sports coaches.

2.4.7. Tackling labour exploitation and safeguarding equal treatment

Fifteen EMN Member Countries,[257] Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine reported measures to tackle labour exploitation of migrant workers and strengthen safeguards for equal treatment in the labour market.

Some measures focused on strengthening employer accountability and compliance mechanisms.[258] Belgium (Flanders) expanded employer liability rules in high-risk sectors such as construction and cleaning to improve oversight of subcontracting arrangements for third-country workers. The Netherlands increased fines for violations of labour laws and introduced a licensing system for temporary employment agencies, which is set to take effect in 2027. Finland increased the minimum income thresholds for migrant workers to EUR 1 600 per month to ensure adequate remuneration.

Other measures sought to improve the protection of migrant workers and victims of exploitation.[259] Croatia introduced new rules regulating employer-provided accommodation to ensure that migrant workers are housed in adequate conditions and protected from excessive rent or unsafe housing arrangements. Italy strengthened protections for migrant workers by introducing a dedicated 'special case' residence permit for victims of labour exploitation. It also reinforced coordination mechanisms to combat illegal employment, with the aim of enhancing victim protection and encouraging cooperation with authorities. Norway launched a new Action Plan to combat social dumping and work-related crime for migrant workers.[260]

Additional initiatives focused on strengthening enforcement and preventive measures.[261] Poland increased fines for illegal employment and introduced stricter criteria for work agencies employing foreign workers. Ukraine expanded the powers of the state labour service to conduct unscheduled inspections based on complaints from employees or trade unions in order to address harassment, undeclared work and labour exploitation, including among vulnerable foreign workers during martial law. The Republic of Moldova aligned its labour inspection framework with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, strengthening the institutional capacity of the state labour inspectorate to monitor compliance with labour legislation and occupational safety and health (OSH) requirements.

2.4.8. Bilateral labour migration agreements

In response to persistent labour shortages across sectors, seven EMN Member Countries,[262] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine signed agreements with third countries to facilitate labour mobility and create structured legal pathways for employment (see section 12.5). Austria signed an MoU with Brazil to facilitate the recruitment of skilled workers in shortage occupations through bilateral cooperation. Italy signed bilateral agreements with Uzbekistan and Ethiopia to promote legal labour migration channels, including reserved admission quotas of up to 500 non-seasonal and 750 seasonal workers from Uzbekistan. Italy also allocated 25 000 quotas for non-seasonal work and 2 000 multiannual seasonal quotas for nationals of partner countries that have concluded migration cooperation agreements or understandings with Italy, linking labour admissions to cooperation on migration management more broadly. The Slovak Republic and Ukraine signed an agreement on cooperation and information exchange in labour migration to streamline recruitment processes, strengthen the protection of workers' rights and enhance joint efforts to prevent illegal employment.

Austria and Spain reported projects to support legal labour mobility and skills development, including the EAGLE vocational training mobility project with Egypt to address skilled labour shortages[263] and the Wafira II initiative to maximise the positive impact of labour mobility between European and partner countries with a strong focus on reintegration of seasonal workers.[264] The Czech Republic added Taiwan to the list of countries whose nationals have free access to the labour market, reflecting strong economic cooperation and investment links.

256 BE, BG, EE, FR, IE, IT, LT, SI and MD.
257 BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FI, HR, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK.
258 BE, FI, NL, MT, PL, SK and UA.
259 ES, HR, IT, LU.
260 Government of Norway, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and other ministries, Handlingsplan mot sosial dumping og arbeidslivskriminalitet [Action plan to combat social dumping and work-related crime], 1 October 2022, accessed 16 March 2025.
261 FI, PL and MD, UA.
262 AT, CZ, ES, FI, IT, SI, SK.
263 AT.
264 ES.

2.5. STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

2.5.1. Students

Policy developments in relation to students in 2025 primarily focused on facilitating the attraction and retention of international students and talent.[265]

Eight EMN Member Countries,[266] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine introduced measures to attract international students and facilitate their transition into the labour market or long-term residence after graduation. Croatia introduced amendments facilitating access to permanent residence for third-country nationals who completed their higher education in Croatia and subsequently found employment in the country. The Republic of Moldova approved new regulations governing admission to higher education for the 2025–2026 academic year, allocating 126 state-funded places for foreign students.

Measures in some countries[267] focused on improving admission procedures, including facilitating visa procedures and the recognition of qualifications. France supported student mobility at university level by implementing an agreement with Quebec that facilitates access to scholarships and doctoral contracts, alongside providing logistical and administrative support for student enrolment in French institutions. Spain introduced a series of reforms under its new Immigration Regulation to clarify student admission rules, allow international students to work up to 30 hours per week and facilitate the transition from study to employment status after graduation.

Four EMN Member Countries[268] introduced measures to prevent misuse of the study migration channel and strengthen admission conditions. In Belgium, the federal government announced plans to tighten admission conditions, such as stricter financial requirements and tighter rules on guarantors, while continuing to attract highly skilled international students and researchers. Poland adopted legislative amendments to strengthen oversight of student visas and residence permits, including the creation of a register of foreign students and stricter admission rules for higher education institutions recruiting international students, including limits on the number of foreign students at a given institution.

2.5.2. Researchers

Five EMN Member Countries,[269] Norway and the Republic of Moldova reported developments to strengthen the attractiveness of national research systems, facilitating recruitment procedures and retaining international research talent. Austria applied temporary exceptions to public advertising requirements for academic positions, meaning that universities could recruit eligible researchers whose main research and teaching activity had been based in the United States (US) during the previous 24 months without launching a public call for applications. Poland prioritised visa processing and residence permits for third-country nationals admitted to doctoral schools or participating in scientific research activities at higher education institutions and research institutes. Sweden introduced a non-binding 'service promise' to process residence permit applications for doctoral students and their family members within 30 days (for completed applications), improving predictability for researchers and universities. The Republic of Moldova established procedures for recognising scientific titles obtained abroad to attract remote professionals and facilitate academic and professional mobility.

2.5.3. Trainees, au pairs and volunteers

Estonia, Italy and Spain reported developments related to trainees, volunteers or au pairs aimed at clarifying admission frameworks, regulating participation in volunteering programmes and preventing misuse of migration channels. Estonia repealed the specific legal provisions governing au pairs and domestic workers in its Aliens Act, as the scheme was considered unnecessary and potentially vulnerable to misuse; au pair activities may still take place under general labour rules. Italy introduced a three-year quota for the admission of third-country nationals participating in volunteering programmes of general interest and social utility to structure and regulate these activities within the legal migration framework. Spain revised admission rules for volunteers under its new Immigration Regulation, clarifying eligibility conditions and documentation requirements and aligning national legislation with Directive (EU) 2016/801.[270]

2.6. FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Eleven EMN Member Countries[271] reported developments related to family reunification in 2025. These measures tightened eligibility requirements, clarified admission rules[272] or improved administrative procedures and facilitation measures.[273]

Four EMN Member Countries[274] introduced measures tightening eligibility conditions and financial requirements for family reunification. Belgium and Finland raised the minimum age for spouses in family reunification applications to 21 years to prevent forced marriages and strengthen integration outcomes. Belgium also introduced a series

265 BG, ES, CZ, IE, HR, LT, SK and MD, UA.
266 BG, ES, CZ, IE, HR, LT, SI, SK.
267 CZ, EE, ES, FR, SK.
268 BE, FI, LV, PL.
269 AT, BE, IE, PL, SE.
270 European Union, Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing (recast), accessed 16 March 2026.
271 BE, BG, ES, FI, IE, IT, LV, NL, PL, PT, SI.
272 BE, FI, IE, LV (planned), PT.
273 BG, ES, NL, PL, SI.
274 BE, FI, IE, PT.

of reforms, including higher income thresholds and new housing standards,[275] with the objective of strengthening integration. Ireland introduced stricter eligibility criteria for adult dependent relatives, increased financial thresholds for sponsors, and clarified the overall framework governing family reunification applications.[276]

Other measures focused on improving the functioning of family reunification procedures or facilitating residence rights.[277] Italy extended the procedural deadline for issuing authorisation for family reunification to 150 days to better reflect the complexity of the verification process. Slovenia introduced the possibility for certain family members of highly skilled workers, such as EU Blue Card holders and researchers, to reside in the country while their application for family reunification is being processed.

2.7. INFORMATION PROVISION

Eight EMN Member Countries[278] introduced or strengthened initiatives to improve the provision of information to prospective migrants and employers. These aimed to increase transparency, facilitate access to legal migration pathways and support informed decision-making. Poland started work on the multichannel 'Working and living in Poland' platform, which will provide comprehensive information on residence and employment conditions and allow migrants to obtain advice through phone or chat services. Malta improved the accessibility of information on legal migration procedures through the digitalisation of services and clearer guidance on the Jobsplus portal. Spain introduced a provision in its new Immigration Regulation explicitly establishing the right of foreign workers and employers to access information on visa and residence procedures.

2.8. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Seven EMN Member Countries[279] reported additional developments relating to specific migration pathways or particular third country nationalities.

Certain developments were linked to facilitating mobility from specific countries or regions. Italy introduced dedicated admission quotas for persons of Italian origin residing in Venezuela.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania introduced more restrictive rules or security-related requirements for certain nationalities. Lithuania extended restrictive measures linked to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and introduced additional conditions affecting Russian citizens' residence rights and travel documents. To address security risks, Latvia stopped recognising non-biometric Russian passports for visa issuance and residence permit applications. Estonia discontinued the possibility of submitting residence permit applications and supporting documents in Russian. In Poland, a decree narrowed access to the declaration procedure for entrusting work to foreigners by removing Georgia from the list of eligible countries, reportedly in light of bilateral relations and concerns over abuses of migration law by Georgian citizens.

Luxembourg and Spain both repealed legislation that enabled residency for investors because it did not have the desired effect on the economy, or to reduce pressure on the housing market and align with EU guidelines respectively.

275 Still to be specified in a Royal Decree.
276 Ireland also granted children between 16-18 years of age an automatic right to work where they are joining a parent on an Irish employment permit as part of its updated Non-EEA Family Reunification Policy.
277 BG, ES, IE, IT, NL, PL, SI.
278 ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, MT, PL, SK.
279 EE, ES, IT, LT, LU, LV, PL.

3. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The number of first-time asylum applications continued to decline in 2025 compared to 2024 and 2023, with the EU27 total decreasing from 912 425 to 669 710 applications (-27%) in 2025 alone. This downward trend was evidenced across EU Member States and Norway, including the main destination countries – Germany, Spain, France and Italy all recording lower volumes of first-time asylum applications. The scale of decrease varied, with particularly pronounced reductions in countries such as Bulgaria (-69%), Cyprus (-58%), Germany (-51%), Romania (-49%) and Austria (-44%). This points to a geographically broad contraction rather than a regionally isolated trend.

At the same time, only a limited number of countries reported increases, notably Hungary (+320%) and Latvia (+61%), although these changes reflect relatively small absolute numbers. (See Figure 5 below).

Across the EMN Observer Countries, 2025 also showed a predominantly downward trend in asylum applications, although on a much smaller scale and with some variation between countries. The most pronounced reductions were recorded in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. By contrast, Albania recorded a moderate increase, albeit in small absolute numbers (see Table 1).

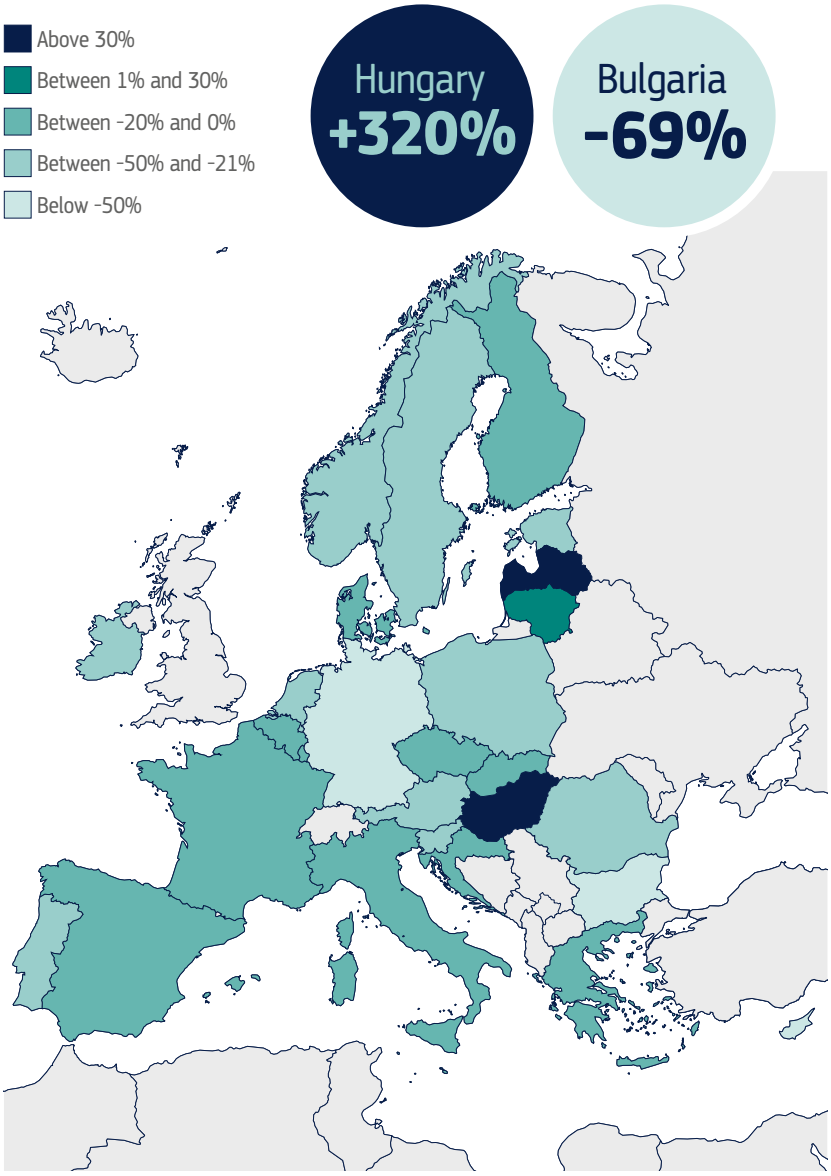
Table 1: First-time/total asylum applications, EMN Observer Countries, 2025

	Year	First-time applications	Total
Albania	2023	261	261
	2024	104	104
	2025	144	144
Armenia	2023	803	817
	2024	637	660
	2025	580	600
Georgia	2023	1 052	1 179
	2024	1 641	1 767
	2025	1 325	1 403
Republic of Moldova	2023	4 100	4 100
	2024	8 153	8 153
	2025	2 587	2 587
Montenegro	2023	145	145
	2024	125	132
	2025	140	n/i
North Macedonia	2023	n/i	n/i
	2024	334	334
	2025	n/i	n/i
Serbia	2023	196	200
	2024	216	219
	2025	132	133
Ukraine	2023	n/i	130
	2024	n/i	106
	2025	n/i	61

Source: Authorities in EMN Observer Countries.
Notes: n/i = no information.

Figure 5: Overview of first-time asylum applications from third-country nationals, EU and Norway, 2025

Variation of asylum applications in 2025 compared to 2024



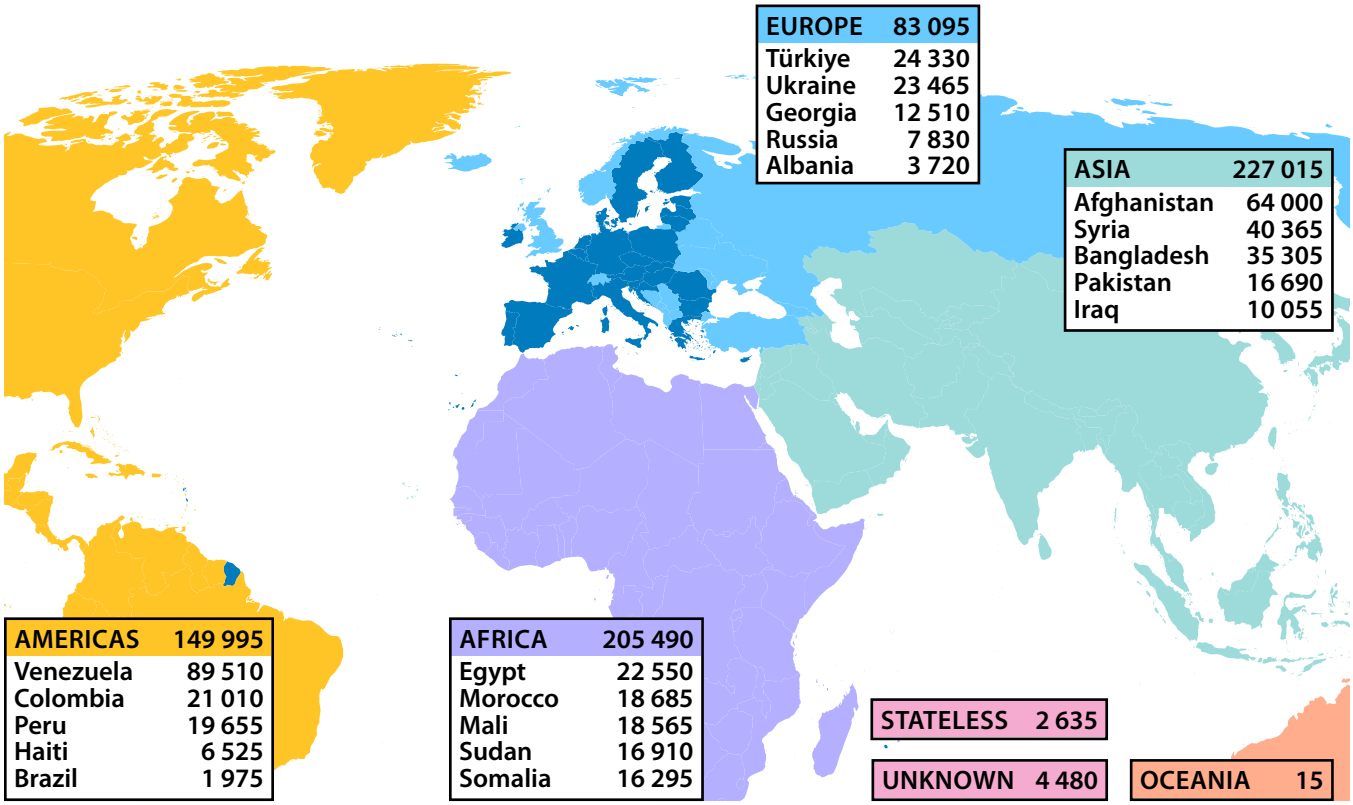
Number of asylum applications

	2023	2024	2025	2024-2025 variation
EU27	1 049 510	912 425	**669 710**	-27%
Austria	56 135	22 220	**12 460**	-44%
Belgium	29 260	32 670	**27 500**	-16%
Bulgaria	22 390	12 130	**3 800**	-69%
Croatia	1 635	1 000	**845**	-16%
Cyprus	11 660	6 750	**2 835**	-58%
Czechia	1 130	1 025	**930**	-9%
Denmark	2 355	2 180	**1 835**	-16%
Estonia	3 980	1 330	**1 005**	-24%
Germany	329 035	229 695	**113 170**	-51%
Greece	57 895	68 995	**55 380**	-20%
Hungary	30	25	**105**	320%
Finland	4 450	2 260	**1 955**	-13%
France	145 055	129 820	**116 370**	-10%
Ireland	13 220	18 435	**12 975**	-30%
Italy	130 565	151 120	**126 635**	-16%
Latvia	1 625	800	**1 290**	61%
Lithuania	510	295	**330**	12%
Luxembourg	2 615	2 125	**1 770**	-17%
Malta	490	440	**405**	-8%
Netherlands	38 320	31 925	**24 020**	-25%
Poland	7 720	14 445	**11 155**	-23%
Portugal	2 600	2 675	**1 750**	-35%
Romania	9 875	2 265	**1 145**	-49%
Slovenia	7 185	5 465	**3 965**	-27%
Slovakia	370	135	**130**	-4%
Spain	160 460	165 435	**141 035**	-15%
Sweden	8 945	6 755	**4 915**	-27%
Norway	5 135	4 800	**3 320**	-31%

Source: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza), date of extraction 28 May 2026.
Administrative boundaries © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap.
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE 04/2026.

In 2025, first-time asylum applications in the EU and Norway originated predominantly from Asia (227 015), Africa (205 490) and the Americas (149 995), while Europe accounted for a smaller share (83 095). Within these regions, applications were concentrated among a limited number of citizenships, notably Afghanistan (64 000), Syria (40 365) and Bangladesh (35 305) in Asia, Venezuela (89 510) in the Americas, and Egypt (22 550), Morocco (18 685) and Mali (18 565) in Africa. By contrast, applications from European citizenships were lower and more dispersed, with Türkiye (24 330) and Ukraine (23 465) representing the largest shares.

Figure 6: Number of first-time asylum applicants, main citizenship by continent, EU and Norway, 2025



Source: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza),date of extraction 10 April 2026.

In 2025, ongoing work at EU level aimed to improve asylum and migration management including processing asylum applications. Key EU developments in international protection included proposals to amend the Asylum Procedure Regulation concerning the concepts of a safe country of origin[280] and a safe third country.[281] These developments took place while EU Member States were preparing for the implementation of the Pact.

National developments in international protection were partly driven by strain on asylum and reception systems. Two EMN Member Countries[282] introduced restrictions or additional criteria to access reception centres, three[283] introduced restrictions to material reception conditions or decreased the amount of housing allowances, and two EMN Member Countries[284] and Georgia introduced or expanded the scope of the admissibility stage of the asylum assessment.

To increase the efficiency of the asylum system, 12 EMN Member Countries[285] and Georgia reported developments related to digitalisation and the use of new technologies. Eight EMN Member Countries[286] and Georgia implemented or upgraded their IT applications to manage the international protection procedure.

On access to the international protection procedure, Hungary abolished provisions deeming that persons who had crossed the border illegally and were subject to coercive measures or criminal sanctions were not entitled to apply for asylum. Conversely, in response to an increase in arrivals, Greece and Poland temporarily suspended the right to apply for asylum. In Poland, this measure responding to the instrumentalisation of migration was extended several times, but was not applied to persons in vulnerable situations.

Following the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria at the end of 2024, eight EMN Member Countries[287] resumed examining pending asylum applications lodged by Syrian nationals. By contrast, Norway suspended the processing of applications for up to six months.

Twelve EMN Member Countries[288] reported developments on the accommodation of asylum applicants. These included the reorientation of reception policy,[289] introduction of limitations or additional criteria to access accommodation

280 European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level, COM (2025) 186 final, 16.4.2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
281 European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the application of the 'safe third country' concept, COM (2025) 259 final, 20.5.2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
282 BE, IE.
283 AT, FI, SE.
284 BE, LT.
285 BG, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, MT, PT, SE, SI.
286 BG, ES, IE, LT, LU, MT, PT, SI.
287 BE, CY, DE, FI, LU, MT, NL, SE.
288 BE, CY, CZ, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PT, SE.
289 BE, FR, IE.

in response to capacity constraints,[290] strengthening housing-related support,[291] measures to increase safety in reception centres,[292] and institutional changes in reception systems.[293]

Twelve EMN Member Countries[294] reported developments in family reunification. In response to capacity constraints and administrative pressures in five EMN Member Countries,[295] and to prevent misuse in Finland, measures sought to restrict access to family reunification by introducing or proposing suspensions or additional requirements. By contrast, Italy and Lithuania introduced targeted measures to facilitate family reunification, ensure the effective realisation of the right to family unity,[296] and support innovative pre-departure preparation for family reunification.[297]

3.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

In spring, the European Commission published two proposals to amend the Asylum Procedure Regulation[298] regarding the safe country concept. On 16 April 2025, it published a proposal for a regulation establishing an EU list of safe countries of origin.[299] The proposal provided for the application of two rules under the Pact before it applies from 12 June 2026: 1) the application of accelerated and border procedures for applicants from nationalities with an asylum recognition rate of 20% or lower; and 2) the possibility to designate safe third countries and safe countries of origin with exceptions. The proposal also proposed establishing the first EU list of safe countries of origin, covering Kosovo*,[300] Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, India, Morocco and Tunisia.[301] In December, the Council of the EU adopted its general approach[302] and the European Parliament issued its final report.[303]

On 20 May, the European Commission published a proposal for a regulation facilitating the application of the safe third country concept.[304] Under the proposal, the connection between the applicant and the safe third country would no longer be mandatory and transit through that country before reaching the EU can be considered a sufficient link to apply the safe third country concept.[305] In December, the Council of the EU adopted its general approach[306] and the European Parliament issued its final report.[307]

On 8 December, the Council of the EU reached political agreement on the Solidarity Pool for 2026.[308] The Council Implementing Decision for the establishment of the Annual Solidarity Pool for 2026 was adopted by written procedure on 22 December.[309]

On 18 December, the Council of the EU unanimously adopted the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan for 2026–2027 (the Union Plan),[310] based on the European Commission proposal of 11 November 2025.[311] It includes voluntary contributions from EU Member States, implements the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation,[312] and outlines the pledges for resettlement and humanitarian admissions over the next two years, focusing on the main migratory routes to the EU. Nine EU Member States[313] contributed to addressing global resettlement and humanitarian admission needs through a total of 10 430 pledges, with Finland contributing through its national resettlement scheme.

In January, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) launched the pilot phase of its monitoring mechanism in Estonia and the Netherlands, in agreement with the respective national authorities. Established under Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 (the revised EUAA Regulation),[314] the mechanism aims to support the effective application of

290 BE, IE.
291 CY, IT, LT, LU.
292 CZ, NL.
293 IE, LT,
294 AT, BE, BG, DE, EE, FI, HR, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL.
295 AT, BE, DE, LU, NL.
296 LT.
297 IT.
298 European Commission, Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU, OJ L, 2024/1348, 22.5.2024, accessed 20 February 2026.
299 European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level, COM(2025) 186 final, 16.4.2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
300 This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.
301 European Commission, Commission proposes to frontload elements of the Pact on Migration and Asylum as well as a first EU list of safe countries of origin, Press release, 16 April 2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
302 Council of the EU, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level - General approach, 16025/25, 27 November 2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
303 European Parliament, Report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level. 10 December 2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
304 European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the application of the 'safe third country' concept,
COM(2025) 259 final, 20.5.2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
305 European Commission, Commission proposes to facilitate the application of the safe third country concept, News article, 20 May 2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
306 Council of the EU, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the application of the 'safe third country' concept - General approach, 16004/25, 27 November 2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
307 European Parliament, Report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the application of the 'safe third country' concept, 9 December 2025, accessed 18 March 2026.
308 Council of the EU, Migration and asylum: Member States agree on solidarity pool, Press release, 8 December 2025, accessed 18 March 2026.
309 Council of the EU, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2642 of 19 December 2025 on the establishment of the Annual Solidarity Pool for 2026, 23.12.2025, accessed 18 March 2026.
310 Council of the EU, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2628 of 18 December 2025 on the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan (2026-2027), 22.12.2025
311 European Commission, Commission's proposal for a Union resettlement and Humanitarian admission Plan, 11 November 2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
312 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2024/1350 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework, and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1147.
313 BE, ES, FR, IE, IT, MT, NL, RO, SE.
314 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 (the revised EUAA Regulation), Articles 14 and 15, accessed 10 June 2026.

the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by identifying and preventing shortcomings in national asylum and reception systems, as well as assessing EU Member States' preparedness to manage situations of disproportionate pressure.[315]

3.3. OVERARCHING AND CROSS-CUTTING DEVELOPMENTS

3.3.1. Overarching and cross-cutting developments

In 2025, 12 EMN Member Countries,[316] Georgia and Serbia reported overarching and/or cross-cutting developments in international protection. Eleven EMN Member Countries[317] and Georgia adopted new legislation, national strategies on asylum and migration management, or presented draft legislation relating to the international protection procedure in response to strain on their asylum and reception systems[318] or to align with the Pact.[319] Legislative proposals in the Netherlands aimed to alleviate pressure on the asylum authorities and reduce the number of applicants for international protection arriving in the Netherlands, Belgium's government coalition agreement 2025-2029 aimed to reduce the administrative backlog in international protection procedures, addressing the structural saturation of the reception network and scaling down the reception network in the future. A new law in Italy aimed to counter irregular migration.

Croatia and Portugal introduced organisational reforms. Croatia established a dedicated Sector for International Protection within the Ministry of the Interior, structured around three departments (Reception, International Protection Procedure, and Dublin) to strengthen capacity for the effective management of international protection. Portugal established a specialised Information and Documentation Unit to support evidence-based decision-making through systematic data collection and analysis, reinforced its institutional capacity by setting up a Dublin Unit within the International Protection Services Directorate, and launched preparations for a single reception system by designating the Institute of Social Security as the entity responsible for reducing fragmentation, improving continuity and predictability for beneficiaries, and enhancing alignment with EU reception standards.

Serbia adopted the Roadmap for cooperation with the EUAA for the period 2025-2027[320] to align with CEAS standards and EU Member State procedures and practices and to strengthen asylum and reception systems.

3.3.2. Digitalisation and/or use of new technologies

Twelve EMN Member Countries[321] and Georgia reported developments related to digitalisation and the use of new technologies, aiming to improve efficiency,[322] foster paperless solutions,[323] and reduce manual data entry.[324] Malta upgraded its storage arrangement to a dedicated document management system, Sweden developed work tools for case officers to monitor and prioritise cases, thereby shortening processing times, Estonia integrated court e-file systems with the information systems of the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB) to enable real-time digital information exchange, and Ireland completed the first phase of a new Migration Pact Case Management System to implement the AMMR.

Eight EMN Member Countries[325] and Georgia implemented or upgraded their IT applications for managing the international protection procedure. In Ireland, negative first instance decisions are served electronically if the applicant has consented to digital interaction. In Georgia, applicants receive decisions electronically.

3.4. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION PROCEDURE

3.4.1. Access to the procedure

Nine EMN Member Countries[326] and Georgia reported developments in access to the procedure, mainly due to pressure at their borders. Most notably, Greece and Poland introduced temporary suspensions of the right to apply for asylum. Greece suspended the possibility to lodge asylum applications for three months for persons entering irregularly by sea in response to increased arrivals from North Africa to Crete. In response to Belarus's instrumentalisation of migration, Poland suspended the right to apply for asylum at the Polish–Belarusian border for 60 days from 27 March 2025, with repeated extensions. It maintained exceptions for vulnerable persons. By contrast, Hungary removed provisions that had prevented persons crossing the border irregularly and subject to coercive measures or criminal sanctions from applying for asylum, while France reorganised its registration system to

315 EUAA, EUAA begins monitoring the operational and technical application of the Common European Asylum System in two Member States, Press release, 21 January 2025, accessed 20 February 2026.
316 BE, CY, CZ, EE, HR, IE, IT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.
317 BE, CY, CZ, EE, IE, IT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK.
318 BE, IT, NL and GE.
319 CZ, EE, IE, NL, SK.
320 The Roadmap outlines key priority areas and activities to be implemented with the support of the EUAA, contributing to the achievement of benchmarks in the negotiation process within the field of justice, freedom and security, as well as effective implementation of the recommendations set out in the European Commission's annual Serbia Report.
321 BG, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, MT, PT, SE, SI.
322 EE, ES, FI, IE, LT, LU, MT, PT, SE.
323 BG, EE, IE, MT.
324 BG, FI, IE.
325 BG, ES, IE, LT, LU, MT, PT, SI.
326 CZ, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, MT, NL, PL.

facilitate access to the procedure (see Box 2). In the Netherlands, a newly established Identification and Screening Service for Asylum Seekers took over the identification and registration of applicants from the police.

Box 2: France: Creation of the first *France Asile* regional centre

In 2025, France set up its first *France Asile* regional centre in the Val d'Oise department. Regional centres will enable the registration of an asylum application, granting of material reception conditions, submission of the application with the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), and the personal interview to be carried out in the same place. This will bring these procedures closer to individuals and limit the large flows of traffic to its headquarters in the Paris region. This regionalisation also contributes to equal treatment between applicants, regardless of their place of residence on the French territory.

3.4.2. Asylum procedures

Changes in asylum procedures in EMN Member and Observer Countries in 2025 were mainly driven by geopolitical changes in countries of origin, strains on asylum systems, uniform application of safe countries of origin and preparation for the implementation of the Pact.

Nine EMN Member Countries[327] and Norway reported resuming or suspending asylum procedures due to changes in countries of origin. The key development related to applications by Syrian nationals. Following the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria at the end of 2024, eight EMN Member Countries[328] resumed examining pending applications lodged by Syrians. Conversely, Norway suspended the processing of Syrian application for up to six months. The Netherlands resumed examining applications for persons coming from Lebanon. Belgium temporarily suspended the processing of applications involving applicants from the West Bank who were not registered with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Notification of decisions refusing refugee status, as well as decisions relating to subsidiary protection, was put on hold pending an updated assessment of the security situation.

To reduce the strain on the national asylum system and reflecting the need to improve procedural efficiency, Belgium and Lithuania introduced measures to improve early identification of unfounded applications and efficiency of asylum processing, while the Czech Republic and Ireland expanded the use of accelerated procedures. Belgium broadened the definition of subsequent applications for international protection to explicitly include cases where individuals have already received protection or a final decision in another EU Member State. To prioritise the examination of applications from countries with a low recognition rate for international protection and ensure timely processing, Belgium amended the scope of the fast-track procedure. Georgia remained covered by the procedure, which was extended to Benin and Angola. Applicants from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who had been included in the procedure in 2024, were no longer among the groups covered in 2025. Ireland added applicants from Pakistan to the list of nationalities processed under the accelerated procedure, replacing Jordan as the country of origin with the second-highest number of applicants.

The Czech Republic, Italy and Ireland reported measures aimed at aligning with and preparing for Pact implementation. Italy expanded its asylum border procedures to strengthen the capacity of asylum case management systems in border and detention contexts and prevent misuse of the procedure. There, the asylum border procedure may be applied to all applications lodged at the border or in transit zones where they meet the criteria for an accelerated procedure, including subsequent applications, applications lodged during criminal proceedings, and applications lodged by persons held in hotspots or in return detention centres. To prepare for the tighter timelines of processing international protection applications under the Pact, Ireland processed all applications from designated safe countries of origin under tighter timelines, mirroring procedures similar to the border and screening procedures insofar as possible under existing legislation. The pilot process was undertaken in the location where applicants under the border procedure will be screened and processed under the Pact.

Three EMN Member Countries[329] reported developments in lists of safe countries of origin whose nationals access accelerated procedures. To ensure uniform application of the rules on safe countries of origin, Italy confirmed its list of safe countries of origin for 2025.[330] Given recent changes in the EU safe country of origin framework, the Netherlands suspended the application of the accelerated procedure to persons from countries considered safe countries of origin, pending the European list of safe countries of origin.

In response to a court ruling, the Netherlands changed its assessment of the risk of indiscriminate violence in situations of armed conflict during the asylum application assessment, placing greater emphasis on individual circumstances so that applications can no longer be rejected solely on the basis of country-wide violence levels. Similarly, Lithuania repealed a provision that automatically extended protection to family members to ensure that each application is assessed individually.

Georgia introduced an admissibility stage in the asylum procedure. An application may be deemed inadmissible when prior protection is granted in another country, in case of conviction for a serious crime, existence of a safe third country or the absence of new evidence in a subsequent application. In response to an increase in abusive asylum applications, Georgia expanded the grounds for the accelerated procedure to include cases when: the information provided is unrelated to the criteria for refugee status or subsidiary protection; the applicant is from a safe country of origin; the person entered Georgia irregularly or their stay in Georgia was unlawfully extended and they did not immediately seek international protection; or when the

327 BE, CY, DE, FI, LT, LU, MT, NL, SE.
328 BE, CY, DE, FI, LU, MT, NL, SE.
329 DE, IT, NL.
330 Albania, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, The Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Morocco, Montenegro, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia.

applicant requested international protection for an illegitimate reason more than 30 days after entering Georgia, with an exception for cases where the request is based on a significant change of circumstances in the country of origin.

3.4.3. Dublin procedures

Seven EMN Member Countries[331] reported developments related to the Dublin system in response to improvements in asylum systems and procedures,[332] court rulings,[333] the Pact,[334] the need for legal clarity,[335] and the need to support Dublin transfers.[336] Austria resumed consultation procedures with Greece, with the exception of vulnerable persons, following improvements in the Greek asylum system, while Spain resumed outgoing requests after strengthening its Dublin Unit. Following a court ruling, the Netherlands suspended transfers to Belgium of single men not considered vulnerable, due to ongoing accommodation shortages.

3.4.4. First instance appeals

Four EMN Member Countries[337] and Georgia noted developments in jurisdiction[338] and the timeframe for first instance appeals.[339] Germany reported a concentration of jurisdiction for asylum-related disputes concerning specific countries of origin at certain administrative courts, with the objective of facilitating the swift and efficient handling of asylum disputes through judicial specialisation and organisational streamlining. Portugal realigned first instance decision-making in the regular international protection procedure with the legal framework, making the final decision a ministerial competence. The Czech Republic and Ireland implemented measures to shorten timelines for the decision on the appeal, with Ireland signing a partnership with the EUAA to receive its assistance. Georgia shortened the timelines for applicants to lodge appeals to prevent potential abuse and unnecessary prolongation of cases.

3.5. OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION PROCEDURE (INCLUDING APPEALS)

3.5.1. Procedural safeguards

Five EMN Member Countries[340] and Georgia reported changes to the provision of procedural safeguards, particularly in access to legal aid and information. The Slovak Republic introduced a right to legal aid for unaccompanied children from the first stage of the asylum procedure, provided through the Legal Aid Centre. By contrast, to cut government spending, the Netherlands reduced funding for the Dutch Council for Refugees, which offers consultations to asylum seekers in reception facilities. France implemented several measures to improve access to information for asylum seekers, including electronic transmission of the information document on the asylum application procedure, specifying the rights and obligations that asylum seekers must respect, and publication of booklets on early marriages, asylum applications for unaccompanied children, and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Box 3: Lithuania: Measures to strengthen transparency and impartiality in state guaranteed legal aid

Lithuania introduced state-guaranteed legal aid for asylum applicants, to be delivered under procedures established by the Minister of Social Security and Labour rather than the Minister of the Interior. This change separates the organisation of legal aid from the authorities responsible for asylum and migration procedures to foster transparency and impartiality.

New legal instruments introduced in Estonia and Georgia clarified procedural safeguards, including access to information, interpretation and legal assistance, and additional guarantees for persons in vulnerable situations.

3.5.2. Timeframes and case management

Seven EMN Member Countries[341] and Georgia reported developments to streamline case management of the procedure in addition to those reported earlier (see section 3.3.2). Portugal introduced prioritisation of high-recognition nationalities and applicants arriving through EU relocation, and Belgium reduced the standard period for justifying absence at a personal interview in the regular procedure from 15 days to eight days. Finland, France and Spain cleared their backlogs of pending asylum cases. Luxembourg implemented practical measures to expedite asylum processing, including updated procedures, enhanced training and revised guidelines, enabling the Refugee Department of the General Department of Immigration to handle cases more efficiently while maintaining applicants' rights.

To tackle the challenge of prolonged case processing and administrative overload, Georgia's new Law on International Protection established or specified statutory deadlines for the main stages of the international protection procedure, granted courts the authority to consider certain categories of appeals without an oral hearing (except in cases where the factual or legal complexity of the case makes

331 AT, ES, HR, IE, IT, LT, NL.
332 AT, ES,
333 IT, NL.
334 IE, HR.
335 LT.
336 IE.
337 CZ, DE, IE, PT.
338 DE.
339 CZ, IE and GE.
340 EE, FR, LT, NL, SK.
341 BE, ES, FI, FR, LU, NL, PT.

it necessary), and reduced the timeframe for requesting asylum during extradition or expulsion procedures.

To avoid unnecessary interviews and efficiently use the available capacity of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), the Netherlands introduced a policy whereby detailed interviews with minor applicants for international protection who are older than 15 years of age and accompanied by parents or a legal representative are no longer automatically carried out, but only on request, or if the IND decides it is necessary. To adhere to Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) case-law, the Netherlands withdrew the extension of the time limit of the examination of asylum requests. In view of the growing number of applications for international protection that cannot be processed by the IND within the time limit of the examination period, and to prevent additional workload and high costs, the Netherlands abolished the administrative fines for exceeding the time limit of the examination of applications for a residence permit.

3.6. RECEPTION OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

3.6.1. Reception of applicants for international protection, including access to basic services

Accommodation

Twelve EMN Member Countries[342] reported developments related to the accommodation of asylum applicants. These included reorientation of the reception system,[343] introduction of limitations and additional criteria for accessing the reception system,[344] strengthening housing-related supports,[345] measures to increase safety in reception centres,[346] and institutional changes in the reception system.[347]

Belgium, France and Ireland reported a common trend of reorientation of reception policy, with increased direct public management and reduced reliance on private and emergency-based accommodation arrangements, in a bid to strengthen control, efficiency and service quality. Belgium transferred the management of five reception centres from private operators to the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) and discontinued Fedasil grants for new or renewed local reception initiatives (without affecting the regular funding). Ireland's Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration secured funding to continue its move away from full reliance on private providers and gain greater control over locations and services. Belgium and France adopted measures to discontinue emergency accommodation arrangements.

In response to strain on their reception systems, Belgium, Ireland and Spain limited length of stay, access or added additional criteria to access reception systems by excluding or deprioritising certain categories or introducing a triage system limiting access to accommodation based on space. Belgium introduced limitations on the provision of accommodation for persons already benefiting from international protection in another EU Member State, and for minors who apply for international protection after their parents' application is rejected.[348] In line with the prioritisation of families or persons with health conditions or vulnerabilities, single men may not be offered accommodation in Ireland due to space constraints. Ireland introduced a process to verify that a single male applicant has slept outside for at least one to two nights to demonstrate a need for accommodation (rough sleeping verification process).[349] Spain limited the length of stay in the reception system for persons granted protection to six months from the date they were notified of the granting decision.

As BIP sometimes remain in the reception system for asylum applicants for some time and there are challenges with the transition out of the reception system, Cyprus, Italy, Lithuania and Luxembourg reported expanding their housing-related support for BIP, including measures to facilitate the transition out of reception systems and to address risks of vulnerability and social exclusion. Cyprus expanded the capacity of reception centres to reduce asylum seekers' need for private housing. Lithuania enabled BIP to be temporarily accommodated in reception centres under specific conditions. In Luxembourg, former state-owned dwellings for public servants have been reassigned to the National Reception Office (ONA) and the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (MENJE) to ensure that applicants for international protection and BoTP continue to be accommodated in suitable structures. Italy launched 56 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)-funded projects to support the social and economic autonomy of BIP and young adults exiting the reception system, with a focus on access to housing.

The Czech Republic and the Netherlands reported measures to maintain order and safety in reception centres. These included room inspections and limited reductions in reception conditions in cases of undesirable behaviour in the Czech Republic, as well as reporting obligations at central reception locations and the use of specialised facilities for applicants causing nuisance in the Netherlands.

342 BE, CY, CZ, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PT, SE.
343 BE, FR, IE.
344 BE, IE.
345 CY, IT, LT, LU.
346 CZ, NL.
347 IE, LT, PT.
348 The Belgian Constitutional Court temporarily suspended the application of the legislation and referred questions to the CJEU for a preliminary ruling.
349 Ireland continues to provide a higher payment in lieu of accommodation to assist with securing private accommodation.

Box 4: The Slovak Republic: a mobile team for asylum seekers accommodated outside asylum facilities

To address limited access to professional services and information for applicants outside reception centres, the Slovak Republic began providing specialised support through a mobile team. The mobile team delivers psychological counselling, cultural mediation and social counselling, including information to support orientation in the asylum procedure, the labour market and the host country's cultural context.

Institutional changes were reported in Ireland, Lithuania and Portugal. In Ireland, the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) was transferred to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to enable coherence between reception and broader migration and asylum measures. Conversely, to ensure more uniform reception standards, Lithuania shifted responsibility for accommodation facilities from the Migration Department to the Reception and Integration Agency. Portugal started work to establish a single entity responsible for material reception (Institute of Social Security).

Other material reception conditions, including allowances

Changes in material reception conditions, including allowances, were reported by seven EMN Member Countries[350] and the Republic of Moldova. The latter reported legislative amendments to the mechanism for granting material reception conditions and the methodology for estimating costs.

While Spain introduced an additional pocket money allowance during the initial assessment and referral phase, Austria, Finland and Sweden imposed limitations or conditions on access to material reception conditions or reduced allowances. Finland extended the reduction of reception allowances, targeting public finance savings. In two Austrian federal provinces, basic care became conditional on the performance of community service. Sweden provided applicants with material reception conditions if they stayed in the accommodation assigned in an effort to rationalise reception capacity and ensure a more consistent system.

Lithuania implemented legislative amendments to encourage asylum applicants to live independently, freeing up reception places and reducing spending. These amendments extended the entitlement to a food allowance, a monthly cash allowance and material reception conditions for asylum applicants residing in a place of their own choice.

Access to healthcare, mental health

The Czech Republic and the Netherlands reported restrictions on the provision of healthcare services, while Italy reported support-related developments. To maintain order and safety in asylum reception, the Czech Republic introduced restrictions on state-funded healthcare for applicants displaying disorderly behaviour. To reduce costs, the Netherlands obliged applicants with their own income or assets to contribute to their healthcare costs.

By contrast, within the AMIF 2021–2027 framework, Italy funded a project of the National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty (INMP) to strengthen the capacity of the reception system and local health services in the identification, referral and case management of vulnerable third-country nationals, paying particular attention to unaccompanied minors, applicants for international protection and BIP.

Access to education

Estonia, the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Moldova introduced measures to improve access to education. To ensure immediate enrolment of foreign children in schools, the Slovak Republic removed the three-month waiting period. The Republic of Moldova temporarily waived the mandatory Romanian language exam. As part of broader education reforms, Estonia extended compulsory education to 18 years, while the Republic of Moldova introduced free breakfast for all students, including BIP, in the first nine grades.

Maintaining family unity

Georgia and Portugal noted developments related to family unity. The proposal to create a Single Reception System in Portugal would provide a more coherent framework for maintaining family unity, including extended families. Georgia tightened the rules on safeguarding family unity in the context of accommodation for asylum applicants. It also clarified that the family needed to already exist in the country of origin to preclude marriage of convenience by asylum applicants to extend their period of stay.

Child protection/safeguarding measures

Three EMN Member Countries,[351] Georgia and the Republic of Moldova introduced measures to strengthen child protection. These included the development of a Child Protection Policy applicable to staff of the reception centres in Greece, and inclusion of asylum-seeking families in the social protection system in the Republic of Moldova. Estonia, Georgia and Lithuania reported legal amendments clarifying accommodation arrangements for vulnerable groups, including children.

Early integration measures

Austria, Estonia, Portugal and Spain reported policy developments to facilitate the integration of applicants for international protection. Austria announced a mandatory integration programme for displaced persons, BIP and asylum seekers with a high probability of being recognised. Estonia announced plans to start integration-related support at an earlier stage of the migration and protection process, including upon arrival, and to expand the scope of the early integration programme to applicants for international protection. Portugal implemented early integration measures through the development by multidisciplinary reception teams of an individual integration plan for each applicant and family from the initial reception phase.

350 AT, ES, FI, LT, PT, SE, SK.
351 EE, EL, LT and GE, MD.

Box 5: Workforce integration of applicants for international protection in Spain

In response to the demand for staff in the business sector and the need for access to employment for persons in the international protection reception system, Spain's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Assistance and the International Protection Reception System issued a resolution regulating employment and job placement projects within the framework of the international protection reception system and the humanitarian assistance programme. The resolution seeks to establish an operational framework to regulate the implementation of employment and labour insertion projects for applicants and beneficiaries of international, temporary, or stateless protection, to facilitate social and labour integration. Collaboration between the administration and various entities and actors is encouraged to promote employment, clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Directorate-General, authorised entities and collaborating companies, establish criteria for monitoring and evaluation, and regulate the allocation of project implementation costs. Support from a third-sector entity for up to six months enables advice on relocation or legal procedures and facilitates legal counsel for the companies themselves. The presence of social intervention specialists helps to resolve conflicts between employers and employees, many of which arise from a mutual lack of understanding.

Assessment and response to special reception needs in relation to vulnerabilities

Eight EMN Member Countries[352] and the Republic of Moldova reported developments to strengthen vulnerability assessments,[353] provide targeted support to specific groups,[354] and clarify the provision of material support for asylum seekers, with particular attention to families and persons with special needs. [355] Lithuania introduced a new procedure to identify vulnerable persons and clarified the reception conditions to be provided based on their specific needs. France, Italy and the Netherlands reported measures to support specific groups, including victims or persons at risk of FGM, victims of trafficking in human beings or gender-based violence and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer or questioning (LGBTIQ+) persons. In France, the Office for Immigration and Integration strengthened cooperation with local partners to improve the identification, support and protection of women victims of violence or trafficking in human beings. In the Netherlands, the reception authority renewed its cooperation with an LGBTIQ+ organisation to improve the well-being of residents in asylum facilities.

Box 6: Dedicated reception centre for LGBTIQ+ people in Italy

In January 2025, Italy opened the first dedicated reception centre for LGBTIQ+ migrants to provide a safe and inclusive environment, psychological and legal support, and integration pathways to foster autonomy and social inclusion. Located in southern Italy, *Casa Arcobaleno* is part of the national reception and integration system (*Sistema Accoglienza e Integrazione*).

3.7. (ALTERNATIVES TO) DETENTION OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Three EMN Member Countries[356] and Georgia reported developments in the detention of asylum applicants, reflecting a stronger focus on safeguarding public order, preventing misuse of the asylum system and improving the effectiveness of Dublin transfers. France introduced the possibility of detaining applicants who pose a threat to public order,[357] while Ireland extended the permissible period of detention from seven days to 42 days to facilitate transfers within the Dublin framework. Georgia introduced the possibility of detaining asylum applicants to prevent abuse of the asylum procedure and safeguard public order.

3.8. FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Twelve EMN Member Countries[358] reported developments in family reunification for BIP. In some cases, these developments introduced[359] or proposed[360] increasing restrictions in response to pressures on reception systems and administrative capacity or sought to prevent misuse in Finland. In other instances, targeted measures aimed to facilitate family reunification[361] and improve procedural clarity through legislative amendments.[362]

Austria and Germany temporarily suspended family reunification, with some exceptions permitted. Austria applied

352 EE, EL, FR, IE, IT, LT, NL, PT and MD.
353 EE, EL, IE (in Ireland's case, vulnerability assessments recommenced for couples without children and single females), IT, LT.
354 FR, IT, NL.
355 MD.
356 FR, IE, IT.
357 Detention may be applied only following an individual assessment, where, given the seriousness and urgency of the threat, less coercive measures such as house arrest are deemed insufficient.
358 AT, BE, BG, DE, EE, FI, HR, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL.
359 AT, BE, DE, FI, LU.
360 NL.
361 IT, LT.
362 BG, EE, HR, PL.

this suspension to all BIP, while Germany applied it only to those with subsidiary protection. Belgium and Luxembourg tightened or prepared amendments to tighten, respectively, their rules, introducing stricter requirements such as higher income thresholds and waiting periods and fees.

Lithuania and Italy introduced measures to facilitate the family reunification process. Lithuania allocated targeted funding to cover essential costs, such as travel from refugee camps or third countries to Lithuania, document procurement, or DNA testing. Italy co-funded an AMIF project to develop an accessible and personalised system of services to support pre-departure preparation and transition towards integration in Italy.

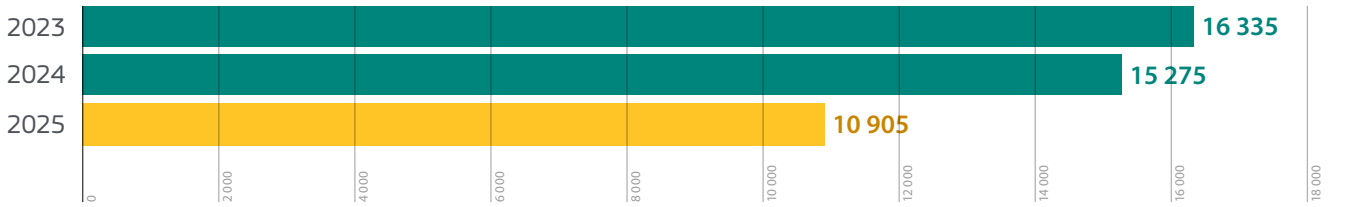
3.9. WITHDRAWAL OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION STATUS

Five EMN Member Countries[363] reported developments related to the withdrawal of international protection status, reflecting an increased focus on security and public order considerations.[364] In Estonia, developments aimed to clarify the legal framework. Finland and Poland introduced the possibility of withdrawing protection where the person poses a danger to society, has committed an international crime, or threatens national security. Cyprus introduced similar provisions allowing the revocation of subsidiary protection if a person poses a risk to public order or national security. The Netherlands removed the minimum sentence threshold used to assess whether a person constitutes a danger to the community, shifting the international protection assessment towards the merits of each individual case rather than the length of the sentence.

3.10. RESETTLEMENT, HUMANITARIAN ADMISSION AND OTHER PATHWAYS TO PROTECTION

Compared to 2023, the number of resettled third-country nationals in the EU and Norway decreased in 2024 and declined more sharply in 2025. Overall, resettlement fell from around 16 300 persons in 2023 to approximately 15 300 in 2024 (a decrease of about 1 100, or 7%), before dropping to around 10 900 in 2025 (a decrease of about 4 400 compared to 2024, or 29%) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Resettled third-country nationals, EU and Norway, 2023-2025



Source, Eurostat (migr_asyresa), date of extraction 27 May 2026.

The total pledge under the Union Plan decreased compared to 2024-2025, with a lower number of EU Member States taking part and the majority of EU Member States decreasing their pledges. In opting not to engage in resettlement and humanitarian admission or to reduce their pledges in the EU resettlement framework, EU Member States cited the large number of persons from Ukraine on their territory or relative to the country's population,[365] and sustained pressure on the asylum system.[366]

France, Italy and Spain reported developments in their national resettlement programmes, and Italy and France also reported developments regarding humanitarian corridors - another admission pathway. Italy signed the fourth protocol on humanitarian corridors from Lebanon, added an annex to the Afghanistan protocol, and extended the memoranda on humanitarian corridors from Ethiopia, Niger and Jordan. France signed new protocols to continue receiving Syrian and Iraqi nationals in need of international protection from Lebanon and stepped up its resettlement efforts, with a particular focus on women, while further developing university and professional corridor pilot programmes. Spain approved the 2025 National Resettlement Plan, prioritising refugees of Syrian origin displaced in Lebanon and refugees of Nicaraguan origin arriving from Costa Rica.

On pre-departure support, Sweden introduced online meetings between resettled refugees and receiving municipalities to support reception. Italy concluded an AMIF-funded agreement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support pre-departure activities

363 CY, EE, FI, NL, PL.
364 CY, FI, NL, PL.
365 EE.
366 BE, DE, NL.

for beneficiaries of its resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes.

Medical evacuations from Gaza were carried out by Italy, Luxembourg and Norway, and from Ukraine by Norway.

Italy provided admission for employment for stateless persons and refugees recognised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or by the competent authorities in countries of first asylum or transit, up to a maximum of 250 persons.

3.11. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Three EMN Member Countries[367] reported other developments. France allowed prefectures to issue residence permits to BIP without waiting for the reconstitution of their civil status by OFPRA to alleviate legal uncertainty and challenges in accessing social rights. Sweden abolished the 'change track' possibility to clearly separate asylum procedures from labour migration and prevent their use as an alternative pathway to work-based residence. Consequently, rejected asylum seekers can no longer apply for a work permit from within Sweden and applicants cannot switch to another residence category during or after the asylum process without first leaving the country. Ireland increased the reckonable residency requirement from three to five years for naturalisation of people granted international protection to align it with the rules for other categories of applicants for citizenship.

367 FR, IE, SE.

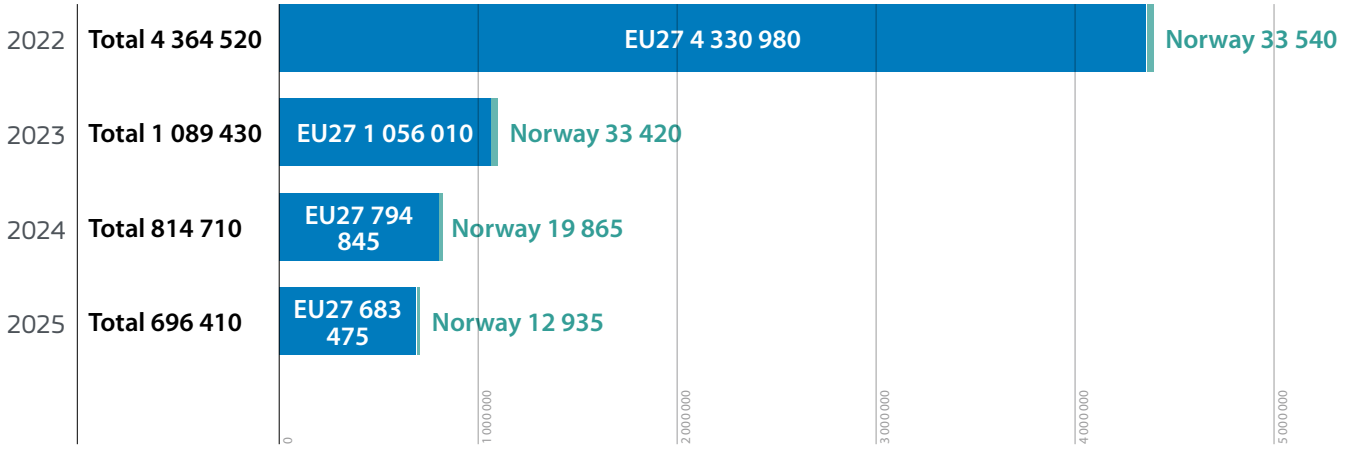
4. TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND OTHER MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO PERSONS FLEEING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In June 2025, the Council of the EU extended temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine until 4 March 2027,[368] ensuring continued legal certainty.

In 2025, the total number of persons enjoying temporary protection in the EU remained relatively stable, at around 4.3 million throughout the year, with only minor fluctuations since 2024. The number of decisions granting temporary protection to third-country nationals displaced from Ukraine remained substantial (see Figure 8). EU countries issued 683 475 new decisions in 2025. Norway (which provides temporary collective protection rather than temporary protection, but whose figures are included in those provided by Eurostat), issued 12 935 new decisions.

Figure 8: Number of decisions providing temporary protection* to third-country nationals displaced from Ukraine, in the EU and Norway, 2022–2025



Source: Eurostat (migr_asytpfa), date of extraction 25 June 2026.
**Norway provides temporary collective protection.*

Nearly four years after the activation of Directive 2001/55 (the Temporary Protection Directive), the EU and EMN Member Countries increasingly moved away from emergency-driven responses towards more structured, sustainable and differentiated policy approaches, reflecting the protracted nature of the displacement. Within this broader shift, EMN Member Countries reported differing underlying drivers: some prioritised measures to support longer-term integration and self-sufficiency of BoTP,[369] while others emphasised the need to safeguard the financial sustainability and integrity of national social welfare, healthcare and housing systems.[370]

At EU level, this shift was reflected in the Council Recommendation on a coordinated transition out of temporary

368 Council of the EU, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1460 of 15 July 2025 extending the temporary protection introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, 15 July 2025, accessed 17 March 2026.
369 CZ, EE, FI, IE, IT, LT, LV, NL, SE, SK.
370 IE, LV, NL, PL, SK and NO.

protection,[371] adopted on 16 September 2025[372], encouraging EU Member States to facilitate pathways from temporary protection to other legal statuses, including residence permits for work or study reasons or family reunification. At national level, six EMN Member Countries[373] reported measures to facilitate BoTP transition to other legal statuses, and three[374] ended temporary protection status for specific groups.

Twelve EMN Member Countries[375] took measures to strengthen targeted support to BoTP for social benefits,[376] education provision[377] and access to the labour market.[378] At the same time, nine EMN Member Countries[379] adapted accommodation[380] and social welfare[381] policies for BoTP in response to growing costs[382] and the need to shift away from emergency measures and promote self-sufficiency.[383] Eight EMN Member Countries[384] harmonised BoTP support for education or training,[385] housing,[386] social assistance[387] and healthcare[388] with regimes governing other groups, such as other legally residing groups,[389] children's education and services,[390] European Economic Area (EEA) residents and third-country nationals with the right to work,[391] asylum seekers,[392] and those on minimum income.[393]

4.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

In response to the protracted nature of displacement from Ukraine and the need to move towards more sustainable and forward-looking solutions while ensuring legal certainty and a coordinated approach across EU Member States, the European Commission adopted a Communication on a predictable and common European path for the future of Ukrainians in the EU.[394] On 13 June 2025, the Council of the EU agreed to extend temporary protection[395] until 4 March 2027,[396] maintaining the terms of the March 2022 decision.[397] However, the Council implementing decision notes that EU Member States should reject a residence permit request based on Article 8(1) of the Temporary Protection Directive,[398] where the person has already obtained a residence permit on that basis in another EU Member State and is thus already enjoying the rights attached to temporary protection, including social assistance. This complies with the CJEU judgment in case C-753/23, particularly paragraph 30.[399]

That communication also proposed a Council Recommendation on a coordinated transition out of temporary protection,[400] which was adopted on 16 September.[401] The recommendation calls on EU Member States to promote and facilitate the transition of BoTP into other legal statuses, support preparation for a gradual return and sustainable reintegration in Ukraine, ensure information provision to displaced persons, and coordination, monitoring and information exchange between EU Member States and with Ukraine. Within the recommendation, measures to support a smooth and sustainable reintegration of BoTP in Ukraine include the development of a voluntary returns programme when temporary protection ends. EU Member States are also encouraged to establish 'Unity Hubs', which are eligible for EU financing, and could support displaced Ukrainians by providing points of contact and the provision of key information, including employment advice and document assistance, amongst other things.

371 European Commission, 'Commission proposes predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainian refugees in the EU', Press release, 4 June 2025, accessed 18 February 2026; European Commission, Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine, COM(2025) 651 final, accessed 17 March 2026.
372 Council of the EU, Council Recommendation of 16 September 2025 on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine, accessed 19 June 2026.
373 CZ, EL, FR, IT, NL, SI.
374 DE, FI, NL.
375 AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE, HU, IE, LT, LV, SK and GE, MD.
376 BG, CZ, LV, SK. For SK, this was a temporary measure provided by international organisations.
377 AT, CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, SK and GE, MD.
378 CZ, IE, LT.
379 AT, BE, EE, FI, IE, IT, LV, PL, SK.
380 EE, IE, IT, LV, PL, SK.
381 BE, FI, PL.
382 AT, EE, IE, LV, PL, SK.
383 IE, IT, SK.
384 AT, DE, IE, LT, LV, NL, SE, SK.
385 IE (only applies to BoTP in Ireland for three or more years), SE, SK.
386 AT.
387 DE, NL.
388 AT, LT, LV.
389 AT, LV, SE, SK.
390 LT, SK.
391 IE.
392 DE, NL.
393 NL.
394 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainians in the EU, COM(2025) 649 final, accessed 18 February 2026.
395 Council of the EU, EU Member States agree to extend temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine, Press release, 13 June 2025, accessed 18 February 2026; European Commission, Proposal for a Council Implementing Decision extending temporary protection, as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, until 4 March 2027, accessed 17 March 2026
396 Council of the EU, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1460 of 15 July 2025 extending the temporary protection introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, 15 July 2025, accessed 17 March 2026.
397 Council of the EU, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection, accessed 17 March 2026.
398 Council of the EU, Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, accessed 18 March 2026.
399 CJEU, Case C-753/23, para. 30, accessed 24 March 2026.
400 European Commission, Commission proposes predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainian refugees in the EU, Press release, 4 June 2025, accessed 18 February 2026; European Commission, Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine, accessed 17 March 2026.
401 Council of the EU, Protection of displaced Ukrainians: Council adopts recommendation about transition out of temporary protection, Press release, 16 September 2025, accessed 18 February 2026; Council of the EU, Council Recommendation of 16 September 2025 on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine, accessed 19 June 2026.

On 17 June 2025, the European Commission designated its former Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, as Special Envoy for Ukrainians in the EU. The Special Envoy is tasked with supporting the implementation of the EU's coordinated approach to supporting displaced Ukrainians in the EU[402]

4.3. OVERARCHING AND CROSS-CUTTING DEVELOPMENTS

Latvia and Slovenia reported cross-cutting developments in temporary protection, adjusting the scope of support offered to BoTP in response to the need to reduce expenditure[403] and improve the temporary protection system.[404]

Latvia introduced amendments to the Law on Assistance to BoTP in December 2025, reducing state support for this group by approximately 40% in 2026.[405] This measure impacts both benefits and some services offered to BoTP, while maintaining support for the most vulnerable groups. For example, in health, Ukrainian civilians will be required to make patient co-payments, and compensation for buying medicines will be provided to ensure that all Latvian residents have equal access to state-funded health care services. Slovenia adopted a new law simplifying procedures, clarifying the relationship between temporary and international protection, enabling individuals to transition to other national residence permits after protection ends, and introducing special provisions for vulnerable groups, such as access to social support. It also established a legal basis for the EU temporary registration platform.[406]

Norway reported cross-cutting developments to align procedural requirements applicable to beneficiaries of temporary collective protection with those of other protection beneficiary groups.[407]

4.4. LEGAL STATUS

Twenty-one EMN Member Countries[408] reported developments related to the legal status of BoTP, including measures to implement the Council of the EU's extension of temporary protection status. In preparing for the termination of temporary protection, measures sought to facilitate the transition from temporary protection status to other forms of legal residence. Overall, drivers included the need to phase out emergency measures,[409] the need to accurately plan support measures,[410] EU or national case-law,[411] specific government decisions,[412] and concerns about the impact of secondary migration.[413]

Given Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, 13 EMN Member Countries[414] took specific administrative measures to implement the EU's prolongation of temporary protection status. While some automatically extended residence permits,[415] others set up or continued to use specific procedures to allow permit holders to apply for an extension.[416]

Overall, six EMN Member Countries[417] reported developments in BoTP transition to other legal statuses in response to the need to progressively phase out emergency measures while maintaining continuity of protection, reception and lawful stay. Greece, Italy and Slovenia introduced legislation to enable BoTP to change their status into other legal statuses. Italy introduced the possibility to change residence permits based on temporary protection status into permits for employment, allowing greater legal certainty and access to medium-term integration support for BoTP.[418] France introduced the requirement for prefectures to examine whether BoTP can be eligible for more permanent types of residence permits, such as those based on employment, given the increased number of Ukrainian asylum applications and the particularly high protection rate offered to BoTP.

Box 7: Introduction of a long-term residence permit for BoTP in the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic introduced a new, special long-term residence permit intended for BoTP who are economically self-sufficient, allowing them to change their status and transition out of temporary protection. The measure was adopted as a part of a national 'exit strategy' to transition out of temporary protection.

The special permit is granted with five-year validity and allows an application for permanent residence in

402 European Commission, EU appoints special envoy for Ukrainians in the EU, News article, 18 June 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.
403 LV.
404 SI.
405 From €65 million (planned in early 2025) to just under €40 million.
406 European Commission, Solidarity with Ukraine: Commission launches an EU platform for registration of people enjoying temporary protection or adequate protection under national law, News article, 2022, accessed 19 June 2026; European Commission, The 10-Point Plan: For stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war from Ukraine, 2022, accessed 19 June 2026.
407 NO.
408 AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK.
409 CZ, EL, FR, IT, NL, SI.
410 LV.
411 AT, FI, SE.
412 FI, NL.
413 DE.
414 BG, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, PT, SI, SK.
415 ES, FI, IT, LT, PT.
416 EE, EL, HR, IE, LU, SI, SK.
417 CZ, EL, FR, IT, NL, SI.
418 The residence permit for employment provides an opportunity for stable residence in Italy, renewable over time without specific limits (as long as employment requirements are met). The residence permit for employment allows: years of residence to be counted for the purpose of meeting requirements for obtaining citizenship and the EU long-term residence permit; the right to a permit for job-seeking in case of job loss; the right to family reunification; freedom of movement within Schengen countries without a visa (for short stays).

the future. Its holders have free access to the Czech labour market. The criteria for obtaining the permit include:

- A period of stay in the Czech Republic on the basis of temporary protection for at least two years;
- Economic and financial independence from the state (i.e. sufficient regular income for applicants and their family);
- Long-term accommodation (at applicants' own expense);
- Continuous participation in the health insurance system without debts;
- No criminal record;
- School attendance of children aged 6–14 years.

Applications were submitted exclusively in electronic format via internet registration, which opened in April 2025. Applicants did not need to provide any supporting documentation; criteria were assessed by the relevant public authorities based on stored administrative data.

The measure sought to provide BoTP with an opportunity to obtain a longer-term residence permit, with the prospect of future permanent settlement. In 2025, 16 000 BoTP met the conditions. Rejected applicants maintained their BoTP status.

To prepare for phasing out temporary protection, the Dutch government presented plans for a three-year temporary residence permit granting displaced persons the opportunity to prepare for their return to Ukraine, including a comprehensive set of rights, obligations and provisions.

To accurately plan support measures, Latvia introduced an obligation for BoTP to have a valid residence permit. By contrast, Austria's Supreme Administrative Court determined that the lawfulness of the BoTP right to temporary residence does not depend on the issuance of an identity (ID) card for displaced persons.

Following national decisions, Finland and the Netherlands terminated temporary protection for non-Ukrainian persons without permanent residence or stay permits in Ukraine. The Finnish Immigration Service also introduced a new guideline for grounds for a negative decision on an application for a residence permit if it is clear that the person concerned has already been granted a residence permit on that basis in another EU Member State, citing CJEU case C-753/23. In Germany, BoTP who had already received temporary protection status in another EU Member State could no longer obtain this same status in Germany, which cited concerns of secondary migration creating a lack of balance across EU Member States in the reception of BoTP.

In Norway, the number of years a foreigner could be granted temporary collective protection was extended from three to five years. National legislation was also amended so that beneficiaries of temporary collective protection can participate in introductory integration programmes full-time, similar to other BIP.

4.5. RIGHTS

4.5.1. Access to suitable accommodation and/or means to obtain housing

Twelve EMN Member Countries[419] introduced changes related to accommodation and housing support for BoTP. Developments were mostly driven by the need to alleviate costs while sustaining targeted support,[420] as well as the desire to shift away from emergency measures and promote self-sufficiency,[421] maintain targeted support measures in the context of the prolongation of temporary protection,[422] including in response to accommodation shortages,[423] and to update and clarify rules.[424]

Five EMN Member Countries[425] restricted the scope of housing support in response to costs. Austria closed its initial early reception centres for persons from Ukraine and integrated BoTP reception with standard processes. Latvia introduced the requirement for municipalities to verify BoTP needs after the initial 180-day reception period and terminate state-provided accommodation if eligibility criteria are not met. To reserve support for those genuinely in need of protection, Poland changed its rules on collective accommodation centres, providing support only to specific vulnerable groups. To ensure uniform practices across regional authorities, it also authorised provincial authorities to order evictions of BoTP if specific criteria are met.[426]

Three EMN Member Countries[427] introduced changes based on the need to move away from emergency measures. The Slovak Republic and Italy both restricted housing support offered to non-vulnerable BoTP to encourage integration into the host society in a self-sufficient manner. Italy also announced the gradual reorientation of the reception system from emergency to more sustainable solutions, calibrating public support to actual needs and promoting greater autonomy where feasible. To facilitate orderly winding down of compensation schemes before the end of the application of the Temporary Protection Directive, Ireland reduced a payment that recognises the generosity of private hosts offering accommodation to BoTP.

419 AT, BE, CZ, EE, HR, IE, IT, LV, PL, PT, SI, SK.
420 AT, EE, IE, LV, PL, SK.
421 IE, IT, SK.
422 BE, HR.
423 IE.
424 CZ, SI.
425 EE, IE, LV, PL, SK.
426 Criteria include persistent violation of the internal regulations of the accommodation facility or failure make the required advance contributions to the cost of accommodation.
427 IE, IT, SK.

Box 8: Support to municipalities for providing accommodation to BoTP in the Slovak Republic

On the basis of Government Regulation No 151/2024 Coll., the Slovak Republic introduced a legislative mechanism, effective from 1 March 2025, enabling the reimbursement of costs incurred by municipalities for providing accommodation to vulnerable BoTP. The mechanism more clearly defines the division of responsibilities between national and local level, with municipalities acting as direct service providers and the state ensuring financing. The measure strengthens the role of municipalities as key actors in securing appropriate accommodation for vulnerable groups of BoTP.

The measure seeks to ensure the sustainable provision of accommodation for vulnerable BoTP and to strengthen local capacity for the implementation of integration measures for BoTP. The development was driven by the continued presence of vulnerable BoTP, the need to stabilise local integration capacities, and the need to establish a clear and predictable financing framework for municipal responsibilities in integration of BoTP.

Two EMN Member Countries[428] took legislative measures to continue supporting BoTP reception housing and accommodation in the context of the prolongation of temporary protection. In Belgium, the Flemish and Walloon governments revised prior decisions to phase out public reception of BoTP and decided to maintain reception capacity until March 2027. The Brussels-Capital region extended temporary exemptions from urban planning permit requirements for works and operations necessary to provide accommodation for BoTP and other beneficiary groups until March 2026. Similarly, Croatia extended government funding for the costs of housing displaced persons from Ukraine in individual accommodation until March 2026.

In response to accommodation shortages, Ireland changed its rules on access to state accommodation, reducing the maximum number of days in such accommodation from 90 to 30 days for newly arriving BoTP. The government categorised beneficiaries who have left state-provided accommodation, who arrived before March 2024 and are not currently in state-provided accommodation, and BoTP previously granted temporary protection status in another EU Member State, as ineligible for state-provided accommodation.

Two EMN Member Countries[429] clarified their legal frameworks governing BoTP reception and accommodation. To ensure that housing support is provided in a targeted, transparent, and financially sustainable manner, the Czech Republic determined that BoTP access to housing support would be ensured through an income-tested humanitarian allowance. To modernise legislation and regulate BoTP access to housing, Slovenia introduced two new regulations[430] clarifying accommodation rules, methods for reimbursing food costs in accommodation centres and accommodation capacities, among other access to rights.

4.5.2. Access to medical care, including in relation to mental health

Three EMN Member Countries[431] reported developments aimed at ensuring sustained and proportionate access to medical care for BoTP. Those measures reflected countries' intention to facilitate BoTP integration into their mainstream national health systems[432] and reduce the burden on national finances.[433]

Austria integrated displaced persons from Ukraine into existing administrative procedures by maintaining access to health insurance through basic care for those in need of assistance. Latvia introduced patient co-payments and applied general rules for medicine reimbursement to ensure equal and sustainable access to state-funded healthcare services. By contrast, in Poland, high volumes of services provided to uninsured BoTP from Ukraine placed an increasing strain on the availability of public healthcare services for Polish citizens. To ensure financial sustainability of the public healthcare system and mitigate the risks of abuse of the right to healthcare, Poland introduced certain exclusions to the list of healthcare services accessible to uninsured Ukrainian BoTP.[434] To safeguard children's rights, not all restrictions apply to BoTP under the age of 18.

Following a request from Ukraine, Lithuania introduced the possibility to allow a yearly cohort of 150 minors, who were forcibly transferred to Russia and then returned to Ukraine, to receive medical rehabilitation and specialised child and adolescent psychiatric services.

4.5.3. Access to assistance in terms of social welfare and means of subsistence

Ten EMN Member Countries[435] introduced changes to social welfare and means of subsistence. Four EMN Member Countries[436] increased the social support to BoTP to sustain early reception support and prevent gaps in basic assistance in the context of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. In the Czech Republic, the humanitarian allowance was revised from a flat rate benefit to a differentiated system based on the degree of disability, more closely reflecting the level of limitation to self-sufficiency. In Bulgaria, a holistic, multisectoral project was funded through the AMIF to facilitate access to essential services and livelihood assistance. This measure was also motivated by the need to move away from emergency support and towards longer term integration-oriented assistance.

Six EMN Member Countries[437] reduced housing support available to BoTP or introduced stricter conditions for

428 BE, HR.
429 CZ, SI.
430 Regulation on the house rules of accommodation centres and other accommodation capacities for applicants for temporary protection and beneficiaries of temporary protection; Regulation on the method of exercising and ensuring rights for applicants for temporary protection and beneficiaries of temporary protection.
431 AT, LV, PL.
432 AT, LV.
433 LV, PL.
434 Excluded services include (inter alia): spa treatment and spa rehabilitation; therapeutic rehabilitation; dental treatment; emergency access to drug technologies.
435 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, FI, LV, NL, PL, SK.
436 BG, CZ, LV, SK. For SK, this was a temporary measure provided by international organisations.
437 AT, BE, DE, FI, NL, PL.

eligibility. This sought to harmonise social assistance across beneficiary groups,[438] boost labour market participation,[439] safeguard the proper functioning of the social benefit system to prevent misuse,[440] and also reflected specific political decisions.[441]

Triggered by a political decision to boost the labour market participation of BoTP, Austria made family and childcare allowance for BoTP conditional on beneficiaries being employed or self-employed, unless specific exemption criteria apply. BoTP who are registered as jobseekers with the public employment service (PES) are also eligible.

In November 2025, Poland introduced stronger verification of entitlements to family-related benefits. These measures reflected concerns about the potential misuse of benefits by BoTP and associated administrative burdens. Specific amendments included the possibility to exchange and compare data across state registers and allowing the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) to continuously verify whether residence requirements are met by claimants. New requirements also ensure accurate and reliable identity verification of foreign nationals, including comprehensive data from travel and residence documents. BoTP rights to childcare benefits were also linked with activity on the labour market.

Both Germany and the Netherlands revised the support offered to BoTP to harmonise rules with the social assistance offered to other beneficiary groups. In Germany, this resulted in reductions in social assistance for BoTP. The Netherlands increased the personal contribution required from BoTP residing in municipality-provided shelters and with sufficient income. Dutch municipalities must now also withdraw living allowances in cases where BoTP earn at least 15% more than the living allowances.[442]

In two EMN Member Countries,[443] BoTP were affected by broader government decisions. In Finland, public savings measures led to the extension of reduced reception and spending allowances until June 2026. In Belgium, the Council of Ministers approved a draft law linking entitlement to social integration income to participation in the civic integration programme. If adopted, future newcomers will be required to wait five years before becoming entitled to social assistance benefits. Under the proposed measures, BoTP in Belgium would be able to supplement reduced social assistance through bonuses linked to integration-related efforts, such as participation in language and integration courses, active job-seeking, and enrolment in vocational training.

4.5.4. Access to education for minors (including educational support)

Six EMN Member Countries[444] reported developments to improve the provision of education for minors. In four EMN Member Countries[445] measures specifically responded to the need to provide tailored educational programmes to Ukrainian children, ensuring an inclusive approach.

In response to the large number of BoTP wishing to follow the Ukrainian education system, the Ministry of Education in Cyprus released a decision clarifying that BoTP students are temporarily exempt from obligatory attendance at Cypriot public schools until the end of the year to follow the Ukrainian educational system via distance learning. Students are nonetheless obliged to register in public schools and present progress reports twice a year to facilitate smooth transition into the Cypriot education system. BoTP minors may benefit from the various Greek language learning programmes offered to students with a migrant background and in secondary general education. The policy aimed to help minors to integrate and socialise in their host society.

To mitigate low participation in education, the Slovak Republic introduced a requirement for local authorities to monitor enrolment of BoTP of compulsory school age. To ensure rapid integration and protect children's right to education, it also introduced compulsory education for BoTP of compulsory pre-primary education and compulsory school age. The deadline for enrolment of foreign displaced children in schools was revised with effect from January 2026, requiring all children, including BoTP, to be enrolled within three months of registration.

4.5.5. Access to the labour market, including vocational training

Three EMN Member Countries[446] introduced new employment support measures, driven by the need to facilitate long-term integration[447] and reduce barriers to employment for BoTP.[448] In the Czech Republic, legislation clarified that holders of the new special long-term residence permit enjoyed the same free access to the labour market and related support (see Box 7) as other BoTP, including the possibility to register with the PES and (conditional) eligibility for unemployment benefits. Ireland financed projects – including support to BoTP – through the national Employment, Inclusion, Skills & Training (EIST) Programme 2021-2027. Lithuania prolonged temporary exemptions from obligatory language proficiency requirements for employed or self-employed BoTP.

Given the relatively high employment rate of displaced Ukrainians, Latvia terminated payments of start-up benefits to Ukrainian BoTP in an effort to transition from emergency support to self-sufficiency and promote full integration.

438 DE, NL.
439 AT.
440 PL.
441 AT, BE, FI,
442 Municipalities in the Netherlands can partially withdraw the living allowance and partially collect the personal contributions requested from BoTP earning below this 115% norm.
443 BE, FI.
444 CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, SK.
445 CY, CZ, HU, LV.
446 CZ, IE, LT.
447 CZ, IE.
448 LT.

4.5.6. Access to general education for adults

To ensure sustained support to students, Austria extended the tuition fee exemption for Ukrainian students at universities and university colleges of teacher education up to the 2025/2026 winter semester.

Two EMN Member Countries amended the financial aid available to student BoTP.[449] In Sweden, BoTP became legally entitled to apply for Swedish student financial aid (CSN), in line with entitlements granted to other legally residing groups. In Ireland, new students granted temporary protection more than three years prior may now access mainstream financial support, subject to eligibility criteria.

4.5.7. Digitalisation and the use of new technologies in provision of services

In Estonia, ongoing cross-sectoral developments in digital public services and integration continued to apply to BoTP, including access to existing e-services and digital administrative procedures. This reflects Estonia's general digitalisation strategy and e-government framework, which underpins public service delivery for all population groups.

Following the extension of temporary protection status, Ireland opted for an exclusively online procedure to allow BoTP to confirm their ongoing residence and intention to remain in Ireland with BoTP status. Applicants can be requested to attend an in-person appointment if there are issues with their application or to obtain their biometrics.

4.6. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

4.6.1. Other developments in EMN Member Countries

Five EMN Member Countries[450] reported other developments in relation to BoTP.

The Belgian federal government's new coalition agreement resulted in legal amendments to the conditions for family reunification with BoTP sponsors, harmonising requirements applicable to this group with those for subsidiary protection. Applicable changes include , inter alia, higher income requirements and minimum age requirements for applicants, and a two-year waiting period for sponsors.

In France, national administrative case-law clarified that BoTP are entitled to register for both theoretical and practical driving tests, as they meet the requirement of 'normal residence'. In the absence of a procedure for exchanging Ukrainian driving licences for French ones, France provided for the recognition of Ukrainian driving permits for the duration of temporary protection and for one additional year.

Given the ongoing need to support displaced persons, the Czech Republic extended financing support to a Unity Hub-type centre[451] for another two years. In response to the Ombudsman's Office report on the different practices in the approach to children from Ukraine, the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs published a methodological document for the Child Protection Authority (OSPOD),[452] aimed at standardising the procedures of these authorities across all regions of the country.

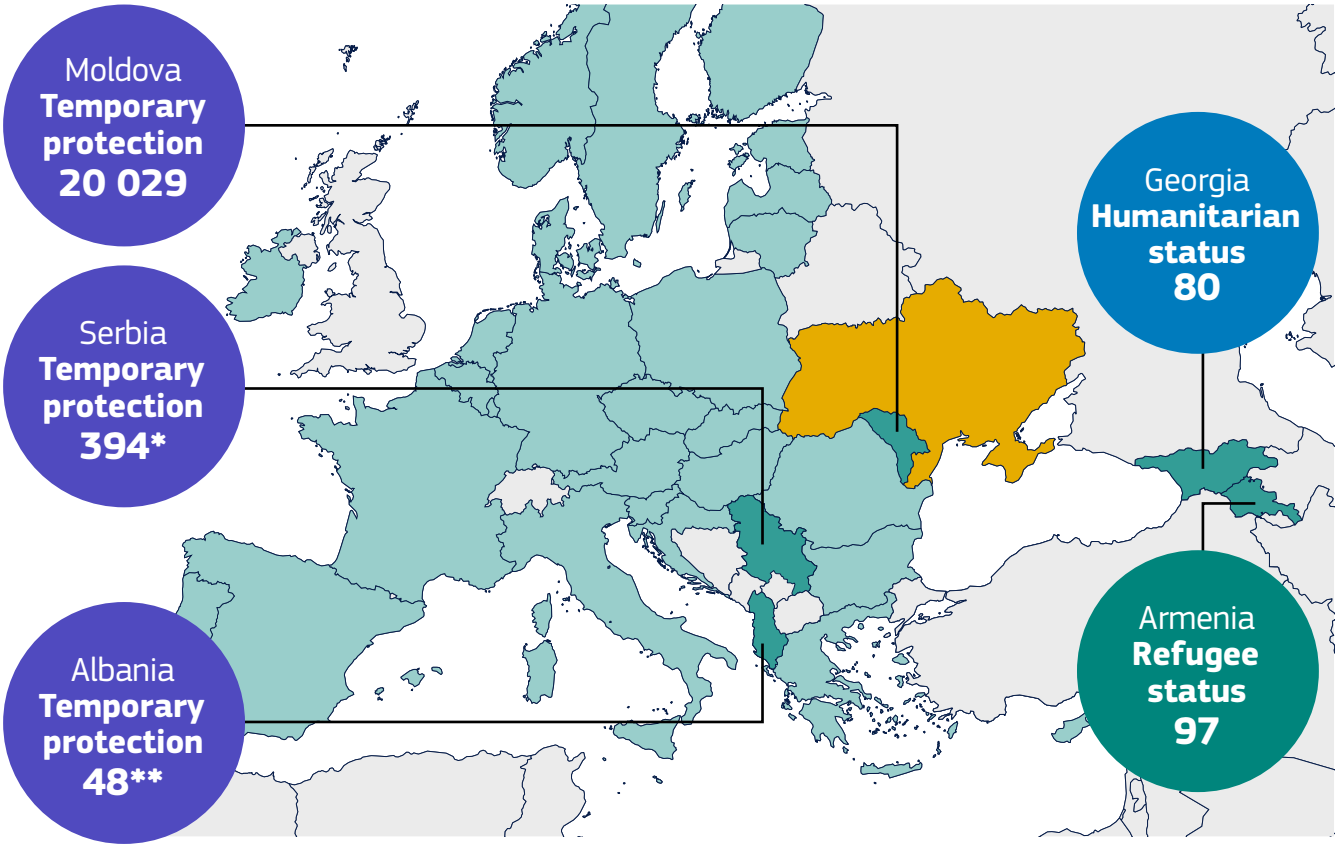
As a result of new digitalised procedures for administrative simplification, Austria lifted fees that were previously required to submit foreign identity documents for residence registration purposes. In Sweden, the Swedish Migration Agency amended its practices to align with the CJEU judgment in case C-195/25,[453] which clarified that applications for international protection lodged by BoTP should be assessed against eligibility for both refugee status and subsidiary protection.

4.6.2. Developments in EMN Observer Countries

In 2025, EMN Observer Countries continued to provide protection to those fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Republic of Moldova reported 20 029 new persons under temporary protection and Serbia, 394. Georgia reported 80 persons granted humanitarian status. Armenia reported 97 persons granted refugee status (see Figure 9).

449 IE, SE.
450 AT, BE, CZ, FR, SE.
451 'Unity Hubs' were set up in some EU Member States to coordinate and provide various services to Ukrainians abroad, including those looking for information to return home or those wishing to integrate in host societies. In the case of the Czech Republic, this is the Ukrainian Consultation and Community Centre in Prague.
452 OSPOD acts as guardian in the cases of unaccompanied minors in the Czech Republic.
453 CJEU, Case C-195/25, accessed 24 March 2026.

Figure 9: Types of protection provided to those fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in EMN Observer Countries in 2025



Source: Authorities in the EMN Observer Country.
** Note: In 2025, temporary protection was provided for 394 persons in Serbia for the first time, while in the same year temporary protection was extended for 853 persons who had temporary protection status previously.*
*** Note: Figures for Albania cover the period 2022-2025.*

Georgia and the Republic of Moldova reported measures affecting the legal status of those fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine The Republic of Moldova extended temporary protection until 1 March 2027 and expanded the categories of persons eligible for temporary protection, adapting its legislative framework to align with Council Implementing Decision 2022/382.[454] In Georgia, the period of legal stay of Ukrainian nationals who had entered Georgia without a visa before 24 February 2025 and stayed, was extended for one additional year, until 24 February 2026.

On education provision, the Republic of Moldova introduced a requirement for beneficiaries to inform the authorities when children start school and notify the local authorities of their enrolment in school. This is to ensure that children access their right to education within the national education system. Georgia organised a summer youth camp for children from Ukraine in a vulnerable psychological state. Ukraine introduced measures supporting Ukrainian citizens who wished to return voluntarily, as well as children (see Box 9).

Box 9: Ukraine's multifaceted assistance for sustainable reintegration of its nationals displaced by the conflict

Ukraine put in place several measures to support its citizens returning to Ukraine and ensure the protection of children. Measures included establishing the Agency for National Unity, developing a state policy for return and reintegration, amending the procedure for guardianship and custody, and introducing financial relocation assistance for the child's legal representative.

454 Council of the EU, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC and having the effect of introducing temporary protection, accessed 17 March 2026.

5. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

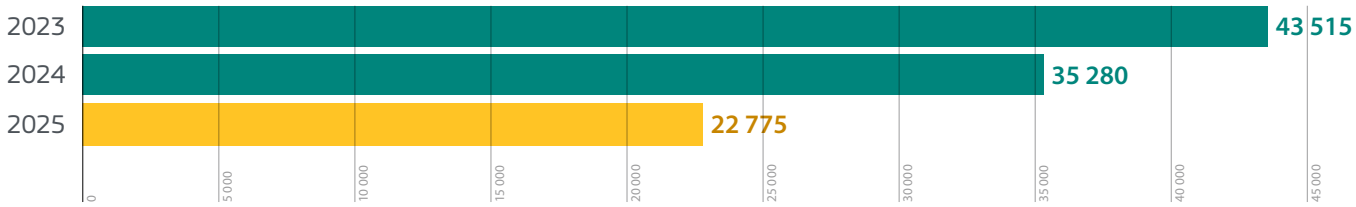
The majority of responding EMN Member and Observer Countries[455] reported adopting new measures on unaccompanied minors[456] and other vulnerable groups[457] in 2025. Compliance with EU obligations[458] and case-law,[459] as well as international human rights and child protection standards,[460] were recurrent drivers.

Key initiatives responded to arrival trends of unaccompanied minors,[461] managing pressures on reception capacity,[462] facilitating the timely identification and support for unaccompanied minors throughout asylum procedures,[463] improving institutional coordination,[464] and ensuring continuity of care.[465]

For vulnerable adults, the focus was on increasing protection for survivors of various forms of gender-based violence[466] and improving assistance to applicants with specific vulnerabilities (e.g. LGBTIQ+ individuals) within asylum and reception systems.[467]

The number of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum fell from 35 280 applications in 2024 to 22 775 applications in 2025, a drop of 35% (see Figure 10). The majority of unaccompanied minors arriving continued to be male, although the number of female unaccompanied minors arriving rose from 11% in 2024 to 18% in 2025 (see Figure 11). The share of rejected asylum applications submitted by unaccompanied minors rose from 16% in 2024 to 43% in 2025 (see Figure 12).

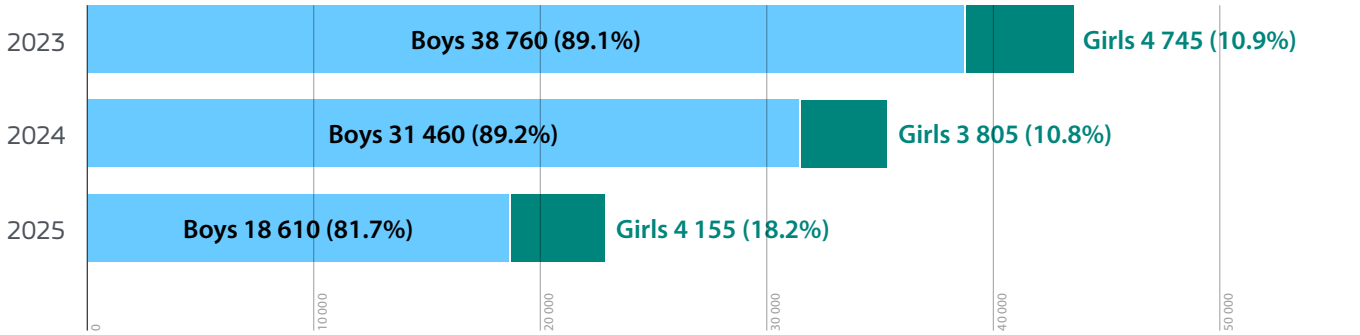
Figure 10: Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum, EU and Norway, 2023-2025



Source: Eurostat (migr_asyumacta), date of extraction 8 May 2026.
Notes: Due to temporary derogations, data on unaccompanied minor first-time asylum applicants not available for Cyprus and Poland (2023); 2024 and 2025:,estimations due to missing data for Italy (2025) and Poland (2024 and 2025).

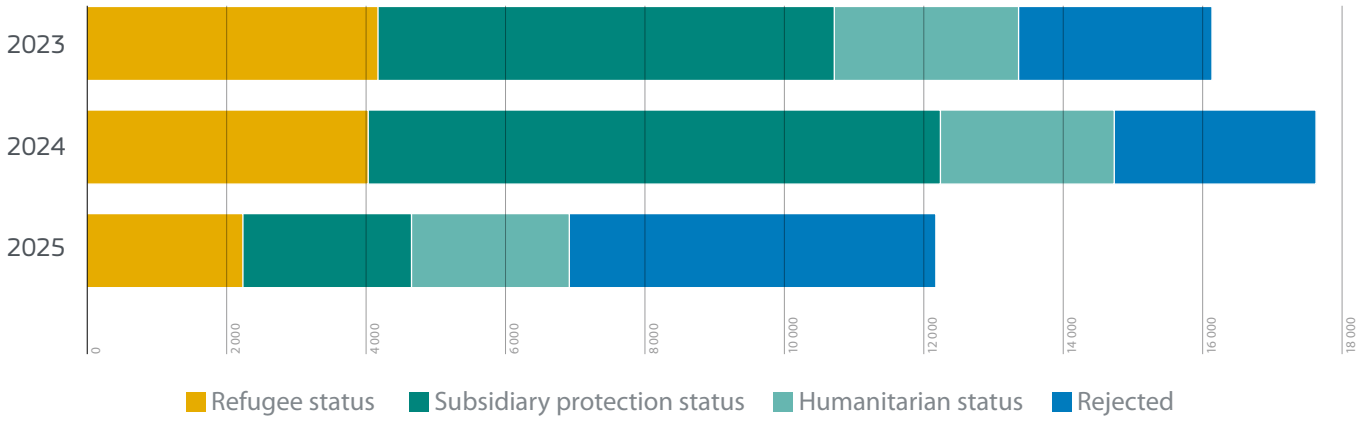
455 BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, EL, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK and NO, MD.
456 This chapter includes unaccompanied minors, both within and outside international protection procedures, including temporary protection.
457 Other vulnerable groups include persons with disabilities, older people, LGBTIQ+ people, pregnant women, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental health issues and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of FGM.
458 BG, CZ, HU, IE, LU, SE, SK.
459 BE, DE, FI.
460 BG, IE, PL.
461 BE, BG, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT.
462 ES, FR, IE, IT.
463 BG, EL, ES, IE, LT, SE.
464 BG, IE, IT, LT.
465 BE, BG, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, PL, SE, SI, SK.
466 AT, DE, EL, ES, FI, MT, SE.
467 IE, IT, LT, MT, NL.

Figure 11: Number of unaccompanied minors, by sex, EU and Norway, 2023-2025



Source: Eurostat (migr_asyumacta), date of extraction 8 May 2026.
Notes: Due to temporary derogations, data on unaccompanied minor first-time asylum applicants not available for Cyprus and Poland (2023); 2024 and 2025:,estimations due to missing data for Italy (2025) and Poland (2024 and 2025).

Figure 12: First instance asylum decisions on applications lodged by unaccompanied minors by outcome, EU and Norway, 2023-2025



Year	Refugee status number (share of total)	Subsidiary protection status number (share of total)	Humanitarian status number (share of total)	Rejected number (share of total)
2023	4 145 (25.8%)	6 535 (40.6%)	2 640 (16.4%)	2 770 (17.2%)
2024	4 005 (22.8%)	8 195 (46.6%)	2 490 (14.2%)	2 890 (16.4%)
2025	2 210 (18.2%)	2 415 (19.9%)	2 260 (18.6%)	5 250 (43.3%)

Source: Eurostat (migr_asyumdcfa), date of extraction 27 May 2026.
Note: 2023 and 2024 exclude Poland (data not available).

5.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

To support EU Member States to fulfil their responsibilities under the Pact, the EUAA published a series of relevant guidelines and tools, including a Practical Guide in Family Tracing[468] in April 2025, a Practical Guide on Age Assessment[469] in November 2025, and a Practical Guide on the Registration and Lodging of Applications for International Protection[470] in December 2025.

468 EUAA, Practical Guide in Family Tracing – 2nd edition, April 2025, accessed 19 February 2026.
469 EUAA, Practical Guide on Age Assessment, November 2025, accessed 19 February 2026.
470 EUAA, Practical Guide on the registration and lodging of applications for international protection, December 2025, accessed 19 February 2026.

5.3. IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

5.3.1. Identification and registration of unaccompanied minors

Six EMN Member Countries[471] improved their procedures for identifying and registering unaccompanied minors, driven by high arrival rates,[472] the need to comply with EU and international standards,[473] alignment with EU-wide reforms,[474] and a push towards digital transformation within public administration.[475]

Due to high arrival rates to the Canary Islands, Spain increased the speed of access and processing of asylum applications for unaccompanied minors.

Increased arrivals of unaccompanied minors were a factor in developments reported by Ireland and Bulgaria, as well as the need to comply with EU and international protection standards. Bulgaria reinforced multiagency cooperation and mandated social worker involvement at registration, ensuring early vulnerability assessments and immediate referrals to child protection services. Ireland outsourced support for lodging international protection applications by unaccompanied minors and separated children to a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to reduce delays and ease pressure on social workers. Acting on behalf of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), the NGO provides children with information and guidance on the international protection process, assists in completing eligibility questionnaires and submitting applications to the International Protection Office, offers legal advice and representation, accompanies children to key interviews, and supports them in lodging statutory appeals where applicable. The General Scheme of a new International Protection Bill, which will implement the Pact in Ireland, was approved by the government on 29 April 2025, including provisions on representation for unaccompanied minors.[476]

In Luxembourg, legislative amendments enabled the inclusion of data on convicted third-country nationals and unaccompanied minors in the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS), as part of a broader EU reform extending the processing of criminal record data to both EU and non-EU nationals.

Digitalisation initiatives played a significant role in enhancing data registration and management in three EMN Member Countries.[477] Bulgaria established a National Information System, Greece launched the National Registry for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (EMPAA) and Lithuania introduced single digital case files for each unaccompanied minor within the Migration Information System (MIGRIS) to improve speed, coordination and data traceability across institutions.

5.3.2. Missing unaccompanied minors

Ireland, Bulgaria and Sweden reported developments in relation to missing unaccompanied minors, driven by national, European and international obligations,[478] as well as to address gaps in national practices.[479]

Ireland established a high-level coordination mechanism and the adoption of a new protocol to strengthen governance and case oversight.[480]

Box 10: Ireland's Integrated Management Forum on separated children seeking international protection

In 2025, Ireland established an Integrated Management Forum to support structured cooperation between the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and the national police (An Garda Síochána). The forum meets quarterly, enabling senior officials to jointly review cases, share information and address issues affecting children and young people in the Separated Children Seeking International Protection (SCSIP) service, with particular attention paid to children who go missing or may be at risk of trafficking or exploitation. This measure is in line with the Child Care Act (1991) and international guidance and legislation on the rights of the child.

Bulgaria and Sweden reported developments to address gaps in national practices. Bulgaria prioritised awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives alongside legal reforms related to the implementation of the Pact, including drafting new procedural guarantees for children (e.g. best interest assessments, strengthened guardianship and legal representation safeguards). Sweden adopted national guidance to strengthen knowledge and working methods to prevent unaccompanied minors from going missing.

5.3.3. Age assessment

Eight EMN Member Countries[481] introduced or worked on changes to the age assessment of unaccompanied minors, partly driven by the need to comply with EU obligations[482] and case-law,[483] international norms and standards,[484] and to follow up outcomes of review processes.[485]

471 BG, EL, ES, IE, LT, LU.
472 BG, ES, IE.
473 BG, IE.
474 LU.
475 BG, EL, LT.
476 As of the end of 2025, the International Protection Bill remained under legislative consideration, with its provisions subject to potential amendment.
477 BG, EL, LT.
478 IE.
479 BG, SE.
480 These measures are in line with the 1991 Child Care Act and international guidance and legislation on the rights of the child and trafficking and were driven by Tusla's equity of care principle.
481 BE, BG, EL, FR, IE, LT, MT, SK.
482 BG, SK.
483 BE.
484 BE, BG.
485 IE.

A shift away from medically intrusive approaches was evident in five EMN Member Countries,[486] which worked on the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches integrating medical and psychosocial assessments. In Belgium, changes were driven by a 2025 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) (F.B. v. Belgium),[487] which led to a revised procedure prioritising documentation evidence and limiting medical examination to a last resort. In Bulgaria, changes were guided by the need to align administrative practice with EU norms and international standards through continued application of the Non-Invasive Age Assessment Instruction adopted in 2024. In Greece, changes followed a Joint Ministerial Decision introducing a standardised, one-day multidisciplinary procedure combining medical and psychosocial assessments. Lithuania adopted a redesigned staged process, including strengthened safeguards and deadlines, to comply with the national reception system reform. In the Slovak Republic, a legislative act on international protection (currently under review) was driven by alignment with the Pact and seeks to introduce a multidisciplinary approach to age assessment in asylum procedures involving minors.

In France, amendments to national legislation led to the nationwide introduction of a mandatory minority assessment support system (AEM). Under this system, after a period of rest and support, individuals who present themselves as unaccompanied minors are formally assessed as to their age and situation of isolation. This supports the authorities to better identify those who should benefit from child protection care.

Other measures included Ireland updating its age assessment guidelines following a 2024 review and Malta amending the legal framework governing the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) with regard to vulnerability and age assessment within reception and support services.

5.4. RECEPTION AND CARE OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Sixteen EMN Member Countries[488] reported policy and legal developments in the reception and care of unaccompanied minors. These were partly shaped by arrival trends[489] and capacity management considerations,[490] as well as the need to promote integration,[491] ensure access to suitable accommodation,[492] mitigate protection risks,[493] eliminate inconsistencies and strengthen the legal basis in service provision,[494] and include information on the accommodation of unaccompanied minors in official national statistics.[495] A first set of measures were primarily driven by arrival trends and strains on reception systems. Belgium, France and Spain focused on adjusting and redistributing reception capacity: Belgium reallocated reception places in response to lower arrival trends, promoting more flexible and needs-based capacity management; France introduced a national distribution key to ensure proportional allocation of unaccompanied minors across the country; and, once situations of extraordinary migratory pressure are declared, Spain introduced legal provisions allowing for the redistribution of unaccompanied minors to ease pressure on any autonomous communities affected. In Ireland, the Child and Family Agency, which is responsible for the care of unaccompanied minors, implemented a new bed management system to provide real-time digital oversight of placement availability and enable strategic matching.

In Italy, measures were driven by high arrival trends and pressures at local level, resulting in the funding and implementation of several projects supporting unaccompanied minors with specific needs and vulnerabilities. Bulgaria, Croatia and Greece combined responses to high arrival trends with broader child protection considerations. Bulgaria developed alternative social services and improved reception and living conditions in 'safe zones' with international and EU support, Croatia funded projects to improve the quality of reception and care, and Greece introduced a code of conduct for professionals working with unaccompanied minors, alongside SOPs.

A second set of measures focused on promoting integration. Slovenia offered psychosocial support and leisure activities to unaccompanied minors in supervised accommodation, while the Slovak Republic invested in specialised spaces within existing reception facilities for children and families.

Luxembourg, Ireland and Portugal reported measures ensuring access to suitable accommodation. Luxembourg opened new accommodation facilities and moved unaccompanied minors to smaller-scale structures, while Ireland introduced its first model of care for unaccompanied minors seeking international and temporary protection, which included accommodation solely for age-disputed minors for the first time. A new type of emergency accommodation was also introduced, alongside compliance units to ensure that all emergency accommodation is compliant with requirements. Following the approval of the Strategy for the Rights of Children and young People (Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 34/2025, of 28 February), Portugal approved the Action Plan for the Single Strategy 2025-2030 (Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 158/2025, of October 13). The Action Plan prioritises family-based foster care over institutionalisation, improves the quality and suitability of care arrangements (foster homes) and supports the autonomy and well-being of children and young people, including unaccompanied foreign minors.

Poland, Sweden and Ireland reported measures to mitigate protection risks. Poland amended legislation to allow secure placement in specific circumstances to prevent absconding and trafficking in human beings, while Sweden

486 BE, BG, EL, LT, SK.
487 ECtHR, F.B. v Belgium, application no. 47836/21, accessed 23 April 2026.
488 BE, BG, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.
489 BE, BG, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT.
490 BE, ES, FR, IE, IT.
491 SI, SK.
492 IE, LU, PT.
493 PL, SE.
494 FI.
495 LV.

completed a governmental initiative to equip multiple actors at different stages of the asylum process (e.g. public authorities, social services, family homes) with tools such as coordination measures to prevent unaccompanied children from going missing. In Ireland, the National Child Protection and Welfare Referral Process was updated to address concerns specific to unaccompanied minors, ensuring that all social workers within the Child and Family Agency follow the same procedures. For example, if an unaccompanied minor discloses abuse that occurred abroad, including FGM, a referral must be made to international social work services and the national police, regardless of whether the practice is legal in the country of origin.

In Finland, the reformed Integration Act came into force on 1 January 2025 and placed housing and care of unaccompanied minors under well-being services counties (with arrangement of these activities subject to the Social Welfare Act). Targeted risk mitigation measures were also reported: Poland amended legislation to allow secure placement in specific circumstances to prevent absconding and trafficking in human beings; Sweden completed a governmental initiative to equip municipalities with tools to prevent unaccompanied children from going missing. Latvia extended reporting requirements related to unaccompanied minors by including new sections in the official statistics forms to report on the number of asylum seekers who, by decision of the Orphan's Court, are accommodated in centres.

5.5. GUARDIANSHIP

Ten EMN Member Countries[496] enhanced guardianship systems for unaccompanied minors, motivated by the need to safeguard the best interest of the child,[497] standardise practices[498] and enhance capacity[499] at national level, as well as to ensure compliance with relevant EU obligations[500] and international child rights standards.[501]

In five EMN Member Countries,[502] measures were driven by the need to place greater emphasis on safeguarding the best interests of the child in asylum and immigration procedures. In Austria, this included plans to embed guardianship from day one across these procedures. Finland introduced an obligation for regional state administration (ELY Centres) to supervise guardians of unaccompanied minors who have been granted a residence permit. Poland expanded the scope of matters in which guardians represent unaccompanied minors. In Greece, related measures included the development of child-friendly information materials to support minors' participation in best interests assessments (BIAs). Italy updated its case management guidance and launched a targeted project to promote the integration and empowerment of young people in juvenile justice contexts.

The Czech Republic focused on building capacity among child protection authorities, in response to a June 2025 report by the Ombudsman's Office highlighting divergent practices in the treatment of children arriving from Ukraine. Slovenia focused on enhancing national capacity by training statutory representatives of unaccompanied minors.

In Bulgaria, capacity-building efforts involving the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) were driven by the need to address structural gaps in national guardianship practices and to ensure compliance with international norms and EU obligations. Sweden initiated preparatory work to align its guardianship framework with the Pact, which expands responsibilities for guardians.

Portugal reported preparatory measures to strengthen the protection and representation of unaccompanied migrant children, in line with EU obligations and international child rights standards.

Box 11: GuardianXchange project in Portugal

As part of preparations for implementing the Pact, in 2025 Portugal launched the GuardianXchange project, led by IOM and developed in partnership with several government entities. It sought to explore the possible introduction of a formal guardianship model, addressing gaps in the current legal representation framework.

The project explored the creation of a specialised and independent guardianship function centred on the best interests of the child, including continuous assistance in asylum and child protection procedures, child-friendly information tools, stronger interagency coordination, and enhanced training and supervision mechanisms. Its recommendations resulted in two proposed operational guardianship models, which are currently under review by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security.

496 AT, BG, CZ, EL, FI, IT, PL, PT, SI, SE.
497 AT, EL, FI, IT, PL.
498 CZ.
499 BG, SI.
500 BG, PT, SE.
501 BG, PT.
502 AT, EL, FI, IT, PL.

5.6. FAMILY REUNIFICATION FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Six EMN Member Countries[503] and Norway reported changes to family reunification policies for unaccompanied minors, reflecting two diverging trends: the introduction of more restrictive or corrective measures[504] and facilitative or clarifying measures.[505]

Austria, Belgium and Norway adopted more restrictive or corrective measures to narrow eligibility for family reunification or address perceived risks linked to migration control or legal consistency. These included the temporary suspension of processing applications for family reunification of BIP in Austria; the removal of automatic reunification rights for parents of unaccompanied minors holding subsidiary protection in Belgium, and legislative amendments in Norway to close gaps in national legislation and prevent bigamy in reunification cases involving minors.

By contrast, four EMN Member Countries[506] introduced facilitative or clarifying measures to better safeguard the right to family life for unaccompanied minors and align national legislation with EU law and jurisprudence.[507] These included greater flexibility in proving family links and the introduction of a three-month deadline for issuing decisions on family reunification in Bulgaria, the alignment of age definitions with EU case-law in Finland, and the extension of eligibility to parents and minor siblings in Poland and Sweden, respectively.

5.7. STATUS DETERMINATION PROCEDURES AND PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Five EMN Member Countries[508] took steps to strengthen procedural safeguards and improve early access to protection for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. These measures were primarily driven by the implementation of the Pact,[509] the identification of procedural or capacity gaps at national level,[510] and the need to enhance protection of children's rights and their best interests throughout the asylum process.[511] Spain put in place a policy to prioritise the processing of applications submitted by unaccompanied children on the Canary Islands.

Bulgaria focused on building institutional capacity through training, reflecting a growing recognition of deficiencies in existing guardianship practices and the need to implement the Pact's child-centred procedural standards. Similarly, the Czech Republic planned specialised training for 2026 to strengthen the capacity and expertise of child protection authorities, ensuring more effective protection of unaccompanied minors.

Legal amendments in Hungary and the Slovak Republic centred on strengthening safeguards for unaccompanied minors. These included removing the requirement for a declaration of intent for unaccompanied minors applying for asylum (Hungary) and guaranteeing legal assistance from the outset to the conclusion of proceedings (Slovak Republic).

Driven by capacity gaps at national level, Ireland outsourced support for lodging international protection applications by unaccompanied minors and separated children to an NGO to improve early access to protection (see section 5.3.1).

5.8. TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Eight EMN Member Countries[512] implemented measures to support unaccompanied minors in their transition to adulthood. These were largely driven by the need to ensure continuity of care,[513] promote transition to independent living[514] and facilitate social and economic integration.[515]

Bulgaria and Cyprus focused on developing structured reception systems and tailored care pathways. Bulgaria approved a framework agreement with Switzerland to strengthen national child protection systems and specialised approaches for children, including improved reception and living conditions ('safe zones'). The provision of continued and structured support for unaccompanied minors sought to address their immediate needs together with

503 AT, BE, BG, FI, PL, SE.
504 AT, BE and NO.
505 BG, FI, PL, SE.
506 BG.
507 FI, PL, SE.
508 BG, CZ, HU, IE, SK.
509 BG.
510 BG, CZ, IE.
511 CZ, HU, SK.
512 BG, CY, CZ, DE, EL, IE, IT, SK.
513 BG, CY, IE.
514 CZ, DE, EL, IE.
515 IE, IT, SK.

broader developmental needs crucial for their transition to adulthood (e.g. psychological support, case management, life skills). In Cyprus, the establishment of a 24-hour shelter for girls under 16 in particularly vulnerable situations complemented a structured care pathway for unaccompanied minors, covering reception, specialised accommodation, semi-independent living and supported transition to adulthood.

The Czech Republic prioritised initiatives to enhance self-sufficiency prior to leaving care through accommodation and employment opportunities. Germany facilitated access to comprehensive support services within the child and youth services system, while Greece and Ireland introduced a range of supports for young people moving to independent living after departing supervised accommodation.

Box 12: Helios Junior Programme in Greece and Aftercare Support System in Ireland

Launched in 2025, Greece's Helios Junior programme assists former unaccompanied minors aged 18–21 to transition to adulthood and integrate into society and the labour market. Funded by AMIF 2021-2027 and overseen by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, with implementation by the IOM, the programme offers leased, fully equipped apartments for up to 18 months. Each participant receives a personalised integration plan, including educational and vocational support, language training and skills recognition. Beneficiaries receive a monthly allowance of €150 via a prepaid card for basic needs during their stay.

In Ireland, 'aftercare' refers to the tailored support provided to young people aged 18-21 (or up to 23 if in education) transitioning from state care to independent living, including financial, educational, housing and personal development assistance. To support unaccompanied minors ageing out of care, the Child and Family Agency introduced a dedicated aftercare module within its national case management system. The module supports the development of 'leaving care' plans, covering areas such as housing, education and legal status, ensuring that young people entitled to aftercare receive consistent and prioritised support during their transition to independence. In 2025, the Child and Family Agency also established an internal review process for young people ageing out of care who are not entitled to aftercare support, with a view to providing the best supports possible within a restricted resource environment.

To further support social integration, the Slovak Republic established age-appropriate accommodation options and activities for unaccompanied minors and young adults. Driven by the need to ensure continuity in the integration pathway, Italy introduced an online procedure for young migrants who arrived in the country as unaccompanied minors, as well as lawyers, reception facility focal points and guardians, to request the Directorate-General for Migration Policies and the Social and Labour Integration of Migrants' opinion required to convert their status into a residence permit for study or work purposes.[516]

5.9. OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

Twelve EMN Member Countries[517] and the Republic of Moldova undertook a range of initiatives to enhance the identification, protection and support of other vulnerable applicants in asylum and reception systems. These efforts aimed to embed considerations of vulnerability in strategies and plans,[518] address legislative[519] and procedural gaps,[520] uphold greater consistency in handling vulnerable cases[521] and mitigate persistent protection risks or needs affecting vulnerable groups.[522]

Five EMN Member Countries[523] introduced measures to enhance protection and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ individuals, with a particular focus on addressing vulnerabilities within asylum and reception systems. Ireland adopted the Second LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy – Action Plan 2025-2029 and completed a quality assurance audit focusing on LGBTIQ+ international protection claims, while Estonia included those that do not speak the local language in the new LGBTQI+ action plan. The Netherlands and Sweden strengthened protection frameworks for vulnerable groups such as LGBTIQ+ residents in asylum reception facilities. Italy created a dedicated reception facility for LGBTIQ+ migrants, given their specific vulnerabilities, as well as to combat discrimination.

Seven EMN Member Countries[524] reported the adoption of measures to strengthen the protection of women and girls, addressing gender-based violence and enhancing safeguards for vulnerable persons, including those within the asylum and migration context. At a strategic level, Ireland adopted the Fourth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2025-2029. At a more operational level, Greece strengthened protection frameworks for survivors of gender-based violence in the asylum system.

Germany clarified that gender and nationality can be sufficient grounds to determine protection without individual exposure to discriminatory practices, pursuant to implementation of EU case-law. In Austria, the Supreme Administrative Court ruled that any form of genital mutilation qualifies as persecution.

516 Granting the permit is subject to the assessment of the Directorate-General for Migration Policies, while the Social and Labour Integration of Migrants at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies is responsible for reviewing the integration pathway undertaken in Italy.
517 AT, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, SE.
518 EL, IE and GE, MD.
519 DE, FI, MT, SE.
520 EL, IE.
521 SE.
522 EL, FI, IE, IT, MT, NL, SE.
523 EE, IE, IT, NL, SE.
524 AT, DE, EL, ES, FI, IE, SE.

Legislative reforms in Finland and Sweden criminalised or prohibited harmful practices, such as FGM (Finland) and virginity checks, certificates and interventions (Sweden). Spain adopted new measures to grant survivors of sexual violence special rights, including residence and work permits on exceptional grounds even if they are in an irregular situation.[525] While these legislative reforms form part of broader efforts to combat gender-based violence across society, they are also relevant to addressing vulnerabilities that may be experienced by certain migrant groups within the asylum system.

Five EMN Member Countries[526] and the Republic of Moldova reported measures to improve the identification, care and protection of vulnerable persons, including through enhanced mental health and psychosocial support, healthcare access, and more robust safeguarding frameworks within reception systems. At an operational level, Greece developed specific guidance on managing third-country nationals who reside in reception facilities and expressed the intention to harm themselves or others, while Malta expanded psychosocial support within reception services.

At a procedural level, Ireland updated its intercultural guide for healthcare providers and the guidelines of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal. At a system level, Sweden clarified reporting obligations related to persons with disabilities to ensure greater consistency in handing vulnerable cases. The Republic of Moldova revised its regulatory framework on temporary placement services for displaced persons.

525 Immigration Regulation (*Real Decreto 1155/2024*) and the Organic Law 10/2022, of 6 September, on the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom.
526 EL, IE, IT, MT, SE.

6. INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Policy developments in integration were characterised by continued efforts to improve frameworks, programmes and measures to promote the integration of migrants, reflecting evolving policy priorities and governance approaches.[527] Drivers varied across countries and included: labour shortages[528] and maintaining European competitiveness in a global economy, increased use of digitalisation[529] in education, training and language learning provision to enhance efficiency and accessibility, [530] changes in political priorities owing to new government mandates[531], challenging the implementation of existing integration policies,[532] need to align integration with other policy frameworks at national or EU level[533] and changes in demographic composition of the migrant population.[534]

Figure 13 below compares EU integration indicators in education, the labour market, social inclusion, health and housing for 2025 for third-country nationals and nationals of the respective reporting countries. While fewer third-country nationals than nationals had been educated at tertiary level in 2025, roughly the same number of third-country nationals and nationals had been in training or education in the last four weeks. Third-country nationals, however, tended to leave education or training early, aged 18–24. In the labour market, a higher proportion of third-country nationals were unemployed or over-qualified for their work than nationals. Third-country nationals were also more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and they were more often living in a household with very low work intensity, or in severe material or social deprivation. For health indicators, on the other hand, third-country nationals were more likely to consider themselves as having good or very good health.

At EU level, key developments included the mid-term review of the 2021–2027 Action Plan and the new Union of Skills proposal, which aimed to address chronic labour shortages by simplifying qualification recognition and fostering multilevel governance (see section 2.2).

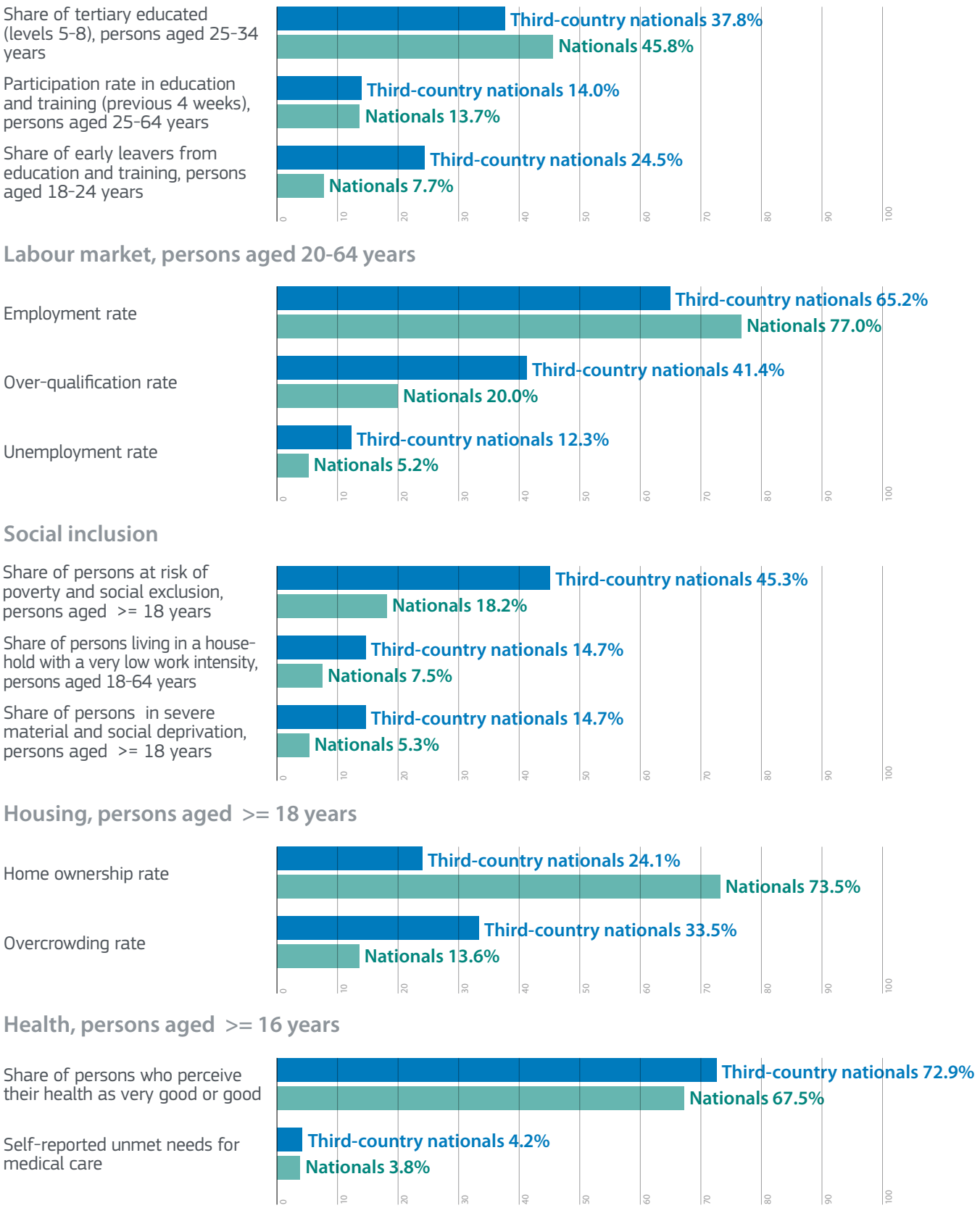
Sector specific workforce needs in EMN Member and Observer Countries gave rise to policy measures spanning different integration areas, notably skills recognition, education and training and early integration. Reported measures included targeted upskilling in high demand sectors,[535] enhanced access to education and training,[536] and strengthening of skills recognition.[537] Three EMN Member Countries[538] introduced measures on employer-migrant matching, including the use of career platforms and mechanism to connect jobseekers with vacancies. Three others[539] reported efforts to reduce and simplify administrative process to access the job market.

Another area of significant development was the emphasis on early integration within national strategies and policies (see section 3.6.1). Eight EMN Member Countries[540] and the Republic of Moldova reported the development of integration frameworks to foster early integration, highlighting a policy direction towards intervention at earlier stages of the integration process to boost sustainability over time. Early integration approaches included the establishment of centralised integration services[541] and the development of structured or mandatory integration programmes.[542]

527 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, SE, SK and MD.
528 EL, FR, IT, NL, PT.
529 BE, DE, EL, EE, FI, HR, LT, LU, NL.
530 EE, FI, FR.
531 FI, LT and NO.
532 AT, FI, FR, IT and SK.
533 AT, LT, LU, MT.
534 CZ, LT, SK.
535 IT, EL.
536 AT and GE.
537 AT, DE and UA.
538 AT, EE, EL.
539 CZ, HR, SK.
540 AT, BE, CZ, EE, FR, LT, MT, SK.
541 LT, MT.
542 AT, LT, MT.

Figure 13: Integration indicators (education, labour market, social inclusion, housing and health), EU, 2025

Integration indicators, 2025



Source: Eurostat (edat_lfs_9911, trng_lfs_12, edat_lfse_01, lfsa_ergan, lfsa_eoqgan, lfsa_urgan, ilc_peps05n, ilc_lvhl15n, ilc_mdsd15, ilc_lvho15, ilc_lvps15, hlth_silc_24 and hlth_silc_30), date of extraction 8 May 2026.

In education and training, the focus was on language acquisition was a key development, with 14 EMN Member Countries,[543] Norway, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova introducing or boosting language acquisition support in both primary and secondary education (see Chapter 2). The main developments reported were language acquisition measures for adults focused on language training,[544] specifically to facilitate labour market entry,[545] and the introduction of mandatory training or language proficiency levels,[546] including the addition of more digitalised and accessible content.

During 2025, 16 EMN Member Countries,[547] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine strengthened their legal and policy frameworks to combat racism and discrimination, adopting comprehensive national action plans[548] and establishing independent oversight bodies for victim assistance and offender sanctioning.[549]

6.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

In June 2025, the European Commission released the mid-term review of the 2021-2027 Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (the Action Plan).[550] It noted progress across the four areas covered by the Action Plan – education, employment, healthcare and housing. It also highlighted persistent challenges due to increased pressure on public services and housing across EU Member States and a pressing need for targeted support for migrant and refugee women through coordinated multilevel governance. The report noted that despite rising employment, labour market access is often hindered by difficulties in qualification recognition, and migrant children remain at higher risk of early school leaving and lower educational attainment. Administrative and cultural barriers continue to impede access to healthcare, particularly mental health services.

To further support integration through labour market participation, the European Commission proposed the Union of Skills in March 2025 (see Chapter 2).[551] The focus is on attracting and retaining talent through an EU Talent Pool for recruiting jobseekers from outside the EU. Other efforts forming part of the Union of Skills include the 'Choose Europe for science' initiative under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

The Action Plan Progress Tracker, hosted on the 'Migrant Integration Hub'[552], continued to monitor changes in integration and inclusion, with updates every four months. Notable developments included the launch of the EU-MiCare digital training platform for migrant and refugee mental healthcare in June 2025.[553]

The European Commission organised two European Integration Network[554] meetings, with the 18th meeting held in May 2025 under the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU.[555] Discussions centred on the digitalisation of integration services, digital skills, and language/civic courses. The 19th meeting was held in December 2025 and focused on labour market integration, with a specific session on the integration of migrant women and overall social cohesion.[556] At the 10th meeting of the European Migration Forum in November 2025, participants addressed the utilisation of non-EU nationals' skills to address job market shortages, while emphasising the need to combat labour exploitation and illegal employment and use EU funds for effective labour market integration.[557] The Urban Agenda Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees continued to implement its 2025-2027 Action Work Plan, featuring four actions: inclusive integration into quality jobs; inclusive education from early childhood to higher education; combating migration disinformation, hate speech and discrimination; and increasing coherence between EU funds on integration to better align funding support with the reality on the ground.

6.3. NATIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY

6.3.1. National/regional integration strategy

In 2025, 14 EMN Member Countries,[558] Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine reported updates to their national or regional integration strategies. These were mainly driven by changes in government mandates[559] or the need to address specific integration policy challenges.[560] Other contributing factors included evolving demographic shifts,[561] efficient budgetary allocation,[562] and

543 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IT, LT, MT, SE, SK.
544 EE, FR, FI, LU, SE.
545 AT, BE, BG, EE, FI, IT, LT, SK, SI and MD.
546 EE, FR, FI.
547 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IT, LU, MT, PT, SE.
548 AT, ES, HR, LU, MT and MD.
549 ES and MD.
550 European Commission, Mid-term review of the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, SWD(2025) 162, accessed 23 February 2026.
551 European Commission, Union of Skills: Investing in people for a competitive European Union, n.d., accessed 24 February 2026.
552 European Commission, Migrant Integration Hub, 2025, accessed 13 March 2026.
553 European Commission, EU-MiCare, n.d., accessed 24 February 2026.
554 European Commission, Cooperation with integration actors, 2025, accessed 25 February 2026.
555 Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU, Meeting of the European Integration Network, May 2025, accessed 24 February 2026.
556 European Commission, 19th meeting of the European Integration Network (in person), December 2025, accessed 24 February 2026.
557 European Economic and Social Committee, European Migration Forum – 10th meeting Harnessing migrants' skills in the EU, November 2025, accessed 24 February 2026.
558 AT, BE, CZ, DE, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK.
559 FI, LT and NO.
560 AT, BE, FI, FR, IT, SK.
561 CZ, LT, SK.
562 CZ, DE.

alignment of national frameworks with EU frameworks such as the Pact[563] and the Action Plan.[564] Substantial strategic focus was placed on early integration[565] and labour market integration.[566]

Of those focusing on early integration, eight EMN Member Countries[567] and the Republic of Moldova reported the development of integration frameworks and strategies to foster sustainable early integration. Others aimed to establish centralised integration services and, in some cases, structured or mandatory programmes.[568] In response to significant integration policy challenges over the past 10 years, Austria presented a mandatory integration programme to the Council of Ministers on 28 May 2025, structured around German language acquisition, employment, and values and rules. The programme aims to initiate integration from the day a person arrives in Austria and make the integration process more targeted and efficient.

Seven EMN Member Countries[569] and Norway reported changes in labour market integration. Italy's 'FAre Sistema: networks for inclusion (FA.SI)' project aims to improve the socioeconomic integration and labour mobility of third-country nationals through a multi-stakeholder approach, supporting inclusion for applicants for protection and BIP and creating labour corridors for refugees and stateless persons. Norway's parliament passed a legislative amendment to the Integration Act in June 2025 to expand the target group for the introduction programme from the age of 55 to 60 and, as of 1 January 2026, immigrants in the target group for the introduction programme who are employed or have an offer of employment of 30 hours a week or more will no longer be eligible and obliged to start an introduction programme, unless the employment relationship ends or the offer of employment expires within two years of the person concerned having settled in a municipality. The eligibility and obligation to training in Norwegian and social studies remains for this group and must be completed alongside work.

To improve the proximity and relevance of services, four EMN Member Countries[570] implemented policies transferring integration responsibilities to local municipalities, recognising that local authorities are best positioned to foster social cohesion. Four EMN Member Countries[571] experienced changes in the distribution of integration responsibilities due to legislative reforms and administrative restructuring.

Box 13: Local strategies in the Slovak Republic

The Slovak Republic reported a focus on local strategies, with long-term, community-led frameworks in the cities of Trnava, Michalovce, Prešov and Nitra. These developments were driven by rapid demographic shifts, exemplified by a 62% increase in third-country nationals in Trnava since 2022 (amounting to about 16% of third-country nationals in the city) and the sustained presence of displaced persons from Ukraine in the four cities. By adopting a participatory 'co-creation' model in Trnava, making integration one of the strategic priorities in Michalovce and a multisectoral Strategy and Action Plan in Prešov and in Nitra, respectively, these municipalities aim to move beyond ad hoc assistance toward a systematic approach that fosters mutual trust, activates 'invisible' residents and ensures inclusive access to education, healthcare and the labour market.

Four EMN Member Countries[572] linked integration strategies with other policies, for example the protection of women or the fight against racism. Luxembourg launched the National Action Plan against Racism (PAN AR) in December 2025, which is formally interlinked with its forthcoming National Action Plan on Intercultural Living Together. Austria's 2025 National Action Plan against Violence against Women aimed to ensure that language support, awareness programmes and cultural orientation courses contribute to preventing violence and strengthening awareness of the inviolability of the physical and psychological integrity of women.

The Netherlands reported a major change in strategy, pausing the imposition of fines and the repayment of integration loans for BIP who do not complete the integration requirements on time. In a ruling of 9 July 2025, the Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State found that the previous system of fines and mandatory loan repayments imposed an excessive burden on BIP and risked undermining their integration.

6.3.2. Digitalisation of integration processes and services

Ten EMN Member Countries[573] reported advancements in digitalisation. These were driven by demands for greater efficiency and modernisation of public services,[574] including improved access to online services and platforms, such as making those offered by employment services multilingual[575] or designing platforms to facilitate early stage and pre-arrival orientation online.[576]

In Belgium (Flanders), the Flemish government approved a communication advancing the development of fully digital pre-arrival integration trajectories for newcomers, with the social orientation course offered as a digital self-study package in the participant's native language. Finland established nationwide customer information systems for promoting migrant integration and Ireland finalised a joint controller arrangement between a central government department and local authorities. The aim was to move from

563 EE.
564 MT.
565 AT, BE, CZ, EE, FR, LT, MT, SK and MD.
566 BE, EE, FI, FR, IT and NO.
567 AT, BE, CZ, EE, FR, LT, MT, SK.
568 AT, LT, MT.
569 BE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IT, PT and NO.
570 CZ, FI, IT, SK.
571 EL, FI, IE, LT.
572 AT, LT, LU, MT.
573 BE, DE, EE, EL, FI, HR, IE, LT, LU, NL.
574 DE, EE, FI, IE, LU.
575 BE, HR, LT, NL.
576 BE, LT.

a previous ad hoc and fragmented approach to data-sharing towards a clear, standardised national data governance framework that supports local authority coordination.

The Association of Netherlands Municipalities launched an online platform, Migration and Work, to support municipalities guiding migrants and newcomers into employment.[577] Additional examples of digitalisation in specific services can be found in sections 6.6.1 and 6.6.6.

6.3.3. Monitoring and evaluation of integration programmes and strategies

Six EMN Member Countries,[578] Norway and Serbia reported developments in monitoring and evaluation of integration programmes. Norway evaluated the national integration programme via surveys, indicators, status and development trends. The outcomes of the evaluation fed into the national integration programme that aims to enable third-country nationals to integrate into Norwegian society at an early stage and become financially independent. Ireland, Spain and Serbia used indicators and data visualisations to enable informed policy-making. In Ireland, this included a report on the experiences of beneficiaries and the perspectives of implementers of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). In Serbia, the study, Integration Challenges 2025, included an evaluation of integration measures and identification of challenges faced by BIP, as well as an assessment of the impact of the services provided.

Box 14: Interactive dashboard in Spain supports policy-making on integration and monitors discrimination and racism

Spain launched an interactive digital dashboard to monitor the 2023-2027 Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion, against Racism and Xenophobia, pinpointing integration deficits in different areas to better guide and inform public policy and track the evolution of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance over time. The dashboard fulfils the commitment established by the Strategic Framework to monitor public actions and policies regarding integration, inclusion and the fight against racism and xenophobia.

6.4. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

In 2025, 15 EMN Member Countries[579] and Norway reported legal and policy developments to strengthen stakeholder involvement in integration processes. These developments were largely prompted by the need to streamline administrative funding structures[580] and strengthen cooperation with civil society and local communities in the delivery of services, recognising the critical role of these stakeholders in the integration of migrants.[581]

Ireland merged two funding streams into a single Integration Fund, which supports communities across Ireland to streamline administration, reduce duplication and create a cleaner funding structure for stakeholders. The Federal Ministry of the Interior in Germany revised the funding guidelines for the migration counselling service for adult immigrants (MBE) to simplify administration and reduce the bureaucratic burden. In Belgium (Flanders), the Flemish government approved the Integrated Action Plan for Horizontal Integration Policy to promote sustainable integration by coordinating policies across education, work, leisure and welfare, and ensuring meaningful participation of local authorities, civil society, migrants and frontline organisations in the design and implementation of integration measures. The plan also aims to establish a structural consultation mechanism between the Flemish government and local authorities, supporting coordination, knowledge-sharing and effective policy implementation.

On cooperation with civil society and local communities, Croatia and Malta aimed to foster structured networks and advisory groups that directly reflected migrant voices in policy design. Estonia, Lithuania and Poland reported developments to empower local authorities and NGOs through nationally supported capacity-building and tripartite partnerships. Poland established national integration offices operating as one-stop-shop regional centres offering comprehensive assistance with administrative and legal advice, psychological support, Polish language training and adaptation courses, career counselling and job placement, social animation and intercultural activities, and training and counselling for the host community. The model is based on a tripartite partnership, with the local government as the project leader, the Voivode representing the government administration, and an NGO or NGO consortium as the operational partner conducting activities directly with migrants.

Luxembourg continued to implement the concept of intercultural living together at local level by facilitating social cohesion through collaborative citizen's guides and municipal pacts.

Other measures included stakeholder support for labour market integration via expanded grant schemes and workplace integration subsidies for employers and civil society organisations.[582]

577 NL.
578 BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE.
579 BE, DE, EE, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK.
580 DE, IE and NO.
581 EE, FI, HR, IT, LT, LU, MT, PL, SK.
582 ES, IE, NL and NO.

6.5. PRE-DEPARTURE INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES

Four EMN Member Countries[583] developed their pre-departure integration measures further to boost early self-reliance and prevent the exploitation of vulnerable foreign workers.[584] Belgium and the Czech Republic moved towards toward digital self-study and targeted orientation for labour migrants. In cooperation with the NGO Slovo 21, the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic carried out a substantial update of the pre-departure information package ('Next Stop Czech Republic'), which resulted in a new webpage. In Malta, the 'I Belong' Pre-Departure Programme was developed in collaboration with the Institute for Tourism Studies and the University of Malta to familiarise future migrants with Malta's cultural, social and legal landscape.

6.6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.6.1. Basic skills and language

Fifteen EMN Member Countries,[585] Norway, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova focused on strengthening language training[586] to facilitate labour market entry,[587] especially in areas with shortages, [588] advance digitalisation of training content and platforms to facilitate access and save costs,[589] and accelerate the achievement of language proficiency levels, including through mandatory levels or programmes, so that migrants can find their way faster in society.[590]

In three EMN Member Countries,[591] measures responded to acute labour shortages in sectors such as healthcare and hospitality. The Slovak Republic introduced specialised language courses for shift workers to improve employment accessibility.

Developments focusing on language proficiency included the establishment of mandatory proficiency levels (A2/B1) for employees and residents[592] or were put in place to implement new national laws linking integration to proven language outcomes.[593] In Finland, a revised Act on the promotion of migrant integration entered into force at the beginning of 2025, aiming to ensure that migrants understand their rights and obligations and that they receive relevant and correct information about life and society in Finland. The act launched a national final test of language skills in integration training to promote integration and language skills. Municipalities are mandated to provide structured civic orientation courses as part of their integration services for immigrants with an integration plan. This reflected the need expressed by parliament to reform integration services for efficiency.

To promote better integration of third-country nationals, Portugal made Portuguese language training compulsory for reunited family members, through the introduction of Law No 61/2025 of 22 October, which entered into force on 23 October 2025 (amending Law No 23/2007 on the legal framework for the entry, stay, exit and removal of foreigners). In Bulgaria, 400 full-time language course placements were provided at public universities for individuals under temporary protection. In Georgia, a state language examination was conducted for the first time for the non-Georgian-speaking population, including foreign nationals. In the Republic of Moldova, foreign nationals were offered access to various services, including general and vocational education, Romanian language courses and vocational training programmes as part of the National Programme for Romanian Language Learning.

Training, including assessment of learning, was increasingly digitalised in 2025 to increase training accessibility via online, AI-driven multilingual platforms and mobile applications[594] and to save costs through digitalised delivery.[595]

Box 15: Free national AI service in Norway: nafoki.no

In Norway, there are large variations in how municipalities approach and use digital tools in their language training for adult immigrants, including the use of AI. Around half of the country's municipalities have started to use the national digital offer for Norwegian language training that was implemented in 2024. In 2025, Norway launched a free national AI service for multilingual users (nafoki.no), which all actors can use free of charge. This development was driven by the need to strengthen language skills to boost participation in the workforce and society. The objective is to provide municipalities and participants with greater flexibility, making it easier to adapt training to individual learner needs through advanced technology.

6.6.2. Civic integration programmes

Nine EMN Member Countries[596] reported developments in civic orientation programmes, reflecting a requirement to harmonise municipal services into uniform national standards,[597] a need for scalable, cost-effective

583 AT, BE, CZ, MT.
584 CZ, MT.
585 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, IT, LT, MT, PT, SE, SK.
586 EE, FR, FI, SE.
587 AT, BE, BG, EE, FI, IT, LT, SK, SI and MD.
588 AT, EL, SK.
589 AT, CY, DE, EE, FI, LT and NO.
590 EE, FI, FR.
591 AT, EL, SK.
592 FI, FR.
593 EE, FI, FR, PT.
594 AT, CY, DE, EE, FI, LT and NO.
595 DE and NO.
596 AT, BE, CY, EE, EL, FI, LT, LV, PL.
597 FI, LT, LV.

digital solutions, [598] and a need for support to sociocultural integration.[599]

In Lithuania, the Sociocultural Orientation Programme and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Programme are the first nationally standardised integration measures available to all municipalities.

Box 16: E-course within the 'Settle in Estonia' national adaption programme

To reach large numbers of people in a time- and cost-effective way, while ensuring more flexible and easier access to essential information, Estonia launched a digital course on an e-learning platform, based on the basic module of the adaptation programme, Settle in Estonia.

The basic module is a civic orientation course that includes information about Estonian state, society, history, culture, services, etc. In 2025, an additional public procurement was launched to develop two additional e-courses based on the work and family modules, extending and integrating available courses into the same platform. The course aims to ensure that newly arrived third-country and EU nationals can access key information for early adaptation in an independent, flexible and location-independent format, alongside face-to-face training courses.

6.6.3. Early childhood education and care

Germany and Malta reported developments related to language acquisition and equitable access to early childhood education and care (ECEC). On 1 January 2025, the Third Law for the Further Development of Quality and Participation in Child Day Care came into force, amending the Childcare Quality Act. The federal government continues its financial commitment to improve ECEC and support states, with a total of around €4 billion in 2025 and 2026, to address persisting disparities in quality and access to ECEC in Germany. In Malta, the aim was to support families in vulnerable socioeconomic situations.

6.6.4. Primary and secondary education

Twelve EMN Member Countries[600] and Norway reported policy and legal reforms in primary and secondary education, mainly focusing on language support and pedagogical reforms (see Box 13). These responded to a substantial influx of school-aged children through family reunification and temporary protection[601] or sought to address disparities in the quality of education and boost language acquisition.[602] The Netherlands reported the need to move from ad hoc emergency education to stable national legal frameworks. The Dutch-speaking community of Belgium reported the policy approach, 'Each Child Language Hero' (*Ieder kind taalheld*), which aims to strengthen Dutch language acquisition through a comprehensive set of measures across compulsory education. In Estonia, the 2024-2025 academic year marked the beginning of its transition to a fully Estonian-language education system in schools and kindergartens, offering all children the opportunity to receive a high-quality education in Estonian, regardless of their native language. The transition will continue until 2030.

In general, countries aimed to enhance access to educational provision through different tools and programmes. Malta reported accredited language induction programmes for secondary students. In Cyprus, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports drew up a Code of Conduct on the use of AI in schools to ensure the safe use of digital technologies, making all forms of technology available to teachers and students, irrespective of their country of origin, and with all rules applying equally to all.

Box 17: Luxembourg 'ALPHA - Growing Together' reform

Luxembourg introduced a landmark legislative reform to its basic education system through the ALPHA-Growing together (*ALPHA - zesumme wuessen*) project, which gives parents the option to choose whether their children learn to read and write in German or French starting from the 2026/2027 school year. This development was driven by the fact that two-thirds of primary students do not speak Luxembourgish or German at home, a demographic shift underscored by a doubling in the share of third-country nationals since 2011 (to 11%). The primary objective of this paradigm shift is to reduce educational inequalities by allowing children to gain foundational literacy in a familiar language. This helps to counter the systematic reproduction of migratory disadvantages while maintaining social cohesion through mixed-language classes and a shared focus on Luxembourgish.

Box 18: Language and cultural mediators in schools in Portugal

Portugal approved the Learn More Now (*Aprender Mais Agora*) learning recovery and improvement plan to provide schools with better tools to support students with little or no Portuguese language, targeting inclusion and academic success. The *Aprender Mais Agora* plan includes a range of measures to promote the integration of migrant students and accelerate the acquisition of Portuguese language skills by migrant students and their families. One measure is to assign language and cultural mediators to schools. Schools were able to recruit up to 287 language and cultural mediators for the 2024/2025 academic year and 310 for the 2025/2026 academic year. In parallel, the Agency for Migration, Integration and Asylum (AIMA) in collaboration with the Agency for the Management of the Education System (AGSE), has developed a **Training Programme for Linguistic and Cultural Mediators**. This programme will be implemented during the 2025-2028 academic years, with training delivered by specialist organisations with technical expertise and proven experience in multicultural educational contexts.

598 BE, EE.
599 CY, EL, LT, PL.
600 AT, BE, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, LU, MT, NL, PT, SK.
601 AT, CZ, SK.
602 BE, EE, LU.

6.6.5. Tertiary and adult education

Two EMN Member Countries,[603] Norway, Georgia and Ukraine reported developments in tertiary and adult education. The measures aimed to increase adult participation in lifelong learning,[604] develop new approaches to make educational resources and language programmes accessible to a wider audience[605] and provide direct financial autonomy through state grants for higher education.[606]

Ida-Viru County in Estonia is undergoing major economic and structural changes. The population is predominantly non-Estonian-speaking, with lower participation in lifelong learning compared to other regions. Supported training and retraining programmes are being initiated to help people, including migrants, to acquire new professional skills, as well as activities to increase adults' interest and capacity for learning.

Other measures were driven by the need to enable access to education for different groups, such as international students in Norway and refugees in Ukraine (see Box 9 and Box 18).

Box 19: Vocational education in Ukraine

Ukraine enacted the Law on vocational education, which explicitly grants refugees and individuals under subsidiary or temporary protection the same rights to vocational training as Ukrainian citizens, in accordance with the Law of Ukraine on refugees and persons in need of subsidiary or temporary protection. This development was driven by the need to eliminate existing legal gaps and harmonise national frameworks with European standards and international protection obligations. The primary objective was to ensure equal access to professional training, enhancing employment prospects and self-sufficiency.

Georgia and Luxembourg reported the digitalisation of vocational training, with Georgia enacting regulations to allow entire programmes to be delivered online and Luxembourg integrating the innovative 'moving languages' method to learn Luxembourgish and French. In Luxembourg, the development of a free online platform for the self-study of Luxembourgish is intended to support language learners in professional contexts, starting with social care, healthcare, ECEC and informal education.

6.6.6. Other forms of education/training

In 2025, the Czech Republic, Greece, Malta and the Slovak Republic reported developments in other forms of non-formal education and training, with an emphasis on digital literacy and specialised pedagogical support. These developments aimed to ensure accessible and clear information on education for third-country nationals, particularly children from Ukraine in the Czech Republic, and to close the critical gap in professional digital skills among young people in the Slovak Republic (see Box 20).[607]

Box 20: 'Activation of Young NEET for the Digital Age' project in the Slovak Republic

The Slovak Republic launched the 'Activation of Young NEET for the Digital Age' project, due to a digital skills deficit among young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). It aims to use innovative psychometric and competence assessment tools to identify career paths and reskilling opportunities for third-country nationals. It seeks to reduce the risk of exclusion by aligning the specific predispositions of young third-country nationals with the rapidly changing technological demands of the labour market.

6.7. LABOUR MARKET AND SKILLS

6.7.1. Access to vocational training/other types of training

Eleven EMN Member Countries[608] and Georgia reported developments in vocational training and labour market integration (see Box 18), reflecting efforts to address sectoral labour shortages[609] and new integration legislation and labour market integration policies.[610] The measures sought to accelerate entry into the workforce,[611] provide targeted upskilling in high-demand sectors such as tourism and shipbuilding[612] and expand educational access via school-based vocational hubs.[613] Georgia expanded vocational education access by completing two new vocational education and training (VET) institutions (in Borjomi and Bolnisi) and launching integrated vocational programmes in 63 public schools, admitting the first student cohorts. With support from the Asian Development Bank, four additional general educational institutions also began offering vocational training and retraining programmes. Portugal implemented the Integrate for Tourism (*Integrar para o Turismo*) programme to train and integrate immigrants and BIP into the tourism, hospitality and catering labour markets, in partnership with *Turismo de Portugal* and the Portuguese Tourism Confederation.

603 EE, LU.
604 EE.
605 LU.
606 UA.
607 EL, SK.
608 AT, BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IT, NL, PT.
609 EL, FR, IT, NL, PT.
610 AT, BE, FI, NL.
611 BE, FI, NL.
612 IT, EL.
613 AT and GE.

Box 21: France's professional integration of non-French speaking employees and legal workers in short-staffed occupations

France implemented French language training for non-French-speaking employees that can be carried out during working hours to help them to acquire a language foundation suited to the work environment. It also promoted foreign nationals' integration into employment, particularly in short-staffed occupations, by: providing for their systematic registration with the French PES, *France Travail*, upon signing the Republican Integration Contract (CIR); establishing pathways combining language training adapted to the work environment; supporting people towards employment; and promoting the recognition of equivalent qualifications and prior learning.

6.7.2. Recognition of skills and formal qualifications

Legal and policy developments to facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications were reported by seven EMN Member and three Observer Countries,[614] These developments were partly driven by acute labour shortages[615] and the need to streamline administrative burdens.[616] They sought to ensure sustainable employment commensurate with prior training, accelerate the validation of certificates, and establish permanent national structures for professional recognition.

The Slovak Republic, Norway and Ukraine reported the digitalisation of the qualifications recognition process.[617] The Norwegian government allocated NOK 10 million annually for the development of three integrated digital services (a career guidance tool, an employer advisory service on vocational training, and a qualifications database) to ease the labour market transition for Ukrainian refugees, with other migrants with foreign qualifications set to be included over time. The Slovak Republic launched a dedicated digital portal that significantly simplifies the recognition of foreign education. For the first time, students with education from the EU and non-EU countries can apply for a certificate of recognition online, benefiting from shortened processing deadlines and reduced administrative fees.

6.7.3. Other measures to facilitate labour market integration of third-country nationals

Eleven EMN Member Countries[618] reported diverse legal and policy developments to facilitate the labour market integration of third-country nationals. These focused on employer-migrant matching and enhanced legal flexibility to connect jobseekers with vacancies,[619] for example through career platforms (Austria). Estonia reported recruitment days and direct employer-jobseeker interaction events to promote the labour market integration of third-country nationals, including entrepreneurs, by ensuring equal opportunities through immediate job-matching services. The initiative also sought to reduce and simplify the administrative process to access the job market.[620]

Certain measures were introduced because of sector-specific labour shortages,[621] the need to provide stable residence status for displaced persons[622] and to increase the retention of international talent,[623] as well as fair and sustainable labour market integration.[624] Portugal held four courses on 'Support for Business Creation' as part of the Promotion of Immigrant Entrepreneurship (PEI) Project, with 113 migrants participating. Under this programme, 10 businesses were supported, and 124 specialised counselling sessions were carried out in 2025.

6.7.4. Access to housing

The Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece and Malta reported developments in access to housing to move displaced persons from Ukraine residing on a long-term basis in collective accommodation facilities (the Czech Republic) and former unaccompanied minors aged 18–21 to stable private accommodation (Greece). These developments also sought to implement administrative adjustments as migrant flows stabilise[625] and to ensure safety and accessibility for persons with specific needs.[626] The measures focused on ensuring safe housing[627] and having legislative standards for rent reimbursement, as well as supported living.[628] Malta integrated refugees into its social housing initiative to provide stable, long-term accommodation for those unable to afford private-sector leases or purchases. Greece's Helios Junior programme provides free accommodation in fully equipped apartments for up to 18 months for beneficiaries, with counselling services on independent living and a monthly cash allowance to cover essential needs The programme aims to support young people's transition to independent living after leaving supervised accommodation (see Box 12).

6.7.5. Access to healthcare, including mental healthcare

Six EMN Member Countries,[629] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine reported legal or policy developments in access to healthcare, due to an increasing demand for trauma-informed care linked to war-related

614 AT, DE, EL, ES, FI, HR, SK.
615 AT, DE, and UA.
616 SK, and NO.
617 SK, and NO, UA.
618 AT, BG, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, IE, PT, SK.
619 AT, EE, EL.
620 CZ, HR, SK.
621 AT, BG, CZ, EL.
622 CZ, HR.
623 FI.
624 BG.
625 EE.
626 MT.
627 CZ, EL.
628 EE, MT.
629 BG, DE, EL, IE, LT, PT.

displacement[630] and the need to bridge cultural gaps in clinical settings.[631] Measures aimed to ensure that third-country nationals in regular employment have equal access to national health funds,[632] provide healthcare staff with the tools to deliver culturally competent care through new national guides[633] and integrate mental health support directly into broader labour and reception policies.[634] Portugal reported the launch of the FAMI2030-2025-23 call, aimed at strengthening the capacity of professionals and volunteers supporting applicants for international protection, BIP and BoTP. The call focuses on mental health promotion, trauma-informed approaches and psychosocial support, and finances training activities, exchange of good practices and the development of pedagogical materials.

6.7.6. Access to social security

Four EMN Member Countries[635] and the Republic of Moldova reported legal or policy developments in access to social security, driven by differing social assistance regulations and access to social security,[636] policy commitments to linking social security with integration,[637] mutual recognition with other countries,[638] and the need to protect the rights of foreign nationals.[639] In Austria, the changes targeted the harmonisation of social assistance systems across federal regions to prevent 'benefit-motivated' internal migration. In Latvia, the aim was to ensure that parental benefits were reserved for third-country nationals and their families permanently residing within the territory (including BIP). Italy and the Republic of Moldova finalised multiple agreements (e.g. with France, Switzerland, Albania) to facilitate mutual recognition of pension and sickness benefits for migrant workers. To facilitate the integration of vulnerable populations in France and to improve the performance of the prefectures in issuing residence permits, the OFPRA will no longer require the 'family form' for BIP. Prefectures are now allowed to issue residence permits to BIP, without waiting for the OFPRA to reconstitute their civil status documents.

6.8. FOSTERING PARTICIPATION AND ENCOUNTERS WITH THE HOST SOCIETY

Seven EMN Member Countries[640] and the Republic of Moldova reported an increase in the provision of initiatives to foster participation and encounters between third-country nationals and the host society. Initiatives focused on institutionalised dialogue, volunteer-led mentorship and intercultural mediation,[641] and were driven by the need to combat rising social isolation[642] and to transition towards sustainable social cohesion.[643] They aimed to facilitate interactive low-threshold activities such as sports and cultural events,[644] build trust through interest-based networks and volunteer counselling and mediation,[645] and empower migrants as active citizens through storytelling and civic engagement training.[646]

In the Slovak Republic, the City of Trnava established the Community Connectors programme, a volunteer civic orientation initiative for migrants that supports civic engagement, storytelling and the formation of an active group of foreign nationals involved in public life, integration policy development, and dialogue between communities and the municipality. Slovenia launched the Strengthening Intercultural Dialogue programme in the cities of Ljubljana, Velenje, Koper and Izola, establishing a network of intercultural mediators to assist third-country nationals, BIP, BoTP and other foreign residents to overcome language and cultural barriers in public institutions. These programmes aim to facilitate access to state, educational and health institutions for foreigners while easing the work of public employees. They respond to the challenges faced by migrants due to language barriers during their integration into the host society and seek to create scalable peer-to peer models of civic participation.

6.9. FIGHTING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Driven mainly by a rise in antisemitic and extremist incidents following global conflicts,[647] the need to counter discrimination, reduce intercultural barriers and strengthen social cohesion in the context of migration[648] as well as the requirement to align national strategies with the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025,[649] 16

630 DE, LT and UA.
631 EL, IE.
632 BG and MD.
633 IE.
634 LT and UA.
635 AT, BE, IT, LV and MD.
636 AT, IT.
637 BE.
638 IT and MD.
639 IT and MD.
640 BE, CZ, EE, EL, FI, SI, SK.
641 SI.
642 SK.
643 EE, SK and MD.
644 CZ.
645 EE, SI.
646 SK.
647 AT, DE, FR.
648 BG, CY, CZ, EE.
649 DE, FI, FR, LU.

EMN Member and two Observer Countries[650] strengthened their legal and policy frameworks to combat racism and discrimination. Mainstream measures included the adoption of comprehensive national action plans in Luxembourg, Malta, and Croatia, alongside the establishment of independent oversight bodies for victim assistance and offender sanctioning in Spain and Moldova. Targeted measures[651] specifically addressed third-country nationals. Italy and Germany expanded community-based *'Antennae'* and counselling networks to detect discriminatory incidents at the local level.

650 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IT, LU, MT, PT, SE, and UA, MD.
651 AT, DE, EE, IT, SE.

7. CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

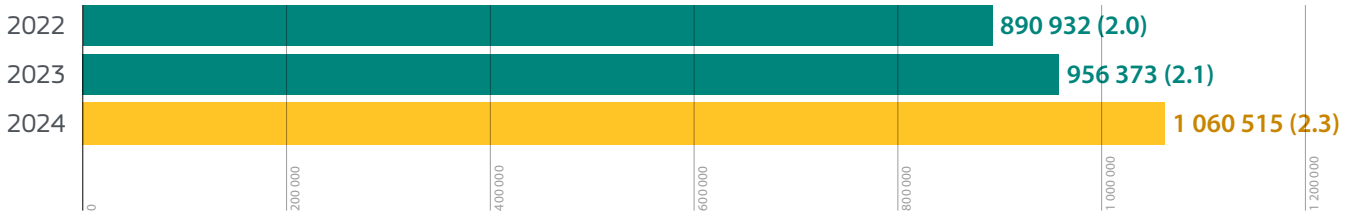
7.1. INTRODUCTION

In 2025, 11 EMN Member Countries,[652] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine reported legal and policy developments in citizenship and statelessness. Citizenship policy, which remains a national competence, evolved to reflect one main trend, with several measures reinforcing integration requirements and tightening residence conditions for acquiring citizenship.[653] Five EMN Member Countries[654] and Ukraine strengthened security checks and increased oversight of citizenship frameworks in response to concerns about the integrity and security of nationality.

At EU level, against the background of the Pact, the EUAA produced new practical tools to guide the identification of stateless persons. National developments focused on strengthening the legal regulation of statelessness,[655] aligning national frameworks with international commitments,[656] clarifying procedures to identify or determine statelessness,[657] and refining residence-related rights for stateless persons,[658] often driven by the need to enhance the protection of human rights and comply with international obligations.

The number of third-country nationals acquiring citizenship in the EU and Norway, grew to over one million in 2024 compared to over 950 000 in 2023 (see Figure 14). Syria, Morocco and Albania were the top three countries of non-EU citizens acquiring citizenship in the EU and Norway in 2024, as in 2023. (See Figure 15)

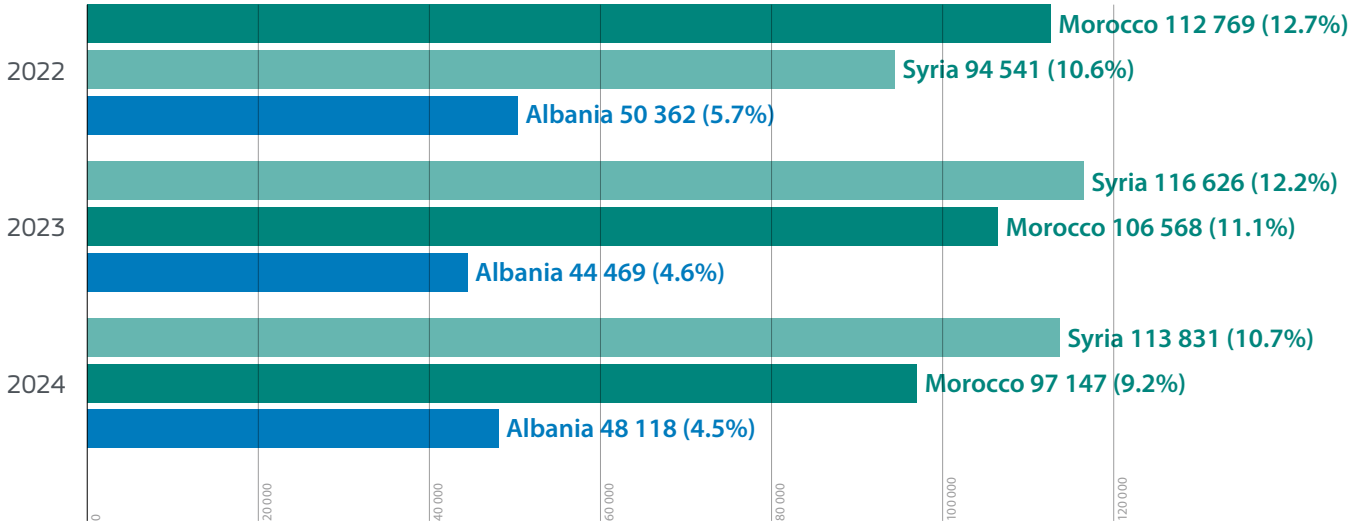
Figure 14: Third-country nationals who acquired citizenship, EU and Norway, 2022–2024



Source: Eurostat (migr_acq and migr_pop1ctz), date of extraction 10 April 2026.
2025 data was not available at time of publication.

652 AT, BE, CZ, DE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, PL, SE.
653 DE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU.
654 CZ, IE, IT, PL, SE.
655 IT, SI and UA.
656 AT, IT, SI.
657 AT, FI, IT.
658 FI, IT and UA

Figure 15: Top three countries of non-EU citizens acquiring citizenship, EU and Norway, 2022-2024



Source: Eurostat (migr_acq), date of extraction 10 April 2026.

7.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

Since the introduction of EU citizenship, individuals who are citizens of an EU Member State automatically hold EU citizenship, a status that grants them additional rights and privileges. However, EU Member States maintain full competence to establish the conditions for acquiring national citizenship[659] and to identify stateless persons and strengthen their protection where appropriate.[660]

At EU level, migration and asylum legislation[661] includes provisions on the recognition and protection of stateless individuals. In the context of the Pact, Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 (the Screening Regulation)[662],[663] and the Asylum Procedure Regulation[664] introduced new provisions to improve the identification of stateless persons. In March 2025, the EUAA published the Practical Guide on Nationality: Concepts related to nationality and statelessness in the context of international protection.[665] The guide covers the asylum legal framework both pre- and post-application of the Pact. Its purpose is to provide a framework for understanding the concepts of nationality and statelessness in the context of the assessment of the need for international protection. Designed to address common misunderstandings and build knowledge about nationality and statelessness, it is targeted primarily at asylum determination case officers.

7.3. ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP

7.3.1. Acquisition of citizenship

In 2025, 11 EMN Member Countries,[666] the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine reported developments in relation to the acquisition of citizenship for legally residing third-country nationals.

Developments largely aimed to tighten the conditions for citizenship acquisition, motivated by efforts to strengthen integration outcomes and civic participation,[667] reinforce the integrity and security of citizenship frameworks (including preventing fraud and misuse),[668] and recalibrate access to nationality by tightening residence, descent and procedural requirements.[669]

659 European Parliament, Acquisition and loss of citizenship in EU Member States: Overview and key issues, 2018, accessed 23 February 2026.
660 European Parliament, Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU, Recital 24 of the Asylum Procedure Regulation, accessed 16 March 2026.
661 European Union, Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast); European Union, Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast), accessed 7 June 2026.
662 European Parliament, Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 introducing the screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817, accessed 23 February 2026.
663 Ireland cannot opt in to the Screening Regulation as it is a Schengen measure, but has indicated that it will align its procedures with the regulation.
664 European Parliament, Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU, accessed 23 February 2026.
665 EUAA, Practical Guide on Nationality: Concepts related to nationality and statelessness in the context of international protection, 2025, accessed 23 February 2026.
666 AT, BE, CZ, DE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, PL, SE.
667 AT, DE, FR.
668 CZ, DE, FI, IE, SE and UA.
669 BE, DE, FR, IT, IE, LU and UA.

France reinforced integration requirements for the acquisition of citizenship, in accordance with Republican principles, through the introduction of a civic examination, higher language proficiency thresholds, and strengthened civic orientation measures. Germany amended its Nationality Act to remove the option for accelerated access to citizenship based on exceptional integration, reestablishing a general requirement of at least five years of legal residence prior to naturalisation. Austria announced stricter integration requirements for citizenship, including a mandatory B2-level German language requirement and the completion of a compulsory citizenship course focusing on democracy, European fundamental values and gender equality.

Other developments were driven by the need to strengthen the integrity, security and state oversight of citizenship frameworks and to tighten procedural safeguards.[670] Due to security concerns linked to Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, the Czech Republic adopted Act No. 24/2025 Coll. to restrict the acquisition of Czech citizenship by Russian nationals. To safeguard the citizenship process from fraud and security risks, in January 2025 the Swedish government instructed the Swedish Migration Agency to strengthen security checks in citizenship examinations. This led to enhanced background checks and verification of identity and residence status.

Six EMN Member Countries[671] and Ukraine introduced measures to recalibrate access to citizenship, reflecting adjustments to residence- and descent-based acquisition rules. Italy substantially revised its citizenship framework by narrowing automatic acquisition through *iure sanguinis* and introducing residence-based conditions for descendants and minors. Luxembourg tightened option-based access to nationality for persons born in the country by applying Article 26 of the amended Nationality Law, which reinforces residence requirements for both applicants and their parents. Ireland increased the residence requirement for BIP from three to five years and published formal guidelines clarifying the criteria and assessment framework for naturalisation based on Irish descent or associations, although the Minister for Justice still retains discretion.

7.3.2. Digitalisation and/or use of new technologies

In 2025, Italy and Luxembourg reported digitalisation-related developments in the processing of citizenship applications. Luxembourg reported that, as of 1 July 2025, a new digital system is available to track the status of applications for the acquisition and recovery of Luxembourg nationality. Italy reported targeted digital updates on the CIVES portal to short and partial procedural segments of the pre-screening phase for citizenship applications by naturalisation and by marriage.

7.4. STATELESSNESS

7.4.1. Legal regulation of statelessness

In 2025, Italy and Slovenia reported developments related to statelessness, with the common objective of regulating statelessness and strengthening the protection of human rights. Italy reported that the Ministry of the Interior joined the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, an international network promoting and facilitating the exchange of good practices to prevent and reduce statelessness worldwide. Slovenia reported its ratification of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in January 2025, thereby committing to preventing and regulating statelessness in a comprehensive manner.

7.4.2. Dedicated statelessness determination procedures or other procedures to identify or determine statelessness

Austria and Italy reported country-specific developments related to procedures for identifying or determining statelessness. In Austria, the government coalition[672] is examining the introduction of an accessible, fair and efficient procedure for determining statelessness, in line with the obligations under the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and relevant parts of the EU acquis. Italy defined guidelines to strengthen coordination between the asylum procedure and the statelessness determination procedure (SDP), to ensure smoother case management and more effective protection for persons whose status may fall under both procedures.

7.4.3. Issuance of residence permits and rights granted to recognised stateless persons

In 2025, Finland issued guidance clarifying how to determine Palestinian citizenship status[673] and what constitutes valid national travel documents for residence permit applications. This aimed to enable the assessment of whether Palestinian citizens – previously considered stateless – are eligible to obtain a residence permit. Italy introduced new cases of acquisition of citizenship by operation of law for minor foreign nationals or stateless persons following the adoption of new legislation.[674] In Ukraine, legislative amendments revised the conditions for the acquisition of citizenship by stateless persons, introducing a requirement of continuous permanent residence and restructuring the residence pathway preceding eligibility for naturalisation.

670 CZ, DE, FI, IE, SE and UA.
671 BE, DE, FR, IT, IE, LU.
672 Austrian People's Party, Social Democratic Party of Austria, NEOS.
673 Finnish Immigration Service, Determination of citizenship status and definition of national travel document for residence permit applications reviewed by Finnish Immigration Service, Press release, 3 October 2025, accessed 18 March 2026.
674 Normattiva, Il Portale della Legge Vigente, n.d., accessed 14 April 2026

8. SCHENGEN GOVERNANCE AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN BORDER MANAGEMENT AND VISA POLICY

8.1. INTRODUCTION

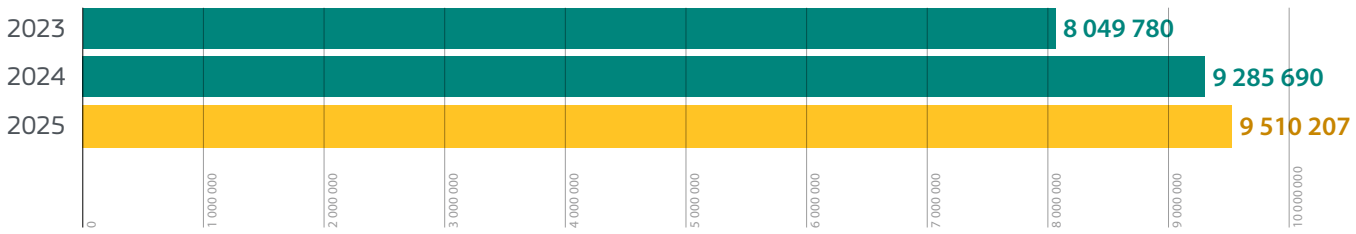
The majority of the developments related to the Schengen area were driven by EU legislative requirements or the need to improve the practical efficiency and effectiveness of border management systems, including border checks and visa processing.

Key EU milestones included Bulgaria and Romania becoming full members of the Schengen Area on 1 January 2025, as well as the launch of the EES in October 2025, with implementation ongoing in EMN Member Countries[675] and Norway. EU developments also related to visa policy, such as an approved reform to the visa suspension mechanism under the Visa Regulation.[676] The EU partially suspended the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the Facilitation of the Issuance of Visas, reintroducing visa requirements for holders of diplomatic and service passports.[677]

In response to concerns about irregular migration in certain EMN Member Countries,[678] trafficking in human beings,[679] security needs[680] and public health concerns,[681] five EMN Member Countries[682] extended the implementation of temporary internal border controls and two[683] introduced temporary border controls. To enhance regional security, seven EMN Member Countries[684] reported new police cooperation agreements to strengthen internal border surveillance within Schengen and four[685] enhanced cooperation on border issues with non-Schengen countries. Serbia adopted an agreement with North Macedonia on joint controls for international traffic at their respective border crossings.

The number of Schengen uniform short-stay visas issued in the EU and Norway increased to over 9 500 000 in 2025 compared to nearly 9 300 000 in 2024. (See Figure 16 below). The detection of illegal border crossings at the external borders of the EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries dropped from 240 286 in 2024 to 180 211 in 2025 (-25%) (see Figure 17).

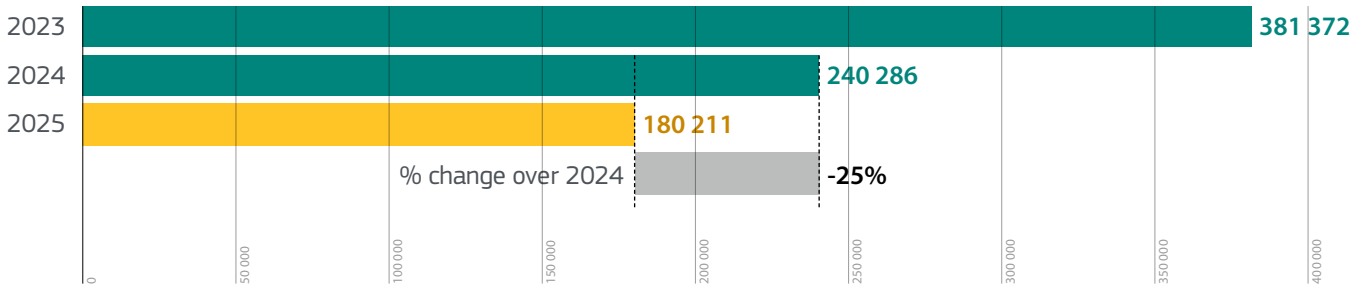
Figure 16: Number of Schengen uniform short-stay visas issued, EU and Norway, 2023–2025



Source: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, date of extraction 1 June 2026.

675 All EMN Member Countries except CY and IE.
676 European Parliament Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (codification) (Visa Regulation), accessed 18 March 2026.
677 European Commission, Communication from the Commission – Providing guidelines on the implementation of Council Decision (EU) 2025/170 of 27 January 2025 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas and on the application by Member States of Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 as regards holders of diplomatic passports, service/official passports and special passports issued by Georgia, accessed 8 July 2026.
678 AT, DE, NL, PL, SE.
679 NL.
680 DE, SE, SI.
681 SK.
682 AT, DE, NL, SE, SI.
683 PL, SK.
684 BG, CZ, EE, HU, LT, LU, LV.
685 AT, HR, PL, SI and RS.

Figure 17: Total annual number of illegal border crossings detected at the external borders of the EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries, 2023–2025



Source: Frontex data as of June 2026.

8.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

In 2025, the EU celebrated 40 years since the Schengen Agreement, with Bulgaria and Romania becoming full members of the Schengen area on 1 January.[686]

In line with the interoperability framework established under EU law, the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) prepared an updated interoperability roadmap, which was approved by its management board on 20 February 2025. The updated roadmap was subsequently endorsed by ministers of the EU Member States at the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 5 March 2025.[687] The plan set out a detailed and coordinated timetable for the phased rollout of EU large-scale IT systems in the fields of migration, asylum, border management and security in 2025 and 2026, including the gradual start of the EES in October 2025.

The launch of the EES on 12 October 2025 was part of this plan.[688] This new border management system, set to become fully operational in 29 European countries by April 2026, digitally records entries and exits, as well as data from the passport, fingerprints and facial images of third-country nationals travelling for short stays in the Schengen area. The launch was accompanied by an information campaign by the European Commission, prepared in cooperation with the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), national authorities and experts.[689]

Several developments concerned EU visa policy. The European Parliament and Council of the EU approved a reform[690] to the visa suspension mechanism under the Visa Regulation[691] to make the mechanism more responsive to evolving security and migration challenges. It sets out visa requirements for citizens of third countries travelling to the Schengen area, including who is exempt from applying for a visa. The updated rules introduce new grounds for the suspension of visa-free travel, such as the use of so-called golden passports and violations of international law, including international human rights or humanitarian law, and non-compliance with international court decisions.[692]

In January 2025, the Council of the EU decided to suspend visa-free travel for Georgian diplomats and officials, inviting EU Member States to adopt parallel national measures.[693] In November 2025, the European Commission decided to suspend the possibility for Russian nationals to receive multi-entry visas.[694] By contrast, the EU adopted a new 'cascade' regime for Turkish citizens applying for a short-stay Schengen visa:[695] upon meeting the eligibility criteria, Turkish nationals may be issued a longer-validity, multi-entry Schengen visa. The EU also adopted a new 'cascade' regime for short-stay Schengen visa for Indonesian nationals,[696] Belizean nationals,[697] and for visa-required legal permanent residents of the US.[698]

686 European Commission, Bulgaria and Romania join the Schengen Area, News Article, 3 January 2025, accessed 19 February 2026.
687 Council of the EU, Justice and Home Affairs Council (Home Affairs), 5 March 2025, accessed 15 July 2026.
688 European Union, Entry/Exit System (EES), n.d., accessed 19 February 2026.
689 European Commission, Commission launches information campaign to inform travellers about the Entry/Exit System, Press release 24 September 2025, accessed 19 February 2026.
690 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2025/2441 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 November 2025 amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 as regards the revision of the suspension mechanism, accessed 18 March 2026.
691 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement, accessed 19 February 2026.
692 Council of the EU, Council greenlights new EU rules for the suspension of visa-free travel for third countries, Press release, 17 November 2025, accessed 18 March 2026.
693 Council of the EU, Georgia: Council suspends visa-free travel for diplomats and officials, Press release, 27 January 2025, accessed 18 March 2026.
European Commission, Communication from the Commission – Providing guidelines on the implementation of Council Decision (EU) 2025/170 of 27 January 2025 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas and on the application by Member States of Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 as regards holders of diplomatic passports, service/official passports and special passports issued by Georgia, 27 January 2025, accessed 15 July 2026.
694 European Commission, Commission Implementing Decision of 6.11.2025 establishing adapted rules on the issuing of multiple-entry visas to Russian nationals residing in the Russian Federation and applying in the Russian Federation for short-stay visas, accessed 18 March 2026.
695 European Commission, New rules for Turkish citizens applying for Schengen visas, Press release 28 July 2025, accessed 19 February 2026.
696 European Commission, Commission Implementing Decision C(2025)4947 about Multiple-entry visas (Indonesia), accessed 19 June 2026.
697 European Commission, Commission Implementing Decision C(2025)7511 establishing adapted rules on the issuing of multiple-entry visas to Belizean nationals residing in Belize and applying in Guatemala or Mexico for short-stay visas, accessed 19 June 2026.
698 European Commission, Commission Implementing Decision C(2025)4038 about Multiple-entry visas (USA), accessed 19 June 2026.

The Council of the EU adopted a negotiating position on the proposed EU Digital Travel app in November.[699] The Council agreed that the app would entail three components: a mobile component (a mobile app), a backend validation service, and a traveller router. The European Parliament's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) Committee announced its decision to enter interinstitutional negotiations in December.[700]

The new European Internal Security Strategy, ProtectEU,[701] emphasises the importance of strengthening external border security, particularly in the context of weaponisation of migration. It highlights the need to improve interoperability through the implementation of large-scale EU information systems (e.g. EES, ETIAS, revised VIS) to provide EU Member States with essential information on individuals from third countries crossing external borders, helping authorities to assess the conditions to authorise entry, as well as whether there is a potential security risk for the Schengen area. The European Commission announced plans to continue countering migrant smuggling by leading the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling, in cooperation with Europol, the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), and Frontex (see Chapter 9).

8.3. SCHENGEN AREA

Box 22: Cyprus' preparation for Schengen accession

To achieve technical readiness for accession to the Schengen area, Cyprus completed the following actions:

- Appointed a national coordinator for preparatory actions for Schengen accession;
- Implemented a fully operational and EU-compliant national VIS;
- Nominated the competent national authority responsible for the EES;
- Launched a project under a Cypriot-Austrian government cooperation agreement, to provide an end-to-end solution for the implementation of EES in Cyprus after its accession to the Schengen area, set up the national interoperability framework, and support Cyprus to implement Regulations (EU) 2019/817 and 2019/818 (the Interoperability Regulations).[702]

8.3.1. Schengen Governance

Seven EMN Member Countries[703] implemented measures in line with outcomes and recommendations in Schengen evaluations. The Slovak Republic and Sweden completed action plans in response to the evaluations. Finland adopted legislative amendments on the review of detention decisions and the geographical scope of entry bans, in addition to registering biometric identifiers to Schengen Information System (SIS) alerts. Following its accession to the Schengen area, Bulgaria underwent its first periodic Schengen evaluation.

8.4. EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF SCHENGEN

8.4.1. Implementation of Schengen visas (short-stay)

Nine EMN Member Countries[704] reported national legal or policy developments related to the implementation of Schengen visas. Five EMN Member Countries[705] implemented changes to ensure compliance with CJEU case-law, which held that EU law required EU Member States to establish a procedure for contesting visa refusal decisions that ensured the possibility of judicial review.[706] A ruling of the Supreme Court of Estonia declared four provisions of applicable national law unconstitutional and invalid, insofar as they prevented an appeal to the Administrative Court regarding visa applications when the applicant was present in Estonia during the visa process. Malta adjusted its visa processing logistics to enhance efficiency in different locations after a review of the Visa Application Centre network.[707]

Belgium and Germany took measures to facilitate the processing of high volumes of visa applications. Belgium expanded its consular network by opening five new Visa Application Centres in Türkiye, Morocco, South Africa and Bangladesh. Germany abolished supplementary procedures for contesting visa application decisions, meaning that objections to a rejection of a visa application may now only be filed with the Berlin Administrative Court. As a result of greater capacity for processing short-stay visas abroad,

699 Council of the EU, Council adopts negotiating position on new law that introduces EU digital travel application, Press release, 19 November 2025, accessed 19 February 2026; European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an application for the electronic submission of travel data (EU Digital Travel application), accessed 19 February 2026.
700 European Parliament Legislative Observatory, Application for the electronic submission of travel data (EU Digital Travel application): use of digital travel credentials, 2024/0670(COD), accessed 19 February 2026.
701 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on ProtectEU: a European Internal Security Strategy, 2025, accessed 19 February 2026.
702 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2019/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration and amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1726, (EU) 2018/1862 and (EU) 2019/816, accessed 29 June 2026.
703 BE, BG, FI, LT, PT, SI, SK.
704 BE, BG, DE, EE, EL, FI, LT, LV, MT.
705 BE, EE, EL, MT, LV.
706 CJEU, Case C-403/16, accessed 24 March 2026.
707 European Union, Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code), accessed 24 March 2026.

Estonia and Lithuania amended their visa representation agreements, terminating mutual representation in Australia, Kazakhstan and Russia.

Bulgaria and Greece adopted legislative amendments to national visa procedures, aligning practices with harmonised Schengen procedures and improving efficiency. Following Schengen accession, Bulgaria implemented a strategic project to strengthen the legal, functional and technical framework governing national visa application processing. Greece optimised the implementation of specific provisions of its national visa code to clarify requirements and facilitate applications.

Belgium and Lithuania introduced digitalised Schengen visa application procedures, with Lithuania doing so in the context of a broader modernisation of migration procedures.

Due to serious cases of labour exploitation in the Finnish berrypicking industry, Finland amended its national legislation to eliminate the possibility of obtaining Type C short-stay Schengen visas for wild berrypicking.

8.4.2. External Schengen border management

Most EMN Member Countries[708] and Norway reported developments in external border management. These included measures to implement principles of EIBM,[709] as well as in the context of large-scale IT systems for border and migration management,[710] and their interoperability.[711]

European Integrated Border Management (EIBM)

Eight EMN Member Countries[712] and Norway reported developments related to EIBM. Five EMN Member Countries[713] reported new measures to enhance cooperation with Frontex. Belgium and Luxembourg both established a legal basis for the deployment of Frontex Standing Corps to support external border management and return operations. Estonia set up a new Frontex regional command office to increase external border security in eastern and northern Europe.

Five countries[714] had their national integrated border management strategy approved. Notably, the Slovak Republic's national migration strategy, adopted in June 2025, emphasised the implementation of the Smart Borders Package, increasing the level of automation in border checks and enhancing the interoperability of national information systems within the EIBM.

Entry/Exit System (EES)

Twenty-two EMN Member Countries[715] and Norway reported developments related to the rollout of the EES. Twenty-nine countries[716] initiated the rollout of EES[717] at national level. Four EMN Member Countries[718] reported having fully implemented[719] EES at all border crossing points.

Six EMN Member Countries[720] adapted their national laws to ensure that the domestic legal framework governing the system's application was compliant.

European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)

Nine EMN Member Countries[721] reported activities supporting the technical development and implementation of the ETIAS system at national level in line with EU requirements. Five EMN Member Countries[722] implemented measures concerning the establishment and capacity-building of ETIAS National Units (ENUs). Croatia introduced legal provisions regulating the processing of personal data stored in the ETIAS and EES, alongside the provision of relevant information to third-country nationals.

Schengen Information System (SIS)

Austria streamlined its administrative processes by introducing secure web forms for SIS deletion requests to reduce processing times and follow-up queries.

Visa Information System (VIS)

Belgium, Slovenia and Sweden reported developments linked to VIS.[723] To anticipate the implementation of the revised VIS Regulation, Sweden amended its national legislation, expanding VIS to cover long-stay visas and residence permits and widening authorised access once the system is in place. Belgium reported decommissioning the legacy VIS application at the Belgian Immigration Office, replacing it with the Smart Borders VIS module.

Slovenia and Sweden developed national VIS components. Sweden cited the need to anticipate the implementation of the revised VIS Regulation, while Slovenia cited the need to comply with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 (the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) Regulation).[724]

708 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.
709 BE, CY, DE, EE, LT, LU, PL, SI and NO.
710 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and NO.
711 BE, LV, SE, SI, SK.
712 BE, CY, DE, EE, LT, LU, PL, SI.
713 BE, DE, EE, LU, SI.
714 CY, LT, LU, PL and NO.
715 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.
716 EU Member States (except CY, IE) and NO, IS, LI, CH.
717 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2017 establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data and refusal of entry data of third-country nationals crossing the ex-ternal borders of the Member States and determining the conditions for access to the EES for law en-forcement purposes, and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement and Regula-tions (EC) No 767/2008 and (EU) No 1077/2011, accessed 29 June 2026.
718 CZ, EE, LV, SE.
719 Fully operational means at all border crossing points, for all relevant third-country nationals, with the full use of biometric functionalities.
720 BE, EE, HR, NL, PL, SE.
721 AT, EL, FI, HR, LT, PL, SE, SI, SK.
722 EL, FI, LT, SI, SK.
723 BE, SE, SI.
724 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1052/2013 and (EU) 2016/1624, accessed 27 March 2026.

Interoperability between EU information systems on migration

Three EMN Member Countries[725] reported advancing technical and operational implementation of the Interoperability Regulations at national level. Latvia analysed the overall architecture, functionality, supported business processes and limitations of the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Police, the State Border Guard, and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs' information systems (IS) to feed into a new interoperability IS concept and implementation plan. Slovenia prepared to connect national systems and authorities with the EU interoperability framework. This included preparing for technical integration with the shared biometric matching service (sBMS), the common identity repository (CIR), multiple identity detector (MID), and European search portal (ESP), as well as national application upgrades, security controls, testing environments and operational procedures ensuring compliant use of interoperability services.

Other

Cyprus and Austria amended their MoU to include smart border management as a field of cooperation and best practice exchange between them.

8.4.3. Situation at the internal borders

Sixteen EMN Member Countries[726] reported developments linked to internal borders. Five EMN Member Countries[727] extended the implementation of temporary internal border controls, citing threats linked to irregular migration and secondary movements,[728] trafficking in human beings,[729] and security.[730] Poland and the Slovak Republic introduced temporary border controls, responding to persistent migratory pressure and secondary movements,[731] as well as the need to eliminate contagious diseases affecting livestock and related economic damage.[732] Responding to risks of migration instrumentalisation, the Czech Republic adopted legal measures enabling the temporarily closure of certain border crossing points.

Seven EMN Member Countries[733] reported strengthening agreements on police cooperation along Schengen internal borders to ensure effective cross-border collaboration and enhance regional security. France adopted national procedures for issuing the transfer of third-country nationals apprehended in border areas, implementing the revised Article 23 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1717 (Schengen Borders Code).[734] Luxembourg filed a complaint with the European Commission that Germany's implementation of border checks violates the Schengen Agreement.

Following Schengen accession, Bulgaria lifted checks at land borders with countries fully applying the Schengen acquis.

Other developments in border management and visa policy

Fifteen EMN Member Countries,[735] Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia changed their visa policy falling under national competence. Nine countries[736] also reported new border management measures outside the Schengen acquis.

8.4.4. Border management

Six EMN Member Countries,[737] Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia took measures related to their external borders, falling under national competence. Five[738] reported enhancing cross-border cooperation at external borders, driven by existing border protection agreements,[739] the desire to ensure smooth cross-border movements for local communities[740] and the need for assistance in preventing illegal migration (see Chapter 9).[741]

Two EMN Member Countries[742] and Georgia reported developments to modernise and strengthen border infrastructure, driven by the need to improve identity verification capabilities and data-driven analysis,[743] ensure better protection at EU external borders[744] and support transfers[745] under the AMMR.[746] Georgia reported expanding its border management capabilities, including specific technical assets and software for border management. Estonia achieved several milestones in developing its South-Eastern border construction, including new surveillance technology and infrastructure to rapidly close border crossing points. Latvia and Lithuania strengthened their border security regime at external border crossing points with Belarus, responding to Russia's ongoing military actions (Latvia) and escalating hybrid threats from Belarus (Lithuania).

The Republic of Moldova adopted legislative amendments to align its national regulatory framework with the requirements of the EU Eurodac system and the Interoperability Regulations. Serbia adopted an action plan for the implementation of the national Strategy for Integrated Border Management 2022–2027 to align with EU standards and Schengen policy.

725 BE, LV, SI.
726 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, FR, HU, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK.
727 AT, DE, NL, SE, SI.
728 AT, BE, DE, NL, SE.
729 NL.
730 DE, SE, SI.
731 PL.
732 SK.
733 BG, CZ, EE, HU, LT, LU, LV.
734 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code), accessed 24 March 2026.
735 BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, NL, LV, SE, SI, SK.
736 AT, EE, HR, IE, PL, SI and GE, MD, RS.
737 AT, EE, HR, IE, PL, SI.
738 AT, HR, PL, SI and RS.
739 AT.
740 PL and RS.
741 HR, SI and RS.
742 EE, IE and GE.
743 GE.
744 EE.
745 IE.
746 European Union, Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, accessed 24 March 2026.

8.4.5. Visa policy under national competence

Fourteen EMN Member Countries,[747] Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia reported developments to their national visa policy.

Three EMN Member Countries[748] integrated their national visa registers with the EES. Estonia additionally integrated its national visa register with the national automated biometric identification system (ABIS) database.

Three EMN Member Countries[749] and Georgia reported developments linked to the digitalisation of national visa procedures. Following the CJEU judgment in Case C-1/23,[750] which stipulated that EU law precludes national legislation which, without exception, requires an application for family reunification to be submitted in person to a competent diplomatic post, the Belgian Federal Ombudsman recommended developing a legal framework allowing for remote digital submission of applications and alternative verification methods for long-stay (Type D) visas. Ireland introduced the possibility to complete online payments for some countries as part of its visa application procedures, implementing strategic commitments to accelerate the digital transformation of customer-facing services.

Box 23: Lithuania's transition to a new digital visa processing system

In 2025, Lithuania transitioned to a new MIGRIS-based visa application system for both Schengen visas and national visas, replacing the previous Electronic Application Module (EPM)portal. This improved the handling of visa data by ensuring that applications are processed within a single system and that data is transmitted directly to VIS, to be used consistently across consular and migration procedures.

This solution supports more coherent and streamlined visa data processing at both national and EU level. As of March 2025, certain Lithuanian consular posts began accepting Schengen visa applications only if completed through MIGRIS.

In six EMN Member Countries,[751] Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia, developments concerned changes to the list of countries whose citizens or holders of diplomatic, service or official passports would be eligible for visa-exempt travel, as well as visa application procedures.

Two EMN Member Countries,[752] Georgia, Ukraine and Serbia introduced restrictions for specific nationalities, driven by developments in international relations,[753] regional migration trends,[754] the desire to strengthen effective migration control[755] and to achieve harmonisation with EU visa policy.[756] France suspended its agreement with Algeria on short-stay visa exemption for holders of diplomatic or service passports, following Algeria's decision to cease applying the agreement. Ireland introduced visa requirements for Trinidad and Tobago, in line with Common Travel Area cooperation arrangements with the United Kingdom (UK). Visa requirements were also introduced for Eswatini, Lesotho and Nauru to bring Ireland in line with the UK and Schengen countries.

Five EMN Member Countries,[757] Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia introduced new visa exemptions, motivated by strengthened diplomatic relations,[758] improvements to migration control,[759] the need to facilitate the arrival of foreigners working for major strategic investors,[760] and to align national legislation with EU rules.[761] The Slovak Republic adopted legal measures to facilitate the granting of national long-stay visas to strategic investors from the People's Republic of China, reflecting the promotion of trade relations and the development of investments. Driven by shared objectives in migration management, such as linking visa facilitation measures with readmission arrangements, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (the Benelux countries) concluded bilateral agreements with Suriname, Belize and Kyrgyzstan. These agreements foresee reciprocal short-stay visa exemptions for holders of diplomatic, service and official passports, as well as formal readmission agreements to establish procedures for the identification and return of persons residing irregularly in the territory of the Benelux countries or the respective partner countries.

Six EMN Member Countries[762] introduced various restrictions for visa applications and travel for Russian nationals, with two countries[763] citing the European Commission's 2025 Implementing Decision.[764] Responding to Council Decision (EU) 2025/170,[765] seven EMN Member Countries[766] and Norway introduced a visa requirement for service and diplomatic passports of Georgia. Norway also introduced this requirement.

Following the approval of a new Immigration Regulation, Spain introduced a residence visa for family members of Spanish nationals, as well as the possibility to approve job search visas for children or grandchildren of Spaniards by origin.

747 BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, NL, LV, SE, SI, SK.
748 EE, EL, MT.
749 BE, IE, LT and GE.
750 CJEU, Case C-1/23 PPU, accessed 24 March 2026.
751 BE, FR, IE, NL, SI, SK.
752 FR, IE.
753 FR and UA.
754 IE.
755 GE.
756 RS.
757 BE, LU, NL, SI, SK.
758 BE, NL, SI and UA, RS.
759 GE.
760 SK and UA.
761 MD.
762 CZ, EE, EL, FI, FR, LV.
763 EL, FI.
764 European Commission, Commission Implementing Decision of 6.11.2025 establishing adapted rules on the issuing of multiple-entry visas to Russian nationals residing in the Rus-sian Federation and applying in the Russian Federation for short-stay visas, accessed 24 March 2026.
765 Council of the EU, Council Decision (EU) 2025/170 of 27 January 2025 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, accessed 24 March 2026.
766 CZ, DE, EE, FR, LV, NL, SE.

9. IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING

9.1. INTRODUCTION

In 2025, countering migrant smuggling remained a key EU priority, reflected in reinforced legislative and operational measures, notably the strengthening of Europol's mandate via the revised Europol Regulation. The regulation strengthened Europol's support, enhancing police cooperation in preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. Reinforced international cooperation on the same topics was renewed at the second International Conference of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling.

At national level, key trends included the adoption of overarching legislative and strategic frameworks aimed at better controlling irregular migration flows[767] and reinforcing border management.[768]

Preventive measures focused on strengthening border-adjacent and internal controls,[769] introducing legislation strengthening criminal liability for migrant smuggling,[770] and deepening cooperation with third countries through MoU and readmission agreements.[771]

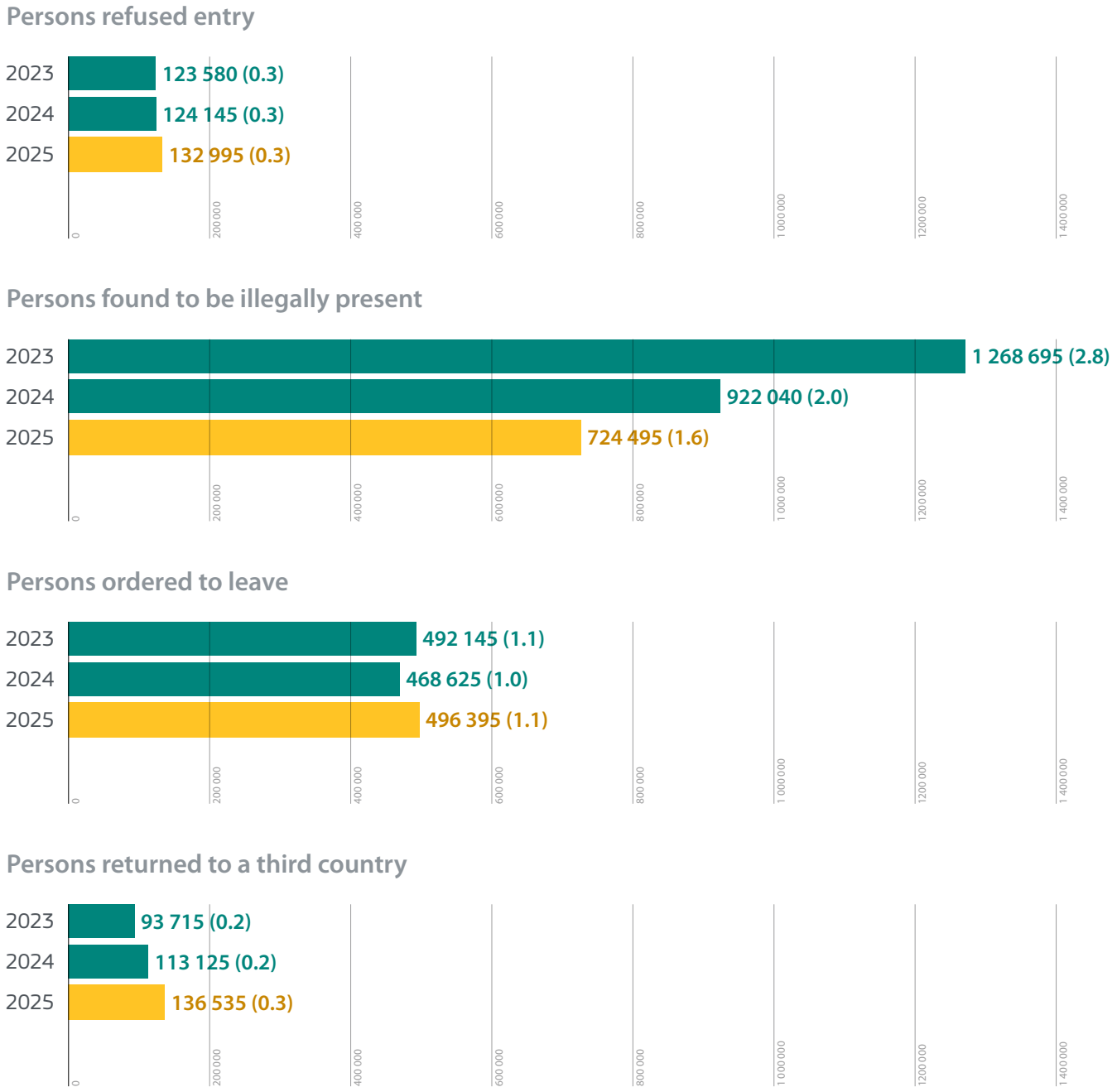
Belgium, Germany and Poland strengthened their border control practices through targeted internal and border-adjacent measures. Lithuania adopted legislative amendments. The Slovak Republic and Ukraine proposed draft laws to reinforce criminal liability for migrant smuggling.

Developments to prevent irregular stay included measures to reinforce sanctioning frameworks targeting unauthorised stay and employment.[772] Five EMN Member Countries[773] introduced legal solutions and safeguards for irregularly staying migrants, including access to residence permits or visas.[774] Finland introduced a legislative amendment restricting access to non-urgent healthcare for migrants with irregular status, while maintaining emergency care.

In 2025 in the EU and Norway, persons refused entry, ordered to leave and returned to a third country, all went up slightly in 2025 compared to 2024, whilst the number of persons found to be illegally present dropped substantially from over 922 000 in 2024 to nearly 724 500 in 2025 (-21%) (see Figure 18).

767 BE, FR, IT, SK and GE, UA.
768 BE, DE, FR, LV, PL.
769 BE, DE, PL.
770 LT, SK and UA.
771 AT, FR, IT, SK and GE.
772 BE, CZ, EE, NL and GE, UA.
773 BE, EE, ES, LT, SI.
774 EE, ES, NL.

Figure 18: Third-country nationals subject to immigration law enforcement (absolute numbers and ratio per thousand population), EU and Norway 2023-2025



Source: Eurostat (migr_eirfs, migr_eipre, migr_eiord, migr_eirtn and demo_gind), date of extraction, 29 May 2026.

9.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

In 2025, countering the smuggling of migrants remained a key priority for the EU. In the 2025 State of the Union address, President Ursula von der Leyen announced the development of new initiatives to strengthen the response against smugglers and traffickers, including "a new sanctions regime to freeze their assets, restrict their freedom of movement and deprive them of their profits."

Following adoption of the Pact, the first Annual Asylum and Migration Report was published by the European Commission in November 2025.[775] It calls for reinforced cooperation with partner countries to help prevent irregular arrivals. It underlines that the Central Mediterranean route is expected to remain the most active migratory route to the EU, with irregular arrivals nevertheless projected to stabilise or decline as a result of reinforced cooperation

775 European Commission, The European Annual Asylum and Migration Report (2025), COM (2025) 795 final, accessed 18 February 2026.

between the EU and partner countries in North Africa and the broader region.

The Europol Regulation (amending Regulation 2016/794 regarding strengthening Europol's support and enhancing police cooperation, for preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings)[776] was formally adopted in December 2025 and entered into force 20 days later. The Regulation established the European Centre Against Migrant Smuggling (ECAMS) as a permanent structure within Europol, improved information sharing via the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) and reinforced data protection safeguards.

In 2025, work continued on the European Commission proposal for a Facilitation Directive.[777] On 26 March 2025, the European Parliament's LIBE Committee (LIBE rapporteur MEP Birgit Sippel (S&D, DE) presented a draft report[778] setting out proposed amendments to the European Commission proposal.

On 10 December 2025, the European Commission hosted the second International Conference of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling[779] in Brussels. The conference brought together more than 90 delegations from the EU and partners worldwide, along with international organisations and digital platforms, reflecting strong global interest in stepping up cooperation through a whole-of-route approach. The Global Alliance supports strengthened international cooperation to prevent and counter migrant smuggling, for example through stronger national frameworks, enhanced information-sharing, cooperation with digital platforms and measures to counter the use of commercial transport for irregular migration, such as air transport. It also includes improving enforcement through enhanced operational cooperation and financial investigations under a 'follow the money' approach. The Global Alliance promotes alternatives to irregular migration by facilitating and expanding safe and regular pathways, including through initiatives such as the EU Talent Pool and, where applicable, Talent Partnerships, while addressing the root causes of irregular migration in countries of origin and transit. The Joint Declaration on the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling was endorsed by more than 60 partners and remains open for endorsement.

9.3. OVERARCHING AND CROSS-CUTTING DEVELOPMENTS

Efforts in 2025 typically aimed to better control irregular migration flows (and strengthen return) through updated legislative frameworks or national strategies. The Slovak Republic and Belgium adopted national frameworks or strategies including measures to address irregular migration. Four EMN Member Countries[780] and Georgia adopted overarching legislation that included provisions related to irregular entry, stay and removal. France introduced legislation that provided authorities with additional tools to remove foreign nationals presenting a public order risk and clarified procedures for administrative detention. Driven by pressures on national reception and return systems and the need to adopt urgent measures to control irregular migration, Italy adopted amended provisions on the management of irregularly staying third-country nationals. Similarly, driven by migratory pressures flows along the Western Balkan route and the need to address organised criminal networks facilitating irregular migration and preserve the integrity of the external Schengen border, Slovenia amended the Foreigners Act and the Employment, Self-Employment and Work of Foreigners Act, while further strengthening operational measures by law enforcement authorities.

9.3.1. Digitalisation and/or use of new technologies

In 2025, Estonia, Lithuania and Georgia reported legal or policy developments related to digitalisation and the use of new technologies in the context of combating irregular migration. These were driven by the need to improve administrative efficiency, data reliability and the use of digital resources in a context of high operational demand, as well as by broader public sector digital transformation objectives.

Estonia reported that the ILLEGAAL2 database was being developed to process screening data in accordance with the Screening Regulation and to transmit the data to the Eurodac system in line with Regulation 2024/1358 (the Eurodac Regulation). Lithuania consulted with suppliers on the formulation of AI requirements and pilot testing of AI based solutions for video data analysis in border surveillance systems. In Georgia, legislative amendments on fighting irregular migration simplified the procedure for notifying foreign nationals of decisions on their return. These decisions are now served electronically on the personal profile page of the foreign national on the Migration Department website.

776 European Commission, Regulation (EU) 2025/2611 amending Regulation (EU) 2016/794 as regards the strengthening of Europol's support and enhancing police cooperation, for preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, accessed 18 February 2026.
777 European Commission, Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down minimum rules to prevent and counter the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and stay in the Union, and replacing Council Directive 2002/90/EC and Council Framework Decision 2002/946 JHA, accessed 2 June 2026
778 European Parliament, Minimum rules to prevent and counter the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and stay in the Union, accessed 18 February 2026.
779 European Commission, 2025 International Conference of the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling, accessed 18 February 2026.
780 FR, IT, PT, SI.

9.4. PREVENTING IRREGULAR ENTRY

9.4.1. Countering unauthorised entry and its facilitation

Belgium, Germany and Poland reported developments to strengthen border control practices (or border-adjacent measures) as part of broader efforts to combat the facilitation of unauthorised entry. These measures focused on internal and border-adjacent controls and were driven by concerns related to irregular migration, secondary movements, and the use of specific transit routes. Belgium and Germany strengthened internal controls through targeted police checks and coordinated operations. Belgium focused on joint actions by federal and local police at key transport hubs and transit corridors, while Germany intensified internal border checks to reinforce monitoring within the Schengen area. Poland adopted temporary restrictions in border-adjacent areas, including a ban on staying in designated zones along the Polish–Belarusian border, reflecting persisting high migration pressure instrumentalised by Belarus.

Estonia, Latvia and Poland reported operational and infrastructure developments in border management and internal controls, largely to prevent irregular entry amid the evolving geopolitical situation and increased pressure at external borders. Measures focused on strengthening border surveillance, including the construction of a fence along the Latvian–Russian border, major investments by Poland along the Polish–Belarusian border (e.g. electronic barriers, patrol roads, drones, observation towers) and the completion of around 110 kilometres (km) of Estonia's south-eastern border, alongside upgraded surveillance systems, reinforced border crossing points, the Narva control centre and new surveillance towers.

An MoU between Croatia, Italy and Slovenia strengthened trilateral cooperation on preventing irregular migration. The three countries coordinate closely through information exchange on irregular migration and related cross-border crime, supported by existing channels and operational working groups. This is complemented by permanent contact points to monitor and adapt cooperation, as well as the deployment of joint trilateral patrols at the Croatian external border, ensuring a coordinated and operational response in line with the EU legal framework. Serbia adopted the Law ratifying the agreement between Serbia and North Macedonia on joint controls at the Preševo–Tabanovce border crossing, strengthening bilateral cooperation to prevent irregular migration.

Legislative amendments were introduced or proposed to strengthen the criminal liability of migrant smugglers. In Lithuania, amendments to the criminal law regulating the offence of smuggling migrants across the state border entered into force. The Slovak Republic and Ukraine proposed draft legislation to reinforce sanctions related to migrant smuggling, including extending the criminal offence to activities affecting the borders of EU Member States[781] and strengthening liability for organising the unauthorised entry of persons into countries.[782]

Prevention, identification and/or investigation of fraudulent acquisition and use of false documents

Four EMN Member countries[783] and Georgia implemented measures to prevent the use of false documents to combat cross-border crime and irregular migration. In view of patterns of misuse of intra-Schengen flights, the Czech Republic deployed a migration and document expert to Greece, combined with an operational measure and the expansion of a related training programme. Hungary deployed liaison officers to the capitals of three third countries (Istanbul, Cairo, New Delhi) as part of the first phase of the four-tier integrated border management system. Georgia reported practical deployments to enhance the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) personnel's skills in detecting fraudulent travel documents. Slovenia reported enhancements to its intranet portal related to document fraud detection, including the addition of new materials and detailed case descriptions to support knowledge and experience-sharing among border guards.

Box 24: Non-recognition of non-biometric Russian passports for entry to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

From 1 June 2025, Lithuania ceased to recognise non-biometric passports issued by the Russian Federation as valid travel documents for entry into Lithuanian territory. The decision was adopted by a joint order of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the Interior as a national security measure, reflecting concerns that non-biometric passports are more vulnerable to falsification and misuse and thus pose increased risks for identity fraud and irregular entry.

As of 31 March 2025, Estonia no longer recognises non-biometric foreign passports issued by the Russian Federation. A transition period until 30 September 2025 was granted to holders of Estonian or EU residence permits. The non-biometric foreign passports issued by the Russian Federation are not in line with the recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and entail various security risks.

From 15 July 2025, Latvia ceased issuing visas in non-biometric passports and no longer accepts residence permit applications from Russian citizens holding such documents. This measure aims to address identified security risks associated with non-biometric travel documents.

9.4.2. Countering irregular migration through information provision

Five EMN Member Countries[784] reported developments to inform potential migrants about the risks of irregular migration and available legal migration alternatives. Austria implemented AMIF-funded information

781 SK.
782 UA.
783 CZ, HU, LT, SI.
784 AT, BE, CZ, HU, LT.

campaigns with the participation and co-financing of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. IOM Lithuania launched a new information website, the Czech Republic organised information days, and Hungary created a Facebook page to share information about the regulation of legal stay in Hungary and raise awareness of avoiding unauthorised residence.

9.4.3. Cooperation with third countries to prevent irregular migration

Six EMN Member Countries[785] and Georgia concluded MoU or other types of cooperation frameworks with third countries to address irregular migration. Some agreements also covered the use of legal pathways,[786] trafficking in human beings,[787] and return[788] (see Chapters 2, 10 and 11, respectively).

Table 2: New cooperation agreements and frameworks reported by countries

Country	Type of cooperation	Partner country/ countries	Focus
Austria	Bilateral operational and policy cooperation (MoU, liaison officer)	UK	Strengthen migration policy cooperation through a MoU, including secondment of a UK liaison officer to the Joint Coordination Platform[789] to enhance political dialogue and operational cooperation, with a focus on Western Balkans migration routes
	EU-level political/diplomatic cooperation (joint advocacy)	19 EU Member States (not specified)	Strengthen cooperation with third countries, promoting innovative solutions (e.g. safe third country asylum, return centres), improving financing, EU agency roles and migration diplomacy to prevent irregular migration
Belgium	High-level exchanges	Republic of Moldova, Kosovo, Albania, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo	Focus on unfounded asylum applications, preventing irregular migration and strengthening return/readmission and information measures
France	Pilot agreement on the prevention of dangerous journeys; readmission agreements concluded; existing agreement revised	UK, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Morocco (revision)	Readmission; prevention of dangerous journey (irregular migration)
Italy	MoU	Ethiopia	Promote legal labour migration pathways while strengthening cooperation to combat irregular migration and trafficking in human beings
	MoU	Uzbekistan	Enhance cooperation on migration management, counter irregular migration and trafficking and support legal mobility for work, study and training
	MoU	Bangladesh	Strenghten law enforcement cooperation against irregular migration while increasing opportunities for regular migration
Latvia	2026–2027 Bilateral Cooperation Plan between the State Border Guard and the General Inspectorate of Border Police	Republic of Moldova	Bilateral cooperation plan between border authorities (Republic of Moldova), involving regular meetings and exchanges of experience across areas such as communication, border control, risk analysis, technology and crime prevention
Slovak Republic	Cooperation development plan for 2025–2026 between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine	Ukraine	Strengthen cooperation in border control, develop cooperation between operational and investigative authorities and risk analysis units, staff training, and prevent cross-border crime, trafficking in human beings and irregular migration

785 AT, BE, FR, IT, LV, SK.
786 IT.
787 ES, IT, SK.
788 AT, BE, FR.
789 Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, Joint Coordination Platform, n.d., accessed 9 June 2026.

Country	Type of cooperation	Partner country/ countries	Focus
Georgia	Cooperation frameworks	Israel, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Armenia	Cooperation in law enforcement with the objective of strengthening interstate cooperation in combating cross-border crime, ensure effective border management, and reduce risks associated with irregular migration through coordinated work with partner countries

Several EMN Member Countries reported operational cooperation, expert deployments and capacity-building activities with third countries, indicating a focus on strengthening external engagement through a combination of operational presence,[790] technical support[791] and targeted investment.[792] Hungary strengthened cooperation with Serbia by deploying police officers to border sections with North Macedonia and Serbia, prompted by the accession of Romania to the Schengen area. Lithuania reported cooperation with border guard and law enforcement authorities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, including national and regional seminars and training sessions in forensic examination, digital forensics and canine handling, as well as the development of recommendations on information collection and exchange. The Netherlands reported an investment of €5 million in a new border management project in Ethiopia (a checkpoint at the border crossing with Djibouti) to address irregular migration at an early stage, particularly along key migration routes in the Horn of Africa. Sweden reported contributions to the IOM to prevent irregular migration from Somalia, Iraq and Uzbekistan.

9.5. PREVENTING IRREGULAR STAY

9.5.1. Monitoring and sanctions against misuse of legal migration pathways for work, study or family reunification (including monitoring the effects of visa-free regimes)

Four EMN Member Countries[793] and Georgia reported legal and policy developments aimed at preventing irregular stay and addressing the misuse of legal migration pathways.

Belgium, Latvia and Georgia reported measures to address the misuse of legal migration channels. Belgium revised a circular on the misuse of civil status procedures (sham marriages, sham legal cohabitations, fraudulent recognition of parentage) and approved a draft law introducing judicially authorised home entries for the enforcement of return decisions, subject to prior judicial approval in cases of non-cooperation and public order or national security concerns (see Chapter 11). Latvia amended the 2022 agreement with higher education institutions on good practices in attracting foreign students and providing studies,[794] introducing stricter obligations for higher education institutions. Georgia introduced amendments to tighten visa-free entry and stay rules for nationals of certain countries holding visas or residence permits issued by Gulf countries.

9.5.2. Other developments to prevent irregular stay or to counter its facilitation

Four EMN Member Countries[795] and Georgia reported a range of legal and policy developments to prevent irregular stay and strengthen enforcement frameworks. Common driver included the need to enhance legal clarity,[796] address misuse of legal stay and employment channels,[797] and reinforce institutional capacity and enforcement tools.[798] Estonia amended the Aliens Act to regulate the legal stay of children born in Estonia to a lawfully-residing parent, to ensure the child can stay in Estonia as long as the parent of the child has a valid basis for stay. This prevents the child remaining in Estonia without a legal basis, provides legal clarity and safeguards the rights and interests of minors. Other measures focused on enforcement and deterrence. The Netherlands approved the Asylum Emergency Measures Act, criminalising the irregular stay of adult third-country nationals, with a later amendment reversing the criminalisation of assistance to irregularly staying third-country nationals. Georgia introduced higher fines and entry bans for violations of legal stay rules.

The Slovak Republic proposed extending aggravated forms of migrant smuggling to cover facilitation of unauthorised stay and employment by organised groups, aiming to prevent fraudulent regularisation.

790 HU.
791 LT.
792 NL, SE.
793 BE, CY, LV, PT.
794 Latvia, Agreement on Good Practice in Attracting Foreign Students and Providing Studies, 2025, accessed 24 April 2026.
795 BG, EE, NL, PT.
796 CY, EE.
797 CY, SK and GE.
798 NL, SK and GE, UA.

9.5.3. Prevention of employment of irregular migrants, including sanctions against employers

Six EMN Member Countries[799] and Georgia reported measures to strengthen controls related to undeclared work, illegal employment of illegally staying third-country nationals and enforcement powers. They reflected the need to prevent undeclared or employment of illegally staying third-country nationals,[800] close legal and procedural gaps,[801] ensure compliance with stay and employment requirements,[802] balance the facilitation of legitimate work with safeguards against misuse[803] and strengthen the powers and institutional capacity of competent authorities overseeing employment involving third-country nationals.[804]

Belgium reported increased chain liability for contractors and subcontractors employing irregularly residing third-country nationals in the Flemish Region, following research findings indicating the use of posted third-country national workers in subcontracting chains, including cases involving irregular residence status and fraudulent social security documentation. To prevent undeclared work and improve compliance, the Czech Republic introduced a legal definition of undeclared work in the Employment Act, covering situations where employers fail to notify the Czech Labour Office. From 1 February 2025, the Netherlands empowered the Netherlands Labour Authority to impose higher fines on employers illegally hiring third-country national migrants without the required permits. Cyprus strengthened labour inspection powers and cooperation with the Migration Department and reinforced labour rules in migrant-intensive sectors to reduce undeclared work and irregular stay. Estonia required employer registration and prior economic activity.

Box 25: Strengthened enforcement powers on irregular stay and labour inspections in Georgia

Georgia introduced legislative amendments expanding enforcement powers in the context of irregular stay and labour inspections. Amendments to the Law on legal status of Aliens and Stateless Persons authorised officials of the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to detain unlawfully staying foreign nationals and inspect public places to identify violations of legal stay rules. Amendments to the Law of Labour Migration strengthened the institutional capacity of the Labour Inspection Office, enabling it to carry out labour inspections in a larger number of establishments and to apply stricter sanctions for employing foreign nationals without a work permit.

9.6. ACCESS TO SERVICES AND LEGAL SOLUTIONS FOR IRREGULARLY STAYING MIGRANTS

Nine EMN Member Countries[805] reported legal and policy developments for irregularly staying migrants in relation to both legal solutions and access to rights.

These measures were primarily driven by the need to address vulnerability and exploitation,[806] ensure fundamental rights and procedural safeguards,[807] provide legal clarity[808] and prevent situations of de facto irregularity.[809]

Estonia, France, the Netherlands and Spain introduced legal solutions to address irregular stay, aiming to provide case-by-case regularisation under defined conditions and ensure access to legal residence. In Estonia, amendments to the Aliens Act allow third-country nationals staying irregularly to apply for a long-term (D) visa from within the country in justified cases, subject to a case-by-case assessment by the PBGB, unless departure is being enforced. In the Netherlands, a temporary amendment to the Aliens Regulation 2000 introduced a legal basis for granting a residence permit for non-temporary humanitarian reasons to a defined group of long-term irregularly staying Surinamese nationals. Spain amended its Immigration Regulation to revise the framework for temporary residence authorisation on exceptional grounds (*arraigo*), reducing the required period of continuous residence to two years (except *arraigo* on family grounds), and allowing beneficiaries to work. Victims of sexual violence in an irregular situation who file a complaint are protected from immigration sanctions and expulsion and are exempt from any minimum residence requirement (see also Chapter 5). France set out new guidelines for the exceptional regularisation of foreign nationals in an irregular situation, placing greater emphasis on integration criteria, namely adherence to Republican principles and French language proficiency.

799 BE, CY, CZ, EE, HR, NL.
800 BE, CY, CZ.
801 CY and GE.
802 BE, CZ.
803 EE.
804 CY and GE.
805 BE, EE, ES, FI, FR, LT, NL, PT, SI.
806 BE, EE, LT.
807 EE, LT, SI.
808 EE, LT, SI.
809 EE, ES.

10. TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

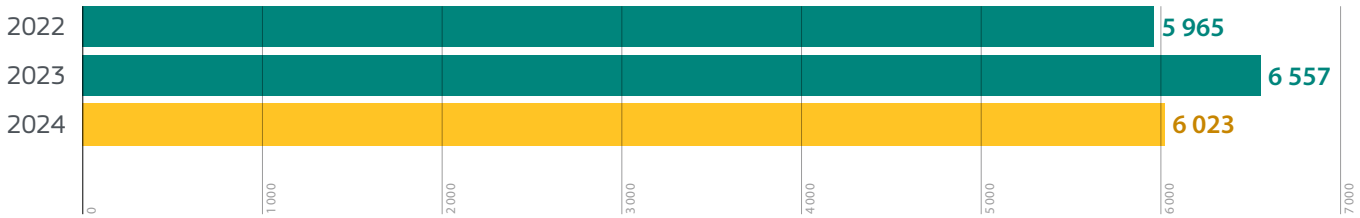
10.1. INTRODUCTION

In 2025, new developments to tackle trafficking in human beings mainly responded to the need to align national legislation and practices with the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive or marked the continued stepping-up of efforts to prevent and combat these crimes and protect the victims, including third-country nationals. Accordingly, most countries implemented new awareness-raising and training activities to enhance the detection and identification of victims,[810] sought to enhance cooperation and coordination between national actors,[811] or reinforced cross-border cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.[812]

Countries worked on the adoption or strengthening of national action plans,[813] introduced legislative changes to enhance the fight against trafficking in human beings[814] or developed or revised National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs).[815] Support to victims was strengthened through the provision of information[816] and direct assistance.[817] In 2025, a stronger focus was placed on addressing trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation, with measures including awareness-raising and training activities,[818] enhanced cooperation between key national actors (e.g. police and labour inspectorates)[819] or actions reinforcing cooperation with (EU Member) States.[820]

There was an 8% drop in the number of third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings registered in the EU from 2023 to 2024, and a 7% increase in the number of first residence permits issued to victims of trafficking in human beings, the EU and Norway over the same period.

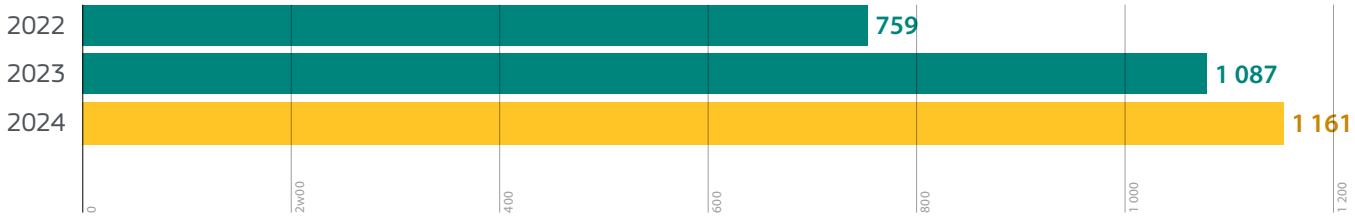
Figure 19: Number of third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings, registered in EU, 2022-2024



Source: Eurostat (crim_thb_vctz), date of extraction 13 March 2026.
Notes: Data not available for Sweden and Norway. Statistics on trafficking in human beings for 2025 were not available at the time of publication.

810 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK and GE, UA, MD.
811 BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LV, MT, PL, PT, SE, SK and NO, GE.
812 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK and GE, MD.
813 ES, IT, LU, LV, PL, PT, SI and NO, GE, UA.
814 CZ, DE, HR, HU, IE, LT, NL, PT, SK.
815 AT, BE, EE, FI, IT, PT, SK.
816 BE, EE, EL, FR, PL, MT and MD.
817 EL, ES, HU, LU and GE.
818 BE, DE, EE, ES, FR, PL, SE, SI and GE.
819 CZ, DE, EE, FI and GE.
820 BE, BG, EE.

Figure 20: Number of first residence permits issued to victims of trafficking in human beings, EU and Norway, 2022–2024



Source: Eurostat (migr_resoth), Eurostat (migr_resoth), date of extraction 13 March 2026.

10.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and supporting the victims of this crime remained a priority for the EU in 2025. In June 2025, the European Commission launched the EU Anti-Trafficking Hub (the Hub), a platform designed to support the implementation of EU anti-trafficking policies, as well as the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025[821] and the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive.[822] The Hub also promotes the exchange of best practices and delivers research, analysis and advice to combat and prevent trafficking in human beings.[823] Some studies already published by the Hub include a study on the concept of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation[824] and a study on the collection and improvements of EU statistics on trafficking in human beings.[825]

The EU started preparatory work for the adoption of the new EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, which will be adopted in 2026, building on past achievements while addressing current and future challenges. In December 2025, the European Commission published a call for evidence, inviting stakeholders to provide inputs to feed into the development of the new strategy.[826]

In January 2025, the European Commission published its fifth progress report on combating trafficking in human beings, covering actions from 2021 to 2024.[827] The report presents statistics and trends in trafficking in human beings and outlines EU and EU Member States actions to address this crime.

In 2025, the Council of the EU defined the new priorities under the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) for the period 2026-2029, which include combating trafficking in human beings for all forms of exploitation.[828] Focus will be put on the exploitation of minors, recruitment, use of threat or violence against family members, and misleading victims by simulating to officialise the exploitation, and exploitation online.[829]

In December 2025, the Europol Regulation was formally adopted, strengthening Europol's mandate to support EU Member States to combat migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (also see Chapter 5 and 9).

10.3. NATIONAL STRATEGIC POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In 2025, most EMN Member and Observer Countries[830] implemented strategic policy and legal measures to enhance the prevention and combating of trafficking in human beings. These developments were largely prompted by the need to adapt national legislation and practices to changes introduced by the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive[831] or, more generally, to continue stepping-up efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.[832] Some were in response to recommendations from the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA).[833]

821 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions on the EU Strategy on Combatting trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025, COM/2021/171 final, accessed 16 February 2026.
822 European Union, Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims (revised Anti-Trafficking Directive (EU) 2024/1712), accessed 16 February 2026.
823 European Commission, Commission launches EU Anti-Trafficking Hub to strengthen fight against trafficking in human beings, News article, 6 June 2025, accessed 16 February 2026.
824 European Commission, Study on the concept of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation on the basis of illustrative national legislation and jurisprudence, 2025, accessed on 18 June 2026.
825 European Commission, Final report - study on the collection and improvements of EU statistics on trafficking in human beings, 2026, accessed on 18 June 2026.
826 European Commission, Commission launches call for evidence on new EU strategy on combating trafficking in human beings - Migration and Home Affairs, 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.
827 European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the progress made in the European Union in combating trafficking in human beings (Fifth Report), COM(2025) 8 final, accessed 18 February 2026.
828 Council of the EU, Council defines the EU's crime-fighting priorities for the next years, Press release, 13 June 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.
829 Europol, EU Policy Cycle – EMPACT 2026-2029 Fighting crime together, n.d., accessed 16 February 2026.
830 BE, BG, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SI, SK and NO, GE, UA, RS.
831 CZ, DE, EL, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, PL, SK and RS.
832 BE, BG, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SI, SK and NO, GE, UA, RS.
833 EL, LT, LU, LV and RS.

Seven EMN Member Countries[834] introduced (or were in the process of approving) legislative amendments to their respective criminal laws to add the new forms of exploitation foreseen under the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive,[835] including the exploitation of surrogacy,[836] of forced marriage[837] and of illegal adoption[838] and the establishment of criminal liability for knowingly using[839] services provided by a victim of trafficking in human beings. Croatia and the Slovak Republic amended their Criminal Codes to establish more stringent penalties for the crime of trafficking in human beings, with Croatia including additional aggravating circumstances (using serious violence, causing serious bodily harm, disseminating sexual audiovisual material involving the victim, or using ICT).

Three EMN Member Countries[840] introduced institutional changes to align national practices and structures with the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive. To comply with the requirements of Article 19 of the directive and formally strengthen strategic planning, monitoring and reporting obligations, Lithuania revised the mandate and competences of the national Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and expanded its membership to include a broader range of actors. The Slovak Republic introduced changes to the structure of its National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, separating the political-coordination and professional (executive) levels. Other measures adopted in the context of the transposition of the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive included the adoption or revision of national action plans[841] or the establishment of new systems for the recording, production and provision of statistical data.[842]

Poland drafted a new law introducing a legal definition of a victim and presumed victim of trafficking in human beings, as well as a precise definition of the competencies of public services and institutions responsible for identifying and providing assistance. It is currently undergoing public and interministerial consultation. The planned regulations envisage stricter penalties against perpetrators, expanding the liability of legal entities, and involving the private sector in preventive measures against the use of forced labour. The draft bill also includes a separate chapter on combating trafficking in children and protecting minor victims.

Six EMN Member Countries,[843] Norway, Georgia and Ukraine adopted comprehensive national action plans addressing trafficking in human beings to step up their efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings and protect victims. Four EMN Member Countries[844] and Georgia adopted national action plans to combat specific forms of exploitation (e.g. labour exploitation, sexual exploitation) or address specific vulnerable groups (e.g. women, homeless children, vulnerable migrants and asylum seekers). Germany adopted its first National Action Plan against Labour Exploitation and Forced Labour, responding to an increase in labour migration and the need to better prevent and combat trafficking in human beings in this context. Georgia adopted the 2025-2030 Strategy on the Protection of the Children Living and/or Working in the Street from Violence, which includes measures to protect these children from falling victims to trafficking in human beings.

Three EMN Member Countries[845] introduced measures in response to GRETA's recommendations. Luxembourg adapted its national strategy to take into account the profiles of groups most at risk of exploitation. Particularly vulnerable groups are third-country nationals, women in the case of sexual exploitation, and men in the case of labour exploitation. Based on the profiles of these identified victims, Luxembourg developed information material and organised awareness-raising campaigns and training sessions for actors working with vulnerable people. Latvia considered GRETA's recommendations in adopting its national strategy against trafficking in human beings. Lithuania transferred the function of National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings from the Ministry of the Interior to the Office of the Seimas Ombudsperson to ensure its independence and impartiality.

10.4. PREVENTION, DETECTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS

10.4.1. Prevention of trafficking in human beings

In 2025, Poland and Georgia adopted policy changes to enhance the prevention of trafficking in human beings. Poland expanded the chapter on prevention in its 2025-2027 National Action Plan against Human Trafficking, with additional preventive measures (e.g. training, awareness-raising, provision of information). It also included a chapter on prevention and education in the field of counteracting trafficking in human beings in the new draft Act on Counteracting Trafficking. Georgia reinforced the structure and institutional capacity of the Labour Inspectorate Office by incorporating a new unit responsible for preventing forced labour.

834 BE, CZ, DE, HR, HU, IE, SK.
835 CZ, DE, HR, HU, IE.
836 DE, HR, HU IE.
837 BE, DE, HU, IE.
838 BE, DE, HU, IE.
839 DE, IE, SK.
840 IE, LT, SK.
841 EL, LV, PL.
842 LT.
843 ES, LU, LV, PL, PT, SI.
844 DE, IE, LU, SK.
845 LT, LU, LV.

10.4.2. Detection and identification of third-country national victims (including applicants for international protection)

Training and awareness-raising

Most EMN Member and Observer Countries[846] adopted measures to enhance the detection and identification of victims of trafficking in human beings through training or awareness-raising activities in 2025. Measures targeted a wide range of actors, including those who might encounter (potential) victims such as law enforcement authorities,[847] the judiciary,[848] prosecutors,[849] labour authorities,[850] social workers,[851] or asylum and migration authorities,[852] as well as employers,[853] the general public[854] and groups at risk of trafficking in human beings.[855]

Several measures sought to enhance the capacity of professionals to detect, identify and refer victims[856] and reinforce cooperation and exchange of knowledge between different actors.[857] In 10 EMN Member Countries,[858] Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, this was done through capacity-building activities that typically covered indicators of trafficking, referral mechanisms, and the provision of support to victims. In the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of the Interior created an online training module on trafficking in human beings for first-line practitioners. Bulgaria, Germany and Poland delivered training to regional and/or local actors on identifying and protecting victims of trafficking in human beings.

Eight EMN Member Countries[859] and Georgia implemented awareness-raising and training activities to enhance the detection and identification of victims of specific forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation,[860] labour exploitation (see Box 24)[861] or the exploitation of minors.[862]

Box 26: Training and awareness-raising measures for the prevention of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation

Driven by high numbers of unreported and unidentified cases of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation, Germany developed an e-learning tool for training the Financial Control of Undeclared Work in its customs administration. The tool also introduced a new procedure to improve victim identification. Poland provided training to employees of district and provincial labour offices to raise awareness of signs of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation. Estonia and Slovenia organised awareness-raising campaigns to prevent trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation. In France, the Ministry of Labour published a page on its website dedicated to the fight against trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and developed practical factsheets for enforcement officers to prevent and combat this type of crime.

Ten EMN Member Countries,[863] Georgia and Ukraine organised awareness-raising and information campaigns on trafficking in human beings. Targeting the general public, they often consisted of social media campaigns, public events, exhibitions or the distribution of information leaflets. Some were organised in the context of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day[864] or the World Day against Trafficking in Human Beings.[865]

Seven EMN Member Countries[866] organised awareness-raising activities specifically targeting groups at risk of trafficking in human beings to reduce their vulnerability and make them aware of potential risks. Greece disseminated information materials to third-country nationals and stateless persons in accommodation facilities to help them to recognise possible indicators of exploitation. Lithuania offered training to young migrants who face a higher risk of exploitation.

Measures on cooperation between national authorities

In 2025, 14 EMN Member Countries,[867] Norway and Georgia adopted measures on cooperation between national authorities, primarily driven by the need to ensure more effective coordination in detecting and identifying (certain forms of) trafficking in human beings.

Measures commonly sought to facilitate the exchange of information and good practices between key actors and to reinforce cooperation on detecting and identifying victims.[868] They included meetings and events gathering different stakeholders,[869] new structures for (reinforced) cooperation between relevant actors[870] and the establishment of interdepartmental or interagency working groups

846 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK and GE, UA, MD.
847 BG, FR, HR, LT, LV, PT, SE, SK and GE.
848 CZ, FR, HR, LV.
849 BG, CZ, FR, LV, SE and GE.
850 BE, BG, CZ, FR, HR, LT, LV, PL and GE.
851 BG, CY, DE, IE, LT, LV, SK and GE.
852 BE, CY, EL, LT, SK.
853 EE, DE, FR, LV, PL and GE.
854 AT, BE, CZ, EE, FR, LT, MT, PL, SI and GE, UA.
855 BE, BG, CZ, EE, EL, FR, LT.
856 BE, BG, CY, DE, EL, HR, IE, LT, LV, PL, PT, SE, SK and GE, MD, UA.
857 BE, CZ, DE, IE, LT.
858 BE, BG, CY, DE, HR, LT, LV, PL, SE, SK.
859 BE, DE, EE, ES, FR, PL, SE, SI and GE.
860 BE, EE, ES, FR, SE and GE.
861 BE, DE, EE, ES, FR, PL, SE, SI and GE.
862 BE, LT and GE.
863 AT, BE, CZ, EE, FR, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK.
864 AT, PL, SI, SK and GE.
865 BE, SK and GE.
866 BE, BG, CZ, EE, EL, FR, LT.
867 BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, IE, IT, LV, MT, PL, SE, SK.
868 BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FR, IT, LV, PL, SE and GE.
869 BE, BG, DE, IE, IT, PL and GE.
870 FR, IE and NO.

to address trafficking in human beings.[871] The Czech Republic strengthened cooperation at regional level through the establishment of working groups and roundtables involving state authorities, local governments and NGOs. In France, the Central Office for the Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings set up a network of experts in trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation to promote interdepartmental coordination, local/national cooperation, and operational exchanges. Four EMN Member Countries[872] and Georgia adopted specific measures to reinforce cooperation between national authorities to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation. Estonia adopted a new law that facilitates interinstitutional data exchange between the PBGB and the Labour Inspectorate. Finland reinforced cooperation between trafficking police units and labour inspectorates by having a labour inspector regularly sharing the office with the police.

Measures on cooperation between (Member) States

Fifteen EMN Member Countries[873] reported enhanced efforts to reinforce cooperation and exchange of information with other (EU Member) States to tackle trafficking in human beings in 2025. These included exchanges and discussions during multilateral meetings and events,[874] including in the context of regional platforms such as the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB) of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the EU Network of National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators, the Network of National Coordinators for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of South-Eastern Europe (NATC-SEE) (see Box 26), and the Benelux Working Group on trafficking in human beings. Cooperation with other (EU Member) States also happened in the context of joint operations in the framework of EMPACT.[875]

Box 27: Cooperation under the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe (NATC-SEE)[876]

States in southeast Europe reinforced their cooperation to address trafficking in human beings through exchanges in the context of the NATC-SEE. In 2025, the NATC-SEE adopted a new Strategy Paper for the period of 2025-2029, including changes stemming from the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive and new obligations for EU Member States. The Strategy Paper aims to enhance collaboration between national anti-trafficking coordinators in the region to ensure more effective joint actions and share best practice. It foresees cooperation with the private sector and seeks to standardise data collection methodologies and reinforce the focus on technological challenges.

Three EMN Member Countries[877] reinforced cooperation to combat trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation. Bulgaria reinforced its bilateral cooperation with Germany through a training session for Bulgarian-speaking labour counsellors and social workers, focusing on the practical application of the NRM and their Bilateral Referral and Coordination Mechanism for cases of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.

Other developments in relation to detection and identification

Three EMN Member Countries[878] developed SOPs, protocols or guidelines to enhance the detection and identification of victims of trafficking in human beings or prevent such crime. Greece produced an SOP on the identification and response to (potential) victims within reception and accommodation facilities. Italy developed guidelines for the timely identification of victims of trafficking in human beings among third-country nationals arriving or transiting through border and transit areas. Ireland developed a protocol for missing unaccompanied and separated children seeking international or temporary protection, which aims to reduce the risk of exploitation, trafficking or re-trafficking of minors who have been referred to the Child and Family Agency.

10.4.3. National Referral Mechanisms (or equivalent systems) for victims of trafficking in human beings

In 2025, seven EMN Member Countries[879] developed or updated their NRMs, responding to the need to establish standardised rules for cooperation on identification, referral and assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings[880] or prompted by the need to adapt national practices to the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive.[881] Belgium revised its NRM to include a specific section on identification, referral and support to minors. As part of the transposition of the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive, and in line with national action plans, Austria developed a concept for a NRM (currently being finalised) and the Slovak Republic updated its NRM to better define and explain concepts related to trafficking in human beings.

Italy adopted a guideline for implementing the NRM at local level. Poland produced a guideline with information on rights and access to assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings. The Greek NRM management team in the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) established a new working group to launch a Human Trafficking Survivors' Body. It seeks to advance the NRM's commitment to becoming more inclusive by strengthening survivors' involvement in national strategies, promoting innovative and sustainable solutions, preventing revictimisation and contributing to meaningful protection and support for victims.

871 CZ, EL, IE, LV and GE.
872 CZ, DE, EE, FI.
873 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, LU, MT, PL, SE, SK.
874 BE, BG, CZ, EE, HR, LU, MT, PL, SE, SI.
875 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, HU.
876 Members of NATC-SEE include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Romania.
877 BE, BG, EE.
878 EL, IT, IT.
879 AT, BE, EE, FI, IT, PT, SK.
880 BE, EE, FI.
881 AT, SK.

10.5. PROTECTION OF VICTIMS

10.5.1. Provision of a reflection period and/or legal residence for (presumed) third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings

In 2025, Malta, Spain and Georgia reported developments related to the provision of legal residence for (presumed) third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings. Spain expanded the protection and scope of the temporary residence authorisation on exceptional grounds for third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings through a legal amendment to also cover the victims' children who are not in Spain, facilitating family reunification. Malta exempted third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings from the payment of fees to apply for residence permits.

10.5.2. Provision of information, assistance and support to (presumed) third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings

Five EMN Member Countries[882] and the Republic of Moldova adopted measures to ensure that (potential) victims of trafficking in human beings are duly informed of the type of support available to them and how to access their rights. In Belgium, the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons issued instructions for all protection officers to provide information to any applicants exhibiting signs of potential trafficking in human beings or self-identifying as victims. In Greece, the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection developed the 'Guide on the rights of victims of trafficking in human beings', which provides information on indicators of exploitation, victims' rights and access to support services.

Four EMN Member Countries[883] and Georgia adopted measures to enhance the provision of direct support to victims of trafficking in human beings. Through a legislative amendment, Spain introduced specific guarantees for trafficking cases, such as the prohibition of the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, the possibility for victims to give statements via videoconference, and granting trafficking victims the right to free legal assistance. To enhance the provision of support to victims of violence, including victims of trafficking in human beings, Luxembourg opened the National Centre for Victims of Violence, an innovative multidisciplinary project offering assistance and care at a single location.

10.6. COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Twelve EMN Member Countries,[884] Georgia and the Republic of Moldova reported developments in their cooperation with third countries to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. These commonly included enhanced cooperation with countries in Eastern Europe[885] and LAC.[886] The need to reinforce cross-border police and judicial cooperation to combat trafficking in human beings was one of the main reasons to strengthen cooperation with third countries in 2025.[887] That cooperation primarily included the organisation of study visits[888] and joint operations,[889] including in the context of EMPACT.[890] Estonia and Slovenia reinforced their cooperation with third countries to better tackle labour exploitation (e.g. through participation in meetings and joint operations).

In response to an increase in the number of victims of trafficking in human beings from Latin America (LAC), four EMN Member Countries[891] sought to reinforce their cooperation with countries in the region. That cooperation consisted of the organisation of multilateral/bilateral meetings to exchange information and good practices[892] and training activities to enhance LAC countries' capacities to address trafficking in human beings.[893]

882 BE, EL, FR, PL, MT.
883 EL, ES, HU, LU.
884 AT, BE, DE, EE, ES, FI, IT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK.
885 EE, FR, SI, SK.
886 DE, ES, FR, PL.
887 AT, BE, DE, EE, ES, FR and GE, MD.
888 FR and GE.
889 AT, BE and MD.
890 AT, BE, EE.
891 DE, ES, FR, PL.
892 DE, ES, FR, PL.
893 DE, ES, FR.

11. RETURN AND READMISSION

11.1. INTRODUCTION

In 2025, key developments at both EU and national level in the area of return focused on increasing the number of persons returned and strengthening the overall return system. At EU level, the European Commission's proposal for a Return Regulation represented the most significant development.

The resumption of returns to Syria was a key cross-cutting development, prompted by the change in the political context in the country. Thirteen EMN Member Countries[894] reported policy and operational changes, with all 13[895] beginning to offer voluntary return and reintegration assistance to Syrians.

Six EMN Member Countries[896] reported developments related to the digitalisation of return procedures. Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus and Portugal advanced the development of their internal return case management system based on Frontex's digital case management system (RECAMA-S).[897] In Belgium, priority was given to a detention module designed to strengthen the monitoring and administrative follow-up of detention-related cases, with full operationalisation expected in 2026. Croatia focused on improving data quality in the return process, while Cyprus sought to strengthen coordination and improve the effectiveness of return procedures. Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Hungary also reported developments concerning the e-RCMS, a system designed to enable the secure digital exchange of information for identification and return procedures.

Eleven EMN Member Countries[898] reported developments on return policy including related to forced return, with nine[899] reporting on legislative reforms. These developments were driven by challenges related to the identification of persons in an irregular situation,[900] security-related considerations[901] or the need to strengthen the prohibition of refoulement,[902] ensure legal clarity,[903] facilitate the return of unsuccessful asylum seekers,[904] or reduce incentives for individuals under a return decision to remain in the country.[905]

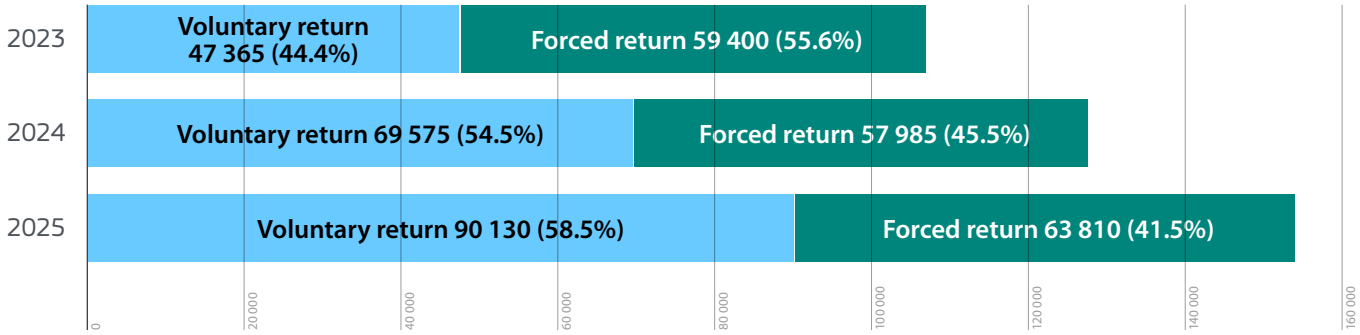
Seven EMN Member Countries,[906] Georgia and the Republic of Moldova reported developments relating to pre-removal detention, including legislative amendments to detention frameworks.[907] Voluntary return measures were developed in 15 EMN Member Countries[908] and Serbia. Key developments concerned strengthening capacity for return counselling.[909] Twelve EMN Member Countries[910] and Ukraine adjusted their reintegration measures.

Ten EMN Member Countries,[911] Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia reported developments in cooperation with countries of origin and transit. Several[912] signed bilateral readmission agreements.

Between 2024 and 2025, there was an increase in the number of both voluntary and forced returns from the EU and Norway, with total returns increasing by 21% (see Figure 21). The percentage of assisted vs non-assisted returns remained approximately the same, at 75% and 25%, respectively in 2025. Table 3 presents information on the numbers of foreign nationals who left the territory of EMN Observer Countries, by type of return, between 2023 and 2025.

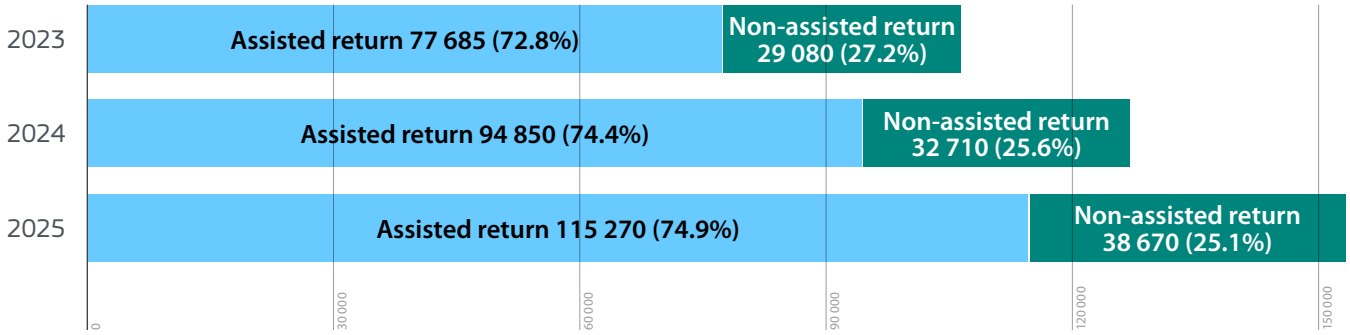
894 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EL, FI, FR, HU, MT, NL, PL, SE.
895 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EL, FI, FR, HU, MT, NL, PL, SE.
896 BE, CY, DE, HR, HU, PT.
897 Frontex, Return digitalisation, n.d., accessed 25 June 2026.
898 AT, BE, EE, FI, HR, HU, IE, NL, PL, PT, SE.
899 BE, EE, EL, FI, HR, NL, PL, PT, SE.
900 PL.
901 BE, NL.
902 HR.
903 EE, PL.
904 BE, FI.
905 SE.
906 EE, FI, FR, HR, IT, NL, SE.
907 EE, FI, FR, HR, IT and GE.
908 BE, BG, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, PT, SE, SI.
909 BE, BG, EL, HR, IT, LU, LV, SI.
910 BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, SE.
911 AT, BE, DE, FR, IT, LT, LU, NL, SE, SK.
912 Austria – Kazakhstan and Mongolia; Benelux countries – Suriname, Belize and Kyrgyzstan; Lithuania – Kosovo; Georgia – Armenia; the Republic of Moldova and the UK; France - Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

Figure 21: Third-country nationals who left the territory, by type of return, EU and Norway, 2023-2025



Source: Eurostat (migr_eirtn1), date of extraction 13 April 2026.
Note: Data not available for voluntary returns for Germany, Q1 and Q2 2024.

Figure 22: Third-country nationals who left the territory, by type of assistance received, EU and Norway, 2023–2025



Source: Eurostat (migr_eirtn1), date of extraction 13 April 2026.
Note: Data not available for voluntary returns for Germany, Q1 and Q2 2024.

Table 3: Number of foreign nationals who left the territory of EMN Observer Countries, by type of return, 2023-2025

Year	Number of total returns	Number of voluntary returns (% of total returns)	Number of forced returnsand (% of total returns)
Albania			
2023	6 345	6 300 (95%)	45 (1%)
2024	1 356	1 242 (92%)	114 (8%)
2025	1 355	1 241 (92%)	114 (8%)
Armenia			
2023	2	2 (100%)	0 (0%)
2024	20	20 (100%)	0 (0%)
2025	11	11 (100%)	0 (0%)
Georgia			
2023	190	181 (95%)	9 (5%)
2024	363	312 (86%)	51 (14%)
2025	1 311	1 198 (91%)	113 (9%)
Republic of Moldova			
2023	1 674	1 603 (96%)	71 (4%)
2024	23	3 (13%)	20 (87%)
2025	73	3 (4%)	70 (96%)
Montenegro			
2023	1 089	1 007 (92%)	82 (8%)
2024	1 627	1 554 (96%)	73 (4%)
2025	n/i	1 955 (n/i)	115 (n/i)
North Macedonia			
2023	287	9 (3%)	278 (97%)
2024	320	10 (3%)	310 (97%)
2025	355	12 (3%)	343 (97%)
Serbia			
2023	287	89 (31%)	198 (69%)
2024	315	103 (33%)	212 (67%)
2025	390	75 (19%)	315 (81%)
Ukraine			
2023	2 565	89 (3%)	2 476 (97%)
2024	2 612	76 (3%)	2 536 (97%)
2025	2 581	65 (3%)	2 516 (97%)

Source: Authorities in EMN Observer Countries, except 2025 data for Montenegro, where the source is Eurostat, migr_eirtn1, date of extraction 25 June 2026.
Notes: n/i = no information.

11.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

The central development was the European Commission's publication of a proposal on 11 March for a Return Regulation[913] to replace the Return Directive. The proposal seeks to establish swifter and more effective return procedures across the EU. The Council of the EU agreed its general approach on 8 December.[914]

On the external dimension of return policy, the European Commission signed a partnership with Jordan on 29 January that includes provisions on return.[915] Similar provisions

913 European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC, COM(2025) 101 final, 11.3.2025, accessed 17 February 2026.
914 Council of the EU, General approach: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC, 5 December 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.
915 European Commission, Statement by President von der Leyen on the signature of the EU-Jordan Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership, 29 January 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.

were included in the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed between the EU and Uzbekistan on 24 October5.[916]

The EU Return Coordinator continued to steer the implementation of the Operational Strategy for More Effective Returns through the High-Level Network for Returns, fostering practical cooperation, operational coordination and the exchange of good practices among EU Member States and relevant EU actors.

11.3. OVERARCHING AND CROSS-CUTTING DEVELOPMENTS

11.3.1. Overarching and cross-cutting developments

Thirteen EMN Member Countries[917] reported developments in their policy on returns to Syria, prompted by the change of political context in the country.[918] Twelve EMN Member Countries[919] reported starting offering voluntary return and reintegration assistance to Syrians, including via the EU Reintegration Programme (EURP) managed by Frontex.[920] According to Eurostat data for 2025, over 8000 Syrian nationals returned in 2025, the vast majority through voluntary return.[921]

Four EMN Member Countries[922] and Norway adopted new instruments addressing return, including national migration strategies,[923] national return strategies,[924] and broader amendments to migration laws.[925]

11.3.2. Digitalisation and/ or use of new technologies

Six EMN Member Countries[926] reported developments in the digitalisation of return procedures. Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus and Portugal advanced the development of their internal return case management system based on the Frontex RECAMAS model in response to the need for more unified and collaborative tools aligned with EU standards and Frontex best practice,[927] as well as to support digitalisation[928] and harmonisation of return procedures and improve data quality.[929] Germany strengthened its digitalisation of migration administration project, aiming to digitalise the return process and increase the number of returns through more streamlined and simplified procedures.

Four EMN Member Countries[930] reported developments linked to digitalisation, notably the e-RCMS, in the context of cooperation with third countries. Belgium advanced its technical and operational preparations to implement the e-RCMS in cooperation with Serbia and Albania, while Croatia, the Czech Republic and Hungary joined Armenia's e-RCMS.

11.4. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RETURNS

Developments in relation to the implementation of returns in 2025 centred on tightening legislative and operational frameworks to make return procedures more effective, while also responding to legal safeguards, security concerns and changing possibilities for return to specific countries. Data show continued use of Frontex-coordinated joint return operations (JROs) as a practical tool to support removals, with participating countries contributing as organisers or participants.

In parallel, the EU Return Coordinator continued work on improving forced return monitoring, bringing together the European Commission, Frontex, the Fundamental Rights Agency and EU Member States to identify common challenges and promote good practices.

11.4.1. Forced return

Eleven EMN Member Countries[931] reported developments related to return policy including related to forced return, with eight[932] reporting legislative changes. These were prompted by challenges related to identifying

916 Council of the EU, Joint Statement on the occasion of the signing of the EU-Uzbekistan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the European Union and its Member States and the Republic of Uzbekistan, Press release, 24 October 2025, accessed 17 February 2026.
917 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EL, FI, FR, HU, MT, NL, PL, SE.
918 BE, BG, CY, FI, NL, SE.
919 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EL, FI, FR, MT, NL, PL, SE.
920 AT, BE, BG, DE, EL, FR, PL, SE.
921 Source, Eurostat: migr_eirtn1, date of extraction 9 July 2026.
922 BG, EL, IT, SK.
923 BG, SK.
924 NO.
925 EL, IT.
926 BE, CY, DE, HR, HU, PT.
927 CY, PT.
928 BE.
929 HR.
930 BE, CZ, HR, HU.
931 AT, BE, EE, FI, HR, HU, IE, NL, PL, PT, SE.
932 BE, EE, FI, HR, PL, NL, PT, SE.

persons in irregular situations,[933] or efforts to strengthen the prohibition of refoulement,[934] improve legal clarity[935] or facilitate the removal of unsuccessful asylum seekers.[936] Croatia introduced a requirement for return decisions to specify the country of return and suspended enforcement where an appeal is lodged on non-refoulement grounds.

Developments in Belgium and the Netherlands were driven primarily by security-related considerations. In Belgium, cooperation between judicial and migration authorities was strengthened to support the identification of third-country nationals in irregular situations who are suspected of criminal offences and to help address prison overcrowding. The Immigration Office established a presence at the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office, enabling identity and nationality checks and, where necessary, contact with the relevant consular authorities. In parallel, support was given to facilitate the return of detainees in irregular stay. In the Netherlands, a legislative proposal broadened the circumstances in which a person in an irregular situation may be required to leave the country immediately. The aim is to address situations in which persons in an irregular situation are less likely to be returned after committing petty offences.

Operational developments sought to strengthen immigration enforcement[937] and improve the effectiveness of return operations.[938] Ireland resumed the use of its own charter flights, while Sweden introduced a preliminary charter planning calendar to schedule removals and improve coordination across the relevant institutions.

Croatia signed an agreement with IOM for a three-year project on forced return monitoring. Additional countries of return reported in 2025 included Somalia in the case of Austria, and Ethiopia in the case of Hungary.

11.4.2. Participation in joint return operations

Three EMN Member Countries[939] and the Republic of Moldova reported participation in JROs coordinated by Frontex. Greece organised eight JROs to Georgia, Bangladesh and Pakistan, resulting in the removal of 300 individuals. Cyprus participated in 19 JROs and removed 146 persons, while Estonia took part in two JROs. The Republic of Moldova also participated in six JROs returning its citizens from Germany.

11.5. (ASSISTED) VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

Developments in assisted voluntary return focused on making voluntary return more attractive and accessible by strengthening return counselling, improving outreach and information provision, and introducing practical arrangements to support earlier uptake. Changes to reintegration measures focused on aligning national approaches with European instruments, expanding or refining support offers, and using eligibility rules and assistance levels more strategically to encourage earlier uptake of voluntary return.

Efforts to promote voluntary return and increase the number of voluntary returns continued during 2025, with developments reported by 15 EMN Member Countries[940] and Serbia.

Eight EMN Member Countries[941] introduced measures to strengthen return counselling capacity. Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia organised training for return counsellors, with Frontex supporting this training in Bulgaria and Croatia. In Greece, 12 Frontex return specialists provided counselling sessions, while in Latvia one Frontex return specialist delivered return and reintegration counselling. Italy launched a two-year AMIF-funded project, implemented by IOM, to recruit and train 60 return counsellors.

France revised its assisted voluntary return programme for different categories of irregular migrants by increasing allowances for certain nationalities and territories and extending eligibility to groups previously excluded. It also carried out targeted actions in the Channel region, including the deployment of two Frontex return specialists and joint OFII–UK Home Office missions, aimed at discouraging crossings to the UK.

Developments in Ireland, Malta and Sweden focused on improving communication of information about voluntary return options. Sweden decentralised the use of the Reintegration Assistance Tool (RIAT) to return centres, enabling caseworkers conducting return counselling to register applications directly for the EURP. In Ireland, members of the voluntary return unit were stationed in person in Citywest, where applicants for international protection[942] are screened and accommodated. Malta launched an information campaign using bus shelter posters in multiple languages and created an Instagram page dedicated to information on voluntary return.

Other developments aimed to strengthen delivery structures and broaden access to voluntary return. Finland launched a pilot return centre as a new type of reception facility, enabling improved cooperation between the police, the Finnish Immigration Service and other relevant services. In addition to normal reception services, the return centre provides asylum seekers with more extensive advice on voluntary return and support with return arrangements. Luxembourg introduced a new approach where the option

933 PL.
934 HR.
935 EE, PL.
936 FI.
937 IE.
938 SE.
939 CY, EE, EL.
940 BE, BG, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, PT, SE, SI.
941 BE, BG, EL, HR, IT, LU, LV, SI.
942 Ireland cannot opt into Regulation (EU) 2024/1349 (the Return Border Procedure Regulation) as it is a Schengen measure; however, it has indicated its intention to align its procedures with the regulation.

of voluntary return is presented at all stages of the asylum procedure, rather than only once procedures have been closed. To align with EU standards, Serbia adopted a Regulation on the Establishment of the Programme of Assisted Voluntary Return of Foreign Nationals for the period 2026-2029.

11.5.1. Reintegration measures

Twelve EMN Member Countries[943] modified their reintegration measures. Four EMN Member Countries[944] reported changes in the use of Frontex's EURP. Latvia issued an internal regulatory act on joining the EURP, while Germany increased the number of applications processed through the EURP by more than 65% to increase voluntary returns and support their sustainability. To align national voluntary return procedures with European return instruments and harmonise standards, Belgium made access to the national assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programme conditional on the prior issuance of a return decision. It began delivering AVRR in Iraq through the EURP, implemented by a local reintegration partner, the European Technology and Training Centre (ETTC). France started using the EURP in Vietnam. Ireland joined the Return and Reintegration Facility (RRF), managed by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) to learn from good practices reported by other states.

Greece launched a reintegration project with IOM, co-financed by the EU. It aimed to provide in-kind reintegration assistance to 2 000 individuals opting to return voluntarily from the Greek islands, the Evros region and detention centres.

Six EMN Member Countries[945] modified the level of financial assistance available for reintegration. To encourage people to opt for voluntary return as early as possible, four[946] introduced or extended an approach whereby the amount offered decreases the later a person chooses voluntary return in the asylum[947] or return process.[948] France also increased allowances for certain nationalities and in specific territories.

Belgium, France and the Netherlands reported developments affecting the geographical scope of reintegration assistance. France extended access to return and reintegration assistance to foreign nationals present in Mayotte, with the exception of nationals of Comoros and Madagascar, but suspended reintegration assistance in Georgia following laws enacted there on foreign funding. It also expanded the range of nationalities eligible for support under the assistance programme. Prompted by an increase in Mongolian nationals applying for reintegration assistance and resulting suspicions of misuse, the Netherlands suspended reintegration assistance through all reintegration programmes, while maintaining basic return assistance, such as providing return counselling and a flight ticket. Belgium discontinued post-return reintegration support for Moldovan and Brazilian nationals, except for persons in situations of extreme vulnerability, such as victims of trafficking in human beings, unaccompanied children and persons with severe medical needs.

11.6. DETENTION

Seven EMN Member Countries,[949] Georgia and the Republic of Moldova reported developments relating to pre-removal detention.

Four EMN Member Countries[950] and Georgia reported legislative amendments relating to detention. These changes sought to address gaps in legal frameworks and align national rules more closely with applicable EU standards. In Georgia, the amendments expanded the grounds for immigration detention and established the procedure for detention. Finland introduced new grounds for detention and increased the maximum detention period from 12 to 18 months.

Finland introduced a new ground for detention to expand the possibility of detaining persons on the basis of a threat to public order. In France, the maximum detention period was extended by 90 days for individuals convicted of particularly serious offences who present a high risk of reoffending. It also regulated the use of coercion to obtain fingerprints and photographs in immigration detention where these are the only means of identifying a person with certainty.

With regard to procedural safeguards, the Netherlands developed a new information leaflet setting out the applicable grounds for detention, supporting the administration's duty to provide information. In Finland, an amendment reflecting the requirements of the Return Directive now requires the district court to reexamine detention ex officio within three months of the detention decision.

Estonia, Italy and Sweden reported developments relating to detention facilities. Following the adoption of the Pact, Estonia reorganised an existing detention centre to create space for persons undergoing screening and asylum and return border procedures. In Italy, pressure on the national reception and return system, together with structural limitations in detention centres, led to an extension of the derogation from rules governing the construction, siting and expansion of detention centres, as well as the refurbishment of police headquarters premises to enable individuals to be held there. Sweden introduced mandatory security screenings, room searches and increased surveillance to strengthen security in detention facilities.

To strengthen the protection of children and uphold the principle of the best interests of the child, the Republic of

943 BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, SE.
944 BE, DE, FR, LV.
945 BE, FI, FR, IE, LU, SE.
946 FI, IE, LU, SE.
947 FI, IE (increased rates only available to applicants for international protection who were in the process before 28 September 2025 and time-limited).
948 LU, SE.
949 EE, FI, FR, HR, IT, NL, SE and GE, MD.
950 EE, FI, FR, HR.

Moldova established that families with children may not be placed in immigration detention. Finland introduced a maximum detention period of three months for children detained with their families, which may be extended by a further three months.

11.6.1. Alternatives to detention

Lithuania and Georgia reported developments relating to alternatives to detention. In Lithuania, the management of accommodation facilities was transferred from the Foreigners' Registration Centre of the State Border Guard Service to the Reception and Integration Agency to create more favourable conditions for persons placed there. Georgia introduced alternatives to detention into national legislation to address the risk of overcrowding in the detention centre.

11.7. COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND TRANSIT

Developments in cooperation with countries of origin and transit focused on making return and readmission procedures more workable in practice through formal agreements, operational arrangements and new forms of cooperation with third countries, including in relation to return to countries other than the person's country of origin.

Cooperation on readmission continued to develop in 2025, with the aim of improving the efficiency of the return process, including the issuance of travel documents and the confirmation of identity and nationality. Ten EMN Member Countries,[951] Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia reported developments in this area.

Several bilateral readmission agreements were signed by EMN Member and Observer Countries (see Table 4).

Table 4: Bilateral readmission agreements

EMN Member or Observer Country	Country(ies) with which a bilateral readmission agreement was signed
Austria	Kazakhstan and Mongolia
The Benelux countries	Suriname, Belize and Kyrgyzstan
Lithuania	Kosovo
Georgia	Armenia
The Republic of Moldova	The UK
France	Uzbekistan and Vietnam

Alongside formal bilateral agreements, several countries reported less formal cooperation and practical arrangements. Germany and Colombia signed a Joint Declaration of Intent to consolidate their migration partnership, which also covers return. The Slovak Republic strengthened its cooperation with the EURLO in Vietnam, while Sweden agreed new return and readmission processes with Ethiopia and Kenya. Luxembourg, Ukraine and Serbia reported developments at national level, notably domestic laws approving cooperation agreements or frameworks concluded with other countries.

Italy and the Netherlands reported developments relating to returns to third countries other than the person's country of nationality. In cooperation with IOM, Italy launched an initiative to strengthen the capacity of Algeria, Libya and Tunisia to provide AVRR and voluntary humanitarian return (VHR). The Netherlands signed a Letter of Intent with Uganda, under which Uganda would accept migrants who had been issued a return decision but were not cooperating in the return process, and for whom direct removal to the country of origin could not be carried out.[952]

11.8. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Other developments related mainly to the reintegration of returning nationals and to institutional changes intended to strengthen national capacity to manage return and readmission.

Serbia reported developments linked to the reintegration of its own returning nationals. It adopted the Reintegration Programme of Returnees based on the Readmission Agreement for the period 2025–2026 to align with EU standards. This concerns nationals returned due to irregular stay, primarily from EU Member States. These reintegration efforts aim to support the full inclusion of returnees upon return and thereby help to prevent secondary movements and renewed irregular stays abroad.

Portugal established the National Unit for Foreigners and Borders within the public security police to manage return and readmission.

951 AT, BE, DE, FR, IT, LT, LU, NL, SE, SK.
952 For political reasons, in February 2026, the new Dutch government put further cooperation with the Ugandan authorities on hold.

12. MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

12.1. INTRODUCTION

In 2025, both EU and national approaches emphasised strengthened partnerships and cooperation with third countries. Twelve EMN Member Countries[953] adopted measures and initiatives faciltating synergies between migration and development in third countries. These were driven by the need to address the root causes of irregular and forced migration,[954] strengthen return and reintegration systems and improve migration governance in countries of origin and transit,[955] or promote diaspora engagement for development purposes.[956] Others were driven by humanitarian crises and displacement.[957] Some countries reported policy developments on circular migration, aiming to facilitate mobility arrangements through bilateral agreements and project-based schemes, while addressing labour market needs and promoting skills exchange and return.[958]

12.2. EU DEVELOPMENTS

The European Commission Work Programme 2025 was published in February 2026 and highlights efforts to implement the Pact, including by addressing the root causes of migration and ensuring comprehensive partnerships.[959]

The Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP) generates insights to inform migration policy-making in the African-European context, with the European Commission, Council of the EU, European External Action Service (EEAS) and Frontex all partners. In April 2025, the JVAP data collection cycle for 2025 was launched.[960] Data were collected on the different priority areas of the JVAP, including priorities related to the development benefits of migration and root causes of migration and forced displacement.

12.3. POLICIES TARGETING SYNERGIES BETWEEN MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THIRD COUNTRIES

Twelve EMN Member Countries[961] reported developments to facilitate synergies between migration and development in third countries. In most cases, these measures sought to address the root causes of irregular migration,[962] often in response to persistent irregular migration flows[963] and instability and displacement in regions of origin.[964] Other measures were prompted by the need to enhance the effectiveness of migration management systems, particularly in relation to return, reintegration and migration governance in countries of origin and transit.[965] Some initiatives responded to the need to strengthen diaspora engagement and harness their potential as contributors to development, particularly in their respective countries of origin.[966] Other interventions were driven by humanitarian considerations in response to armed conflict and displacement.[967] France held the presidency of the Khartoum Process from 9 April 2025 to 5 April 2026 and

953 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, NL, PT, SE, SK.
954 AT, BE, CZ, EE, IT, NL, SK.
955 BE, IT, NL, SE.
956 BE, DE, IT.
957 AT, CZ, EE, SK.
958 BE, ES, IE, IT.
959 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Commission work programme 2025, COM (2025) 45 final, accessed 18 February 2026.
960 Joint Valletta Action Plan, Launch of JVAP Data Collection Cycle 2025, 2025, accessed 18 February 2026.
961 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, NL, PT, SE, SK.
962 AT, BE, CZ, EE IT, NL, SK.
963 CZ, NL.
964 AT, BE, CZ, SK.
965 BE, IT, NL, SE.
966 BE, DE, IT.
967 AT, CZ, EE, SK.

fostered the South-North policy dialogue on issues related to the Eastern Mediterranean migration route.

Seven EMN Member Countries[968] reported initiatives driven by persistent irregular migration flows and instability and displacement in regions of origin. Italy launched 28 projects in African countries to promote socioeconomic development, improve labour market conditions and create employment opportunities. The Slovak Republic adopted a Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation for 2025–2030, which seeks to address the root causes of irregular and forced migration and promote coherence between development, foreign, migration and other relevant policies.

Four EMN Member Countries[969] reported initiatives to strengthen return and reintegration systems and improve migration governance in countries of origin and transit. Three[970] did so through targeted development cooperation projects: Sweden initiated 13 projects under its strategy for global development cooperation on migration, returns and voluntary repatriation 2024–2028 to enhance local reintegration capacities. The Netherlands reported institutional measures to strengthen migration governance and coordination mechanisms at home by establishing an interdepartmental Taskforce on International Migration to enhance coordination across ministries and improve the coherence of its external migration policy.

Three EMN Member Countries[971] reported initiatives to leverage diaspora communities to contribute to development in their countries of origin. Belgium integrated a Mobility and Entrepreneurship initiative in Senegal into its bilateral cooperation programme (2024–2029). The initiative aims to strengthen local actors' capacity to attract diaspora investment, promote networking between local authorities and diaspora communities, and facilitate South–South entrepreneurial mobility. Germany's Shaping Development-Oriented Migration (MEG) programme continued to support partner countries in strengthening migration policies and leveraging regular migration and diaspora engagement for sustainable development, including promoting regular migration pathways, enhancing the protection of migrant rights, fostering gender equality and cooperation with civil society, strengthening partnerships with multilateral organisations, and promoting investment and knowledge exchange in partner countries. Italy approved the second phase of the Diasporas for Development Cooperation initiative to strengthen the role of diaspora organisations within its development cooperation framework.

Four EMN Member Countries[972] reported measures driven by humanitarian considerations in response to armed conflict and displacement. Austria allocated €19.3 million in humanitarian aid to Syria to support the civilian population and enable the sustainable return of refugees. Estonia supported digital public services and education initiatives in Ukraine to create conditions for the sustainable return and reintegration of displaced persons and to mitigate long-term forced migration.

12.4. CIRCULAR MIGRATION

Four EMN Member Countries[973] reported policy developments on circular migration, mainly aimed at facilitating temporary or structured mobility arrangements through bilateral agreements and project-based schemes, linked to labour or skills needs and including return components. Ireland participated in the private-sector led Migration Partnership Facility (MPF)-funded SUSTAIN Europe project, promoting the circular migration of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) talent from Nigeria with defined work or training periods and reintegration support upon return. Spain signed MoU with Egypt and Paraguay to establish fixed-term labour programmes where workers are selected in their countries of origin and return on completion of their employment in Spain.

Box 28: Promoting entrepreneurial mobility and diaspora engagement: Belgium's Boosting Gambian Talents project

In 2025, Enabel launched the Boosting Gambian Talents project. The initiative aims to link entrepreneurs and investors based in Belgium with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in The Gambia.

The project combines short-term and, where relevant, circular mobility opportunities, including South–South and South–North dimensions, in sectors such as creative industries, agri-food and new technologies.

968 AT, BE, CZ, EE, IT, NL, SK.
969 BE, IT, NL, SE.
970 BE, IT, SE.
971 BE, DE, IT.
972 AT, CZ, EE, SK.
973 BE, ES, IE, IT.

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Bulgaria www.emn-bg.com/

Croatia emn.gov.hr/

Cyprus www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/emnncpc.nsf/home/home?opendocument

The Czech Republic www.emncz.eu/

Estonia www.emn.ee/

Finland emn.fi/en/

France www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2

Germany www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html

Greece https://migration.gov.gr/emn/

Hungary www.emnhungary.hu/en

Ireland www.emn.ie/

Italy www.emnitalyncp.it/

Latvia www.emn.lv

Lithuania www.emn.lt/

Luxembourg emnluxembourg.uni.lu/

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Poland www.gov.pl/web/european-migration-network

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Slovenia emnslovenia.si

Sweden www.emnsweden.se/

Norway www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway#

Georgia migration.commission.ge/

The Republic of Moldova bma.gov.md/en

Ukraine dmsu.gov.ua/en-home.html

Montenegro www.gov.me/mup

Armenia migration.am/?lang=en

Serbia kirs.gov.rs/eng

The Republic of North Macedonia https://mvr.gov.mk/

Albania

United Kingdom