

EMN BULLETIN

The EMN Bulletin provides policymakers and other practitioners with updates on recent migration and international protection policy developments at EU and national level. The 25th Edition provides information from October 2018 to December 2018, including the (latest) relevant published statistics.

The Bulletin is organised by policy theme. You can directly access your area of interest by clicking on one of the following themes:

[1. General policy developments](#); [2. Implementation of the Common European Asylum System](#); [3. Unaccompanied Minors and Vulnerable Groups](#); [4. Legal migration and Integration](#); [5. Management of EU external borders](#); [6. Irregular migration and return](#); [7. Actions Addressing Trafficking in Human Beings](#); [8. External dimension](#); [Annex on EU & Complementary Statistics, Additional information, other EMN outputs and upcoming events.](#)

SPECIAL NOTE

The European Migration Network (EMN) has recently launched its Twitter account and invites all readers to follow [@EMNMigration](#) for regular updates on new publications, upcoming events and other relevant news related to asylum and migration.

1. GENERAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ In December 2018, the [Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) was adopted at the Intergovernmental Conference on Migration in Marrakesh. This document declares commitment to improving cooperation on international migration and sets out common understanding, shared responsibilities and unity of purpose regarding migration. The global compact comprises 23 objectives for better managing migration at local, national, regional and global levels as well as commitments and suggested follow-up actions for States.
- ★ From 11 to 18 October, three Council configurations took place during which EU Member States discussed matters related to asylum and migration.
 - The [European Council](#) (18 October) discussed the importance of strengthening cooperation with countries of origin and transit; particularly North African countries. A joint task force at Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre will be established to fight against smuggling networks. In addition, the European Council urged the European Parliament and the Council to prioritise the examination of the recent Commission proposals on the Return Directive, the Asylum Agency and the European Border and Coast Guard.
 - The [Foreign Affairs Council](#) (15 October) touched upon various issues on foreign issues, including the external aspects of Migration. The Council discussed these topics with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and with the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration, António Vitorino. Positive results in the fields of irregular migration and smuggling networks through joint efforts of the EU, its Member States and UN agencies were highlighted.

- At the [Justice and Home Affairs Council](#) (11 and 12 October), Member States expressed their opinion on the European Commission's proposal on the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG) and the need to strengthen its role. The return procedure and the border procedure for returns were also debated: Member States took stock of progress made and recent developments on the reform of the Common European Asylum System and Resettlement: some progress was noted but further negotiations and discussions between Member States are required to reach an agreement.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Belgium:** Since December, Belgium is left with a minority government in a caretaking capacity to handle urgent and ongoing matters. On 8 December, the largest party, the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), quit the coalition over a dispute on signing the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (GCM). The N-VA demanded that the Prime Minister refrained from signing the Global Compact in Marrakesh but, following a majority vote in parliament in favour of signing, the Prime Minister stated that Belgium would adopt the Global Compact.
- ★ **Ireland:** The Department of Justice and Equality announced [a special scheme which will allow certain former students to apply for permission to remain in Ireland](#). The scheme is open to non-EEA national resident in Ireland who held a valid student permission during the period of 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2010. The scheme came into effect on 15 October and will be open for three months to 20 January 2019.
- ★ **Luxembourg:** On 14 October, Parliamentary elections were held to elect the 60 deputies that constitute Luxembourg's national Parliament. The three-party coalition (DP, LSAP and déi gréng) of the preceding government formed a new government, holding a majority of 31 seats in Parliament. The main opposition party (CSV) holds 21 seats. The new government consists of 24 ministries. Immigration and Asylum remain in the competence of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, while Integration remains in the competence of the Ministry of Family, Integration and the Greater Region. A [coalition agreement](#) spells out the plans and priorities of the new government (please see the respective sections below for more details).
- ★ **Poland:** On 19 December, the 22nd meeting of the Migration Council was held at the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Renata Szczech, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of the Interior and Administration - deputy chairman of the Council. It was agreed to develop a strategic document "Poland's migration policy" defining the directions of the state's migration policy and guidelines in the form of recommendations for individual ministries and other public institutions in the scope of their implementation. Detailed measures to implement the recommendations contained in the "Migration Policy of Poland" will be described in a separate executive document - an action plan. Furthermore, a working group will be established within the framework of the Council for Migration to develop the draft of the Integrated Border Management Strategy (IBM).



2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 14 December, the European Commission [announced](#) € 43.7 million in emergency assistance to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in order to support Greece as a response to the increasing challenges in the migration field. Specifically, this funding consists of assistance to increase reception capacity in mainland Greece and establish temporary accommodation facilities for up to 6 000 asylum seekers and refugees.
- ★ On 4 December, the European Commission [called](#) on Member States and the European Parliament to proceed with the adoption of the reform proposals on asylum. Member States and the European Parliament were urged to swiftly complete the EU's asylum reform and in particular adopt the five proposals of the Common European Asylum System: [Qualification Regulation](#), [Reception Conditions Directive](#), [EU Agency for Asylum Regulation](#), [Eurodac Regulation](#), [Union Resettlement Framework](#).

Relocation and Resettlement

- ★ No relevant updates.

LATEST RELEVANT STATISTICS

- ★ On 20 December, Eurostat published its [quarterly report on asylum](#). The first-time asylum applicants in the EU increased by 4% in the third quarter of 2018 compared with the previous quarter however the total number has decreased by 13% compared with the same quarter of 2017. Out of 162 000 asylum applications, 147 000 (91%) were first-time applicants. Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi were the top three citizenships of asylum seekers, lodging 21 200, 11 200 and 10 000 applications respectively.

The trends regarding the highest numbers of first-time asylum applicants in the third quarter of 2018 remained unchanged in comparison to the previous quarter: most if the applicants were registered in Germany (42 000, or 29 % of all applicants), followed by France (27 200, or 19 %), Greece (16 700, or 11 %) and Spain (12 700, or 9 %).

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Belgium:** On 22 November, the former State Secretary for Asylum (N-VA) decided to limit the number of applications to be registered per day to 60. One day later this number was revised to 50 applications per day. However, on 8 December 2018 the N-VA left the government due to disagreement on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). From 9 December 2018 onwards, Ms. Maggie De Block (Open Vld) became the responsible Minister for Asylum and Migration Policy, and decided to end this limit. Nevertheless, due to a lack of capacity in the reception network it continues to be challenging to register all the applications for international protection on the same day of the making of the application. On 20 December, the Council of State ruled against the limitation of the number of applications to be registered per day.

Since 3 December, all applicants for international protection have to be registered in the newly opened temporary arrival centre, located in the former reception centre “Le Petit-Château”. Applicants will follow the same harmonised procedure: registration of the application for international protection, identification, security screening, medical examination, social intake and allocation of a reception place. This procedure will be spread over several days, which will enable an improved screening of special needs of applicants and a better preparation of reception in general, improved information sharing with the applicants and coordination of the activities of the Immigration Office and Fedasil (the Federal Reception Agency).

- ★ **Bulgaria:** In 2018, Bulgaria remained committed to contributing with experts to the EASO operations in Italy and Greece, in accordance with the current administrative capacity and workload of its asylum and reception system. At the moment, Bulgaria contributes to the EASO Asylum Intervention Pool with 40 national experts, including 34 experts from the State Agency for Refugees and 6 from the Ministry of Interior. Since the beginning of 2018 Bulgaria has initiated 18 new missions of experts from the State Agency for Refugees which were successfully completed. The procedure will continue during 2019.

Judgment of the European Court of Justice – Case [C-652/16](#)

On 4 October, the Court of Justice delivered a preliminary ruling concerning the correct processing of applications for international protection lodged separately by family members and the interrelationship between them. The European Court of Justice reiterated the importance of individual assessment of asylum claims to be carried out in the context of the applicant's personal circumstances. At the same time, the applicant's possible risk of persecution or serious harm, due to their family tie with the person at primary risk, must be considered. Furthermore, the Court found that an asylum application cannot be suspended until another family member's application is processed.

- ★ **Cyprus:** On 26 October, a Decision of the Minister of Interior, based on the relevant provisions of the Cyprus Refugee Laws 2000-2018, was published in the official Gazette of the Republic, according to which applicants for international protection have the right of access to specific sectors of the labour market one month (instead of six months as previously applied) after the submission of the asylum application.

The increase in applications for international protection continued, with the new applicants in October reaching 1 055 and in November reaching nearly 1 000 new applicants, which comprises an increase of more than 60% compared to the same period in 2017.

The EASO Operating Plan Cyprus, covering the period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019, was signed by the Cypriot Minister of Interior and the EASO Executive Director.

- ★ **Finland:** In December, the Finnish Immigration Service [updated](#) its situation reports on the security situations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. The guidelines of the Finnish Immigration Service will remain largely unchanged. In Afghanistan and Somalia, the security situation continues to be unstable. In Afghanistan, there are still several areas to which, due to the security situation, asylum seekers cannot be required to return. In Iraq, the level of violence against civilians has continued to fall. The terrorist organisation ISIS is nevertheless capable of carrying out attacks and still poses a significant threat in Iraq. A legislative project investigates possible changes to the processing of subsequent applications.

The Government plans to [amend](#) the processing of subsequent applications for international protection, submitting its proposal on the matter to Parliament on 5 December. The amendments are based on the EU Asylum Procedures Directive. Finland has not previously included all the provisions of the Directive in the Aliens Act.

A series of [videos](#) that inform asylum seekers of basic rights, criminal law and the sanctions for crimes in Finland was released. The video material will be used at the reception centres as part of the training about Finnish society that the asylum seekers participate in. The videos have been produced as part of the project TURVA, a joint project by the Finnish Immigration Service and the Police University College. One of the aims of the project is to advance asylum seekers' conceptions of basic and human rights and to provide them with information about Finnish society.

On 30 November, the Ministry of the Interior began a [survey](#) concerning the asylum procedure. The purpose of the independent survey is to identify development needs concerning the asylum procedure, examine the cooperation between different authorities and assess the practices of the administrative courts for dealing with asylum-related issues. The objective is to determine how the asylum procedure could be streamlined and shortened and how the quality of the procedure could be improved in the future, while also better safeguarding the legal protection of asylum seekers.

- ★ **Luxembourg:** Regarding immigration and asylum, the most significant institutional change following the formation of the new government was that the competency for the reception of applicants for international protection has moved from the Minister of Family and Integration to the Minister of Immigration and Asylum. The coalition parties agreed that in order to ensure a dignified reception, applicants for international protection should have a single point of contact for the entire duration of the application process and for all aspects of reception.

With regard to reception, the agreement foresees the creation of a mechanism for the progressive empowerment of applicants for international protection, a simplification of the procedure to get a temporary work authorisation and the creation of a legal framework so that applicants can gain access to volunteering opportunities, internships and community work. The government aims to increase both the quantity and the quality of housing structures for applicants for international protection.

The parties also intend to increase the amount of adequate social housing opportunities for beneficiaries of international protection, which would have a positive incidence on the reception capacity as a whole. Furthermore, the time period within which beneficiaries of international protection are exempted from fulfilling the health insurance, housing and resource conditions for family reunification will be increased from three to six months.

- ★ **Netherlands:** On 7 December, the minister for Migration [informed](#) the Dutch parliament on the reassessment of safe countries of origin, specifically Brazil, Togo and Trinidad and Tobago. In case of Togo there has been a deterioration on three main rights: democratic governance, protection of the right to freedom and security of the person involved, and freedom of expression. An extensive reassessment on Togo will follow and, in the meantime, it will no longer be identified as a safe country of origin. Brazil will still be considered a safe country of origin, however developments in the country with the new elected president are thoroughly followed. A special notice must still be paid to LGBTI's in individual cases. Trinidad and Tobago are also still considered safe countries of origin, although a special notice must be paid to LGBTI's in individual cases.

In November, the minister for Migration [provided](#) an update about the various legislative and regulatory changes needed to ensure that the asylum procedure could be completed faster, and that Dutch policy was in line with European laws and regulations. Among others, the legislative amendments currently being prepared are:

- An amendment to the Aliens Act concerning the reduction of the validity period of the asylum permit from five to three years;
- An amendment to the Aliens Decree that refers to the waiver of an interview if it appears that a repeated application has no chance of success;
- A legislative amendment to make legal assistance only available after an intention to reject an asylum application.

Apart from these amendments, the working method of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) for the expiration of a temporary asylum residence permit will be adjusted. The IND will now start with a withdrawal procedure of the refugee status when a temporary asylum residence permit expires and a request for an extension or for a permanent residence permit is not submitted on time.

- ★ **Sweden:** On 14 November, the Migration Court of Appeal in Sweden ruled in a case concerning the temporary postponement requirement in Swedish law in cases of family reunification to persons who have been granted subsidiary protection. The case ([MIG 2018:20](#)) concerned a child from Syria who had arrived in Sweden with his uncle. His parents and a sibling applied for residence permits to reunite with him after he was granted subsidiary protection status, but their applications were rejected by the Swedish Migration Agency. The Migration Court upheld the Agency's decision and concluded that the refusal to grant family reunification did not breach the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

On appeal, the Migration Court of Appeal examined the balance between the family's interest in reunification and the Swedish law maker's interest in the reduction of the number of asylum-seekers, which was why family reunification to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have been restricted by means of a temporary law that was passed in 2016. The Migration Court of Appeal found that in light of Article 8 ECHR and relevant ECtHR jurisprudence, the refusal of family reunification in the present case could not be considered proportionate. The Court also attached particular weight to the principle of the best interests of the child, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to reiterate that delays in family reunification were not in accordance with that principle. The judges concluded that the restriction imposed on the right to family life was contrary to Sweden's international obligations under Article 8 ECHR and Articles 3, 9 and 10 CRC.

- ★ **United Kingdom:** On 16 October 2018 an updated 'Screening and routing' document was [published](#) for staff in UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), Immigration Enforcement (IE) and Border Force (BF) who register asylum claims and complete the screening process for asylum claimants.

On 8 October, an updated 'Assessing age' [guidance note](#) used by UK Visas and Immigration to make decisions when an asylum applicant claims to be a child with little or no evidence was published.

Relocation and Resettlement

- ★ **Bulgaria:** In November, a new group of eight persons was resettled to Bulgaria, in addition to another thirteen, resettled in June 2018. With regard to EU joint resettlement programmes, in line with the Commission Recommendation on enhancing legal pathways for persons in need of international protection and the new timeframe, a decision for the resettlement of 110 persons until 31 October 2019 was approved on 30 November 2017.
- ★ **Croatia:** In October, a new group of 47 persons was resettled to Croatia in line with the Commission Recommendation on enhancing legal pathways for persons in need of international protection. Thus, so far Croatia has accepted a total of 152 refugees from Turkey.

In addition to resettlement, Croatia has been continuously providing support to Member States which bear the greatest burden, in order to relieve the pressure on their asylum systems. From October to December, two experts from Ministry of the Interior participated in EASO missions in Greece and Cyprus.

- ★ **Spain:** On 21 December, Spain approved the [National Resettlement Programme](#) for 2018. During the reporting period, Spain also continued to carry out its relocation and resettlement activities.
- ★ **Sweden:** In December 2018, the Swedish government [decided](#) to maintain the Swedish resettlement quota. This means that in 2019, the Swedish Migration Agency will be responsible to resettle 5 000 refugees or persons in need of subsidiary protection to Sweden, the same number as in 2018. Over the past few years, Sweden has increased its resettlement quota, from 1 900 in 2016 to 3 400 in 2017, and 5 000 in 2018. In 2018, the most common nationalities among refugees resettled to Sweden were Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. Resettled refugees receive a permanent residence permit and for each individual, a Swedish municipality is designated to offer settlement services including housing and integration.



3. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 18 December, on the occasion of International Migrants' Day and as part of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), the Council of Europe [launched](#) a practical handbook for professionals called "How to convey child-friendly information to children in migration".

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Greece:** Following the adoption of the law n. 4554/2018, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity in close cooperation with the National Centre of Social Solidarity, UNHCR and NGO METAdrasi worked on the drafting of a transition programme regarding the guardianship of unaccompanied and separated minors. The transition programme will last nine months starting from January 2019 until September 2019 when the guardianship system is expected to be fully undertaken by state authorities. The Transition Programme provides for the protection of and safeguarding of unaccompanied minors (UAC) residing across Greece (in protective custody, RICs, Hospitals, Shelters and SIL, Hotels and Safe zones) including homeless children, through the deployment of Authorized Minors' Representatives/Guardians as per pertinent Law (4554/ 2018).
- ★ **France:** In December, France Terre d'Asile (FTDA) [published](#) a booklet on "the reception and care of unaccompanied minors in France". The aim is to provide information on the various challenges related to providing administrative and legal support to unaccompanied minors in France.

★ **Ireland:** In the margins of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on 6 December 2018, the [Minister Flanagan has made a commitment to the Greek Government to invite up to 36 unaccompanied minors to Ireland from Greece](#). Ireland will offer solidarity to Greece by agreeing to accept up to 36 unaccompanied minors in need of International Protection in 2019.

★ **Italy:** In early November 2018, the Ministry of the Interior presented a new technical document related to the reception conditions of asylum seekers and the services they are entitled to whilst staying in reception centres. The document shall help prefects and municipalities in defining the costs of reception services in their call for tenders. It should also lead to a significant contraction of public spending.

The Humanitarian Corridor linking the African continent to Italy is still operating. A total of 51 people in situation of extreme vulnerability reached Italy through the Corridor managed by the UNHCR on 14 November 2018. A total of 31 people came from Sudan, nine from Ethiopia, six from Eritrea, four from Somalia, and one from Cameroon. Whilst 15 of them had already been recognised as refugees, 36 are asylum seekers. On 19 December 2018, 103 people arrived to Italy from Libya through a humanitarian corridor managed by the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with the Don Benzi Community.

★ **Luxembourg:** The [coalition agreement](#) emphasises that particular attention will be paid to the specific needs of unaccompanied minors. Irregularly staying unaccompanied minors or those whose application for international protection has been rejected must be adequately cared for and placed into specific housing structures.

★ **Poland:** In November, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland adopted the draft act amending the act on supporting family and foster care system and some other acts. It assumes, among other things, an extension of the catalogue on indefinite residence permits (consent to stay for humanitarian reasons and consent for tolerated stay), as well as for temporary residence permit based on the premise of family life (family reunification) and the risk of violating children's rights.

★ **United Kingdom:** On 3 December, UK Visas and Immigration modernised [guidance](#) for how it uses evidential flexibility when considering applications was published.

On 30 November, an asylum policy guidance was [published](#) on how Home Office staff process and assess asylum claims from those people who were transferred to the UK as unaccompanied minors between 17 October 2016 and 13 July 2017, in connection with the clearance of the Calais camp, for the purpose of being reunited with family.

Judgment of the European Court of Justice – [Case C-713/17](#)

On 21 November, the Court of Justice ruled in the case C-713/17, concerning the rights of refugees with temporary residence permits to social assistance benefits. The Court concluded that the level of social security benefits paid to refugees, whether they have a temporary or a permanent residence permit, must be the same as that offered to nationals of that Member State.



4. LEGAL MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 12 and 13 November, the European Integration Network [met](#) in Vienna to discuss ways to better integrate migrant women. The meeting brought together representatives of national public authorities from all 28 EU countries, Norway and Canada and outlined the need for further measures and coordinated efforts to reach a better integration of migrant women and promote gender equality.
- ★ On 23 October, the European Commission published a new [feasibility study](#) on sponsorship schemes as a possible pathway to safe channels for admission to the EU. The study, carried out by ICF and MPI Europe, confirms that private sponsorship schemes can be useful in order to promote safe and legal channels of admission to the EU for those in need of international protection.
- ★ On 15 October the Action Plan “Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees” was [launched](#) by the UNHCR, the OECD and the French Interministerial Delegation for Reception and Integration of Refugees (DiAir). The Action Plan is composed of ten “action areas” identified as key to supporting the successful labour market integration of refugees. The action areas are illustrative of the process and issues faced by employers concerning the hiring of refugees. For each action area, the support that governments, civil society, employers and refugees can provide is highlighted.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** On 27 December, the Austrian Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection [has set](#) a contingent of 2 610 foreigners for the temporary employment in “agriculture and forestry”. Work permits may be issued from 1 January 2019. They must not exceed a period of validity of six months, at most nine months under certain circumstances, and must not end after 31 December 2019.

Furthermore, an additional contingent of 275 foreigners for the short-term employment in “agriculture” was set. Those work permits may be issued from 1 March 2019. They must not exceed a period of validity of six weeks and must not end after 30 November 2019. Foreigners subject to transitional provisions of the EU free movement of workers and seasonal workers who have been lawfully employed within the contingent in the last five years (according to Art. 5 Act Governing the Employment of Foreigners) are to be preferred when granting work permits.

On 31 October, the Austrian Government [decided not to adopt](#) the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Furthermore, it was decided that no Austrian representative will attend the inter-governmental conference in Marrakech, that the non-accession will be declared in writing, that Austria will abstain from voting on this pact in the UN General Assembly and that Austria will submit an “explanation of vote”.

On 24 October, the Austrian Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection [has set](#) a contingent of 1 100 foreigners for the temporary employment in winter tourism. Work permits may be issued from 12 November 2018. They must not exceed a period of validity of 25 weeks and must not end after 15 May 2019. Foreigners subject to transitional provisions of the EU free movement of workers and seasonal workers who have been legally employed within the contingent in the last five years (according to Art. 5 Act Governing the Employment of Foreigners) are to be preferred when granting work permits.

★ **Bulgaria:** In February 2018 an Agreement for Regulation of Labor Migration between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Armenia was signed in Yerevan (promulgated in State Gazette 90/2018). It entered into force for both countries on 9 October 2018. Currently there are negotiations on draft implementing procedures of the Agreement. By the beginning of April 2019, both countries must sign and start the practical application of the Agreement.

★ **Croatia:** In December, the Ordinance on status and work of third-country nationals was amended. New provisions allow for diplomatic missions and consulates to issue residence permits to certain categories of third-country nationals. Until this revision, residence permits were only issued on the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

On 20 December, in line with the Foreigners Act, the Government of the Republic of Croatia set the annual quota for the employment of third-country nationals for 2019. The Decision is published in Official Gazette, no 116/2018. The total quota for 2019 was set at 65 100 permits, including permits for new employment (41 810) and for the extension of already issued work permits (15 000). An additional 6 540 work permits for seasonal work was also set, 250 permits for ICT and 1 500 permits for national permits for strategic investment projects.

★ **Czech Republic:** On 12 November, the Czech Republic introduced the Cuban transit visas. The reason was that Cubans were abusing the transit through the Czech Republic while traveling from Russia, as they did not continue to the final destination of their journey and were applying for international protection in the Czech Republic.

★ **Estonia:** In December, the e-Residency 2.0 White Paper was [published](#). E-Residency 2.0 is a national initiative in Estonia based on cooperation between the public and private sector. It was unveiled by Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid and includes 49 recommendations to make e-Residency more beneficial for everyone in Estonia.

On 2 November, the one-stop-shop service centre called [International House of Estonia](#) was opened in Ülemiste City. The aim of the service centre is to provide consultation and public authority services for international newcomers in Estonia and local employers. The services of the International House are aimed at internationals (mainly specialists) who have come to Estonia to work or to study, but also for their spouse and for the company that hires international specialists.

★ **Finland:** The [number](#) of applications for a first residence permit for studies increased in 2018. By the end of September, a total of 5 007 students had applied for a first residence permit. From January to September 2017, a total of 4 353 students applied for a first residence permit. In 2016, the total number of applicants was 5 660. The low number of applications last year was presumably influenced by the fact that educational institutions in Finland implemented tuition fees for students from countries outside the EU. Students who started their studies in the autumn of 2017 were the first ones affected by the change. Most foreign students study at a higher education institution.

Judgment of the European Court of Justice - [C-257/17 \(C, A\)](#) and [C-484/17 \(K\)](#)

On 7 November, the Court of Justice ruled that failure to pass an integration procedure can legally justify the rejection of a residence permit. However, the civic integration requirements for residence permits should have as only objective the facilitation of the third-country national's integration and should be reasonable in terms of requirements and costs.

In the upcoming months, the Finnish Immigration Service is [hiring](#) a significant number of immigration experts. Approximately 240 fixed-term posts, amounting to half of the agency's fixed-term positions, will become permanent posts. The agency is recruiting new employees to several roles, for instance to the Immigration Unit to process residence permits and to the Asylum Unit.

- ★ **France:** On 19 November, France's Prime Minister [presented](#) the national strategy for attracting international students. The Government's goal is to increase the incoming mobility of foreign students and to strengthen the influence of French universities abroad. This new strategy is structured in six main objectives: to simplify visa policy, to double the numbers of students benefiting from intensive training in French as a foreign language and in programmes taught in English, to create a label to improve the quality of students support services, to adopt differentiated tuition rates and triple the number of scholarships, to increase France's presence and its influence abroad, as well as to launch a global communication campaign.

The Interministerial Delegation for Reception and Integration of Refugees (DiAir) [started](#) a partnership with the Civic Service Agency the programme Volont'R. Volont'R is a civic service for and with refugees. It aims to facilitate the contact between the French society and the beneficiaries of international protection by trying to change the opinion of young people on migration and promoting the integration of refugees into French society through specific missions. For this occasion, the DiAir launched a national call for actions in favour of the integration of refugees on 4 December. This should allow the implementation of national or interregional structural projects intending to recruit and accompany refugees in civic service missions.

On 4 October, the Directorate of School Education (DGESCO) of the Ministry of National Education and Youth and the Directorate for Reception, Foreigner Assistance and Citizenship (DAAEN) of the General Directorate for Foreign Nationals in France within the Ministry of Interior [organised](#) the second national meeting dedicated to the measure "Opening schools to parents for the success of children" which was initiated in 2008. This meeting reflects the continuity of Aurélien Taché's report on the reform of the integration policy of foreign nationals in France which promotes the reinforcement of the above-mentioned measure and the recommendations of the Interministerial Committee on Integration (C2I) of 5 June 2018 aiming to increase classes for parents.

- ★ **Germany:** On 19 December, the German Government adopted new legislation on skilled worker immigration (*Fachkräftezuwanderungsgesetz*) to ensure a stable social and economic situation in Germany. With the new legislation, the German government is putting in place a framework for forward-looking, needs-driven immigration of skilled workers from non-EU States.

The major changes include the following:

- The term 'skilled worker' is used for both university graduates and employees with full vocational qualifications.
- Where an applicant has the required qualification and an employment contract, it will no longer be reviewed whether it would not have been possible to find a suitable German or EU candidate for the post.
- Candidates with full vocational qualifications will not only be accepted for occupations already suffering a shortage of skilled workers.
- Skilled workers with full vocational qualifications will be able to come to Germany for a limited period to seek employment, as is already the case for university graduates (provided their German skills are of the required standard and they are able to finance their living costs).
- There is an acceleration of administrative procedures, in particular to facilitate the obtaining of visas and the recognition of vocational and professional qualifications.

At the same time, the draft law also allows skilled workers from third countries, already in Germany and awaiting decisions on their asylum applications, to stay if they are already gainfully employed and can show that they have integrated. The proposed law must now be debated and approved by the Bundestag.

- ★ **Latvia:** In October, the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS published a Handbook called "Workplace Integration". It was created with the objective to combine good practices of employers regarding workplace integration of newcomers and diversity management. The handbook is available in Latvian, English and Russian.

On 18 and 19 October, the Ministry of Culture and the British Council in Latvia organised an Integration hackathon or Integration Ideas Laboratory where teams under professional mentors' supervision created innovative, sustainable and modern technology-based projects for the development of a more friendly and open society. The main prize was won by a team whose idea was to create a mobile application COoperly to unite people from different cultures. The application will offer users to build the content by adding events and entertainment activities. The application will include several categories as sport, culture, entertainment and business.

★ **Lithuania:** On 20 December, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania approved the changes to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens which inter alia endorsed the institutional reform of the migration management in Lithuania. From July 2019 the main institutions in migration management will be the Migration Department with regional migration units responsible for legal migration and the State border guard service responsible for border security and irregular migration. Police will no longer perform functions related to migration.

On 4 December, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania endorsed a resolution on the United Nations Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and voted in favor of this resolution. The Parliament acknowledged that migration is a global phenomenon and that Lithuania and the international community face constant challenges of uncontrolled irregular mass migration.

In 2019 Lithuania will take over the chairmanship of the Prague Process Strategic Group. The Prague Process is a targeted migration dialogue and a policy process promoting migration partnerships among the countries of the European Union, Schengen Area, Eastern Partnership, Western Balkans, Central Asia, Russia and Turkey.

★ **Luxembourg:** With regard to legal migration, the [coalition agreement](#) is a continuation of the previous agreement, the general principle being that immigration must serve national economic interests, attracting talents and addressing labour market needs. The coalition parties aim to verify the coherence of the Immigration Law and will consider its potential codification. Regarding Brexit, they affirm their willingness to take the needed measures to mitigate undesirable negative effects.

Concerning integration, the coalition agreement stresses the implementation of the National Action Plan on Integration and the continued development of Accompanied Integration Pathway. The Welcome and Integration Contract will be adapted to its users and efforts will be made to further decentralise its offer.

The agreement announces two reforms related to integration: firstly, the Law of 16 December 2008 on reception and integration and the linked Grand ducal regulations will be adapted so that they align with the reality in the field and the resulting integration measures. Secondly, a reform and promotion of the National Council of Foreigners is also announced. In addition, the municipal consultative commissions on integration will be enhanced and municipalities will receive support in their integration work, for instance by means of an integration officer.

★ **Malta:** During the reporting period, the Government's Integration Unit opened its doors to the public, offering the services [announced](#) in the [Integration Strategy and Action Plan](#) published in December 2017.

The first [Annual Integration Conference](#) was held on 14 December 2018.

★ **Netherlands:** In 2018, eight experimental pilots were [set up](#) under VIA to improve the effectiveness of instruments to promote labour market participation and the labour market position of Dutch citizens with a migration background. One pilot started in 2018, the other 7 pilots will start in early 2019. The VIA program was set up by the ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in 2017 and is intended to improve the position of Dutch people with a migrant background on the labour market.

On 5 October, as a result of the lack of accommodation for both Dutch and international students, the new [Action Plan on Student Housing 2018-2021](#) was published. This plan aims to build up a local partnership in the next three years, which ensures that a local balance between supply and demand is created within ten years.

On 1 October, the Decree implementing the Aliens Employment Act was [amended](#) following the introduction of hybrid entrepreneurship for intra-corporate transferees. With this change, the transferee is permitted (in addition to the activities associated with this specific purpose of stay) to perform work as a self-employed person without having to apply for a work permit (TWV). This change also applies to holders of a residence permit for intra-corporate transferees who received their residence permit before 1 October 2018.

As of 1 October, the Single Permit procedure (GVVA-procedure) [applies](#) inter alia to certain intra-corporate transferees who do not directly fall under the Intra Corporate Transferees Directive 2014/66/EU. Before, the employer required a work permit and a provisional residence permit (mvv) or an extension of a former residence permit separately.

★ **Portugal:** On 19 December, Ordinance n. 328/2018 was published which defines the scheme of certification of companies with a view to recruiting third-country nationals wishing to develop a highly qualified activity in Portugal. This ordinance enters into force in January 2019.

★ **Sweden:** The process of granting third-country nationals a [residence permit for study purposes](#) has been accelerated in Sweden. In 2018, the average processing time for first-time permits for studies at doctoral level was reduced from 64 days in 2017 to 42 days in 2018, and the processing time for applications for studies at master's and bachelor's level was reduced to around 30 days.

The shortening of processing times for education-related permits was possible due to an effort at the Swedish Migration Agency to work off applications that had been pending for a long time. Also, doctoral students can now receive a residence permit for two years (instead of one year), which automatically reduces the number of applications for residence permit extensions. The Migration Agency also improved its cooperation with higher education institutions and other actors. The number of third-country nationals applying for study-related permits in Sweden has been increasing over recent years.

- ★ **Slovak Republic:** In October, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted [the Strategy](#) on Labor Mobility of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic, which deals with the strategic planning and organisation of regulated labour mobility of foreigners in the labour market in Slovakia. The strategy elaborates measures aimed at resolving labour market shortages in certain areas. The strategy will be updated regularly in accordance with the situation on the Slovak labour market (in a one-year period).

The strategy identifies various short-term (temporary) measures (2018-2019) and long-term measures (from 2019 to 2030). Several proposed legislative changes will enter into force in January 2019.

- ★ **Spain:** On 26 December, a new regulation for the collective management of recruitment of workers from third countries for 2019 was approved and [published](#) in Official State Gazette. This new regulation elaborates on the rules for the collective recruitment of third-country nationals and job-search visas to meet a dual objective: on the one hand, it articulates safe, orderly and regular migration routes in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Migration Pact. On the other hand, it addresses the needs of workers not already resident in Spain. The 2019 circular migration project with Morocco in the agricultural sector will be developed through this new regulation. Several meetings with Moroccan authorities and employers involved in this project have been held to prepare the campaign.

The Spanish Government and UNHCR will carry out a pilot project of community sponsorship for the reception and integration of refugees.

- ★ **United Kingdom:** On 4 December, it was [announced](#) that Singapore and South Korea will be added to the list of countries whose nationals will be eligible to use ePassport gates to enter the UK from summer 2019. The proposals build on those set out in the Budget, to allow nationals from the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Japan to use ePassport gates, and demonstrate the government's commitment to develop a new global immigration system as the UK leaves the EU.

Alongside the Green Paper, the UK Government [launched](#) the Integration Area Programme, to better understand and tackle the challenges specific to a place. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government is working with five local authorities in England – Blackburn and Darwen, Bradford, Peterborough, Walsall and Waltham Forest. They are developing their own local integration strategy to address the different types of integration challenges specific to their communities. Blackburn and Darwen's local integration strategy, Our Community, Our Future, was published on 6 December.



5. MANAGEMENT OF THE EU EXTERNAL BORDERS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ No relevant updates.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Estonia:** In December, the eastern border of Estonia was [marked](#) with warning signs in order to prevent accidental irregular border crossings. Altogether, 1 130 warning signs will be installed on the borderline of the eastern border.
- ★ **Lithuania:** In October, a Schengen evaluation was started in Lithuania. During a six-week period, experts from the European Commission, Schengen Member States and other institutions will evaluate and prepare a report on how Lithuania implements Schengen requirements. Experts will also visit Lithuanian consular posts in Kaliningrad and Azerbaijan to assess procedures of the common visa policy.

The State border guard service of Lithuania considerably improved the technical equipment needed for the control of the facilitated transit system which provides for transit of trains from mainland Russian Federation to the Kaliningrad area via Lithuania. This improvement will allow borders guards to better monitor passing trains and to react faster in case of possible violations of the transit rules.

- ★ **Luxembourg:** The new [coalition agreement](#) views the maintenance of free movement of people in the Schengen area as a priority and hence announces support for measures aiming to improve the management of external borders. In this context, the government will implement European projects such as the European Travel Information and Authorisation System and the Entry / Exit System. Luxembourg will also continue to participate in Frontex missions. With regard to maritime search and rescue, the Grand Duchy will, on the European and international level, fight for the adherence to international maritime law.

- ★ **Poland:** On 7 December, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration Renata Szczęch participated at Polish-Belarusian co-ordination committee for cross-border cooperation in Minsk. Among the topics discussed were the modernisation of border infrastructure and regional cooperation. Deputy Minister Szczęch expressed the hope that improving relations between countries will contribute to the development of border infrastructure and increasing the economic and tourist potential of border regions. She thanked the Belorussian side for the facilitations introduced since 2016, including the introduction of visa-free travel in the Grodno and Brest regions. Issues related to cooperation in emergency situations, such as natural disasters and regional cooperation were also discussed.
- ★ **United Kingdom:** On 31 December, the UK Home Secretary [announced](#) two Border Force cutters, currently operating abroad, are to be brought back to the UK to help patrol the Channel. The move comes in response to growing concerns that the increase in attempts by migrants to cross the Channel in small boats over recent weeks could lead to the loss of life. This year 539 migrants have attempted to travel to the UK on small boats. Of these, 434 (around 80%) made their attempts in the last three months of the year (since October 1). 227 (42%) were intercepted by the French before they made it to the UK.



6. IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND RETURN

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ No relevant updates.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** On 9 November, as a response to a parliamentary question, the Austrian Vice-Chancellor [explained](#) that the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union is based on a detailed national programme, comprising three priority areas, one of them being “Security and Fight against Illegal Migration”. According to the response to the parliamentary question, progress was made in all those priority areas over the past months. The Vice-Chancellor particularly referred to the informal summit of Heads of State and Government on 20 September 2018 in Salzburg, where the turnaround in the European Migration Policy, especially the stronger focus on external borders, the strengthening of Frontex as well as the intensification of the partnership with Africa, was confirmed.

On 2 November, the Austrian Interior Minister enacted a [Regulation](#), re-introducing temporary border controls between 12 November 2018 and 12 May 2019 on the internal borders to Slovenia and Hungary to maintain law, order and public safety. During that period, internal borders may only be crossed at points of entry.

- ★ **Czech Republic:** On 30 November, the Minister of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Jan Hamáček and his Macedonian counterpart signed an agreement on the return of irregular migrants.
- ★ **Cyprus:** On 19 December, a grant agreement between the European Funds Unit of the Ministry of Interior, as the managing authority, and the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights, as the final beneficiary, was signed for establishing and operating an effective system for monitoring forced return procedures for third-country nationals staying irregularly in the country. The project has a total budget of € 329.537 and is co-funded by AMIF and the Republic of Cyprus.
- ★ **Estonia:** In November, a new [detention centre](#) opened in Rae municipality, which replaced the previous detention centre in Harku. The new detention centre accommodates up to 123 returnees and asylum seekers and has better living conditions compared to the old centre.
- ★ **Finland:** The [enforcement of decisions](#) on removal from the country will be accelerated. Certain removal decisions related to public order and security can be enforced after 30 days from the service of the decision, unless the administrative court has prohibited its enforcement. The removal procedure is applied to removal from the country when the person concerned has or has had a residence permit in Finland or the residence of an EU citizen has been registered.

The Finnish Immigration Service has decided to remodel the facilities of the Oulu reception centre so that some sections can, if required, accommodate clients who are placed in detention. Earlier, the agency planned to establish a new detention unit in the district of Heikinharju in Oulu. As the need to increase detention capacity has not been as high as anticipated, no new separate detention unit will be established.

- ★ **France:** On 14 December, the [decree](#) n° 2018-1159 implementing the law of 10 September 2018 “for a managed migration and an effective right of asylum and a successful integration” was published. It includes different provisions, in particular on the fight against irregular migration, the reduction of timescales for the processing of asylum applications and the national reception scheme for asylum seekers and refugees.
- ★ **Germany:** On 12 November, Federal Interior Minister of Germany, Horst Seehofer, ordered the extension of the internal border controls with Austria and Denmark for another six months.

This was decided in close coordination with Sweden's, Norway's, Denmark's and Austria's Ministries of Interior and justified by the fact that irregular secondary migration was still too high and the external border protection of the EU still insufficient. According to the Minister, the aim remains nevertheless to return to a control-free movement in the Schengen area.

- ★ **Italy:** In early October 2018, the Decree-Law on security and immigration entered into force and in December it was converted into Law n. 132 of 1 December 2018 with some modifications. The Law aims at improving the management of migrant influxes towards Italy by providing protection and integration measures to those who deserve protection whilst discouraging specious protection claims. Accordingly, it stipulates new provisions relating to temporary residence permits for humanitarian protection (a national type of protection subsidiary to international protection statuses), international protection, and immigration at large.

More specifically, the nationally-defined "humanitarian protection status" is reformed through the institution of "special" residence permits delivered in cases where the protection seeker is not eligible to the refugee or subsidiary protection status but still requires some sort of protection. The "special" residence permit may be delivered in a limited number of situations, such as medical care cases or in cases where the foreigner cannot be returned without infringing the non-refoulement principle.

The law also introduces the concept of "safe country of origin" into the Italian legal framework. To reduce the time for decisions granting international protection, accelerated procedures are provided to speed up the assessment of specious protection claims (in case of a manifestly unfounded application, in cases where the claimant comes from a "safe country of origin", etc.).

To ensure that return decisions are carried out, the new Law also provides for an extension of retention in in expulsion centres to 180 days.

The new Law also brings about changes regarding the Italian reception system by establishing a clearer distinction between reception and integration. From now on, only beneficiaries of international protection, as well as unaccompanied foreign minors, are to be hosted within secondary reception facilities to initiate their integration project.

- ★ **Luxembourg:** The [coalition agreement](#) foresees that Luxembourg will proceed to the implementation of the recommendations of the Schengen evaluation through legal and procedural changes as appropriate. Voluntary return will continue to be promoted and will be complemented with the implementation of a policy of awareness-raising amongst rejected applicants for international protection. Furthermore, a personalised mechanism for support to return will be put in place.

Civil society representatives will be eligible to join the work group in charge of evaluating the situation of irregularly staying migrants, in order to advise the minister regarding a potential regularisation of these people based on humanitarian motives of exceptional gravity.

With regard to detention, the coalition aims to create a detention facility for women, families and vulnerable people. Once this specific structure is created, the legislation will be amended to ensure that children are no longer placed in the current detention centre. More efforts will be made to provide alternatives to detention, starting with the replacement of the semi-open return structure in Kirchberg with a permanent structure.

- ★ **Netherlands:** On 29 November, the Ministry of Justice and Security reached an [agreement](#) with the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) on the development of National Immigration Facilities (LVVs) as of early 2019 through several local pilots. The LVVs are intended for migrants who are not entitled to stay and who have not left the Netherlands voluntary or by force.

On 12 October, a legislative proposal was [submitted](#) to the House of Representatives with regard to apprehension, relocation and retention of asylum seekers who are awaiting a decision on their residence application or on the relocation to another Member State as a result of the Dublin Regulation. This proposal will provide a legal basis to apprehend and detain such asylum seekers if deemed necessary.

- ★ **Poland:** As of 1 November, Poland is the first EU Member State country in the European Union which obtained the consent of the Vietnamese authorities to establish an officer of Polish Border Guard in Hanoi as a European Return Officer. The main duties of the EURLO officer include the direct delivery of readmission applications directed by Poland as well as coordinating and supporting the return of Vietnamese citizens.

- ★ **Sweden:** In December, the Swedish Migration Agency revised its internal guidelines for the handling of return cases. The objective is to achieve a greater degree of flexibility and to make it possible for case workers to deal with each return case in accordance with the characteristics of the case. Return cases can vary significantly depending on, for example, whether or not a returnee is available to the authorities, is willing to cooperate with the authorities, has a valid travel document, and whether or not a return can – if necessary – be carried out by force.

The only mandatory element of the procedure is the notification of the return decision to inform the returnee about the decision. Instead of detailing other elements of the procedure and at what point in time these measures are to be taken, the new guidelines provide case workers with a number of possible measures to choose from, as considered suitable, and to adapt these to the individual case. The Swedish Migration Agency is responsible for voluntary return, and the Swedish Police is responsible for forced return.

- ★ **United Kingdom:** On 3 December, a new pilot scheme called Action Access was [launched](#) to support vulnerable women in the community, when they would otherwise be liable for immigration detention. The pilot will last two years and will support up to 50 women during that time. The Home Office will work in partnership with Action Foundation, a charity which provides support to asylum seekers, migrants and refugees. The first phase began on 3 December 2018 and will see up to 21 women supported in the community who would otherwise be detained at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre.



7. ACTIONS ADDRESSING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 4 December, the European Commission presented its [Second Report](#) on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, required under Article 20 of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. The report, together with its accompanying [staff working document](#), presents emerging patterns based on data and trends, actions taken under the EU Strategy and the progress in implementing the 2017 Communication, in line with the commitment undertaken therein. The report also analyses statistical data provided by Member States and presents an update on the implementation of Directive 2004/81/EC7 on residence permits for victims of trafficking. A [factsheet](#) summarises the findings. The European Commission also published the [Study on Data collection on trafficking in human beings in the EU](#).
- ★ Implementing a key action under priority B of the [2017 Communication](#) stepping up EU action to address trafficking in human beings the European Commission published [Working together to address trafficking in human beings: key concepts in a nutshell](#). The document is to be seen in the context of contributing to a coordinated and consolidated Union response against trafficking in human beings.
- ★ On 18 October, on the occasion of the 12th EU Anti-Trafficking Day, the European Commission [called](#) for more anti-trafficking measures and actions to protect women and girls. As a key action of the 2017 Communication, set forth under priority B, the European Institute for gender equality published a [report](#) on gender-specific measures in anti-trafficking actions. The report analyses both the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive and the Victims' Rights Directive from a gender perspective. The report highlights that trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most commonly reported form of trafficking in the EU: 95% of registered victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the EU are women or girls.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** In November, the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria published its [Report](#) on Trafficking in Human Beings 2017. Based on data collected from police investigations completed in 2017, the report shows that 70 per cent of human trafficking are for the purpose of sexual exploitation. 57% of the victims are third-country nationals, mainly from China and Nigeria.

In October, the fifth National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking (2018–2020), the fourth Austrian Report on Combating Human Trafficking (2015–2017) as well as the reports of the working groups on child trafficking, prostitution and human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation were [presented](#) to the Council of Ministers. In response to the migration movements of 2015 and 2016 the new National Action Plan lists refugees and unaccompanied minors as potential groups at risk.

- ★ **Greece:** On 7 November, diplomatic staff of foreign missions in Greece attended a workshop aiming at raising awareness on THB focusing on victims' repatriation process. The workshop took place in Athens and it was co-organised by IOM, the Office of the National Rapporteur and the Human Rights General Secretariat, Ministry of Justice.

A Conference titled "Putting *Chowdury* into practice: Challenges and opportunities in relation to the execution of the judgement by the ECtHR in *Chowdury and others vs Greece*" was held on 30 November 2018, in Athens in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Conference was jointly organised by the Office of National Rapporteur on THB, the Office of the General Prosecutor of the Supreme Court and the Human Rights General Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. The Conference aimed at informing participants of the general measures to be adopted for the implementation of the judgement and enhanced awareness and operational readiness of prosecutorial, judicial, law enforcement, labour inspection and social welfare bodies in addressing challenges related to human trafficking for labour exploitation.

The parliamentary Committee on THB was [convened](#) on 12 December in order to identify, discuss and seek solutions to tackle justice system issues. A wide range of stakeholders participated in the discussion.

A training seminar on THB for labour exploitation, addressed to Labour Inspectors, was co-organised by the Hellenic Labour Inspectorate and the Office of the National Rapporteur on THB. The seminar took place in Athens on 27 December. Representatives of ILO and UNODC contributed to the training.

- ★ **Luxembourg:** The [coalition agreement](#) foresees to strengthen the support to victims of human trafficking with regard to legal advice and professional care in a protected housing.
- ★ **Netherlands:** On 13 December, a new regulation with regard to the criminal responsibility for carrying undocumented aliens or incorrectly documented aliens was [announced](#), which has come into force on 1 January 2019. This regulation refines the criminal responsibility for carrying undocumented aliens or incorrectly documented aliens. Carriers will be required to carry a certified copy of the travel documents of his passengers. Moreover, the new regulation concerns an increase of the level of fines.

On 4 December, the programme 'Together against trafficking in human beings' was [launched](#) in cooperation with a large number of partners and aims to prevent trafficking in human beings and to support victims of human trafficking. In the Dutch Coalition Agreement, extra funding has been made available to the reception of victims of human trafficking. This funding is also used to support the police with tackling human trafficking.

- ★ **Poland:** In November 2018, the Sea Border Department in Gdańsk and the District Prosecutor's Office in Gdańsk apprehended a criminal group involved in human trafficking in the area of exploitation to work or forced services and money laundering. To date, 35 victims of human trafficking have been identified: 18 citizens of Ukraine, 8 citizens of Belarus and 9 citizens of Poland. Foreigners were sent to work on construction sites in Sweden and Poland. No contracts were signed with employees or they were made in a language incomprehensible to them. Perpetrators removed passports, contracts, job declarations, only part of the remuneration was paid or not at all. It is estimated that the perpetrators could have used over 540 people, thus achieving income of around 4.5 million PLN (1.04 million EUR).

On 12 December, the Interministerial Team for Counteracting and Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings adopted a new National Action Plan on prevention of THB in Poland for the period 2019-2021. The main objectives of the plan are as follows: raising awareness about the phenomenon of human trafficking; raising the standard of support provided to victims of trafficking in human beings (including minors); increasing the effectiveness of the activities of institutions responsible for prosecuting trafficking in human beings by improving legal tools, structures and implementation of best practices; raising the qualifications of representatives of institutions and organisations involved in combating trafficking in human beings and supporting victims of this crime; and strengthening international cooperation.

- ★ **Portugal:** In the reporting period, the 2017 THB Report was translated into English for dissemination at international and European level, namely within the framework of the Group of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms / Office of the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator/European Commission.

On 18 October, the European Day against THB, the national campaign "It could be You" was launched, including a TV spot, posters and leaflets in seven languages (Portuguese, English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Romanian and Russian).

- ★ **United Kingdom:** On 12 October 2018 the Home Office [announced](#) that it will provide 2 million GBP (2.2 million EUR) to stem human trafficking in Albania. The programme will help tackle the flow of modern slavery to the UK by supporting victims to rebuild their lives and by deterring vulnerable people from falling into the hands of traffickers in Albania. The UK will also support criminal justice officials to ensure perpetrators of this awful crime are brought to justice. The funding runs until March 2021 to assist Albanian victims with their reintegration into society once they are identified, as well as educating vulnerable communities about the dangers of trafficking. The package, from the Home Office's Modern Slavery Fund, also includes training for Albanian criminal justice officials so that they are better prepared to deal with human trafficking cases, meaning those responsible are more likely to face justice. Albania has endorsed Prime Minister Theresa May's international Call to Action to end modern slavery. The UK is committed to working closely with Albania to combat the issue.



8. EXTERNAL DIMENSION

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ No relevant updates.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Czech Republic:** On 10 October, the Government of the Czech Republic approved further financial assistance under the Aid in Place Programme. The Ministry of the Interior can thus provide another financial donation (50 million



CZK – 1.95 million EUR) to support countries in the Sahel region and Iraq. The goal is to help these countries coping with refugee crisis and migration flows heading to Europe.

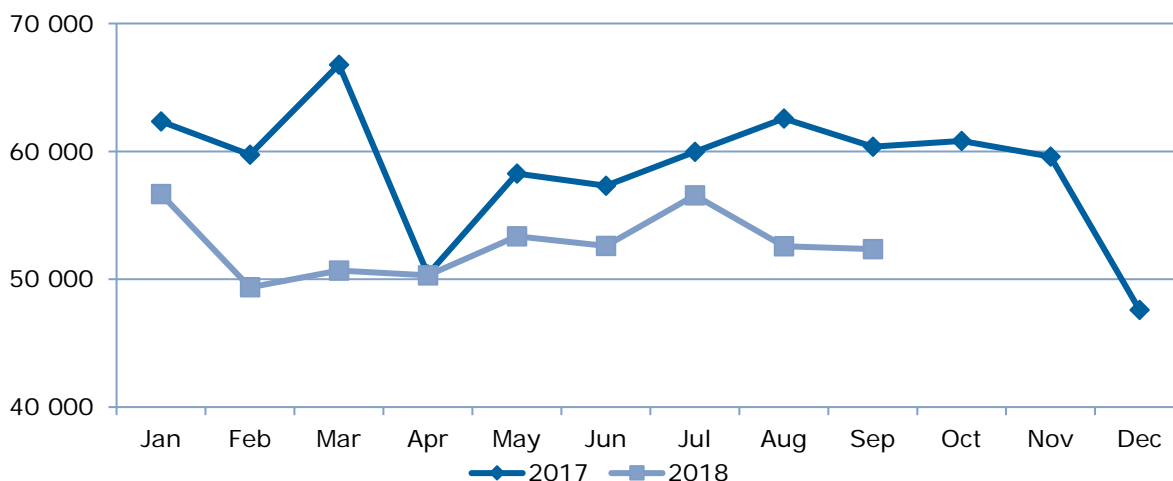
Teams of Czech doctors specialising in gynaecology and ophthalmology operated in Senegal and Jordan under the MEDEVAC Programme from November to December 2018. In Senegal 73 patients were checked and 13 patients underwent surgery while during November 2018 in Jordan 258 patients underwent surgery.



On 20 November, the Government of the Czech Republic approved a financial contribution of approximately 300 million CZK (11.7 million EUR) within the framework of European aid to Turkey.

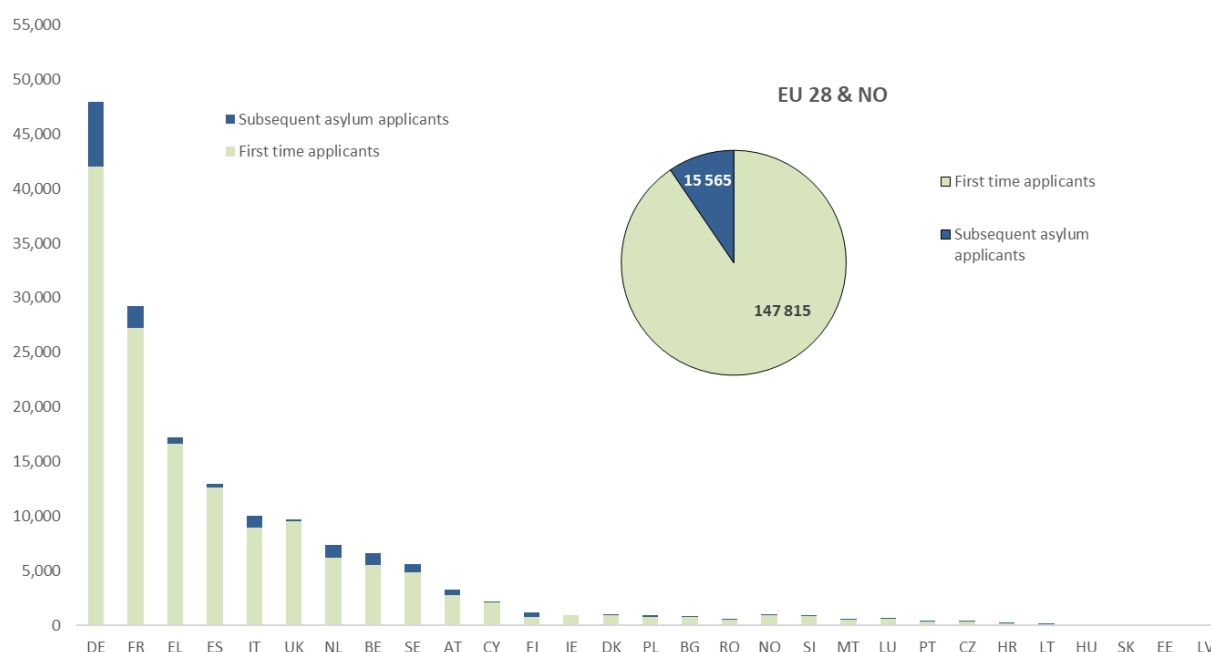
ANNEX: EU & COMPLEMENTARY STATISTICS, ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, OTHER EMN OUTPUTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Figure 1a: Asylum applications in the EU-28, January 2017 – September 2018.



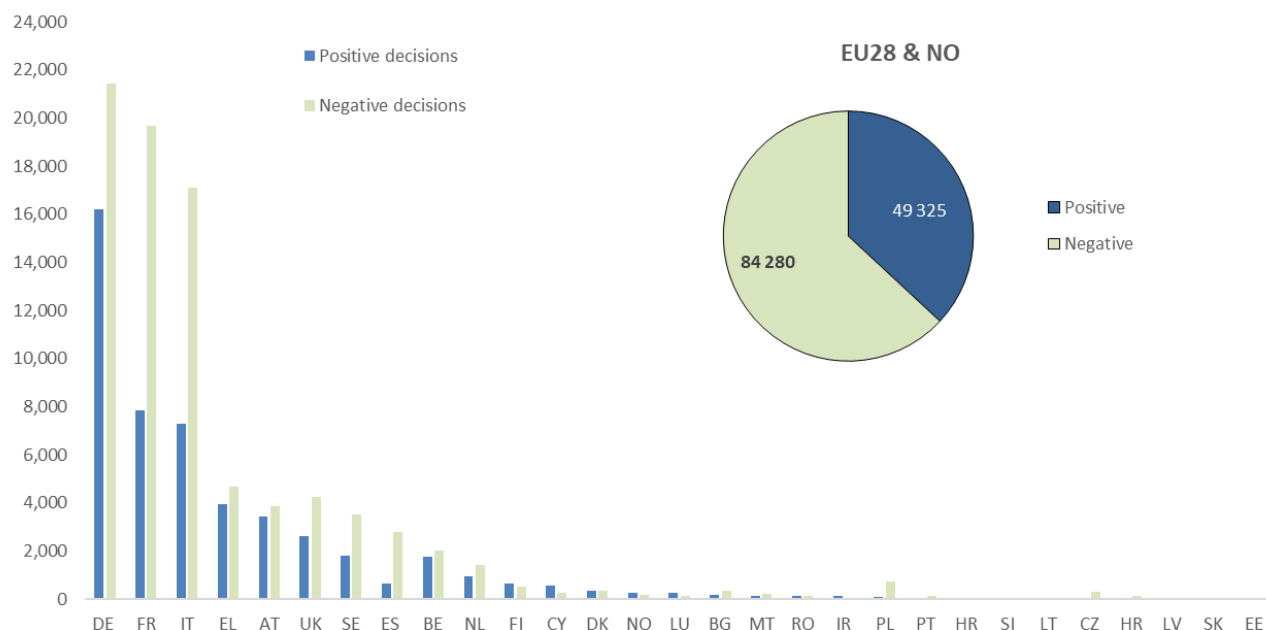
Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)], total asylum applicants, extracted on 7 January 2019.

Figure 1b: First time asylum applicants and subsequent applicants (together, total asylum applicants) in the EU-28 and Norway, Q3 2018 (quarterly data)



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)], accessed on 7 January 2019.

Figure 2: First instance asylum decisions in EU-28 and Norway for non-EU citizens, Q3 2018



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asydcfstq](#)], accessed on 7 January 2019.

Figure 3a: Illegal border crossing – Top nationalities (in %)

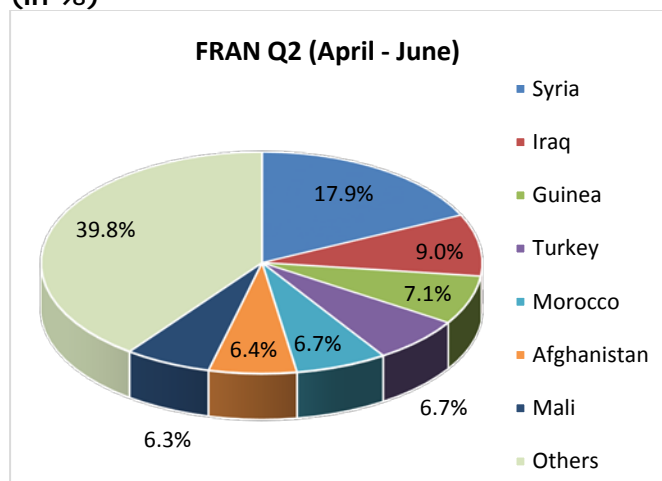


Figure 3b: Refused entry – Top nationalities (in %)

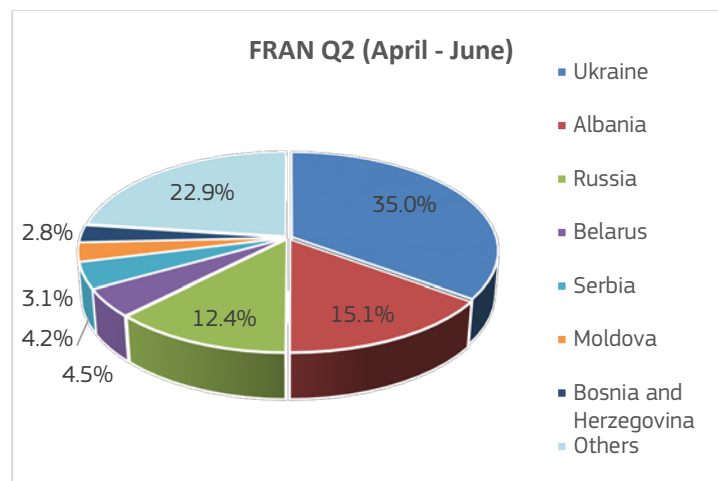
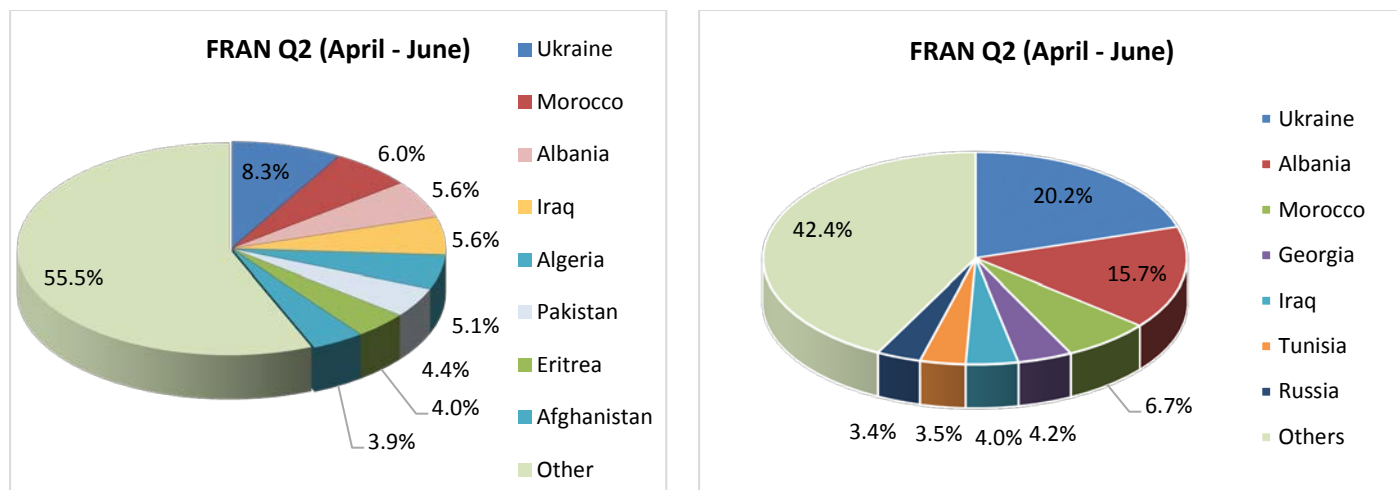


Figure 3c: Illegal stay – Top nationalities (in %)

Figure 3d: Effective return – Top nationalities (in %)



Source: [FRONTEX FRAN Quarterly Report Q2 2018](#) (April - June 2018)

Latest available national statistics

- ★ No new updates.

Updates on EU legislation transposition

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

- ★ **Greece:** In July 2018, the fourth Directive 2015/849/EU on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist, was transposed into national law (Law 4557/18). In compliance with the Directive, the national legal framework provides for measures to tackle money laundering related to proceeding derived from acts constituting criminal activities described as “predicated offenses”, such as Trafficking in Human beings (art.323A of the Greek Penal Code) and Trading in humans (art.351 G.P.C.).

Other EMN outputs and past/upcoming events (see also the [EMN website](#))

- ★ **Poland:** On 20 December, the Polish NCP organised a two-part seminar. The first part was devoted to the migration situation in Europe, Africa and Central Asia, while the second one focussed on Poland. The latter particularly discussed the extent to which the Polish economy depends on immigration and the main challenges for Poland in terms of security, socio-politics and economy.

On 23 November, the Polish EMN National Contact Point organised a seminar entitled “Policy towards unaccompanied minors in Poland in the context of the selected countries”. The goal of this event was to bring together experts to exchange experiences and views on the situation of unaccompanied minors in Poland. During the seminar, the EMN Synthesis report “Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway” was presented, followed by a fruitful discussion with interesting outcomes on the situation of unaccompanied minors in Poland. This event was meant to improve exchange of information, communication and cooperation between all the actors working with the topic of unaccompanied minors in Poland. After this event, a new communication channel was established as well as a working group on UAM under the umbrella of the Polish EMN National Contact Point.