

# Migration Update

June 2024



Wilfried  
**Martens Centre**  
for European Studies

## Migration Update June 2024

The purpose of these news summaries is to provide a factual base for migration debates within the European centre-right. [Vít Novotný](#) is responsible for the selection of information items from the media, governments and social media. The value of these summaries is in the categorisation of information items and in listing those items that readers might have missed. Facts and opinions are conveyed as they are reported. Original comments are kept to a minimum. These news summaries are not subject to a formal editorial process. Matúš Babulík, Erik Swärdh and Ernest Su prepared coverage of this month's election campaigns. (Thanks also to Dimitar Lilkov for his input.) Andris Petersons submitted news items. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Vít Novotný at [vn@martenscentre.eu](mailto:vn@martenscentre.eu).

- On 30 April 2024, about 4.2 million people (4,198,490), who had **fled Ukraine** as a consequence of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, were [under temporary protection in the EU](#). The number of temporary protection beneficiaries relative to the EU population was 9.4 per thousand people at the end of April 2024. The highest **ratios** were observed in Czechia (31.9), ahead of Lithuania (27.0). **Germany and Poland** [account](#) for almost one-half of all decisions granting temporary protection.

### Contents

TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE FLEEING UKRAINE .....	2
LABOUR MIGRATION .....	2
EDUCATION MIGRATION.....	2
NEW PACT ON MIGRATIO AND ASYLUM .....	3
ASYLUM .....	3
VISAS AND WORK PERMITS.....	4
GRANTING CITIZENSHIP .....	5
REPATRIATIONS.....	5
BORDERS .....	5
Belarus-Poland .....	5
Greece-Türkiye .....	6
The UK.....	6
The US.....	7
PUBLIC OPINION .....	7
NATIONAL ELECTIONS .....	8
Bulgarian parliamentary election.....	8
Belgian parliamentary election .....	8
EU ELECTION.....	9
SELECT EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS .....	10

## TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE FLEEING UKRAINE

On 13 June, the Council [welcomed](#) the proposal to extend the temporary protection for the Ukrainians fleeing from Russia's war of aggression until 4 March 2026.

- 'The temporary protection mechanism was triggered on 4 March 2022 – only a few days after Russian armed forces launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine – and is due to run until 4 March 2025. The proposal to further extend the temporary protection **until 4 March 2026** comes in a context of volatility of the situation in Ukraine.
- The extension does not change the decision of March 2022 in terms of the categories of persons to whom the temporary protection applies.
- The Council will formally adopt the decision to extend the temporary protection once the legal scrubbing and translation into all EU languages has taken place.'

On 25 June [6 days before the Hungarian presidency of the Council started], the Council [formally adopted](#) a decision to extend the temporary protection until 4 March 2026.

## LABOUR MIGRATION

A [new scheme](#) allowing **skilled non-EU workers** to come to **Germany** to seek work has gone into force. Eligibility for the new Opportunity Card is based on language skills, education and job experience, among other factors.... People can apply for the so-called Opportunity Card, known as the *Chancenkarte* in German, if they have had at least two years of vocational training or possess a university degree recognised in the country it was obtained in. They must also have knowledge of German or English. Eligibility for the scheme will be decided according to a **points** system on the basis of an applicant's language skills, professional experience, age and ties to Germany. At least six points are required to obtain a card. If an applicant receives a card, she or he will be able to **enter Germany and look for a job for up to year**. During that time, participants in the scheme can work up to 20 hours a week in part-time or trial jobs. The scheme **removes the necessity for non-EU residents** wanting to work in Germany to present a contract with a German company before being permitted to enter the country.

- Separately, opportunities for jobseekers from the Western Balkans have also been expanded, including for non-skilled workers. Instead of the previous 25,000, up to 50,000 nationals from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia will have access to the German labour market **without having to present any professional qualifications**. However, people from the West Balkan countries will still require a contract with a German company to be able to enter Germany.

## EDUCATION MIGRATION

A Finnish company, Finest Future, recruits [high-school-age students](#) in Asia, Africa and Latin America. 'Those who achieve decent proficiency are referred to willing schools [in Finland]. By the end of this year, the firm will have helped import around 1,500 foreign pupils. But it says its goal is ultimately to supply Finland's upper

secondary schools—which educate about 110,000 students in total—with around **15,000 new faces each year**. Already some small schools are taking in more foreign pupils than Finnish ones.

- In theory, the savings youngsters derive from free tuition in Finland justify the inconvenience of having to learn a language not many people speak. So does the prospect of a free Finnish university place, a few years down the line. Schools approve because, under current rules, the central government provides per-student funding for each newcomer, just as if they were Finnish. In the long run all Finns benefit, argues Peter Vesterbacka, Finest Future’s co-founder.... Finland’s total population of 5.5m will start declining within the next decade. The country struggles to attract high-skilled foreign workers (about 9% of its inhabitants were born abroad, one of the lowest rates in Europe).

## NEW PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

On 12 June, the European Commission [presented](#) the **Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum**. ‘After a historic agreement was reached on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, work has started to translate the large and complex set of legislative acts into an operational reality over the next two years. This will be a common endeavour, with the Commission supporting member states every step of the way. The Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum, adopted by the Commission today, sets out the key milestones for all member states to put in place the legal and operational capabilities required to successfully start applying the new legislation by mid-2026. In addition, the EU Agencies will also provide both operational and targeted support to the member states throughout this process. The Common Implementation Plan provides a **template for the National Implementation Plans** to be adopted by Member States by the end of this year. It groups the legal, technical and operational work into 10 building blocks to focus and facilitate the practical implementation efforts.’

- The legal instruments of the Pact, including some which had been already proposed in 2016, entered into force on 11 June 2024 and will enter into application after two years, as of 12 June 2026; except the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation, which is already applicable today.’
- The Commission [announced](#) a List of Commission Implementing and Delegated Acts that it will adopt for the implementation.
- On 13 June, the Commission [presented](#) the Implementation Plan to ministers. In their reaction to the presentation of the implementation plan, many ministers highlighted that the **Council should continue playing a strong role in offering political guidance** during the implementation phase.

## ASYLUM

The European Union Agency for Asylum [published](#) its asylum report for 2024.

- The number of asylum applicants in EU+ countries in 2023 was **1.14 million**, up from 0.96 million in 2020. Germany and France together accounted for more than one half of the applicants.

- In 2023, the number of implemented **Dublin transfers (15,000)** remained stable compared to 2022, but still well below pre-COVID-19 levels (over two-fifths fewer than in 2019). Belgium implemented the most transfers on record, while Austria and Croatia received the most transfers on record.
- The continuously widening gap between applications and case closures led to the highest number of pending cases in the last 8 years, second only to the levels recorded in 2015. **883,000 cases were pending** in 2023.
- In 2023, the **recognition rate** at first instance for EU-regulated forms of protection climbed to 43%, increasing for the third year in a row. This was the highest rate since 2016 (when 57% of decisions granted refugee status or subsidiary protection). The rise was mostly driven by increased recognition rates for Afghans, Iraqis, Palestinians and Ukrainians and by more decisions issued to Syrians.
- In 2023, about 15,000 people arrived in the EU+ from third countries in the context of resettlement or humanitarian admissions. The number of resettled persons peaked in 2021 but dropped by around one-fifth in 2022 and then again by one-quarter in 2023. In fact, **resettlement figures in 2023 reached their lowest level since 2016**, for the exception of the level in 2020 when transfers were severely hindered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Germany and France were the main receiving countries, accounting for over one-half of all resettlements. In Sweden, which was the top receiving country from 2017 to 2022, the number of resettled persons significantly dropped from 5,100 in 2022 to 540 in 2023. Notable decreases also took place in Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland. In contrast, Finland and Romania resettled the most refugees on record, and the number of resettled people more than quadrupled in Belgium, nonetheless remaining at lower levels than in the past. Syrians accounted for one-half of all resettlements to EU+ countries.

## VISAS AND WORK PERMITS

Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and Ireland are [phasing out or limiting](#) the sale of **‘golden visas’ and ‘golden passports’** due to security risks. Malta and Italy are continuing these programmes. ‘Hungary has announced plans to reintroduce its golden visa scheme on 1 July 2024, after having ended it back in 2017.’

According to the [EU Observer](#), ‘EU governments rake in **€130m per year in rejected visa application fees**, dubbed as ‘reverse remittances’.... The cost of Schengen visa rejections in 2023 was €130m, up from €105m in 2022, according to data compiled by the LAGO Collective.... The fees are non-refundable, regardless of the outcome. The figures do not account for the costs incurred by not being able to travel for business and leisure, or bills for legal advice and private agencies involved in processing visa applications. African and Asian countries bear 90 percent of the costs for rejected Schengen visas.’

Prosecutors in **Romania** [launched](#) an investigation into **the fraudulent use of work permits**. It is alleged that between 2022 and June 2024, a criminal group consisting of more than 37 suspects, Romanian and foreign citizens, and operating through 31 commercial companies in Caraş-Severin, Timiş and Arad, brought migrants to the country. The criminal group illegally obtained work permits for 1,181 foreign nationals, mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh but also from Sri Lanka, India,

Nepal and Sudan. These individuals were often redirected to other European countries without further contact with the recruiting company. The group also helped foreign nationals overstay their visas through corrupt practices with immigration officials.

At the beginning of June, Italy's PM, Giorgia Meloni, [said](#) that **criminal gangs** were using the country's **seasonal work visa scheme** to bring in migrants who have "no right" to enter Italy. "Regular immigrant flows for work reasons are used as another channel for irregular migration." Italy has sought to increase the number of work visas in order to create more legal paths into the country and meet the demand for workers. "In the face of the exorbitant number of applications, only a very small percentage of the foreigners who obtained work visas actually signed a work contract, **less than 3% in Campania**," Meloni [said in a speech](#). She said this was evidence that "organised crime groups" had infiltrated the management of applications to obtain visas for migrants who had no right to enter Italy, in return for payments of around 15,000 euros.

## GRANTING CITIZENSHIP

[According to](#) a survey by the European Migration Network, pathways to citizenship vary greatly between the EU countries. Out of 22 respondents, 9 countries require applicants for citizenship to lose their previous citizenship. The length of **permanent residence required** varies, ranging between 1 year (usually in the case of marriage with a national, or if the applicant is an EU citizen) and 30 years. All but one country (Ireland) require some proof of knowledge of (one of) their official languages. Most countries require some form of economic participation, proof of employment or sufficient income, although there can be exceptions. None of the responding countries have rules setting a maximum number of applications for citizenship.

## REPATRIATIONS

A Gambian newspaper [launched](#) a campaign against a planned **deportation of 25 Gambian nationals from Germany**. At the beginning of June, 12 Gambians are detained in various deportation centres across Germany.

- Previously, the EU [imposed](#) visa sanctions on the Gambia due to non-cooperation on deportations. This seems to have resulted in a new willingness to accept deportation flights from EU states. On 16 January 2024, the EU eased the sanctions and removed the increased visa fee, after what the Council of the EU described as "substantial and sustained improvement in the cooperation on readmission, with regard to the organisation of return flights and operations."

## BORDERS

### Belarus-Poland

'The number of [attempted illegal border crossings from Belarus into Poland](#) has shot up in recent months to **almost 400 a day** — from only a handful a day earlier this year, Polish officials said... Poland's border guards have also decried increasingly aggressive behaviour by some migrants on the Belarus side of the

border. They have posted online videos of some throwing rocks, logs and even burning wood at the Polish troops from behind the fence.’...

- “We are not dealing with (just) any asylum seekers here, we are dealing with a coordinated, very efficient — on many levels — operation to break the Polish border and attempts to destabilise the country,” PM Donald Tusk said.
- ‘Polish FM Radosław Sikorski alleged at a meeting in Białystok... that many of the migrants who try to break through the Polish border “are people with **Russian visas**” — meaning they were at some point allowed to enter Russia before heading to Belarus and toward the West.
- The Interior Ministry in... **Germany**... has cited an increasing trend in unauthorised migration related to Russia and Belarus. It attributed the rise in part to intensified action taken by Russian security officials against unauthorised migrants following a deadly terrorist attack on a Moscow concert hall in March.’

On 13 June, [Poland’s interior ministry](#) reintroduced an **exclusion zone** covering about 60 kilometres of the country’s border with Belarus, a restriction that will initially last for up to 90 days. Media and humanitarian workers will only be able to access the area after getting permission from the Border Guard. In practice, however, the requirement to obtain a permit effectively limits the ability of media and NGOs to reach migrants in problematic situations, when they are sick or being pushed back from the border by Polish authorities. The buffer zone will cover key locations where migrants have been most intensely crossing the border since 2021, when this new migration route began to be used. In most cases, the buffer zone is 200 metres from the border, but in others – including in the area of the Białowieża National Park – it will be as wide as 2 kilometres. The introduction of the exclusion zone [follows](#) an incident on 29 May in which a migrant stabbed a Polish soldier who later died from his wounds.

### **Greece-Türkiye**

‘The **Greek coastguard** has caused the deaths of dozens of migrants in the Mediterranean over a three-year period, witnesses say, including nine who were deliberately thrown into the water, [according to the BBC](#). The nine are among more than 40 people alleged to have died as a result of being forced out of Greek territorial waters, or taken back out to sea after reaching Greek islands... The Greek government has long been accused of forced returns - pushing people back towards [Türkiye], where they have crossed from; The Greek coastguard ...strongly rejects all accusations of illegal activities.’

### **The UK**

The UK government has [started releasing](#) detainees scheduled for deportation to Rwanda because the courts would [not allow](#) these individuals to be detained for more than 6 weeks and PM Sunak had ruled out flights taking off before 4 July, the date of the general election.

## The US

On 4 June, US President Biden **issued an executive order** to [limit illegal arrivals](#) across the southern border. ‘The order will be in effect when the seven-day average of daily border crossings exceeds 2,500 between ports of entry, senior administration officials said, meaning it will go into effect immediately.... Senior administration officials framed the order as a response to congressional inaction on immigration after a bipartisan framework in the Senate was blocked by Republicans for a second time.’

- [About 4,000](#) people already are entering the US each day.
- Biden [stated](#): ‘Migrants will be restricted from receiving asylum at our southern border unless they seek it after entering through an established lawful process. And those who seek to come to the US legally, for example, by making an appointment and coming to a port of entry — **asylum will still be available to them**. But if an individual chooses not to use our legal pathways, if they choose to come without permission and against the law, they’ll be restricted from receiving asylum and staying in the United States’... This ban will remain in place until the number of people trying to enter illegally is reduced to a level that our system can effectively manage.’
- [According to](#) the Cato Institute, Biden has already enacted more than 120 policies designed to restrict entry at the southwest border, and he is currently detaining and expelling vast numbers of people—far more than his predecessor.
- ‘There are ... [serious questions](#) of whether the new measure can stop large-scale migrant entries. Mexico has agreed to take back migrants who are not Mexican, but only in limited numbers. And the Biden administration doesn’t have the money and diplomatic support it needs to deport migrants long distances, to China and countries in Africa, for example.’
- [According to](#) Pew, immigration is now the second most important concern of the American voters, after the economy.
- [‘Most Americans, 56%, say Biden’s presidency has hurt the country on the issue of immigration and border security](#), according to an AP-NORC poll conducted in April. That’s far higher than the number — 37% — who said the same about Trump’s time in office. Even among Democrats, only about 3 in 10 say that Biden’s presidency has done more to help the country on immigration and border security, while about the same share say it has hurt. Nearly 9 in 10 Republicans say Trump’s presidency helped on this issue... According to one commentator, ‘Biden is especially vulnerable with African American men under 40 who are worried about newcomers competing for jobs and Latinos who may resent those entering illegally.’

## PUBLIC OPINION

[According to](#) a **global survey** by the UNHCR and IPSOS,

- a global average of 73% responded positively to the statement: ‘People should be able to take refuge in other countries, including in my country, to escape from war or persecution. Kenya had the highest percentage, 93%, whereas South Korea had the lowest, 49%.’



- A global average of 51% agreed that ‘Most refugees who come to my country will successfully integrate into their new society.’ Uganda had the highest score, 86%. Japan had the lowest, with 22%.
- Responses to the statement ‘Refugees make a positive contribution to my country’ ranged from 73% positive in Uganda to 18% in Türkiye.
- In response to the statement ‘We must close our borders to refugees entirely – we can't accept any at this time’, 77% of Turks agreed, whereas only 12% of Ugandans agreed.
- The large majority of people surveyed – 75% (global country average), correctly understand the term "refugee" to mean someone who has left their home country due to conflict, violence, or persecution or has sought and been granted asylum. However, a significant portion also believes the term applies to those escaping natural disasters or seeking better economic opportunities.

## NATIONAL ELECTIONS

### Bulgarian parliamentary election

An early parliamentary election took place in Bulgaria on 9 June. Migration was not strongly present in the election campaign. The **GERB–SDS** formation (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria—Union of Democratic Forces, EPP) did not express positions on the matter. The [electoral manifesto](#) of **DPS** (Movement for Rights and Freedoms, ALDE) mentioned the movement’s political support for the modernisation of the common European migration policy. The **ITN**’s (There is Such a People, ECR) [electoral manifesto](#) said the party would endeavour to obtain full Schengen membership for Bulgaria, ‘without a commitment on Bulgaria’s part to accept illegal migrants’. Other political parties that won seats in the Bulgarian Parliament, such as **PP – DB** (We continue the change), **BSP** (Bulgarian Socialist Party, PES) and the new far-right **Velichie** did not address migration issues in their electoral manifestos. **Revival** (far-right) was vocal on stopping immigration and going against the common asylum provisions of the EU. The election results are [here](#).

### Belgian parliamentary election

On June 9, the Belgium held a regular election for the federal parliament (along with the regional elections). The Flemish Christian Democrats (cd&v; EPP) [said](#) it stood for a firm and humane asylum and migration policy. Thanks to the European Asylum and Migration Pact, it would ensure better protection of the EU's external borders, fast border procedures, a fair distribution of applicants for international protection across all Member States and better cooperation in the field of return. It emphasised the added value of legal migration channels and said it would use these channels in its broader migration policy as leverage in negotiations with third countries. The francophone **Les Engagés** (LE; EPP) in its manifesto [claimed](#) that “imaging Europe with closed borders is illusory” but so was “welcoming everyone”. The party called for a pragmatic migration approach which included cooperation with third countries, establishing humanitarian corridors to the EU and enhancing education programmes for migrants. The **New Flemish Alliance** (NVA; ECR) said it [wants](#) to stop illegal migration by externalising asylum procedures and imposing stricter rules for family reunification. In addition, the party called for the return of illegal immigrants and an end to the provision of benefits without prior contributions to the social system. The

francophone **Socialist Party** (PS; S&D) in its [position](#) considered it important to provide material assistance to migrants, develop a redistribution plan and set criteria for the regularisation of illegal migrants. The socialists see space for financing municipalities that welcome migrants and sanctioning those who do not “respect their obligations”. The **Flemish Interest** (Vlaams Belang; ID) in its [stance](#) claimed that immigration undermined the Flemish way of life, traditions and affordability of housing. The party argued that for maintaining a liveable society “mass immigration must be stopped”. The **Reformist Movement** (MR; Renew) [recognised](#) the positive contribution of migration to society when properly managed. It therefore called for “legal, pragmatic immigration corresponding to the needs of our country”. The MR proposed the reception of migrants in safe third countries and a more determined fight against illegal immigration. The Flemish social-democratic party **Forward** (Vooruit; S&D) [stressed](#) the importance of a “strictly controlled and humane asylum and migration policy”. Refugees must receive protection close to home and Belgium should invest in these regions. The party also proposed concrete measures for the integration of migrants in Belgium. The result of the federal election is [here](#).

## EU ELECTION

The election to the European Parliament was held from 6 to 9 June. Here are the main migration-related points of the larger campaigning parties’:

**EPP** The European People’s Party’s [electoral manifesto](#) stated the party wanted a Europe that protects its borders and tackles illegal migration. The party wanted to guarantee control over migration in accordance with international law and respect of fundamental rights. It would transform Frontex into a ‘real European border and coast guard’, prevent illegal immigration, help the member states to secure the EU’s external borders, and increase the return of illegal migrants to their home countries. Regarding labour migration, the EPP underlined that this is a national competence.

**PES** The Party of European Socialists stated in its [manifesto](#) that it wanted a “common and coordinated system for migration and asylum based on solidarity and shared responsibility.” In the context of Europe as a solidarity project, the PES wanted a more resilient institution to offer better procedures, protection and assistance to asylum seekers and migrants; a decriminalisation of humanitarian aid workers; a strengthened EU external border to fight against traffickers and smuggler; and a more transparent cooperation with third countries.

**ECR** European Conservatives and Reformists, in their election [manifesto](#), called for enhanced management of migration with strengthened border security covering all possible points of entry, including air, land, and sea borders. Root causes of migration need to be addressed by combating human trafficking and smuggling. The party’s objective in migration policy was also to externalise migration management by processing most applications for international protection in third countries.

**Renew Europe** Renew Europe’s [electoral manifesto](#) stated that the group wants to fight for an “asylum policy that works”. Renew campaigned, among other things, for the launch of a European Action Plan for search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, prioritising the safety and dignity of individuals in distress. Renew also

campaigned to facilitate legal pathways for labour migration within and across the EU. This would be implemented through an EU talent pool and through simplifying the connection between employers and third-country nationals in areas with labour shortages in the member states.

**ID** The Identity and Democracy group did not publish any electoral programme, but it based its positions on its 2022 [declaration](#). In this declaration, the group stated that the EU was ‘keeping open borders in an extremist manner’ and ‘promoted mass immigration’. The document claimed that the migration policy should be based on strict control of external borders; it denounced the presence of illegal migrants, who ‘threaten labour conditions’ and ‘foster social conflicts’.

**Greens** The Greens’ [manifesto](#) stated that the group wanted a fast and decentralised asylum procedure and a mandatory relocation mechanism for burden sharing. It also called for “EU visas for Human Rights and Environmental Defenders” which aim to “provide legal protection for people forcibly displaced due to the climate crisis and environmental disasters”. It argued for a “comprehensive Migration Code” that provides visas for family reunions and promoted social integration and equal opportunity access for migrants.

**The Left** The European Left called for a break from “Fortress Europe” in its [manifesto](#). It wanted to end the externalisation of the EU border by demanding the cancellation of the Dublin Agreement and the dissolution of Frontex. The European Left wanted a “Common Reception System” in the EU for obligatory solidarity (burden sharing) and co-responsibility in all member states, as well as the creation of a “safe, legal passage” for refugees into Europe, especially those crossing the Mediterranean.

**Fidesz** The Fidesz party (HU, not affiliated) published its brief election [manifesto](#) in a social media post. The party distanced itself from former Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, describing him as a politician who supports all ‘pro-immigration policies.’ In the final paragraph of the short manifesto, the party called for voters to support Fidesz’s ‘anti-immigration representatives.’

**Volt Europa** Volt Europa’s [electoral manifesto](#) stated that the party would attempt to dismantle the networks of illegal migration, prioritising the needs of the victims, and ensuring legal pathways for both refugees and migrants, standardised across all Member States. The party would also end the massive loss of life in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic by simplifying visa processes and having a fair relocation system. This is by, for instance, abolishing the principle of the first-entered country and ensuring asylum seekers were distributed according to a mandatory distribution key among the Member States.

(Provisional) election results are [here](#).

## SELECT EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS

H. Brady, *Breaking taboos: EU asylum and migration policy since 2020*, [ICMPD](#), June 2024

E. Milazzo and A. De Leo, *Responsibility sharing or shifting? Implications of the New Pact for future EU cooperation with third countries*, [European Policy Centre](#), June 2024