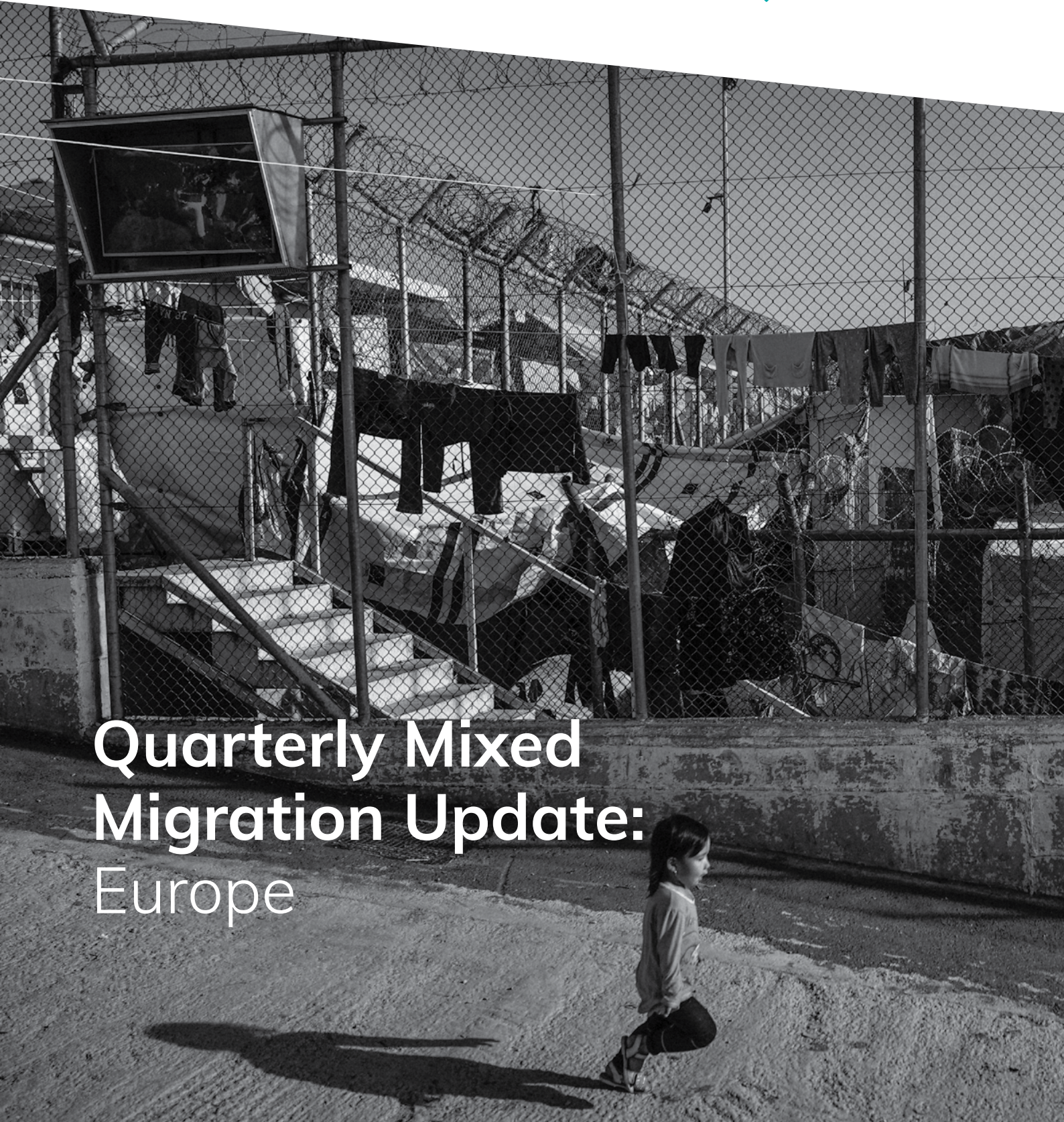


MMC Europe
QUARTER 2 2024



Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Europe

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers Europe. The core countries of focus are Spain, Italy, Greece and countries along the Balkan migration route. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels. For more information on MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

MMC's understanding of mixed migration

"Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people engaged in mixed migration have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Mixed migration describes migrants travelling along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly, and wholly or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

Front cover photo credit:

Lesbos, Moria camp. Jan Krarup 2019

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Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Europe

Quarter 2 - 2024

Key Updates

- **Changing route usage:** According to [UNHCR](#) the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece saw more than a doubling in arrivals compared to the same period in 2023. In contrast, the Central Mediterranean route to Italy experienced a drop in entries (-63%) from Q2 of the previous year. The Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes to Spain are comparable to the same period in 2023, with the majority of arrivals through the Canary Islands.
- **Central Mediterranean remains busiest route:** Despite a drop in arrivals (-63%) compared to the same quarter in 2023, according to [UNHCR data](#) the Central Mediterranean route remains the busiest migration pathway into the EU, followed by the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece.
- **Alarming rise in deaths on sea routes to Spain:** A [report from Caminando Fronteras](#) revealed over 5,000 fatalities on sea routes between Africa and Spain in the first five months of 2024. An alarming increase of almost 700% in the first five months of 2024 over the same period in 2023.
- **Pushbacks and human rights violations:** Renewed allegations of Greek coastguard involvement in pushbacks revealed by [BBC investigation](#), including incidents where migrants were reportedly thrown overboard or abandoned in life rafts.
- **Stranded migrants in Cyprus buffer zone:** Nearly 30 asylum seekers, including children, are [stranded in Cyprus's U.N.-controlled buffer zone](#) between the Turkish-occupied north and the internationally recognised south, with UNHCR urging Cyprus to process asylum requests in the buffer zone.
- **Rwanda deportation plan 'dead', following electoral results in UK:** the [new UK Prime Minister confirmed that his government will end the scheme](#), which he qualified as costly and ineffective, promising a new approach to tackling irregular migration.
- **EU extends temporary protection for Ukrainian refugees until 2026:** In June, the EU [extended temporary protection](#) for Ukrainian refugees, allowing them to continue benefiting from residence rights and access to essential services until March 4, 2026.
- **EU adopts comprehensive migration and asylum reform:** In April, the European Parliament [approved the New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), establishing unified rules for managing asylum seekers within the EU, despite mixed reactions from member states and criticism from NGOs.

Regional Overview*



*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration within and out of Europe.

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

Europe region

The Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece

- [UNHCR](#) recorded 9,485 land and sea arrivals into Greece in Q2 2024 and an estimated 1,764 into Cyprus. The number of arrivals to Greece has more than doubled, compared to the same period in 2023.
- Among registered arrivals so far in Greece in 2024, by far the largest group were from Afghanistan (43%), followed by Syria (17%), Egypt (13%), Eritrea (5%), Palestine (4%) and Yemen (3%). According to data from [IOM's Missing Migrants Project](#), the total number of fatalities or missing persons along the Eastern Route in the second quarter of 2024 is 64, 49 of which were recorded in the [first quarter of 2024](#).

Emerging route between Libya and the island south of Crete

The Greek island of Gavdos, south of Crete, has seen [a rise in migrant boat arrivals](#) from Libya since early 2024. The islands' [limited infrastructure](#) is struggling to cope, prompting calls for government aid. (For a more detailed analysis please refer to the thematic section of the [MMC North Africa QMMU Q2 2024](#)).

Migrants stranded in Cyprus buffer zone

Since early June 2024, nearly 30 asylum seekers, including children, [are in limbo](#) in Cyprus's U.N.-controlled buffer zone between the Turkish-occupied north and the internationally recognised south. The individuals, mostly from Syria risk deportation if they return to the north, which lacks an asylum system. While the Cypriot government provides humanitarian aid, President Nikos Christodoulides has denied them entry to the south to avoid "[the creation of a new route for illegal migration](#)." Meanwhile, [UNHCR has urged Cyprus to process asylum requests](#) even in the buffer zone, as people remain in a vulnerable position amid squalid living conditions and extreme heat.

This situation follows an increase in Syrian arrivals from Lebanon, causing Cyprus to declare a "[state of serious crisis](#)" in early April 2024, urging the EU for assistance. In 2024, thousands of Syrians departed Lebanon for Cyprus, [an almost 60-fold increase from the previous year](#), amid [deteriorating economic conditions](#), aid cuts, [increasing anti-refugee sentiment](#), and rising tensions linked to the Israeli-Hamas war. As President Nikos Christodoulides called for the EU to step in, he emphasised the need for [EU aid to Lebanon to be conditional](#) on stopping migrant departures and called for designating parts of Syria as safe zones for migratory returns. In the following weeks, Cyprus intensified its efforts to prevent Syrian refugees from reaching the island by [deploying a law enforcement vessel](#) off the coast of Lebanon, while advocacy groups reported that refugees were being blocked at sea without food or water. Following reports of Cypriot patrol vessels intercepting boats near Lebanese waters and allegedly using force to turn them back, [UNHCR has urged compliance with international human rights law](#). At the same time, Cyprus [suspended the processing of asylum applications](#) for Syrians, [leaving over 14,000 Syrians in limbo](#) and leading them to cross across the Green Line.

At the beginning of May 2024, the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and President of Cyprus Nikos Christodoulides undertook a joint visit to Lebanon, [unveiling a financial package of €1 billion available until 2027](#), which includes efforts to tackle border control and smuggling, including support for

Lebanon's armed forces. Human rights groups [condemned the EU package](#), stating that it incentivises Lebanon's poor financial management, and [its mistreatment of the Syrian community](#) calling it "[the latest in a series of bad migration deals](#)."

Alleged pushbacks and human rights violations by the Greek coastguard back in the public eye

[BBC investigations revealed](#) multiple alleged incidents including migrants who were deliberately thrown overboard, and others who were abandoned in life rafts, while the Greek authorities continue to deny involvement. [A former Greek coastguard](#) labelled the actions of colleagues who abandoned nine migrants at sea as "clearly illegal", referencing one incident among 15 alleged pushbacks from Greek islands revealed in the investigation.

[Documents seen by Statewatch](#) show that Frontex management knew about systematic rights violations by Greek authorities but failed to halt operations in Greece despite legal obligations to do so. Although warnings from its own rights officials were ignored, [a pending case before the Court of Justice](#) of the EU seeks to stop Frontex's operations in Greece, while documenting incidents of abuses and fatalities linked to the Greek coastguard's actions.

Greek court dismisses case against nine survivors of the Pylos shipwreck

On May 21, 2024, the criminal court in Kalamata, Greece, [dismissed the case](#) against nine Egyptian citizens accused of having caused the Pylos shipwreck. The [judges ruled](#) that they lacked jurisdiction as the ship sank in international waters. Despite the acquittal, the nine Egyptian men, often referred to as the Pylos Nine, [remain in custody](#) pending asylum applications due to flight risk concerns, this follows 11 months already spent in pre-trial detention. The men survived the sinking of a trawler near Pylos, Greece, on 14 June 2023, in which it is estimated that over 600 people died, making it [one of the most deadly incidents](#) to occur in the Mediterranean.

Meantime, allegations against the Hellenic Coast Guard's role in the disaster are still under review

The Naval Court opened [an investigation](#) in June 2023, while 40 survivors [filed complaints](#) in the same Naval Court. Inquiries by the [Greek and European Ombudsman](#) into the Coast Guard and Frontex's actions are also underway. In a [joint statement](#), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) urged for "comprehensive and conclusive" investigations into the circumstances surrounding the shipwreck. The Greek coastguard denies wrongdoing or cover-up and allegations remain [under review](#).

The Central Mediterranean route to Italy

- According to [UNHCR](#), 13,409 persons entered irregularly to Italy by sea between April and the end of June 30, 2024. Compared to the same period in 2023, Italy has seen a 63% drop in entries (down from 36,970 in Q2 2023).
- Between 1 January and 31 May, the most represented country of origin among arrivals in Italy was Bangladesh (21%), followed by Syria (15%), Tunisia (14%), Guinea (9%), Egypt (7%), Pakistan (4%) and Mali (3%).

- The number of dead and missing on the Central Mediterranean route in the second quarter of 2024 was 278 people (134 in April, 42 in May and 102 in June), slightly lower than the first three months of 2024, bringing the total number of people who lost their lives so far in the Central Mediterranean to 640. This is lower than the number of deaths counted in the second quarter of 2023, where 730 deaths were reported (including 509 in April 2023).¹

Two shipwrecks on the same day near Italy

On 17 June, At least 11 people have died, and dozens are missing following [two separate shipwrecks near the Italian coast](#). In [one incident](#), ten bodies were found in the lower deck of a sinking vessel carrying around 60 people that departed from Libya, and [in another boat](#) departing from Turkey, 66 people, including children, went missing after a shipwreck off Calabria, with survivors reporting that they lacked lifejackets and were ignored by passing boats.

Legal victories for migrant rescue efforts in Italy

After a seven-year legal battle, in mid-April 2024 Sicilian judges have [acquitted the crew of the NGO rescue boat Luventa](#), who were accused of aiding illegal migration, a case that became emblematic of the criminalisation of aid workers. This verdict followed prosecutors' admission of insufficient evidence, highlighting concerns over politically motivated investigations and the challenges faced by humanitarian efforts to save lives at sea. An Italian court also ruled in June, that the [seizure of the Sea-Eye 4 rescue ship earlier this year in March was unlawful](#), reversing the 60-day administrative block imposed by authorities who had accused the crew of disobeying the Libyan coast guard. The court found no valid evidence supporting the accusations and ordered the Italian government to compensate Sea-Eye, marking a significant win for the organisation and highlighting issues with Italy's approach to regulating sea rescues.

Continued legal limbo for El Hiblu 3 in Malta

[Amnesty International has urged](#) Maltese authorities to drop [the case against the El Hiblu 3](#), three young men who face life imprisonment for trying to prevent their illegal return to Libya after being rescued at sea, emphasising that they should not be scapegoated for Europe's search and rescue failures. This ongoing trial comes shortly after the three men were [honoured with a Human Rights Defenders Award](#) for their bravery and solidarity. Twenty human rights and migrant advocacy organisations [urged Malta to stop the illegal pushback of migrants to Libya](#), following reports of 83 individuals being intercepted by the Libyan coastguard in Malta's search-and-rescue zone and returned to Libya.

Dangerous conditions and exploitation faced by undocumented migrant workers in Italy

An Indian farm worker in Italy, Satnam Singh, [died after being severely injured by machinery in a vegetable field near Rome](#), and subsequently left by his employer on the roadside. Despite being airlifted to a hospital, Singh succumbed to his injuries, leading to [the employer being investigated](#) for criminal negligence and manslaughter. Following the tragic death of Satnam Singh, Italy's Labour Minister Marina Calderone announced [new measures to combat migrant worker exploitation](#), including increasing the number of labour inspectors and doubling inspections this year.

¹ [IOM's Missing Migrants Project](#), estimate of the total number of dead and missing along the Central Mediterranean route in 2024 so far is 870 illustrating some differences between the UNHCR and IOM datasets.

Creating legal pathways to Italy

Alongside Italy's Prime Minister's strict stance on irregular migration, this quarter has seen the implementation of some legal pathways for refugees and migrant workers to Italy. On May 9, 119 refugees from Eritrea, Egypt, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan were [evacuated from Libya to Rome's Fiumicino airport](#) through a humanitarian corridors agreement between Italy's Ministry of Interior, UNHCR, and various organisations. This protocol, [active since 2017](#), aims to relocate 1,500 refugees from Libya to Italy over the next three years, focusing on those fleeing war or violence. On May 30, a group of 49 Syrian refugees, including 17 children, [arrived in Italy from Lebanon](#) through the Humanitarian Corridors program, which is supported by various religious organisations and the Italian government to resettle refugees and prevent them from resorting to smugglers. Further, Italy will admit 300 migrant workers from Lebanon, Ivory Coast, and Ethiopia [under a new pilot project called "work corridors"](#), spearheaded by the Community of Sant'Egidio in agreement with the interior ministry. Further, Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh Enrico Nunziata announced that Italy is working on a memorandum of understanding with Bangladesh [on mobility and migration](#), including the expansion of legal pathways for migration.

The Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes to Spain

- During the quarter, according to [UNHCR](#), 8,377 arrivals were recorded in various Spanish territories including mainland Spain, Ceuta, Melilla, Canary and Balearic islands. The majority entered through the Canary Islands, followed by Mainland Andalucía. Figures are comparable to the second quarter of 2023, where 8,403 arrivals were recorded.
- By the end of June 2024 of this year, the number of dead and missing [recorded by IOM](#) travelling on the Western Mediterranean route had risen to 111.

Surge in migrant deaths on route to Canary Islands

According to [a report from Caminando Fronteras \(Walking Borders\)](#), more than 5,000 people died attempting to reach Spain by sea in the first five months of 2024, with [95% of these fatalities occurring on Atlantic crossings](#) from West and Northwest Africa to the Canary Islands.² [Mauritania has overtaken Senegal](#) as the primary departure point, accounting for 3,600 of these deaths. A variety of actions could have contributed to the rise in migration from Mauritania, [including the tightening security and crackdown on migration in Morocco](#) and [Senegal](#), with Spanish and EU support. Despite the [European Union's efforts](#) to curb this trend by [investing €60 million in Mauritania](#) to combat illegal immigration, migrants continue to use Mauritania as a steppingstone to Europe. This comes amid ongoing political and economic turmoil [in origin and transit countries](#) such as Morocco and Senegal.

Spain moves to regularise undocumented migrants

On April 9, Spain's parliament has [voted to consider a bill](#) that would grant residency to hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants who arrived before November 1, 2021, following a successful campaign by Regularizacion Ya. The bill, which [seeks to provide legal rights and access to public services](#) for these migrants, has garnered support from multiple parties and organisations, though it faces potential amendments and opposition from conservative factions. It also announced the elimination of "[golden](#)

2 These figures differ from those recorded by UN agencies, IOM and UNHCR respectively, reflecting differences in methodology.

[visas](#),” which allowed non-EU nationals to gain residency by investing over half a million euros in real estate. Following the vote, Spain’s Minister of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, Elma Saiz, [stated that the country needs 250,000 immigrants by 2050](#) to maintain its welfare state. Despite opposition and concerns over increasing irregular migration, the Spanish government highlights the economic necessity of immigration to fill job vacancies and sustain social security contributions.

The Western Balkans route

- [Preliminary data collected by Frontex](#) indicates the first five months of 2024 saw a 71% drop in movement compared to the same period in the previous year, with just over 8,900 people detected. The top three nationalities include Syria, Turkey and Afghanistan.
- According to data from [IOM’s Missing Migrants Project](#), 16 people died or went missing along the Western Balkans route since the beginning of 2024. 13 people have died in the second quarter of this year.

Italy’s migrant centres in Albania to open in August, Meloni confirms

Albania is rapidly transforming a former military airbase in Gjader [into an Italian-run migrant centre](#) ahead of a visit from Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, with the facility intended to process asylum seekers [rescued at sea](#) by Italian boats. Italy’s Prime Minister announced that the controversial migrant reception centres in Albania, “[intended as an extraordinary tool of deterrence](#)” will be operational by August 1, following construction delays. Among other concerns, the [chaotic conditions and human rights abuses](#) in Italy’s migrant detention centres, highlighted by the tragic suicide of Ousmane Sylla in February, underscore the controversy surrounding Italy’s plan to open migrant centres in Albania.

Orbán to prioritise migration during Hungary’s upcoming EU Presidency

Hungarian Prime Minister [Viktor Orbán plans to prioritise migration](#) during Hungary’s upcoming EU presidency, supporting the idea of transferring asylum procedures to non-EU countries. This comes against a backdrop of [recent EU fines](#) for Hungary’s non-compliance with asylum policy rulings; further, [since legalising pushbacks in 2017](#), Hungary has conducted over [380,000 pushbacks](#) at its southern border with Serbia, often accompanied by violence.

EU and Serbia sign new Frontex cooperation agreement for enhanced border management

On June 25, the EU Council approved an agreement with Serbia, [allowing Frontex and Serbian border guards to conduct joint operations and deploy Frontex teams in Serbia](#) to address “irregular migration and further enhance security in the region. This agreement, which replaces the previous one limited to Serbia’s EU border, [expands Frontex’s operational scope](#) based on the 2019 regulation, enabling comprehensive border management cooperation across Serbia’s territory. This [makes it the fourth](#) out of six Western Balkan countries who have signed arrangements with Frontex, including North Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro.

Bulgaria and Romania officially (but partially) join the Schengen area

On March 31, 2024, Bulgaria and Romania [officially joined the Schengen area](#), lifting internal air and sea border checks, and expanding the world’s largest area of free movement without internal border controls. [Austria in particular](#) was hesitant to extend Schengen rules to Bulgaria and Romania’s land borders due to concerns over how these countries handle irregular migration. Despite this, Bulgaria and Romania aim

to [fully join the Schengen zone by year-end](#), as both countries are collaborating with Austria, Greece, and Slovakia on [a regional police initiative](#) to combat irregular migration, supported by increased presence from EU's Frontex in Bulgaria.

The Eastern border

- Between January and May 2024, [Frontex recorded](#) a total of 4,450 people using this route.³ This is nearly double compared to the numbers recorded during the same period in the previous year. While trends suggest the Eastern route is [becoming more active](#), it still represents the least used irregular route into Europe, with the rise in numbers largely attributed an [increase in attempted crossings at the border with Belarus](#). The top three nationalities detected on this route include Ukraine, Somalia, and Ethiopia.

Finland proposes controversial temporary legislation barring entry of asylum seekers from Russia

Frontex will [continue supporting Finland's Border Guard](#) along the eastern border until at least next autumn, aiding with surveillance and patrol efforts. Finland is [planning to enact temporary legislation](#) aimed at blocking asylum seekers entering irregularly from Russia, citing concerns over “instrumentalized” migration, accusations from Helsinki that Moscow is orchestrating the migrant flow, which Russia denies. The [proposed measures include](#) deploying additional patrols, drones, and electronic detectors along the Finnish-Russian border, with provisions allowing for the detention and potential deportation of people back to Russia without processing asylum claims. The move follows Finland's [closure of all crossings](#) on its 1,340 km border with Russia last year due to a significant influx of migrants. [Amnesty International strongly condemns](#) Finland's proposed emergency law on migration, arguing that the law poses a serious threat to asylum seekers' rights, potentially legitimising violent pushbacks at the Finnish border and undermining international principles like non-refoulement.

Little has changed when it comes to treatment of refugees and migrants at Poland's border with Belarus

In April, Poland [denied allegations](#) that border guards pushed back a pregnant Eritrean woman who gave birth alone in the forest near the Belarus border. However, [activists claim](#) such pushbacks and associated violence continue despite the new government's promise of a more humanitarian border policy. In May, Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced [Poland's plans to invest €2.3 billion](#) to enhance security along its eastern borders with Russia and Belarus, citing the “hybrid war” of illegal immigration allegedly facilitated by Belarus. In late May, the [stabbing and death of a Polish soldier](#) at the border, prompted Prime Minister Donald Tusk to reinstate to reintroduce a [200-meter emergency buffer zone](#), which [activists worry](#) it will hinder humanitarian aid and monitoring efforts. Following a meeting in Paris, [Poland's defence minister said](#) he asked for support from German and French police and border guards to protect Poland's border with Belarus.

³ This is the border between Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the EU Member States – Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Slovakia and Romania.

The Ukraine crisis and wider region

- As of mid-June 2024, [UNCHR](#) has recorded 5,996,500 registered Ukrainian refugees in Europe. The largest populations remain present in Russia (over 1.2 million), Germany (over 1.1 million), Poland (957,505), Czech Republic (346,830). Beyond Europe, 558,300 are recorded.
- As of April 2024, according to IOM the [IDP population](#) within Ukraine stood at 3,548,000, an increase of approximately 3,9% from the [end of February 2024](#).

EU extends temporary protection for Ukrainian refugees until 2026

In June, the European Union [extended temporary protection for Ukrainian refugees](#), adding one more year to the initial expiration date, until March 4, 2026. This extension allows 4.2 million Ukrainians to continue benefiting from residence rights, access to housing, social assistance, healthcare, and education. While refugee organisations welcome the extension, they [advocate for a more permanent status](#) to support sustainable integration, focusing on essential elements like housing, employment, and education, given the prolonged nature of the conflict in Ukraine.

Germany urges Ukrainian refugees to seek employment

Chancellor Olaf Scholz is urging Ukrainian refugees to [find work](#) to help integrate them into society and alleviate Germany's labour shortages, amidst [significant political pressure](#) and the high costs of social support. Efforts to provide language courses and support are ongoing, but many refugees, especially women, face [bureaucratic hurdles and childcare shortages](#) that hinder their employment prospects. German conservative politicians, led by CDU's Thomas Strobl, advocate for [reducing welfare benefits for Ukrainian refugees and processing them through the asylum system](#), arguing that Germany's generous payments attract more refugees compared to neighbouring countries.

Increase in irregular crossings of Ukrainian men into Romania

The Romanian Border Police [reported](#) 2,373 Ukrainians involved in irregularly crossing the Romanian-Ukrainian border between January and April, including 19 deaths. This increase coincides with [Ukraine's campaign](#) to boost army recruitment, including measures such as suspending consular services for men of conscription age to encourage them to return.

The United Kingdom

- [Provisional figures by the Home Office](#) show that 12,901 people have crossed the English Channel to the UK in the first six months of this year⁴. This represents a [17% increase](#) over the same period of last year (11,058). A new daily high was recorded the weekend ahead of the Rwanda bill votes, with [750 arrivals](#) recorded.
- More than 200 people have died over the last decade trying to cross the English Channel, with [14 deaths so far](#) recorded in 2024.

⁴ This differs from figures by [Frontex](#), which recorded 21,820 arrivals in the first 5 months in 2024 via the English Channel into the UK, an increase of 38% compared to the same period in the previous year. The top three nationalities according to Frontex travelling on this route include Afghans, Vietnamese, and Iranians.

UK detains asylum seekers ahead of Rwanda deportations while facing legal challenges

In April, the UK government [passed a bill](#) allowing for the deportation of asylum seekers to Rwanda, despite facing legal challenges and opposition from various groups. Shortly before the UK Home Office was [set to begin detaining asylum seekers](#) across the country, [critics, including lawyers and human rights advocates](#), warned of potential legal battles, community protests, and adverse impacts on the refugees' mental health and integration prospects. The UK Home Office distributed a [promotional booklet](#) to detained asylum seekers that described Rwanda as "generally safe" despite previous UK Supreme Court concerns about the safety and fairness of the deportation process. In mid-June, lawyers [confirmed that 79 asylum seekers](#), detained for deportation to Rwanda, have been released on bail after the High Court was informed that flights would not occur before July 24. Despite Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's plan to initiate regular deportation flights starting in July, the courts ruled that [detentions are only lawful if flights are imminent](#), leading to the release of detainees who do not pose a flight risk and the continuation of legal challenges against the controversial policy. Following UK elections, the Rwanda plan [was scrapped within hours following the electoral result](#).

Policy and Legal Updates

EU adopts comprehensive reform of migration and asylum system with mixed reactions at national level

In April, the European Parliament narrowly [approved the comprehensive New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), a reform package aimed at establishing unified rules for managing asylum seekers and migration within the European Union. Despite opposition from both right and left-wing factions, and amid [criticism from NGOs and human rights advocates](#), the vote passed and was [adopted in May by the Council of the European Union](#). The newly approved EU migration deal has sparked mixed reactions across member states, with its practical implementation still in question. During a meeting on Gran Canaria Island, ministers from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain, collectively known as the MED5, called for [stronger bilateral agreements with migrant origin countries](#) and increased funding to address migration causes, criticising the Pact's "lack of ambition". Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk [rejected the migrant relocation mechanism](#), advocating for a focus on border security. The Dutch government, led by Geert Wilders' PVV party, said it [plans to opt out of](#) EU asylum rules for a stricter regime. EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson [warned of potential legal action](#) against countries failing to implement the pact.

Rwanda deportation plan 'dead', following electoral results in UK

While European leaders were increasingly [paying attention](#) to UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's controversial Rwanda asylum policy, the [new UK Prime Minister confirmed that his government will end the scheme](#), which he qualified as costly and ineffective, promising a new approach to tackling irregular migration

EU member states intensify focus on outsourcing of migration and asylum policy

Swiss parliament approves plan to repatriate Eritrean asylum seekers via Third Countries

In late April, the Swiss parliamentary committee has [approved a proposal](#) to repatriate rejected Eritrean asylum seekers via third countries like Rwanda. Despite approval from the committee, the [proposal faces skepticism](#) from Swiss Justice Minister Beat Jans, who doubts its feasibility.

Germany explores outsourcing asylum processing to third countries, deportation deal with Uzbekistan

The German government, amid pressure by federal states, is [continuing to explore models of asylum processing in third countries](#), with Italy's agreement with Albania and the UK's deal with Rwanda being key examples under review. Despite [skepticism](#) about the feasibility of these models in Germany, the examination will proceed, with proposals [expected by December](#). Interior Minister Nancy Faeser indicated that third-country processing [could become a component of German migration policy](#) but emphasised it would not significantly alter the overall migration landscape in Germany.

Further, German lawmakers are considering [a proposal to deport Afghan migrants via Uzbekistan to Kabul](#). This initiative follows increasing [public and political pressure](#) after an Afghan migrant allegedly fatally stabbed a police officer in Mannheim.

Italy and Finland present unprecedented, joint stance on migration

Italy and Finland have presented a [non-paper](#) at the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on April 22, 2024. This unprecedented north-south European collaboration outlines measures aimed at [countering the instrumentalization of migration and migrant smuggling](#)". Among other measures, it highlights the importance of forging comprehensive partnerships with key countries of origin and transit, citing the EU's Memorandum of Understanding with Tunisia [as a potential model](#). There is no mention of the adverse effects that these proposed responses to the instrumentalisation of migration [can have on the rights and wellbeing of migrants](#).

15 EU member states advocate for outsourcing migration management

In May, ahead of the EU Parliament elections (you can find a detailed analysis the EU Parliament elections in the thematic section of this QMMU), [15 EU member states, led by Denmark](#), in a [joint letter](#), called for the outsourcing of migration and asylum policies following the completion of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. The ministers [call for](#) approaches to manage migration, such as designating "safe" third countries for processing asylum seekers and partnerships with key nations along migratory routes and improved return mechanisms. The letter reflects a growing trend towards more restrictive migration policies across Europe.

EU migration deals face scrutiny and legal challenges

This quarter saw increased scrutiny of the EU's external migration deals. Amnesty International Netherlands, Boat Refugee Foundation, and Defence for Children are [suing the Dutch government](#) over its role in the 2016 EU-Turkey migration deal. They argue that the deal, which the Dutch authorities endorsed despite clear human rights risks, resulted in [appalling conditions](#) for tens of thousands of asylum seekers trapped on Greek islands. Further, members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have reiterated their [disapproval of the European Commission's migration agreements with North African countries](#), arguing these deals undermine European values by prioritising financial arrangements with authoritarian regimes over human rights. A [joint investigation released in May by The Washington Post, Lighthouse Reports, and a consortium of international media outlets](#) revealed that North African countries, with EU support, engage in severe human rights abuses to deter migrants from reaching Europe, including detention and abandonment in desert regions. Moreover, a [report published in June by Amnesty International](#) alleges that the Egyptian authorities, using EU-funded security forces, have been conducting mass arrests and forcible deported around 800 Sudanese without allowing them to seek asylum.

EU court to assess human rights impact of anti-smuggling laws

On June 18th, the European Court of Justice (CJEU) [will review the EU's legal framework that criminalises the "facilitation of unauthorized immigration"](#) to determine its compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. This review, prompted by [the Kinsa case](#) involving a Congolese woman facing charges for using false passports to bring her nieces to Italy, could [impact numerous ongoing cases](#). The EU's Facilitators Package, has been criticised for [being used](#) to also prosecute migrants and humanitarian workers. A favorable ruling could [necessitate changes](#) in both EU and national laws to better align with human rights protections.

Ireland seeks to return asylum seekers to the UK

Ireland is preparing to [implement emergency legislation](#) to facilitate the return of inadmissible international protection applicants to the UK in response to a rise in irregular arrivals through Northern Ireland. Ireland has recently [seen more people seeking asylum](#), who cross the open border with Northern Ireland to avoid the UK's previous policy of sending asylum seekers to Rwanda for processing. This would potentially circumvent [a previous decision](#) by the Irish Supreme Court's ruling against returning asylum seekers to the UK due to the controversial Rwanda deportation scheme. Amid ongoing discussions between Irish Justice Minister Helen McEntee and UK Home Secretary James Cleverly, the [UK insists it will not accommodate returned asylum seekers](#).

Hard winds coming: Impacts of the EU elections for mixed migration

All the European political groupings in the parliament have placed migration management among the most urgent priorities for the next legislature, with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum at the centre of the debate: the European Parliament election results will therefore have a direct impact on mixed migration in Europe. The EU elections that took place between 6 to 9 June 2024 did not bring the [anticipated](#) overwhelming win for the far-right. However, the overall success of right-wing parties was unprecedented and further normalises previously marginalised far-right groups. The EU's stance and discourse on migration have become much tougher, and several mainstream parties have adopted more restrictive immigration policies. The [salience](#) of immigration in national and EU-level politics is significant, rising and [influencing outcomes](#). The accompanying [politicisation of migration](#) is arguably only matched by its divisiveness in politics. Overall, the right will now pack a heavier punch in the EU immigration debate.

Main EU election outcomes

MEPs from 27 countries fought [for 720 seats](#). Whatever their party affiliation in individual countries, once elected to the EU Parliament most MEPs are linked to specific [groupings](#) representing their political and ideological position.

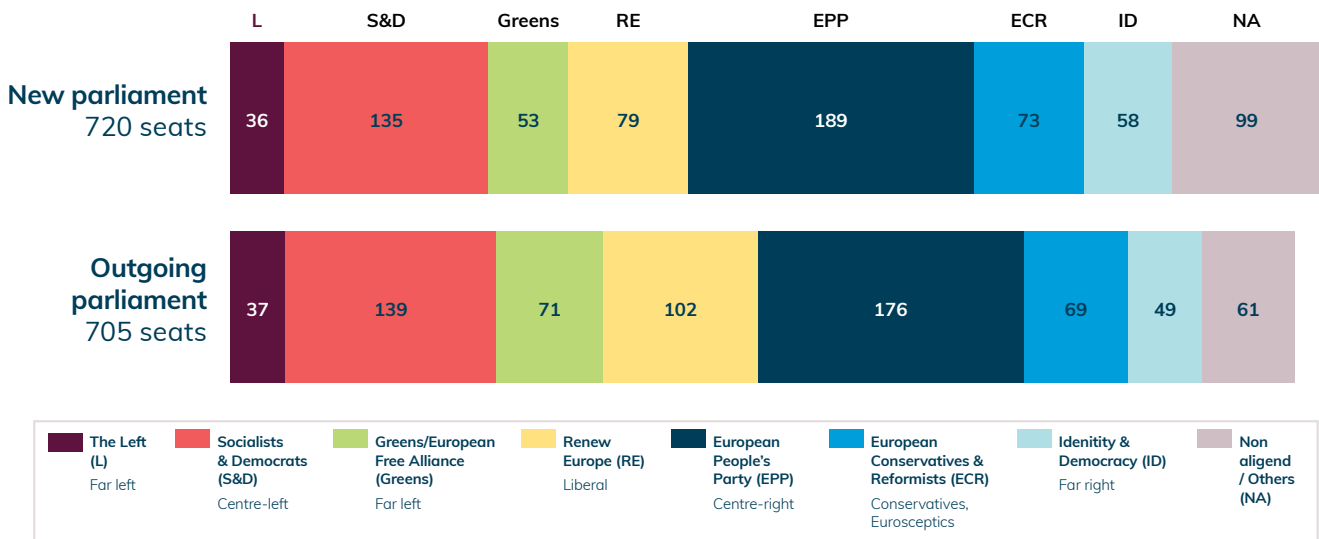
The three immediate outcomes of the June elections are:

- First, the centre-right has consolidated its position as the largest political grouping in Europe – a continuation of the dominance of the European People's Party (EPP) with significant support from the European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR Party).
- Second, the Greens and the Liberals (Renew Party) saw their power shrinking significantly – the Green lost more than [25 per cent of their seats](#) and the Liberals [22 per cent](#). Meanwhile the centre-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) held on to its position as the second strongest bloc in the parliament with 135 seats, but lost four seats.
- Third, the radical right has continued to strengthen its position gaining more seats (mainly in the Identity and Democracy group with some non-aligned MEPs), along with the conservative centre-right EPP and ECR, as mentioned.

This third outcome is important not only because it represents additional far-right heft in the EU Parliament going forward, but their victories (winning 58 seats, representing 8.1% of total seats) have more seismic political significance in their home countries.

Overall, the EU-wide rightward shift [in recent years](#) cannot be denied, gaining deeper traction in the EU elections and looks set to have further gains ahead. [Some analysis](#), looking at the rising popularity of the right among European youth, wonders if the right wave will be sustained as these voters get older and their views become entrenched as mainstream politics - if it hasn't already done so.

Figure 1. Composition of the new EU parliament, as of June 12 2024



Source: [European Parliament](#), adapted from design by Graphic News.

The far right’s mixed success and migration politics in Europe

The far-right with explicit anti-migrant agendas emerged as clear victors in [Italy](#), [Austria](#), [France](#), and registered best-ever results in [Germany](#) and [the Netherlands](#). However, although still scoring well - compared to some predictions - the far right failed to gain the support they expected in [Hungary](#), [Sweden](#), [Finland](#), [Belgium](#) and [Portugal](#), resulting in the far-right surge being uneven and nuanced.

[Analysts consider](#) that the extent of the impact of the European Parliament’s rightward acceleration will depend on whether the relevant parties can unify and work together. In this light, the future development of the new far-right alliances, the [Patriots for Europe](#), established by Viktor Orban, largely replacing the Identity & Democracy group, and the [Europe of Sovereign Nations](#), led by Germany’s far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), should be closely monitored.

It will also depend on the willingness of the centre groups to engage with parties to their right (instead of the left) and thereby capitalise on their collective weight in parliament. Some are reluctant to do so, but these outcomes are also occurring in a context where the left-of-centre parties have already been moving to the right on migration issues, in an attempt [to counter the influence of right-wing propaganda and](#) reduce support for far-right parties (even if this strategy already seems [to have backfired](#) in a few European elections).

In any case, there remains a significant opportunity to influence the new commissioners—not only through the far right but also through the influence the left may still wield, particularly during commissioner candidate hearings. Commissioners will need the votes of the Socialists & Democrats (S&D), to be confirmed and will therefore need to accommodate some of their key demands. Well-positioned members from S&D, Liberals, or Greens could still make a considerable impact, and the current lack of a cohesive front on the right could also affect their influence on specific policy areas.

Migration and voter concerns

In 2023, 380,000 irregular border crossings were registered, half of them through the Central Mediterranean route. Asylum applications in the EU [reached a seven-year high](#), with over 1.1 million people applying for asylum, nearing the levels seen during the 2015 so-called “refugee crisis”. Meanwhile, a bit less than [six million refugees](#) from Ukraine were recorded in Europe as of June 2024.

Ahead of the elections to the European Parliament, a [study by the European Council on Foreign Relations \(ECFR\)](#) indicated that migration is not the primary concern for most voters. The 11-country survey highlights that different voter groups are impacted by various crises in different ways – [only in Germany](#) does it stand out as the most significant for everyday life. Another [study](#) suggests that it is socioeconomic factors over xenophobia that determine the shift to the right. Support for the welcoming of refugees fleeing Ukraine remains strong. According to the results of [August 2023 Eurobarometer survey](#), 79% of people are in favour of welcoming people fleeing the war to the EU. However, a March 2024 [Euronews / Ipsos poll](#) of almost 26,000 respondents across 18 member states indicated that 51 per cent had a negative assessment of the EU’s efforts to control its borders. The survey found that 71 per cent of respondents agreed that strengthening border controls to combat irregular migration should be the main focus in the coming years.

The issue of where voters obtain their information and how they form their views in this age of social media and the high politicisation of migration issues is highly relevant, but beyond the scope of this article. Poll results emphasise that migration remains a key policy concern, among other issues, for voters in the EU. However, how incoming policies will address and alleviate these concerns remains to be seen.

Manifestos and mixed migration implications

It is well-documented how the EU as a whole - and certain individual nations, have been engaged in increasingly hard-line immigration and asylum policies and practices. Even without the far-right holding more power, the EU, under the leadership of the EPP, has already implemented many policies which could be considered ‘[extreme](#)’. An ever-mounting number of reports from [INGOs](#), [human rights agencies](#), [UN agencies](#) and government investigations catalogue the extent of the EU’s direct and indirect role in [practices](#) and [policies](#) that not uncommonly result in violations, sometimes [lethally](#).

The direction of travel regarding the EU’s approach to immigration and asylum illustrates that for some years, at the EU parliament and council, the centre-right, conservative and far-right parties (EPP, ECR and ID, see below) have wielded strong influence. All three right-leaning political groups have been strengthened by the June elections bringing their total number of seats to 315. However, 361 votes are needed for a parliamentary majority so the collective right will still need to firstly unite and secondly convince others such as non-aligned MEPs to join them on particular issues going forward.

The [manifestos](#) of party groupings at the EU parliament on immigration and asylum conform to expectations – moving along the continuum from moderate and inclusive Greens and far-left to exclusionary and hard-line on the far-right.

The consensus is that the EPP as the largest grouping in the Parliament with [189 seats](#) has retained hold of the middle ground while holding the far right at bay. As mentioned above already under the previous EPP legislation the approach to migration management has been marked by increasingly hard-line policies. Their manifesto for the election was in line with this hardening approach: [the EPP](#) are dedicated to strengthening external borders and wants 'rigorous' screening of all irregular arrivals and 'comprehensive' electronic monitoring at all entry points. They want to hugely increase the staffing and budget of Frontex and implement the transfer of asylum seekers to 'safe' countries and thereby process their applications outside the bloc. They also intend to continue using trade, development and visa policies as leverage to force countries of origin to take forced 'returnees' deported from Europe or other transit countries. This represents an unapologetic reinforcement and expansion of the [same policies promoted by the right](#) in the EU in recent years and to some extent characterise the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

[The ERC](#) echoes most of the EPP positions with even more emphasis on outsourcing asylum applications and border externalisation to outside the EU, controlling the borders and reinforcing Frontex's and Interpol's role in protecting borders as well as developing an EU naval mission to 'block illegal departures', rather than to save migrants in distress.

The ID grouping have an [on-line statute](#) declaration but did not offer a collective manifesto during the recent election. But there are indications at the national level of policies yet more draconian than those promoted by the EPP and ERC. This group includes eleven far-right parties presently.⁵ In the absence of an EU-level manifesto explaining their positions, the kind of policies and legislation they will be expected to support as MEPs can be deduced from their national-level manifestos. For example, France's National Rally (RN) intends to use '[emergency legislation](#)' to severely cut both regular and irregular immigration to "[stop the flood of immigrants](#)", and to abolish the "droit du sol" (*jus soli*) path to citizenship. They intend to toughen conditions for family reunification and replace [state medical aid](#) for undocumented immigrants with a fund that would cover only life-threatening emergencies. These proposed changes would be accompanied by a policy of national preference, giving French citizens priority access to housing and jobs, with welfare benefits limited to French nationals. The Netherlands' Party for Freedom (PVV) and winner of the November 2023 Dutch elections, also wants to use a temporary crisis law to implement the "[strictest asylum policy ever](#)" including the rejection of all new asylum claims, the deportation of dual-national criminals and opting out of certain EU migration rules along with a raft of other anti-migrant and [anti-Muslim](#) regulations.

However, manifesto declarations are often unachievable, as the PVV found [when it formed a coalition government in the Netherlands](#). Arguably, if the RN in France tried to implement some of their manifesto aims not only could they get bogged down in legal challenges but they could [lead to unrest and insecurity](#) – as President Macron [has suggested](#).

Meanwhile, on the other political divide, the well-represented left (S&D), the far-left (The Left) and greens (Greens/Europe Free Alliance) to different degrees propose the [mirror opposite](#) of the right. *Inter alia*,

5 Austria: Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ); Belgium: Flemish Interest (VB); Czech Republic: Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD); Estonia: Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE); France: National Rally (RN); Italy: League (Lega); Netherlands: Party for Freedom (PVV); Portugal: Enough!(Chega CH); Slovakia: Slovak National Party (SNS). Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) party was [expelled](#) from the ID group in May 2024.

these include some arguing for the dissolution of the New Pact (although not S&D, they supported it); the dissolution of Frontex and migrant detention facilities; the expansion of legal visa access to Europe; the regularisation of existing irregular migrants in Europe and the end of migration deals with ‘dirty’ regimes abroad – a mainstay of the current externalisation policy.

Focus on the new Pact on Migration and Asylum

Apart from their manifesto aims, the most immediate low-hanging fruit of the EPP will be to advance the operationalisation of the regulations contained in the four pillars of the recently passed and [controversial New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#).⁶ It must be fully enacted by June 2026, so given the strong views all parties have on the Pact it can also be expected to be the [centre of all migration debates](#) in the immediate future. Not least because its elements cover all aspects of migration and asylum policy response and management.

In an effort to enforce coherence, the EU has indicated that member states failing to implement the reforms or being uncooperative to the “[mandatory solidarity](#)” and [distribution relocation \(of refugees\) mechanism](#), could face [legal action](#). Despite conservative and far-right general support for the New Pact, for some, it does not go far enough, or concepts like mandatory solidarity and relocation quotas are unacceptable. For example, the ERC manifesto opposes the forced ‘solidarity’ stating that member states must not force “their citizens to welcome illegal immigrants without their consent”.

In this context, the re-election of Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission is significant. In her [speech to the European Parliament](#), and also outlined in the [document setting out her vision](#), von der Leyen framed migration through a security lens. She announced plans to triple the number of Frontex officers, enhancing Europol’s capabilities, new measures to curb migration from the Mediterranean region and proposed a new approach for returning migrants. Von der Leyen’s second term signals a continuation of stringent migration policies.

The New Pact and other immigration-related issues will no doubt face political resistance, horse-trading and compromise as the 720 MEPs and the Council get down to business in the coming 5 years. But the fact that the New Pact is already in place will give the EU an important platform to start implementing migration and asylum reforms that mostly reflect right-wing, exclusionary approaches. The fact that it was also in place before the election may have the effect of not allowing the right (predicted to make gains) to have pushed for an even harsher Pact, although there is scope now for the individual instruments to be toughened as they come into force. Céline Mias, Director of the DRC Europe Bruxelles Representation, emphasises the potential for more balanced policy outcomes within the European Parliament, despite its shift to the right:

“While it is true that even the left is adopting a harder line on migration, some parties and MEPs remain committed to social justice and human rights, and they could play an important balancing role. For instance, as the Socialists

⁶ These include detailed regulations under the [4 broad categories](#) of Secure external borders; Fast and efficient procedures; Effective system of solidarity and responsibility and Embedding migration in international partnerships. The various associated legislative files can be found [here](#).

and Democrats (S&D) and Greens voted to renew EPP-affiliated Ursula Von der Leyen’s mandate as President of the European Commission, she will now be required to make some political concessions to them. Much will now depend on how the groups to the left position themselves during the European Commissioner hearings in September, which could influence the EU’s approach to the implementation of the Pact.”

Much could depend on what individual countries implement and initiate as a *de facto* interpretation of certain elements of the pact. For example, the ECR group in which Meloni’s Fratelli d’Italia party is dominant, supports the idea of outsourcing mixed migration issues. Italy’s deal with Albania in 2023, in which some migrants will be taken to Albanian centres to have their asylum claims assessed, is an example of the kind of outsourcing this group might push for. The New Pact [includes potential options for outsourcing](#) so with Italy as part of the ECR group already using their Albania deals as an implementation of an aspect of the Pact they create a precedent and even a standard that others may not be able to fight if presented as a *fait accompli*.

Immediately after winning EU seats in Austria, its Freedom Party (FPÖ) lost no time in advocating for the far-right concept of “remigration” calling its government to name a [dedicated EU commissioner](#). This illustrates that going forward, as the far-right gains strength at home and in the EU a mutually reinforcing relationship may develop with clear negative implications for mixed migration in the bloc. Speculatively, we may also expect the language used around migration and asylum to be, if possible, even less inhibited as the powerful right take their gloves off - exemplifying the further slippage into the [normalisation of the extreme](#).

The wider EU ecosystem

The election results of the 2024 EU parliament are, of course, a reflection of the domestic politics of the 27 member states.

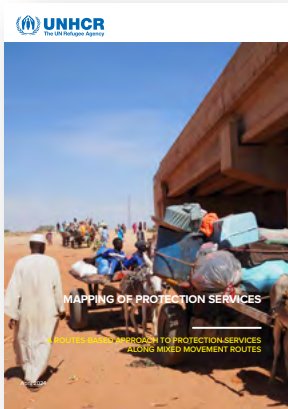
With the right and far-right having strengthened their political positions and some in leadership roles across Europe, it would be fair to expect that their influence and the subsequent normalising of the extreme in relation to immigration and asylum are set to be further consolidated. Even more so knowing that previously centrist or social democratic parties (even leftists in Denmark) increasingly adopted “rightist” immigration policies in recent years.

On the other hand, the UK-Rwanda migration deal, which was seen as playing a pioneering role in the outsourcing of asylum processing by other parties in Europe, [was scrapped within hours following an electoral result](#), after years of negotiations, hours of parliamentary discussion, several legal challenges, and rulings and an investment of hundreds of millions of pounds. This shows that the wind can also change quickly in the direction of a more progressive approach to migration. Further, the snap elections in France opened a phase of uncertainty, after [the election concluded without a clear winner, with the far right finishing in third place](#), despite initial projections claiming the Front National would emerge in first place.

The resulting picture is therefore quite mixed at this point. However, when the bar has been lowered, and hard-line policies become normalised, reversing them and raising the bar again might be increasingly challenging. In the EU, as mentioned, many hardline immigration and asylum policies have been normalised, some of which have crystallised in the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, making them very hard to redress.

This comes at a time of unprecedented internal displacement and rising numbers of international displacement, with climate change as a threat multiplier, all while advanced economies are in high need of migrant labour. Therefore, the stakes could not be higher, for both vulnerable refugees and migrants as well as European societies.

Highlighted New Research and Reports



[Mapping of Protection Services: A Routes-Based Approach to Protection Services Along Mixed Movement Routes](#)

UNHCR | April 2024

This report aims to ensure that refugees and migrants have access to information about protection services in their native languages, helping them understand the risks of irregular movement and consider safer alternatives. Additionally, it supports States and donors in strategically allocating resources through a route-based approach, focusing on specific locations and local actors to provide sustainable, essential services to vulnerable populations.



[Europe – Migrants Travelling to Europe by land and by sea. Journeys, Vulnerabilities and Needs of migrant arriving in Greece, Italy, and Spain in 2023](#)

IOM | May 2024

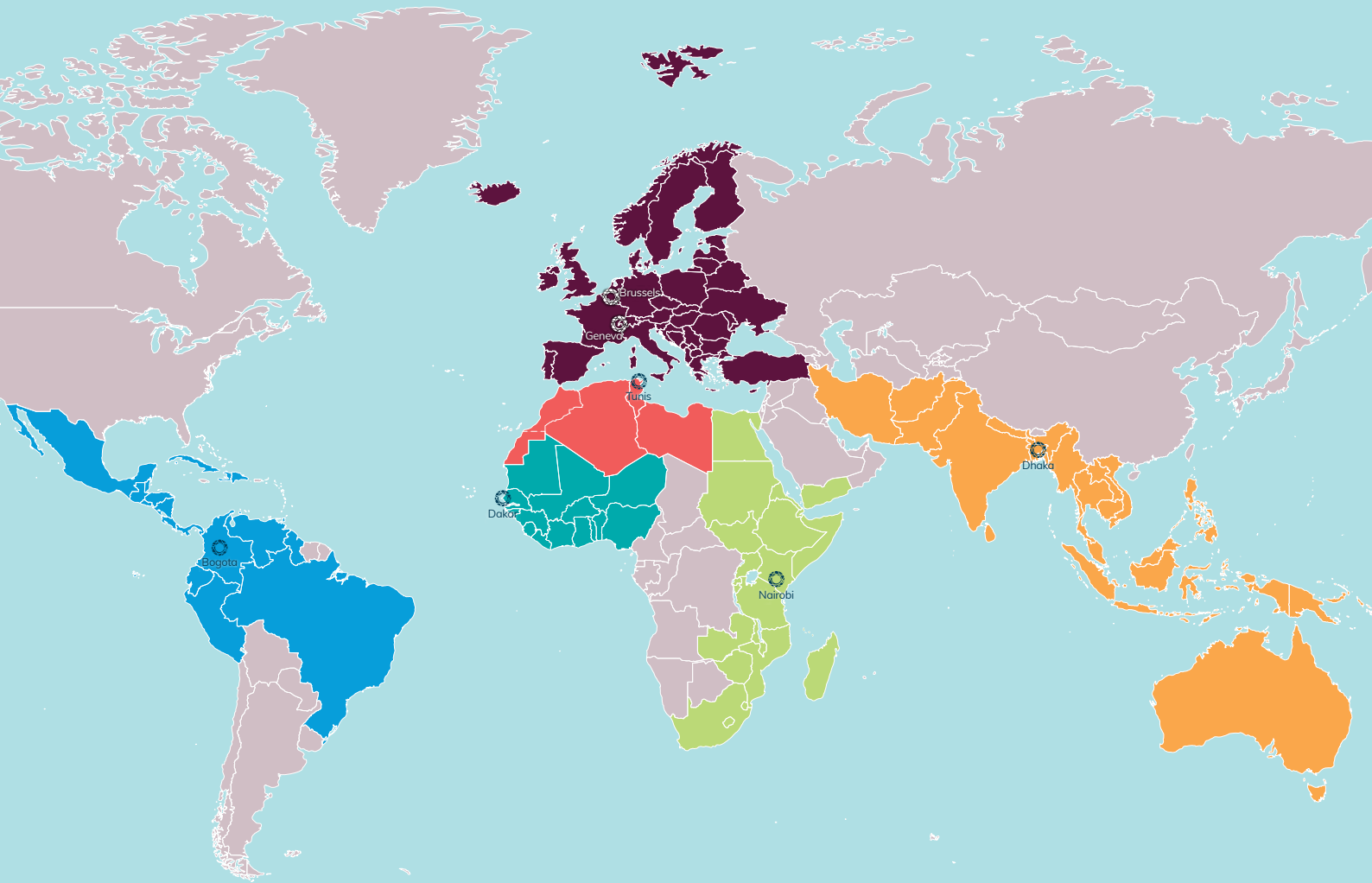
This report presents the main findings from the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) deployed in Greece, Italy, and Spain in 2023. FMS provide a snapshot of the profiles, experiences, and needs of migrants. The survey asks questions on demographics, education and employment backgrounds, the circumstances of the migration journey and migration factors, as well as future intentions and vulnerabilities to abuse, exploitation and violence.



[Essential but Invisible and Exploited: A literature review of migrant workers' experiences in European agriculture](#)

Oxfam | May 2024

This report – derived from work implemented by Oxfam Intermón and the University Institute for Studies on Migration (IUEM) of Comillas University in the EU SafeHabitus project – is based on a review of academic and non-academic literature from the past five years. It assesses research on working, living, health and transport conditions for migrants working in the agri-food sector in Europe, and cross-cutting gender issues.



MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels.

MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based mixed migration responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

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