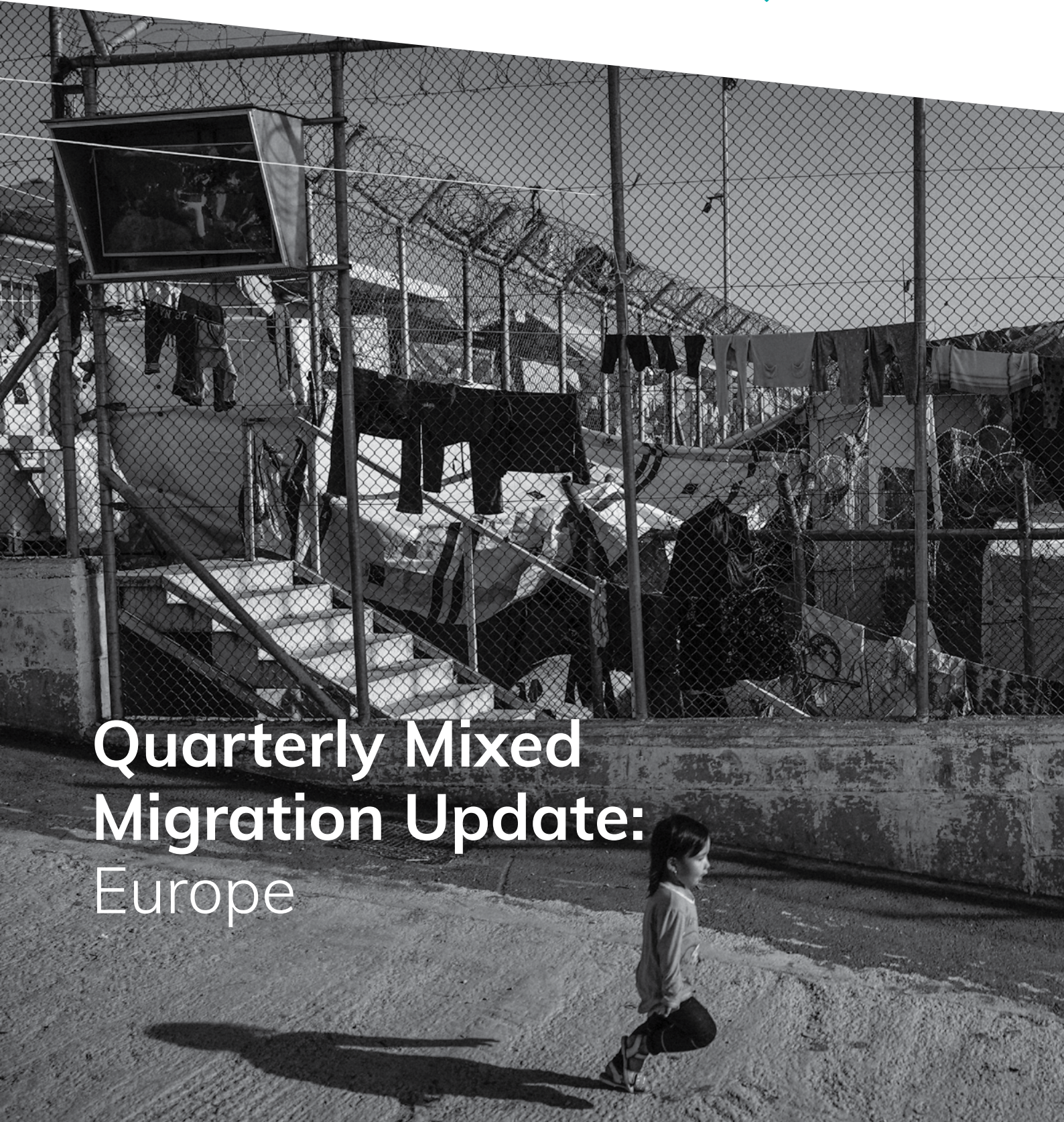


MMC Europe
QUARTER 3 2024



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

SUPPORTED BY:



Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Europe

Quarter 3 - 2024

Key Updates

- **Frontex reports a 39% decrease in irregular border crossings during the first eight months of 2024, compared to the same period of 2023:** The Western Balkans (-77%) and Central Mediterranean route (-64%) experienced the biggest drops. By comparison, arrivals on the Eastern Mediterranean route, the Atlantic route, and via Eastern land borders increased.
- **By the third quarter of 2024, UNHCR continued to record an increase in deaths and disappearances:** On the Central Mediterranean route, fatalities rose by 18% (increasing from 645 in the first half of the year to 759) despite a drop in recorded movements, while the Western Mediterranean saw a 6% rise (from 203 in the first 6 months of 2024 to 216 by Q3 2023). On the Atlantic route, deaths and disappearances surged by 130% (from 320 to 736).¹
- **Samos' Closed Controlled Access Centre labelled "dystopian nightmare":** [Amnesty International](#), in a July 2024 report, criticized the EU-funded refugee camp on Samos as a "dystopian nightmare" due to poor conditions and allegations of unlawful detention, echoing concerns raised by the [Council of Europe](#).
- **Frontex chief denies that migrant rescue ships act as "pull factor":** In September, Frontex Executive Director Hans Leijtens stated that NGO rescue ships in the Mediterranean [do not encourage migration](#), countering claims made by Italy's far-right government.
- **Spain embraces migration amidst European tensions:** In October 2024, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez outlined plans to [ease the settlement of migrants in Spain](#). Contrasting Europe's hardline stance, Sánchez promoted legal migration and denounced xenophobia, calling it a "battle between tales and data."
- **Finland enacts law allowing for suspension of asylum procedures:** On July 12, , Finland passed a law [enabling the suspension of asylum procedures](#) at the Finnish-Russian border in cases, justifying the measure as a response to "hybrid threats" from Russia.
- **Calls for urgent protections for asylum seekers in the UK amid far-right attacks:** In early August 2024, following [violent far-right attacks](#) on hostels housing asylum seekers, over 50 refugee organizations urged the UK Home Office to improve safety protocols.
- **Germany tightens border controls and ramps up deportations:** On September 16, , Germany introduced checks at all land borders to reduce irregular migration and enhance security, following concerns after a [series of attacks](#) allegedly linked to foreign nationals.
- **Stranded migrants in Cyprus buffer zone continue to spark tensions:** Nearly 70 asylum seekers [remain stranded](#) in the UN-controlled buffer zone between the Turkish-occupied north and the internationally recognized south of Cyprus. Cyprus continues to face criticism for alleged pushbacks and human rights violations, while maintaining that Türkiye should be responsible for handling the asylum seekers.

1 These figures differ from those recorded by the IOM Missing Migrants Project, reflecting differences in methodology.

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 and Cyprus

- The UN refugee agency ([UNHCR](#)) recorded 17,713 land and sea arrivals into Greece in Q3 2024, and 579 into Cyprus. The number of arrivals to Greece decreased by 20% over the same period in 2023 (from 22,226), whereas arrivals to Cyprus decreased approximately by 64% (from 1,637).
- Among registered arrivals in Greece up until 30 June 2024, the largest group were from Afghanistan (34%), followed by Syria (27%), Egypt (12%), Eritrea (4%), Palestine (4%) and Yemen (4%).
- Among registered arrivals in Cyprus up until 31 August 2024, the majority were Syrians (74%), followed by Iran (5%), Afghanistan (4%), Nigeria (4%) and Somalia (3%).
- According to data from [IOM's Missing Migrants Project](#), the total number of fatalities or missing persons along the Eastern Route by the third quarter in 2024 is 74 persons.²

Council of Europe's Anti-Torture Committee calls on Greece (again) to reform its immigration detention system and halt pushbacks

In a July 2024 [report](#), the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) called on Greece to reform its immigration detention system and halt pushbacks of migrants. The report [followed a visit in late 2023](#), where the CPT examined the treatment of people held in various detention facilities, including the newly built EU-funded "Closed Access Controlled Centres" on the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Kos, and Samos. The report detailed [serious allegations of abuse](#), including beatings in police and border guard stations. The CPT found that many people were held for extended periods without proper access to legal safeguards such as interpreters or lawyers, in conditions it described as ["inhumane and degrading"](#), particularly on Kos and Samos. The report also flagged credible complaints of violent [pushbacks](#) along the Evros River, further exacerbating the humanitarian situation. Despite the gravity of these findings, the Greek government insisted that the conditions met international standards and promised renovations in some areas.

EU- funded refugee camp on Samos labeled "dystopian nightmare"

Amnesty International has labelled the EU-funded facility on the Greek island, the "Closed Controlled Access Centres", of Samos a ["dystopian nightmare"](#) due to poor conditions and allegations of unlawful detention, echoing concerns by the Council of Europe. In a July 30, 2024, [report](#), Amnesty criticized the camp for inadequate access to basic services like water and healthcare, overcrowding, and unlawful detention. [Testimonies from migrants](#) highlight psychological struggles and inadequate living conditions, with limited medical support, poor sanitation, and restricted freedom of movement. Amnesty calls on the EU to address these issues and ensure such centres do not set a precedent under the EU's new Migration and Asylum Pact.

² These figures differ from those recorded by the UNHCR reflecting differences in methodology.

Greek Coast Guard denies pushback allegations as tensions with Türkiye persist

This quarter has seen several migration-related incidents in Greece, accompanied by ongoing tensions with neighboring Türkiye. In July 2024, [a Greek border guard was shot](#) near the Evros River, with shots allegedly coming from the Turkish side, and authorities suspecting migrant smugglers were involved. The month of August saw Türkiye [repeatedly accuse Greece of illegal pushbacks](#), including a case where 46 migrants were rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard off the coasts of Izmir and Muğla. In late August, a 39-year-old migrant died after [the Greek Coast Guard fired on a vessel](#) near Symi, Greece, in the Aegean Sea, resulting in the arrest of the officer involved in the shooting. In September, Turkish authorities rescued 18 migrants, including children, who were [allegedly pushed back](#) into Turkish waters by Greek forces. In September, a tragic incident also occurred off the Aegean coast near Cesme, where [a migrant raft struck rocks](#), leading to the deaths of seven people. Survivors claim they were left to drift by Greek authorities. These incidents highlight the increasing strain on Greece's migration management, as the country continues to face both internal challenges and external criticism regarding its border enforcement practices and treatment of asylum seekers.

The Central Mediterranean route to Italy

- According to [UNHCR](#), 20,536 persons entered Italy irregularly by sea between July and the end of September 2024. Compared to the same period in 2023, Italy has seen a 69% drop in entries (down from 68,302 in Q3 2023).
- Between 1 January and 31 August, the most represented country of origin among arrivals in Italy was Bangladesh (21%), followed by Syria (17%), Tunisia (14%), Egypt (6%), Guinea (6%), Pakistan (4%).
- The number of dead and missing on the Central Mediterranean route [according to IOM](#) by the third quarter of 2024 was 1,121 people, up from 870 by the second quarter of 2024.

Sea-Eye calls on EU to establish state-led sea rescue system after 10 years of civilian efforts in the Mediterranean

In August 2024, on the 10th anniversary of civilian sea rescue efforts in the central Mediterranean, Sea-Eye, a private rescue organization, [called on the European Union to take responsibility for establishing a state-led sea rescue system](#). Since the Italian 'Mare Nostrum' operation ended in 2014, no official state-led sea rescue operations have been in place, with [private organizations filling the gap](#). Despite their efforts, thousands of migrants continue to die each year in the Mediterranean. After the luxury yacht Bayesian sank off Sicily in August 2024, Sea-Eye and other humanitarian groups also [condemned the disparity in how European authorities handle shipwrecks](#): following the sinking of the yacht rescue operations were swift and well-resourced, while migrant boats in similar danger often face delayed responses or are ignored altogether. Pope Francis also spoke out, calling the failure to aid migrants in the Mediterranean a ["grave sin."](#)

Six Italian officials face charges over migrant shipwreck

In July 2024, six Italian officials were [charged with involuntary manslaughter](#) over their handling of a 2023 shipwreck that killed 94 migrants off the coast of Calabria. [Prosecutors allege](#) that the officers failed to act swiftly on distress signals, despite warnings from the EU border agency Frontex, leading to the tragic sinking of the overcrowded boat. The case has ignited debate over Italy's handling of migrant rescue operations and the government's hardline anti-migration policies.

Salvini faces six-year prison term for blocking migrant rescue ship

Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini [faces six years in prison after being charged with kidnapping and neglect of duty](#) for preventing the NGO vessel Open Arms from docking in Lampedusa in 2019. As Italy's interior minister at the time, Salvini enforced a [“closed ports”](#) policy, leaving 147 migrants stranded at sea for 19 days. He defended his actions as protecting Italy's borders, but prosecutors argued that human rights must not be disregarded. Salvini's trial has sparked both support from right-wing figures like Giorgia Meloni and Elon Musk, and criticism from opposition parties for undermining human rights.

Italian authorities face legal and public backlash over NGO rescue ship detentions

On June 26, 2024, a Civil Court in Crotona [annulled the detention](#) of the rescue ship Humanity 1, operated by SOS Humanity, after it rescued 77 migrants in March. The ship was penalized for defying orders from the Libyan Coast Guard, but the court ruled Libya is not a safe place for migrants and upheld the NGO's actions under international law, ordering the Italian government to pay legal fees.

On July 3, 2024, Italian authorities [detained the MV Louise Michel, a Banksy-funded rescue boat](#), after it saved 37 migrants in the central Mediterranean. Despite receiving permission to disembark survivors near Lampedusa, the ship was penalized for not following orders to dock in Sicily. Banksy condemned the detention as [“vile”](#), while the crew called it a [“political game.”](#) This marks the second detention of the MV Louise Michel since Italy's far-right government introduced stricter protocols for migrant rescue missions.

In the meantime, Italy's right-wing government is [preparing new legislation](#) that would impose fines up to €10,000 on planes supporting NGO rescue missions at sea and restrict their activities, following similar measures against migrant rescue vessel.

Frontex chief denies that migrant rescue ships act as “pull factor”

On September 4, 2024, Frontex Executive Director Hans Leijtens [stated that NGO-run migrant rescue ships in the Mediterranean do not act as a “pull factor”](#) for migrants attempting to cross to Europe. His position counters previous claims by Italy's far-right government, which cited a 2022 Frontex document criticizing NGO operations. [Leijtens emphasized](#) that the presence of rescue vessels is not responsible for encouraging migration, aligning with research that identifies other factors, like conflict and economic hardship, as key drivers of migration.

Calls for more legal migration routes after (another) tragic shipwreck

On September 4, 2024, [a migrant boat sank off Lampedusa](#), leaving 21 people dead, including three children, and sparking criticism from Sea-Watch, an NGO, for the Italian authorities' delayed response to distress signals. The [Community of Sant'Egidio has called for increased legal migration pathways as a result](#). The Catholic charity urged European and national governments to improve sea rescue operations and provide safer alternatives for people fleeing conflict, such as humanitarian corridors. Sant'Egidio highlighted the success of such programs, which have helped [over 7,700 refugees](#) reach Europe safely since 2016.

Amnesty International criticizes conditions in Italy's migrant detention centers

In a report published on July 3, 2024, Amnesty International [criticized the conditions at Italy's migrant detention centers](#), stating they fall below international standards and violate the rights of those held there. The [report](#), based on visits to two Repatriation Centers (CPRs) in Rome and Caltanissetta, highlighted the unlawful detention of migrants and asylum seekers, including individuals with serious mental health issues

or those fleeing persecution. Amnesty noted that detention should be a last resort but [found that these centers impose prison-like conditions](#) that undermine human dignity. The organization urged Italy to improve conditions and address the legal violations linked to the upcoming expansion of repatriation centers.

More delays in Italy's plan to open migrant centres in Albania

Italy's plan to open migrant detention camps in Albania has [faced further delays](#), originally scheduled to be operational by August 1, 2024. The delay is attributed to hot weather in Albania affecting construction progress, with no new opening date set. The camps will process [up to 36,000](#) migrants rescued at sea annually, their asylum claims are processed by Italy. The controversial agreement has been criticized by opposition groups and human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, for resembling the controversial migrant deportation deal between the UK and Rwanda. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has also voiced concerns, while not a direct party to the deal, the [UNHCR will monitor the first three months of its implementation](#) to ensure the protection of migrants' rights and adherence to international human rights standards. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama [emphasized that the asylum processing deal with Italy is exclusive to Italy](#) and not open for replication by other countries, despite growing interest in similar migration strategies.

Italy to lead EU in asylum application processing for 2026-2027

Between June 2026 and June 2027, Italy will be required to process 16,032 asylum applications, accounting for 26.7% of all EU applications [under the new border procedures](#) outlined in the EU Pact reform. This [quota will increase](#) to 24,048 applications the following year. Once Italy reaches its application limit, a [solidarity mechanism](#) will be triggered, requiring other EU countries to assist. The report stresses the need for Italy to enhance its reception capacity and human resources to manage this influx efficiently.

Trieste residents protest for proper shelter for migrants

In late August 2024, residents of Trieste, Italy, protested by sleeping in the streets [to highlight the lack of proper shelter for migrants](#) arriving via the Western Balkans Route. The protest aimed to raise awareness about the growing number of migrants forced to sleep rough, especially after [a grain storehouse previously used as a shelter](#) was closed. Protesters called for dignity and better facilities for both migrants and the local community as concerns over public order have increased.

The Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes to Spain

- During the quarter, according to [UNHCR, 13,052 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 third quarter of 2023, where 14,194 arrivals were recorded.
- By the end of September 2024 of this year, the number of dead and missing [recorded by IOM travelling on the Western Mediterranean route](#) has risen from 111 to 251.

Spain's political crisis deepens amid increased arrivals, Canary Islands accuses Spanish government of neglect

This quarter, Spain faced an escalating political crisis amid rising numbers of irregular arrivals, especially in the [Canary Islands](#) and [Ceuta](#). By July, tensions between political factions deepened. The centre-right Partido Popular (PP), led by Alberto Núñez Feijóo, called for stronger border controls, including [military deployment](#), but Defense Minister Margarita Robles rejected this, stating it violates the Constitution. The proposal sparked political debate, with the government, led by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, criticizing the PP for adopting far-right rhetoric. The Sánchez administration [advocated reforms](#) to distribute migrants more evenly across Spain's autonomous communities, emphasizing solidarity. In response, the far-right Vox party [broke off regional coalitions](#) with the PP, opposing the relocation of around [400 unaccompanied minors](#) from the Canary Islands and Ceuta. The PP called for a [national 'migratory emergency'](#) to address the crisis.

In August, irregular arrivals [surged by 66.2%](#) compared to 2023, overwhelming the Canary Islands, which houses nearly 6,000 unaccompanied minors in overcrowded facilities. The government announced a [€50 million aid package](#), similar to [the one announced in October 2023](#), in and continued diplomatic efforts, including talks with Mauritania to curb migration. Tensions peaked in early September, as Canary Islands President Fernando Clavijo accused the national government of neglect and [considered legal action](#). In the meantime, Spain announced plans for a [strategic partnership with the EU](#) to secure financial resources, with Frontex encouraging Spain to formally request assistance. Political divisions, particularly between the centre-right PP and far-right Vox, continue to fuel the debate over migration.

Spain embraces migration, setting new approach amid European tensions

In late October 2024, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez outlined plans to ease the process for migrants to settle in Spain, emphasizing [migration's critical role in addressing labor shortages, driving economic growth, and sustaining the welfare state](#). Contrasting sharply with Europe's hardline stance, Sánchez promoted legal migration and condemned xenophobia, stating, "I want citizens to understand that this is not a battle between Spaniards and foreigners, or Christians and Muslims or saints and criminals. It is a battle between truth and lies, between tales and data, between what is in the interests of our society and the interests of a few who see fear and hatred of foreigners as their only path to power." In late August, Sánchez and Minister Elma [Saiz traveled to Mauritania, Senegal, and The Gambia to sign Memorandums of Understanding](#) that bolster circular migration programs. These agreements help address Spain's labor market needs while fostering cooperation with workers' countries of origin, [benefiting 17,200 workers in 2023](#) through seasonal job opportunities in Spain.

Rising death toll on the Atlantic route

In the first seven months of 2024, according to UNHCR data, [the irregular sea route to the Canary Islands](#) has claimed more than 700 lives. [With one death for every 31 survivors](#), the Canary Islands route has become the deadliest sea crossing into Europe. [UN agencies³ estimate actual death tolls may be higher](#), underscoring the growing risks faced by migrants trying to reach Europe from Africa. In late September, in what is considered [one of the deadliest incidents in decades](#), a vessel from Mauritania sank near Spain's El Hierro in the Canary Islands, with nine bodies recovered and 48 people still missing.

A Spanish Town embraces refugees amid political tensions

In Monterroso, a small town in Spain's Galicia region, [residents have welcomed 120 refugees](#), primarily from Mali, who arrived after fleeing violence and political instability. Despite initial concerns about the strain on local resources, the town has rallied to support the newcomers, with local organizations and individuals offering everything from free haircuts to football match tickets.

Growing numbers of asylum seekers from Latin America flee to Spain

As Venezuela's political and economic crisis deepens, more Latin American asylum seekers, especially Venezuelans, are heading to Europe, with Spain seeing a significant influx in the first half of 2024. [Venezuelan arrivals in Spain increased](#) by 7%, with a total of 44,000 new arrivals, largely due to the political instability in Venezuela, especially following the disputed July 2024 election. Many Latin Americans, including Colombians and Peruvians, arrive in Europe via visa-free entry, making Spain a favored destination due to cultural and linguistic ties. Despite their growing presence, Latin American asylum seekers [face low recognition rates, with only 2%](#) of Venezuelan applications approved.

The Western Balkans route

- [Data collected by Frontex](#) indicates the first eight months of 2024 saw a 77% drop in movement compared to the same period in the previous year, with just over 14,669 people detected. The top three nationalities include Syria, Türkiye and Afghanistan.
- According to data from [IOM's Missing Migrants Project](#), 33 people died or went missing along the Western Balkans route since the beginning of 2024.

Chinese migrants turn to Balkan route to reach EU

A [rising number of Chinese nationals](#) are traveling to the Balkans, particularly Bosnia and Serbia, where visa-free entry is available, in hopes of entering the EU. Driven by [political repression, and economic challenges](#), many then attempt to cross into the EU through Croatia. As others on this route, they often [face significant challenges](#), including tough border enforcement and complexities navigating European asylum systems.

³ Figures differ between those recorded by UN agencies, IOM and UNHCR respectively, reflecting differences in methodology.

Migrant boat capsizes in river along the Serbia-Bosnia border

A boat carrying around 30 migrants [capsized in the Drina river](#) along the Bosnia-Serbia border on August 22, 2024. Twelve people, including a nine-month-old baby and her parents, were confirmed dead, with their bodies recovered over several days. Eighteen survivors, including three of the baby's siblings, managed to reach the shore. The migrants, [primarily from Morocco](#), were attempting to cross the river with the help of smugglers. The Drina River is a dangerous crossing for migrants, and at least [40 have died](#) attempting to cross it in the past decade. The tragedy highlights the risks faced by migrants on the Balkan route.

Frontex officers allegedly conceal migrant abuses at EU's borders

Frontex officers deployed at Bulgaria's border with Türkiye report [being pressured by Bulgarian border guards](#) to ignore and not document incidents of pushbacks and abuse against migrants. The officers witnessed forced returns, violence, and other human rights violations but were warned to stay silent. [Documents show](#) that despite Frontex's mandate to safeguard migrant rights, the agency's officers are being intimidated, with some fearing retaliation. Similarly, an investigation by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) revealed that Frontex officers [are allegedly failing to report right violations](#), including pushbacks against migrants at the Albania-Greece border. Internal documents suggest officers received "implicit instructions" to [avoid filing Serious Incident Reports \(SIRs\)](#), which they are required to submit when witnessing rights abuses. This has raised concerns about Frontex's credibility in upholding human rights at EU borders.

Serbia expands cooperation with Frontex, amid concerns over refugee shelter closures

Human rights groups have [condemned Serbia's closure of three refugee shelters](#) along the Western Balkans Route, warning that it will push migrants toward more dangerous, smuggler-reliant routes. Despite claims of low occupancy, [aid organizations report](#) worsening conditions for migrants, including overcrowded camps and hygiene issues. Meanwhile, the European Union and Serbia have strengthened their existing collaboration through a [new agreement with Frontex](#) to improve border management and fight smuggling at key borders with Bosnia and North Macedonia and beyond.

Hungary assumes EU presidency, tensions with Brussels grow

On July 1, 2024, Hungary [assumed the rotating EU presidency](#) under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, despite concerns about the country's democratic backsliding and Russia-friendly policies. Orbán, who has governed since 2010, and has said he wants to move Hungary toward a ["illiberal democracy."](#) frequently clashing with the EU on rule-of-law and human rights. Among Hungary's declared focus is on ["illegal migration"](#) and advancing EU integration for the Western Balkans. However, tensions with Brussels over Hungary's restrictive asylum policies persist: Hungary has faced significant EU fines, including [a €200 million penalty](#) imposed by the European Court of Justice for violating asylum laws. Orbán's government has taken a defiant stance, [threatening to bus migrants to Brussels](#) and refusing to change its policies despite growing EU pressure. As Hungary continues to defy EU rulings, after missing the September deadlines for paying the fine, the European Commission is [moving to deduct the amount from Hungary's EU budget allocations](#). In the meantime, Hungary has [joined the Netherlands in requesting an "opt out"](#) from EU asylum and migration rules.

The Eastern border

- Between January and August 2024, [Frontex recorded](#) a total of 11,270 people using this route⁴. This is an increase of 193% compared to the numbers recorded during the same period in the previous year. The top three nationalities detected on this route include Ukraine, Somalia, and Syria.

Poland approves use of live ammunition at Belarusian border amid rising tension

On July 12, 2024, Polish MPs have passed a controversial law [allowing security forces deployed at the border with Belarus to fire live ammunition “preventively” or in “self-defense”](#) at migrants crossing irregularly, sparking outrage from human rights groups. Shortly after, on July 18, 2024, [a Polish court ruled](#) that border guards unlawfully pushed Afghan and Ethiopian migrants back to Belarus despite their injuries and asylum requests. This case adds to previous rulings against Poland’s controversial “pushback” policy, which has been criticized for its inhumane treatment of migrants. This follows increasing tensions at the border: in late June, Poland sought police and border guard [support from Germany and France](#) to help protect its border with Belarus, following the stabbing and death of a Polish soldier. In early July, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, [urging Germany to take greater responsibility for the security](#) of the EU’s eastern border. The meeting takes place against the backdrop of disputes between Poland and Germany over migrant returns, particularly [after a case involving Afghan asylum seekers](#) was handled improperly. In 2024, Germany sent back [over 4,600 people who crossed into its territory](#) from Poland, with around half being Ukrainians. Poland’s interior minister had warned of possible border controls if the situation continued.

Finland enacts law allowing for suspension of asylum in certain circumstances

The Finnish Parliament passed a controversial law, proposed by the right-wing government, on July 12, 2024, [allowing asylum procedures at the Finnish-Russian border to be suspended](#) if Russia is found to be deliberately sending migrants across the border. Prime Minister Petteri Orpo justified the law as a necessary response to Russia’s use of migrants for “hybrid influence.” The law allows pushbacks, which contravene EU law: [the European Commission defended Finland’s new deportation law](#), and also stated that it plans to review the law’s compliance with EU law. Critics, [like Amnesty International](#), argue it risks escalating violence and undermines the rights of asylum seekers. The law mirrors similar measures taken by Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland after Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko created a [“border crisis”](#). On 19 August, [Lushenko hinted that Belarus may again](#) facilitate the travel of large numbers of migrants to the EU, citing EU sanctions imposed on Belarus due to its support for Russia.

Swedens immigration policies stir backlash after proposed “snitch law” and return incentives

Sweden introduced two divisive immigration policies. In August 2024, [Sweden’s proposed “snitch law.”](#) which mandates public sector workers to report undocumented individuals, has ignited widespread criticism from healthcare professionals, educators, and rights groups. Critics argue that it will undermine trust, foster discrimination, and deter people from seeking essential services. The committee studying the proposal will present its findings by November 2024. On September 12, 2024, Sweden announced plans to [significantly increase financial incentives](#) for immigrants who voluntarily return to their home countries. Starting in 2026,

⁴ 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.

those who choose to leave [could receive up to \\$34,000](#), a sharp rise from the current \$1,000 grant. The proposal, led by Sweden's right-wing government backed by the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats, aims to encourage more migrants to return.

The Ukraine crisis and wider region

- As of mid-September 2024, [UNHCR](#) has recorded 6,218,200 registered Ukrainian refugees in Europe. The largest populations remain present in Russia (over 1.2 million), Germany (1.2 million), Poland (970,120), Czech Republic (370,980). Beyond Europe, 571,300 are recorded.
- As of August 2024, according to IOM the [IDP population](#) within Ukraine stood at 3,699,000, an increase of approximately 3,4% from April.

UNHCR chief calls for future planning for Ukrainian refugees

In July 2024, UNHCR head Filippo Grandi [pledged \\$100 million to Ukraine to help prepare for winter](#) amidst power shortages caused by Russian strikes. Grandi highlighted the [growing anti-refugee sentiment](#) in some Western countries, raising concerns for the over 6 million displaced Ukrainians. To assist those considering returning home, the UNHCR and Ukrainian government launched the ["Ukraine is Home"](#) platform. Grandi stressed that true large-scale returns depend on achieving peace.

Exploitation of Ukrainian refugees in Europe's labor markets

Despite the European Union's efforts to integrate Ukrainian refugees, including by providing rapid access to legal status, social benefits and employment, challenges remain. [Many face exploitation in labor markets](#), according to a September 2024 report. Refugees, especially in Germany and the Czech Republic, encounter withheld wages, poor working conditions, and abuse. Highly qualified individuals often end up in low-wage jobs due to slow recognition of credentials. Some are pushed towards informal/undeclared work. Issues such as language barriers and limited access to education compound the problem. This demonstrates that while regularization measures play a vital role in protecting refugees, a more holistic approach is necessary to ensure comprehensive support and successful integration.

Norway tightens asylum rules for Ukrainian refugees

Norway will [now assess asylum applications from Ukrainian refugees individually](#), especially those from western regions, instead of offering automatic asylum as it has since 2022. [The government](#) says this shift is driven by pressure on housing and public services, the rising number of [male applicants of conscription age](#) and with the aim to balance its intake of Ukrainian refugees with other Nordic countries.

The United Kingdom

- According to [Frontex](#), 41,078 people crossed the English Channel to the UK in the first eight months of 2024, a 12% increase over the same period in 2023.
- According to the [IOM Missing Migrants project](#) there were 51 deaths recorded as of mid-September 2024.

Call for urgent protections for asylum seekers amid far-right attacks

Following violent far-right attacks on asylum seekers' housing in early August 2024, [over 50 refugee organizations have urged the UK Home Office to improve safety protocols](#). They requested clearer evacuation plans and called for asylum seekers to be housed in communities, not hostels. Recent attacks, particularly in [Rotherham](#), have raised concerns about the lack of pre-emptive protection despite online warnings. The organizations highlighted how this situation [retraumatized](#) asylum seekers and called for investigations into authorities' failure to prevent such violence. Some refugee charities in northern England [had temporarily closed](#) to ensure staff and migrant safety. The UN has since called on the UK to address [rising racist hate speech](#), particularly from politicians, media, and far-right groups following recent riots. The home secretary condemned the attacks as ["utterly appalling."](#)

Labor government ends Rwanda deportation scheme, but maintains securitization approach to migration...

In July 2024, newly appointed UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer confirmed the termination of the controversial Rwanda deportation scheme, calling it ["dead and buried."](#) The scheme, established by the previous conservative government, aimed to deter 'illegal' immigration by sending migrants to Rwanda but faced legal setbacks and cost around [£310 million](#) without deporting anyone. An [investigation into the UK's scrapped Rwanda deportation plan](#) revealed inhumane treatment of migrants, including the use of force on distressed detainees, with legal action and compensation claims now anticipated.

...with a shifting focus towards anti-smuggling...

The government is exploring the [possibility of recouping funds](#) already paid to Rwanda, though the Rwandan government has stated it is not obligated to offer refunds. Starmer's Labour government plans to redirect savings to a new [Border Security Command](#), focusing on dismantling smuggling networks. A [£84 million investment](#) aimed at addressing the "root causes" of migration in Africa and the Middle East was also announced. However, experts and campaigners argue that [creating safe, legal asylum routes is vital](#) for addressing continued crossings to the UK in small boats.

...and returns

Further, Labour announced plans to prioritize asylum applications from migrants arriving from ["safe" countries](#) such as India, Vietnam, and Albania, many of whom will likely be deemed ineligible for asylum. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper [will propose a change in the law](#) allowing the processing of claims from over 100,000 people who arrived in the past 18 months. Labour's initiative [aims to clear the backlog](#) and aims to grant asylum to around 70,000 people. However, the focus on "safe" countries seems to reflect the government's broader strategy to expedite returns. A few days later, UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced that flights originally scheduled for deporting migrants under the now-scrapped Rwanda scheme [were redirected to return 46 individuals to Vietnam and Timor-Leste](#).

UK seeks strengthened cooperation on migration with Italy, France, Germany

On August 30, 2024, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz discussed a [joint action plan](#) to tackle irregular migration. This plan focuses on dismantling human smuggling networks and improving intelligence-sharing, especially concerning Channel crossings. On September 4, 2024, following [the death of 12 people attempting to cross the English Channel](#), French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin called for a [migration treaty](#) between the EU and the UK. On September 16, 2024, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer [announced strengthened cooperation with Italy](#) to tackle irregular migration, focusing on dismantling smuggling networks and sharing intelligence, praising Italy's success in reducing irregular migrant arrivals. Italy's migration deals with Albania, Tunisia, and Libya have raised concerns over human rights violations. The [International Rescue Committee](#), has criticized UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's [interest in Italy's migration policies](#), urging the government to focus on safe asylum routes rather than costly deterrence strategies.

Policy and Legal Updates

Van der Leyen starts her second term, frames migration through security lens

Ursula von der Leyen, starting her second term as European Commission president in July 2024, [pledging to expand Frontex and strengthen border controls](#). She announced a strengthened focus on migration policy: [key measures include](#) tripling the number of Frontex officers to 30,000 to enhance border security, alongside expanding Europol's mandate. Von der Leyen emphasized the importance of addressing “[hybrid attacks](#)”, and promoting a “[fair and firm](#)” European response to migration challenges. The list of [Commissioners-designate](#) and their portfolios were also announced, which will be subject to public hearings at the European Parliament.

Concerns rise over EU’s strengthened Frontex operations

The European Union's decision to strengthen Frontex, tripling the number of officers and expanding surveillance technology like drones, has [drawn criticism from human rights groups](#). Frontex, the EU's border agency, has launched [tenders worth nearly €400 million](#) to expand its use of drones and other surveillance technology, in response to calls from member states to strengthen external border control. [Activists fear](#) this could lead to migrant pushbacks to countries with authoritarian regimes, such as Libya, where returnees face abuse. Critics argue that Frontex should focus more on rescue operations rather than border enforcement, amid claims of complicity in human rights violations during sea rescues. The EU maintains that these measures are vital for border security.

EU member states criticized for not investigating border rights violations

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) reported that several EU member states, including Greece, Croatia, and Hungary, are [failing to investigate credible allegations of human rights abuses and deaths at their borders](#). Despite numerous reports by human rights groups, authorities are not adequately addressing these violations. The FRA highlighted specific cases of mistreatment and loss of life, [calling for a 10-point plan](#) to improve investigations and protect victims' rights. The report underscores the need for better compliance with human rights law in border management.

EU faces human rights dilemma over Tunisia migration deal

A [leaked EU report](#) reveals worries about Tunisia’s shrinking civic space while the EU maintains a migration deal aimed at curbing migration flows to Europe. [Critics argue](#) that the EU’s engagement risks supporting an authoritarian regime, raising ethical questions about balancing migration management with human rights commitments, particularly ahead of Tunisia’s October 2024 elections. This quarter saw ongoing human rights abuses: on July 10, 2024, the [UN reported](#) the discovery of mass graves

of migrants along the Libya-Tunisia border, on August 30, around 40 migrants, including children and pregnant women, were [expelled from Tunisia](#) and left without food or water near the Algerian border. While the EU maintains that human rights principles are upheld, it [plans to send independent observers to investigate](#). [Tunisian authorities](#) have rejected the accusations, asserting that their security forces act within international law.

EU auditors highlight human rights concerns and mismanagement in Africa Trust Fund

On September 25, 2024, [the European Court of Auditors released a report](#) criticizing the EU's \$5 billion Africa Trust Fund, established to curb migration. The auditors found that the fund lacked focus, was spread too thin, and [did not sufficiently address the risk of human rights abuses](#), particularly in Libya. The report urged the EU to improve its oversight, [citing concerns](#) that EU-funded equipment might have indirectly supported abusive practices in migrant detention centres.

EU increases deportation rates amid migration pressures

As of June 28, 2024, [Eurostat data](#) reveals a rise in deportation rates for non-EU migrants, with 29.5% of those ordered to leave the EU returned to non-EU countries, up from 21.6% in 2022. The European Union's ["Return Roadmap"](#) has aimed to speed up deportations, supported by agreements with nations like Tunisia, Türkiye, and Egypt. Despite criticism from human rights groups, EU countries like France and Germany lead in the number of deportations issued. Despite an increase in deportation rates, the overall numbers remain low. The [European Commission](#) is encouraging EU member states to use trade and international development aid as leverage to enforce the return of rejected migrants, alongside visa restrictions. The EU aims to [integrate return mechanisms](#) into broader migration policies, including the newly adopted Migration and Asylum Pact.

Germany introduces checks at all land borders, steps up deportations

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is adopting a tougher stance on migration due to public concerns over [rising crime](#), following a series of highly publicized attacks allegedly linked to foreign nationals and the [growing popularity of the far-right AfD party](#). Germany announced [new border controls](#) at all land borders, following [checks already in place](#) at select borders, starting September 16, 2024 and initially set for six months, [seeking to reduce irregular migration and enhance security](#). The move, supported by the opposition CDU party, has sparked debate within the ruling coalition, especially from the Greens, with some warning of legal challenges under EU law. It has also [sparked protest from other EU countries](#), such as Poland and Greece, which argue that it undermines free movement under Schengen. This comes after several violent incidents, that authorities have attributed to foreign perpetrators, including a [knife attack in Solingen](#), suspected as an act of terrorism, on August 23 that killed three people. [Experts warn](#) that populist rhetoric following the knife attack in Solingen, may escalate xenophobic tensions.

The various incidents since July have also fuelled calls from conservative factions for stricter deportation laws, particularly targeting foreign individuals convicted of crimes. Chancellor Olaf Scholz has also declared his support for tougher deportation measures. In July, [a German court ruled](#) that certain regions in Syria no longer pose a serious threat to civilians, rejecting the appeal of a Syrian man seeking subsidiary protection. This decision [may allow the deportation of Syrian criminal offenders](#). In late August, [Germany deported 28 Afghan nationals for the first time](#), who were “convicted offenders”, the first deportations since the Taliban took power in 2021. Critics, including [Amnesty International](#), condemned the move, warning of human rights violations and accusing the government of prioritizing political gain over international obligations. Following Germany’s example, [Austria](#) has since then announced plans to begin deporting Afghan nationals with criminal records. In mid-September, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, [with migration agreements](#) among the agenda, including facilitating the immigration of skilled workers to Germany and facilitating the return of Uzbeks and rejected Afghan asylum-seekers via Uzbekistan.

Dutch government announces plans for new, strict asylum policy

This quarter, the Dutch government revealed plans for a [new, strict asylum policy](#). The measures include enhanced border checks, limiting family reunifications, and faster deportations of “criminal asylum seekers”. The Dutch government has also confirmed its intent to request an [opt-out from the EU’s migration and asylum rules](#). Experts and business organizations in the Netherlands have [expressed concerns](#) over the government’s plans for tighter border controls arguing that such measures could disrupt the country’s trade and logistics, and that controls within the EU are legally limited to exceptional situations, and may have little impact on stemming migration.

Thematic Focus:

Cyprus' migration dilemma: hardline measures, regional conflict and rising pressures

In the first four months of 2024, Cyprus saw increasing numbers of irregular sea arrivals from Lebanon, consisting mainly of Syrian nationals. Located just 170 kilometres away, Cyprus is seen as both a lifeline and a gateway to the European Union for many risking the perilous sea journey.

Lebanon, host to over [1.5 million Syrians and 250,000 Palestinians](#), has experienced increasing political and economic turmoil, that has severely affected both refugee and local populations, along with rising anti-migrant sentiment. Lebanon's evolving role as a transit and departure point into Europe has added pressure on Cyprus, further exacerbating the challenges posed by overcrowded reception centres and growing hostility toward asylum seekers on the island.

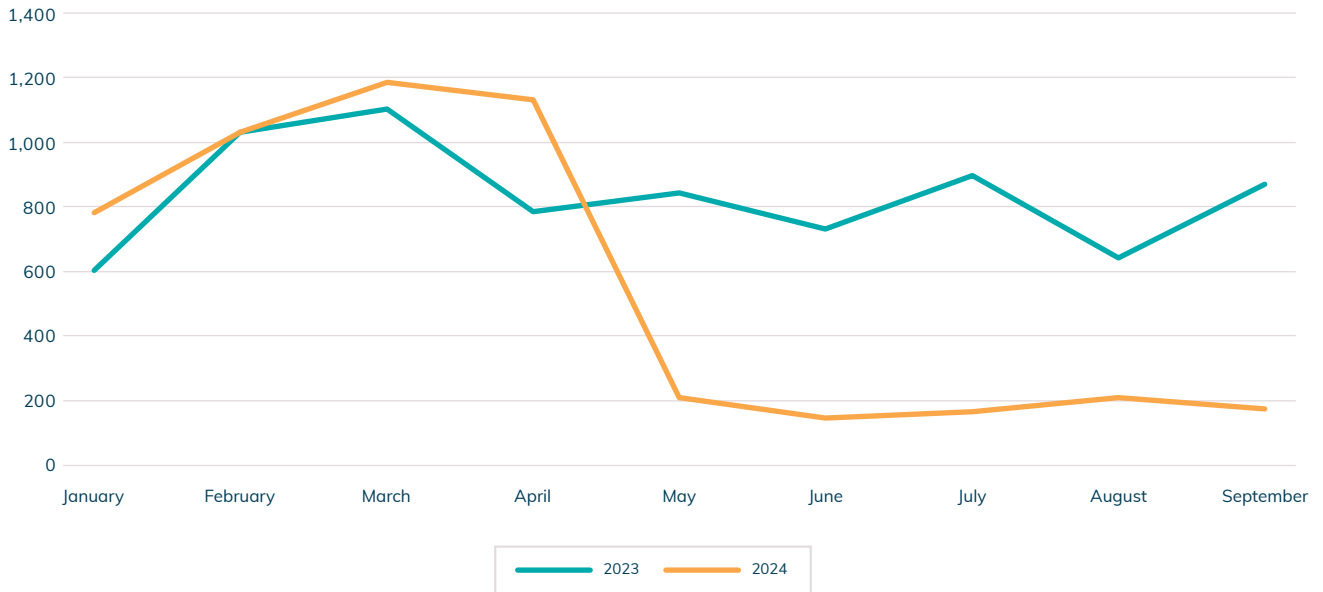
The escalating regional conflict, including [Israel's ground offensive into Southern Lebanon](#) and extensive bombardment campaign across the country - including the capital, Beirut - may well result in increased movement along this route. To date, movements along this route have comprised primarily of Syrians engaging in onward movements from worsening conditions in Lebanon. However considering the current unfolding events, future movements may also include Lebanese nationals who have the means to leave the country, with the number of internally displaced people within Lebanon [already estimated at 1 million](#) and with many having been [displaced multiple times](#).

This thematic section analyses the rising number of sea arrivals to Cyprus in 2024 and the political and humanitarian response from both Cyprus and the European Union. Additionally, it provides a brief overview of the impact of the escalating regional conflict, and an outlook on how in light of these developments, migration movements to Cyprus, and the response, may evolve in the coming months.

Following high numbers of sea arrivals in the first four months of 2024...

For years, Cyprus has consistently hosted the highest number of asylum seekers relative to its population within the EU. In 2023, Cyprus had the [highest number of asylum applications in the EU per capita](#), with around 13,000 per 1 million inhabitants - though this was a significant decrease from previous years. By mid-2024, [5,089 people](#) had applied for asylum.

Despite an overall [decrease of over 50% in irregular arrivals by September 2024](#), the early months of the year saw a sharp rise in sea arrivals, peaking at [120-140 per day](#). By mid-2024, this figure dropped to an average of [60 per week](#). Most of the boat arrivals came from Lebanon, largely made up of [Syrian nationals](#), driven by [worsening economic conditions](#), aid cuts, [anti-refugee sentiment](#), and escalating tensions related to the Israeli-Hamas conflict.

Figure 1. Numbers of sea arrivals in Cyprus: January-September 2023 vs. 2024

Source: [Cyprus sees over 50 per cent drop in migrant arrivals](#), Cyprus Mail, 24 September 2024

...Cyprus takes an increasingly hardline stance on migration

In early April 2024, following the increase in boat arrivals from Lebanon, Cyprus declared a “[state of serious crisis](#)”, urging the EU for assistance. As President Nikos Christodoulides [called for the EU to step in](#), he emphasized 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.

Increased maritime patrols and suspension of Syrian asylum applications

In the following weeks, Cyprus intensified its efforts to prevent boats from irregularly 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. The NGO Alarm Phone criticized the situation, calling it a “[cruel game](#)” between Lebanon and Cyprus that puts migrants' lives at risk. Following reports of Cypriot patrol vessels intercepting boats near Lebanese waters and allegedly using force to turn them back, [UNHCR urged compliance](#) with international human rights law. At the same time, Cyprus [suspended the processing of asylum applications](#) for Syrians, citing overcrowded reception centres and efforts to classify parts of Syria as safe for repatriation, [leaving over 14,000 Syrians in limbo](#).

People left stranded in UN-controlled buffer zone, denied access to asylum

Additionally, since early June 2024, nearly 30 asylum seekers, including children, [have been in limbo](#) in Cyprus's U.N.-controlled buffer zone between the Turkish-occupied north and the internationally recognized south. The individuals, including people [from Cameroon, Iran, Sudan and Syria](#), risk deportation if they return to the north, which lacks an asylum system. Nearly all of these migrants are [reported to](#) have travelled from Türkiye to the self-declared Northern Cyprus and then tried to enter the internationally recognized southern part of Cyprus, where they were blocked by authorities. 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. By the end of June, the situation had drawn attention from the EU Commission, which [stressed the right to seek asylum](#).

By July, UNHCR alleged that Cyprus had [forcibly removed 25 migrants](#) from government-controlled areas and pushed them into the buffer zone, preventing them from accessing asylum procedures. Cyprus has denied the allegations and cited the [Green Line regulation and a tougher migration policy](#) to justify its actions, with the number of migrants in the buffer zone rising from 30 in May to 59 by late July. In early August, the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) echoed concerns about [alleged pushbacks](#), while expressing concerns over the [poor humanitarian conditions](#).

In response to accusations of pushbacks, Cyprus has [shifted the blame to Türkiye](#), arguing that Türkiye, as a safe country, is responsible for providing asylum to migrants within its territory under international agreements with the EU. On August 8, 2024, Cyprus [increased security along the buffer zone](#) to prevent crossings from the Turkish-occupied north. In the meantime, the European Commission [has once more urged Cyprus](#) to allow the now 70 migrants stranded in the buffer zone to seek asylum, as they have been living in poor conditions for weeks. Some migrants have [filed lawsuits](#), while the Cypriot government [continues to refuse entry and plans to reform migration laws](#) to expedite asylum processing and deportations.

Focus on returns and repatriations

The Cypriot government has a high rate of deportations and voluntary returns, with, according to data from the immigration service, [7,456 individuals](#) leaving Cyprus so far in 2024, [compared to 6,900](#) during the same period in 2023. Following a recent [suspected terror attack](#) in Germany, attributed by authorities to a Syrian man, Germany's opposition Christian Democrats are calling for deportations to countries like [Syria and Afghanistan](#), despite safety concerns. This mirrors Cyprus' stance, as Cypriot officials have [urged the EU](#) to reconsider Syria's status, suggesting some regions could be deemed safe for returns. The [European Commission has refrained from declaring any parts of Syria safe](#) for returning refugees, despite growing political pressure.

EU funding amid accusations of human rights violations

Following Cyprus' call for EU support in April, in 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 incentivizes Lebanon's poor financial management, and [its mistreatment of the Syrian community](#) calling it ["the latest in a series of bad migration deals."](#)

Meanwhile, Cyprus was set to receive [€30 million in funding](#) from the European Commission to enhance its coastal surveillance system as part of broader efforts to manage migration. The funding was to be used to upgrade electronic surveillance at [the country's sea borders](#), aiming to prevent irregular immigration and cross-border crime.

A [Human Rights Watch report](#) published on September 4, 2024, alleges that European Union funds provided to Lebanon for border management lack monitoring and may be contributing to the perpetuation of human rights abuses, as both Lebanese and Cypriot authorities are [accused of pushing back Syrian refugees](#) attempting to flee via boats. The [report highlights](#) that refugees were forcibly returned to Lebanon by Cyprus and some were deported to Syria, where they faced further mistreatment. [While both countries deny these allegations](#), citing migration pressures, the report criticizes the ongoing use of EU funds amid documentation of practices that violate international asylum laws.

In October, the [European Court of Human Rights ruled that Cyprus violated human rights](#) by pushing Syrians back to Lebanon without properly assessing their asylum claims or risks they could face. [The court found](#) this to be collective expulsion, lacking individual processing and legal safeguards, and that the poor treatment of migrants at sea amounted to degrading conditions.

Impact of the crisis in the Middle East

In October, with intensifying Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon, an Israeli [ground offensive in southern Lebanon](#), and fears of Lebanon's political collapse, Cyprus, geographically the closest EU country to the conflict, is preparing for a [potential surge in arrivals](#). The Cypriot government has [stepped up military cooperation with international partners](#), including the U.S., and is readying for increased arrivals under evacuation plans for [third country nationals](#) residing in the Middle East, offering temporary safety and facilitating their return home.

Cyprus, with [its population of just over a million](#), is actively preparing to temporarily host evacuees in transit and has activated its [Estia plan](#), which was developed to handle mass evacuations from neighbouring crisis zones. [Temporary shelters are being set up near Larnaca International Airport](#), recalling similar efforts during the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, when Cyprus served [as a temporary evacuation point for around 60,000 people](#). [Additional accommodation facilities are set to be prepared](#) on military bases, schools, and sports centres to accommodate evacuees temporarily.

[Several countries in Europe and beyond](#) have initiated [official evacuations with the assistance of Cyprus](#) as a key stopover point. While the full scale of evacuations is still unfolding, the island has also seen the arrival of Israeli and EU citizens fleeing escalating tensions. Israeli nationals can enter Cyprus visa-free for up to 90 days, whereas Lebanese citizens require a visa prior to traveling to Cyprus. Following Iran's missile attack, [demand for commercial flights from Tel Aviv has surged](#), with most flights operating at near full capacity. Leaving Lebanon is more challenging due to the suspension of most flights from the country's main airport. However, [private boats, including luxury yachts](#), have been transporting mostly European nationals from Lebanon to Cyprus, with [some operators reportedly advertising](#) these sea journeys on social media. These privately arranged trips are available only to those with sufficient funds, who either have visas or don't require one to enter Cyprus, [making this option accessible to a fortunate few](#).

Meanwhile, the European Commission announced an additional [€30 million in humanitarian aid](#) to Lebanon, bringing the total for 2024 to over €100 million. This funding aims to provide urgent food, shelter, and healthcare to [those affected by the ongoing conflict, which has displaced many and caused numerous civilian casualties](#). Before the escalating conflict, [2 million Lebanese and Syrian refugees](#) were already facing food insecurity.

For more information on the mixed migration consequences of the crisis, you can read an [in-depth article on the Mixed Migration Centre \(MMC\) website](#).

Securitization over protection in the face of growing migration pressures?

Prior to the current escalations, Cyprus has managed the increasing numbers of irregular arrivals by sea from Lebanon by enhancing maritime patrols, suspending Syrian asylum applications, and increasing returns, which raised serious concerns about compliance with international human rights obligations. EU funding for Lebanon, including for migration management, [has continued, amid allegations of human rights abuses](#). Meanwhile, rising anti-migrant sentiment and economic pressures in Türkiye have made it increasingly hostile for refugees, with Cyprus shifting responsibility to Türkiye for asylum claims from those entering Northern Cyprus. Cyprus' hardline measures reflect a broader efforts within the EU towards containment, rather than offering protection, even as the drivers of migration – conflict, economic insecurity, and regional instability – persist and are set to worsen.

Given the military escalations in the region, a prolonged crisis would further test Cyprus' political will to balance migration control with the protection of human rights. The country is likely to face increased pressure to provide protection to displaced populations, who may arrive irregularly, exacerbating existing challenges such as [limited reception capacity and barriers to accessing asylum procedures](#). With the prospect of thousands of Lebanese, Syrians and other third country nationals potentially seeking refuge, Cyprus could draw on its past experience in handling a large-scale evacuations and temporarily hosting people during previous crises—such as the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war - to provide a first point of entry and protection. Long-term hosting of large numbers of displaced people would require EU support and a shift away from the current security-focused approach.

The European Union has also shown its capacity to absorb increased numbers of displaced persons, most recently with the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive for those displaced from Ukraine. While it requires resources and coordination, this capacity is ultimately dependent on political will. In the current climate, with the growing influence of far right and populist movements across Europe, there is a stronger focus on curbing migration, by all means, which raises concerns about access to asylum, protection standards, and the long-term impacts on displaced populations. The key question is whether Europe will prioritize humanitarian principles or continue down the path of restrictive and security-driven responses in the face of high uncertainty in the Middle East.

Highlighted New Research and Reports



[“I can’t go home, stay here, or leave” Pushbacks and Pullbacks of Syrian Refugees from Cyprus and Lebanon](#)

Human Rights Watch | September 2024

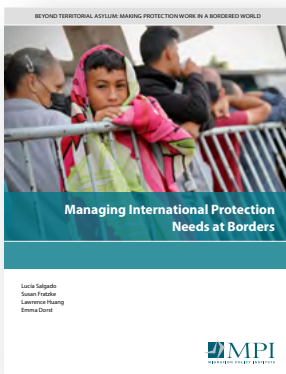
The 90-page report, titled “I Can’t Go Home, Stay Here, or Leave’: Pushbacks and Pullbacks of Syrian Refugees from Cyprus and Lebanon,” highlights the desperation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon who try to escape to Europe. It details how the Lebanese army has intercepted these refugees, forced them back, and expelled them to Syria. Simultaneously, the Cypriot Coast Guard and other security forces have pushed back Syrian refugees whose boats reached Cyprus, sending them back to Lebanon without considering their refugee status or the risk of being expelled to Syria. Once returned to Lebanon, many were immediately deported to Syria by the Lebanese army.



[European Migration Network annual report on migration and asylum for 2023](#)

EMN | July 2024

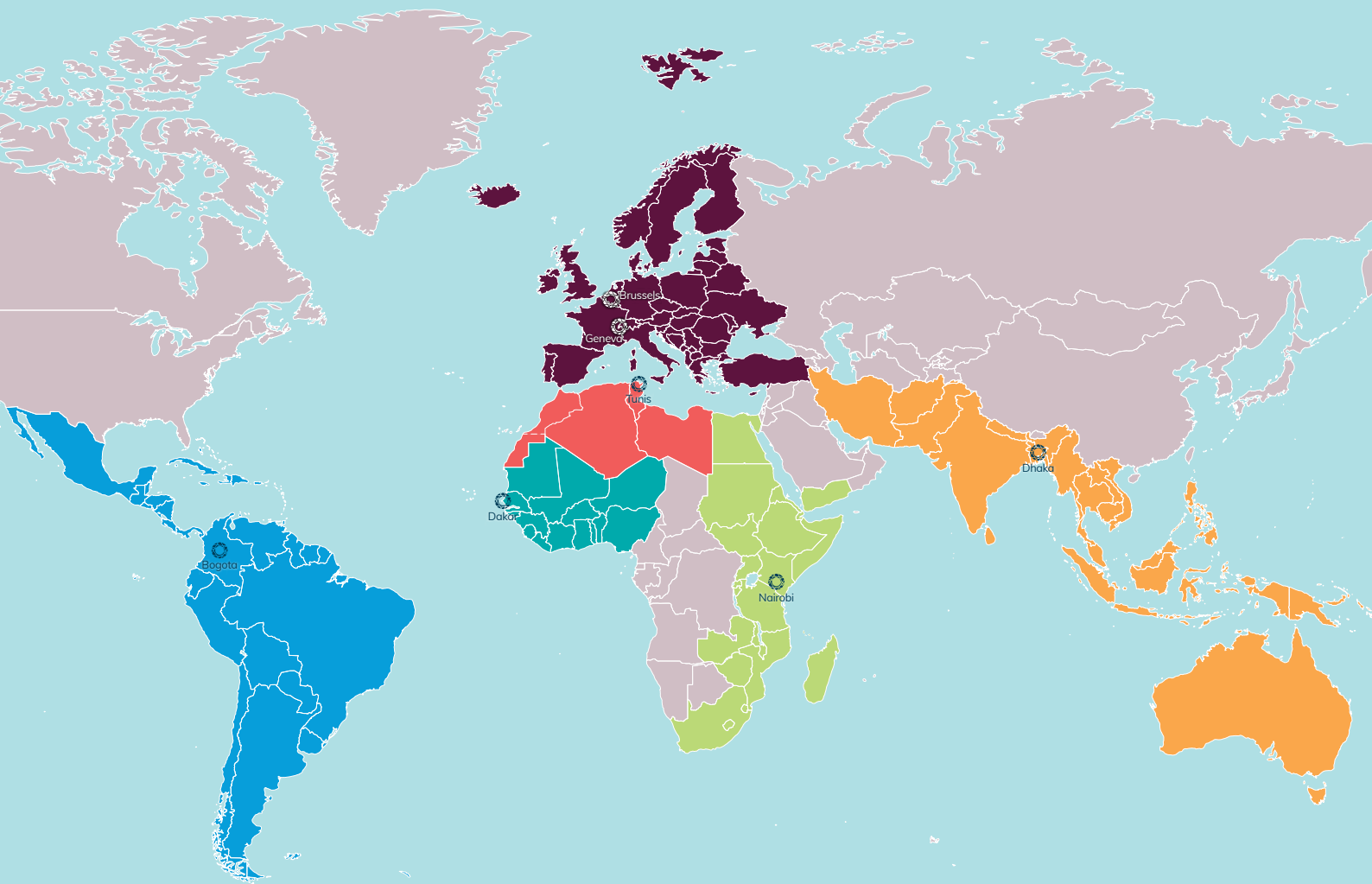
The report offers a detailed analysis of key legal, policy developments, and migration trends across the European Union (EU) and Observer Countries. It highlights significant changes in asylum procedures and migration management. The Statistical Annex, developed by Eurostat, provides key data to accompany the policy insights, presenting a comprehensive view of migration issues throughout Europe.



[Managing International Protection Needs at Borders](#)

MPI | July 2024

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) released a report examining the growing public dissatisfaction with border management in Europe, the U.S., and other regions. The report highlights the challenges governments face in maintaining orderly border systems amid mixed migration flows and displacement crises. It stresses the need for resilient systems that not only manage current pressures but also anticipate future migration trends, all while ensuring the protection of the right to seek asylum. The report advocates for modernizing infrastructure to better respond to evolving migration patterns.



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.

MMC is part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

For more information visit:
mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

