

MMC Europe
QUARTER 1 2025

A photograph of a detention facility at dusk. The facility consists of several long, white, rectangular buildings with multiple windows, some of which are illuminated from within. The buildings are situated in a flat, open area with some sparse vegetation. In the foreground, there is a field of dry, brown grass. The sky is a mix of purple, blue, and orange, with large, dark clouds. A power line runs horizontally across the middle of the image.

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 and the quarterly updates from other regions, visit mixedmigration.org and subscribe to the [MMC newsletter](#) to receive our latest research. Follow us on Bluesky [@mixedmigration.org](#), on X [@Mixed_Migration](#) and LinkedIn [@mixedmigration-centre](#).

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:

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Zervou, Samos Island, Aegean, Greece, 2022. General view of the new Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) of Samos.

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Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Europe

Quarter 1 - 2025

Key Updates

- **Movement down on majority of European routes:** overall, compared to the first quarter of 2024, movement along most routes appears to have dropped along the Central Mediterranean route, the Eastern Mediterranean route, the Western Mediterranean route and even the Atlantic route, despite its continued popularity.
- **Court ruling put Greece's returns policy to Türkiye in spotlight:** the Greek Council of State ruled that [Türkiye could not be included on the government's list of safe countries](#) for returns, meaning that asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia entering Greece from Türkiye [can no longer be automatically returned](#).
- **Italy's plan to repurpose migrant reception facilities in Albania as "return hubs":** while the future of its migrant reception centres remains uncertain, pending the verdict of the European Court of Justice, in March the Italian government has [passed a decree](#) allowing for its facilities in the Albanian territory of Gjadër to be [repurposed to hold migrants](#) whose asylum claims in Italy had been rejected and were now scheduled for deportation.
- **Unaccompanied minors in the Canary Islands to be redistributed to other regions:** with unprecedented numbers of migrants straining local facilities in the Canary Islands, in March the government announced proposals for around 4,400 unaccompanied minors on the islands [to be redistributed to other regions](#) in Spain. The move will be formalised with [a vote in early April](#) on a new law.
- **Spain to regularise the status of 25,000 migrants who were victims of the Valencia floods:** in February the Spanish government announced that it would be granting [one-year residency and work permits to up to 25,000 foreign nationals](#) who following the [devastating flash floods in Valencia](#) in October 2024, were unable to meet the requirements for living, studying and working in Spain legally.
- **Increasing EU surveillance and securitisation in the Balkans:** the EU has increased its engagement along the Balkans route, including an [agreement between Bosnia and the EU](#) for Frontex personnel to operate in the country.
- **Amidst violent pushbacks, Poland suspends the right to asylum:** alongside the [continued use of violence at the Eastern Borders](#), including thousands of reported pushbacks from Poland, a new law enacted in March 2025, condemned by human rights organisations, allows the government to [suspend the right to asylum](#) for up to 60 days at a time. .

- **The UK's Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill:** [New legislation](#) announced by the UK government in January has raised concerns that the legislation will [criminalise many asylum seekers](#), particularly anyone coerced by smugglers into navigating the boat during the journey, in what would amount to a "[gross miscarriage of justice](#)".
- **Elections signal rightwards shift on migration:** The first months of 2025 have seen a shift towards more exclusionary policies in many countries including [Belgium](#), [Austria](#), the [Czech Republic](#) and France. Germany has also pivoted towards stricter asylum policies, with the newly elected Chancellor Friedrich Merz promising to [escalate the number of deportations](#), [expand detention facilities](#) and other measures.
- **Proposed legislation on "return hubs" alarms human rights groups:** The proposed [Common European System for Returns](#), announced on 11 March, has [alarmed human rights groups](#) with a range of restrictive measures including higher time limits for immigration detention, longer entry bans and the provision of so-called "[return hubs](#)" whereby failed asylum seekers could legally be sent to a third country pending their return to their country of origin.

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

- [According to UNHCR](#), 8,844 arrivals were registered in Greece between 1 January and 30 March, a reduction of more than 16% from the total in the first quarter of 2024. As of 28 February, the most represented countries of origin during the year to date were Afghanistan (45.5%), Egypt (23.0%), Sudan (5.4%), Pakistan (4.3%) and Eritrea (3.6%).
- The route from eastern Libya to Greece [continues](#) to gain prominence as migrants increasingly resort to alternative routes. By 30 March 2025, [UNHCR](#) reported a total of 2,168 arrivals in Crete, marking an increase from previous years. For [context](#), there were 1,961 arrivals between January and 16 June 2024, while only 750 [arrivals](#) were registered in 2023. In addition to the islands of Crete and Gavdos, there have been additional arrivals in [Chios](#) and [Tilos](#). In January alone, over 200 migrants [arrived](#) on the Greek islands of Crete and Gavdos within a single week. The migrants arriving are [mainly](#) from Bangladesh, [Pakistan](#), Egypt, and Sudan, reporting that they [paid](#) USD 2,000 each for passage.
- In [Cyprus](#), meanwhile, there were 616 registered arrivals between 1 January and 30 March, around a fifth (20.7%) of the total of 2,977 recorded in the first quarter of 2024. The most represented countries of origin in the first two months of 2025 were Sudan (15.6%), Afghanistan (15.3%), Syria (14.4%), Iran (12.7%) and Nigeria (10.2%).
- According to IOM's Missing Migrants Project, 38 people died or disappeared along the [Eastern Mediterranean route](#) in the first quarter of 2025, compared to 49 in the same period of 2024. In addition, two fatalities were recorded on the [Türkiye-EU land route](#).

Cyprus accused of pushbacks and coerced “voluntary” returns

Having [suspended asylum processing](#) for Syrian nationals during 2024, Cyprus has now been accused of [pressuring Syrian nationals to return](#) to Syria through various means of coercion, including arbitrary detention and apparently spurious accusations of serious crimes. The joint investigation, by StateWatch, The New Arab and UntoldMag, focuses on practices extending back several years, but the reporting has added relevance since [the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime](#) in December 2024. Since then, other EU member states have followed Cyprus' lead and [suspended asylum applications](#) from Syrian nationals. While hundreds of Syrians have reportedly [withdrawn their applications](#) for asylum in Cyprus since Assad was ousted, the suspension remains in place, despite [calls from local advocacy groups for it to be lifted](#) so that frozen claims can be processed.

At the same time, reports on 17 March of a [vessel capsizing in Cypriot waters](#), with at least seven bodies recovered from the wreck, prompted [allegations that authorities had engaged in pushbacks](#) after it emerged that NGO Alarme Phone had alerted them about the boat the day before. Despite calls from opposition parties to examine whether any violations of international law took place, the government has [refused to investigate the incident](#) further.

Court ruling put Greece's returns policy to Türkiye in spotlight

For years, since the brokering of the [2016 EU–Türkiye Agreement](#), Greece has been sending back asylum seekers who had travelled there from Türkiye. In 2021, the Greek government [attempted to solidify this arrangement further](#) by naming Türkiye as a “safe country” for nationals of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Somalia and Syria to be returned to. However, [this arrangement was criticised in many quarters](#) for failing to acknowledge the difficult realities for many asylum seekers there and the risk of deportation. The designation was subsequently challenged in the EU's Court of Justice, which in October 2024 upheld it but also ruled that the Greek authorities should [not use it as a justification to summarily refuse](#) an asylum claim. However, in March 2025 the Greek Council of State ruled that [Türkiye could not be included on the list of safe countries](#) for returns. The decision is significant, as it means that asylum seekers entering Greece from Türkiye [can no longer be automatically returned](#). Nevertheless, while this strengthens the status of asylum seekers in its territory and confirms Greece's responsibility to them, whether it will lead to a tangible improvement for the thousands of asylum seekers stranded in a limbo there [remains to be seen](#).

The Central Mediterranean route to Italy

- [According to UNHCR](#), there were 9,168 registered arrivals in Italy between 1 January and 30 March 2025, down from 11,416 in the first quarter of 2024. As of 28 February, the most represented countries of origin during the year to date were Bangladesh (38.0%), Pakistan (17.6%), Syria (9.7%), Egypt (9.5%) and Eritrea (4.3%).
- According to IOM's Missing Migrants Project, there were 225 suspected fatalities along the [Central Mediterranean route](#) in the first quarter of 2025, compared to 379 during the same period in 2024.

Italy's plan to repurpose migrant reception facilities in Albania as “return hubs”

The proposed creation of [migrant reception centres in Albania](#), announced in November 2023 as a centrepiece of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's migration policy, suffered a further setback at the end of January 2025 when a court blocked the processing of asylum seekers there [for a third time](#). The facilities were designed to hold up to 3,000 migrants intercepted at sea while their claims were fast-tracked in Albania: however, the Italian courts have repeatedly ruled against the government on the basis that the countries of origin of the migrants in question (for instance, Bangladesh and Egypt) [cannot be regarded as safe](#).

The government is now awaiting the verdict (likely to come in May) of the European Court of Justice on whether the [19 countries of origin](#) designated on its “safe list” can be upheld. In the interim, at the end of March the government [passed a decree](#) allowing for its facilities in the Albanian territory of Gjadër to be [repurposed to hold migrants](#) whose asylum claims in Italy had been rejected and were now scheduled for deportation. While human rights groups have [been vocal in their criticism](#) of the government's stance on supposed safe countries and the [lack of due process](#) inherent in the Albania model, the government's plans continue to garner [strong support from senior EU officials](#).

The Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes to Spain

- [According to UNHCR](#), between 1 January and 30 March 2025 there were 11,851 registered arrivals in Spain, with the large majority (9,128) using the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands. This is lower than the total of 16,575 (13,297 on the Atlantic route and 3,278 along the Western Mediterranean route) during [the first quarter of 2024](#). According to [Frontex data](#), of 28 February 2025, the most represented countries of origin among arrivals during the year were Mali (37.8%), Senegal (15.9%), Algeria (11.3%), Morocco (9.0%) and Guinea (8.5%).
- According to IOM's Missing Migrants Project, 170 migrants died or disappeared in the first quarter of 2025 along the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, compared to 115 during the same period in 2024. There were also 123 fatalities along the [Western Mediterranean route](#) in the first quarter of 2025, compared to 167 during the same period in 2024. However, the true number of fatalities along these route is [likely to be much higher](#), with estimates by the NGO Caminando Fronteras along these routes typically [much higher](#).

Unaccompanied minors in the Canary Islands to be redistributed to other regions

The protracted crisis in the Canary Islands, where the arrival of unprecedented numbers of migrants is straining local facilities beyond capacity, has created growing tensions between local authorities and the central government around how the responsibility should be shared. After months of discussions, in March the government announced proposals for around 4,400 unaccompanied minors currently on the islands [to be redistributed to other regions](#) in Spain. The move will be formalised with [a vote in early April](#) on a new law that would enshrine the responsibility of regions to share the responsibility for hosting migrant minors arriving in other regions, in particular the Canary Islands. The precise allocations for different areas will be [depend on several factors](#), including population size, per capita income and unemployment levels.

In the interim, at the end of March the Supreme Court [ruled that the central government should take responsibility](#) for 1,000 unaccompanied minors currently on the islands, with 10 days to implement the provision. The ruling was in response to a petition from regional authorities in the Canary Islands for assistance in the context of the “emergency situation” there.

The Western Balkans route

- [According to Frontex](#), there were around 1,400 irregular border crossings detected along the Western Balkans route during the first two months of 2025, a drop of 64% compared to the same period in 2024. The three most represented countries of origin along the route were Türkiye, Afghanistan and Syria.
- The Italian Consortium of Solidarity, responding in January 2025 to preliminary data from Frontex showing a significant reduction in movement through the Western Balkans, suggested that [this may only be part of the picture](#) and called for “careful analysis” of the data alongside other sources. Pointing to the fact that data elsewhere, such as Greece, did not reflect a similar decrease in movement, the organisation argued that some of the apparent reduction might be due to an uptick in illegal pushbacks at the EU border and the increasing invisibility of trafficking networks along the route.

Increasing EU surveillance and securitisation in the Balkans

The EU's increased engagement in border management along the Balkans route has been evidenced by [a number of developments](#) in the region involving Frontex. A report published in January 2025 has highlighted the role of the EU in supporting the [implementation of fast-tracked asylum and deportation procedures](#) in Bulgaria, including “assisted voluntary returns”. However, the extent to which these returns can be classified as free and informed is questionable. In the wake of an [agreement between Bosnia and the EU](#), brokered in December 2024 and [formally approved](#) at the end of January 2025, Frontex personnel will be operating in the country alongside the authorities to support border management.

The Eastern Border

- [According to Frontex](#), there were 962 irregular crossings in the first two months of 2025 along the Eastern Border,¹ an increase of 6% from the same period in 2024. The three most represented countries of origin were Ukraine (predominantly [men of military age](#)), Russia and Sudan.
- A new report by a consortium of NGOs, published in February 2025, drew attention to the [continued use of violence at the Eastern Borders](#), with almost 20,000 documented pushbacks reported between January and November 2024: 13,600 in Poland, 5,388 in Latvia and 1,002 in Lithuania. As the figures suggest, while other countries such as [Finland](#) and [Latvia](#) continue to securitise their borders in response to Russia's use of irregular migration as “hybrid warfare”, the epicentre of the ongoing human rights abuses in the regions is at the Poland-Belarus border. A joint publication by Oxfam and Egala, released in March 2025, presents extensive research of [repeated human rights abuses by both Polish and Belarusian guards](#) including beatings, abuse and mistreatment, with Belarusian guards also implicated in widespread sexual violence.

Ukraine

- As of 20 March 2025, [according to UNHCR](#), there were 6.37 million Ukrainian refugees in Europe, with the largest numbers in Germany (1.24 million), Russia (1.22 million), Poland (1.0 million) and Czechia (0.4 million). In addition, [according to IOM](#), as of December 2024 3.67 million people were internally displaced.

Continued uncertainty for Ukraine's refugees

As discussed in the [previous Europe QMMU](#), after three years of conflict, the high levels of solidarity towards Ukrainian refugees in Europe appear to have fallen due to a combination of “compassion fatigue” and the apparently “Russia-friendly” positioning of certain EU member states, most notably Hungary. Popular sentiment in some countries appears to be turning, too, with [increasing reports of attacks and hate speech in Poland](#), home to the largest refugee population in Europe. Some politicians have also called for child benefits to be reduced to only include Ukrainians who are employed and paying taxes in the country, a proposal that is now being [developed into a draft law](#) by the government.

¹ 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.

Talks of a US-brokered peace deal have raised concerns that the settlement could [force an agreement on the aggressor's terms](#). An inequitable and unstable ceasefire may serve as a pretext for some countries to [call an end to their refugee status](#) (an approach already evident with the suspension of asylum applications for Syrians and calls for those [already settled to be returned](#) after the fall of Assad). While the Ukrainian government will likely [encourage its refugee diaspora to return post-conflict](#) to support the country's reconstruction, recent surveys suggest that even once a peace agreement is finalised, [returns will likely be gradual rather than immediate](#) and dependent on lasting security in the country.

The Channel

- According to [UK government data](#), 6,642 migrants reached the UK in the first quarter of 2025, an increase of 22% from the total (5,435) in the same period of 2024. This is only a fraction of the total number of journeys being made, as illustrated by the [reported rescue of more than 6,300 migrants](#) by French authorities during 2024, up 30% from the previous year, with [hundreds more rescued](#) since 2025 began.
- According to IOM's [Missing Migrants Project](#), 10 people died or disappeared in the Channel in the first quarter of 2025, comparable to the total (11) during the same period of 2024. Nevertheless, [there are concerns](#) that smugglers are loading more passengers onto boats, potentially resulting in more deaths, particularly as increased surveillance appears to be driving smugglers to take more hazardous routes.
- In early March, the UK and French governments announced the agreement of [a new roadmap](#) to support collaboration around curbing irregular migration through deterrence, returns and the disruption of smuggling networks.

The UK's Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill

New legislation announced by the UK government in January to “identify, disrupt and smash people-smuggling gangs” – the [Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill](#) – has raised concerns about its implications for migrants and their right to claim asylum. In addition to imposing sentences of up to 14 years for people smugglers, the law also includes penalties of up to five years for anyone refusing to be rescued by the French coastguards. These provisions have prompted concerns that the legislation will [criminalise many asylum seekers](#), particularly anyone coerced by smugglers into navigating the boat during the journey, in what would according to the UK Refugee Council amount to a [“gross miscarriage of justice”](#).

The legislation comes against a backdrop of increasing hostility to migrants, with the Home Office in February releasing [footage of migrants being deported](#) in a move that was condemned by the organisation [Detention Action](#) as “an act of performative cruelty”. The same month, the Home Office also issued [new guidance](#) to case workers to the effect that “any person applying for citizenship from 10 February 2025, who previously entered the UK illegally will normally be refused, regardless of the time that has passed since the illegal entry took place”. This means that the majority of migrants who have entered the UK irregularly, even those who did so to apply for asylum and subsequently received refugee status, are [highly unlikely to be ever granted citizenship](#) (previously, they typically needed to wait 10 years before being eligible).

Policy and Legal Updates

Elections signal rightwards shift on migration

The first months of 2025 have been a shift towards more exclusionary migration and asylum policies, often in the wake of national elections that have pushed the political centre of gravity further right. In **Belgium**, for instance, where asylum applications in 2024 were the highest in a decade, the newly formed government under Bart de Wever announced in February that [it would be implementing](#) “the strictest migration policy ever”. Among other measures, the government will seek to standardise its asylum policy so that it is not seen as more generous than in neighbouring states, with plans to significantly strip back the available reception facilities for asylum seekers to collective centres only. It will also implement a range of deterrence and security measures, from phone surveillance to police raids, with plans to [double the current capacity](#) of immigration detention facilities. In addition, the government has stated its opposition to further regularisation programmes, and is likely to [reduce access to family reunification](#).

In **Austria**, meanwhile, following elections in 2024 that saw the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) secure the largest share of any political party, a [three-party coalition was formed](#) after months of negotiations that explicitly excluded the FPÖ. However, the effects of the anti-immigration sentiment that the FPÖ successfully mobilised in its campaign are already evident in the new government’s proposals around asylum and migration. Besides [a planned headscarf ban](#) on girls under the age of 14, the government has also announced that [family reunification will be halted](#) with immediate effect and has stated that it could [suspend asylum](#) in the event that the number of refugees spikes significantly in future.

In **the Netherlands**, the [coalition government formed in 2024](#) in the wake of the national elections the previous year that saw the far-right Freedom (PVV) party gain the most votes of any party has adopted a [raft of anti-immigration measures](#) since coming to power that are among the strictest in Europe. Most recently, reports emerged in February that the government was considering the revival of its plan ([first aired in October 2024](#)) for [Uganda to serve as a deportation hub](#) for failed asylum seekers, who would be sent there in the interim before they returned to their countries of origin. The proposal has been criticised for effectively amounting to a [policy of forced returns](#).

In the **Czech Republic**, with national elections scheduled later this year and a centre-right coalition apparently threatened by the resurgent populist ANO party, the government’s announcement in March of [tougher migration laws](#) appears to have been designed to secure more support from right-leaning voters. Given the relatively small number of asylum applications in the country, which fell 8% in 2024 compared to the previous year, the [proposed measures](#) – including increased security and fast-tracked asylum and deportation procedures – have been criticised as a [politically motivated stunt](#) that threatens to undermine the rights of asylum seekers.

In **France**, the government’s increasingly hostile migration policy is reflected in a number of recent proposals that further restrict migrant rights. While the government of Emmanuel Macron managed to see off a far-right victory during the 2024 elections, the results were close enough to result in a [hung parliament](#), and since then anti-immigration policies have become steadily more normalised even within centrist politics. In February, the government announced that it was considering the restoration of the so-called “[offence of legal residence](#)”, a crime that was abolished in 2012 but has recently become a political talking point and was proposed as draft legislation back in 2023, before being struck down by the Constitutional court.

The same month, the Senate approved a draft law formally [prohibiting undocumented migrants from marrying](#), with the stated aim of curbing sham weddings, though critics have argued that the move would be unconstitutional. This was followed in March with the Senate voting to [extend the maximum period for immigration detention](#) from 90 to 210 days, a move criticised by rights groups for the physical and mental distress it would inflict.

But perhaps the most troubling development, given its long history of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers, is the likely emergence of much stricter asylum and immigration policies in **Germany under its new ruling coalition**. [Anti-migrant rhetoric](#) was already evident during the previous administration, particularly ahead of the February 2025 national elections: a series of deadly terrorist incidents across Germany in recent months contributed to [growing anti-migrant sentiment](#) and a [disturbing rise in attacks](#) on asylum seeker accommodation.

Shortly before the elections, the head of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) Friedrich Merz (now Germany's new Chancellor) pushed through a [controversial non-binding motion on asylum policy](#) with the support of the populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) in what was vocally condemned as the [breaking of a longstanding taboo](#) around collaborating with the far-right. Among other measures, the motion proposed that asylum seekers could be turned back at the border. Amid widespread outrage, a subsequent vote days later on a bill which would have been legally binding was [rejected in parliament](#).

Since the election, Merz has distanced his party from the AfD and explicitly [excluded them from the ruling coalition](#). Nevertheless, the party's influence will likely be felt indirectly as the new government attempts to position itself as tough on migration to appease voters. Among other measures, Merz has promised to [escalate the number of deportations](#) and bar asylum seekers from entering Germany from other member states – proposals that some commentators fear could [undermine the fundamental stability](#) of the EU. The government has also agreed to [expand detention facilities](#), suspend family reunification for two years, extend the list of safe countries that migrants can be returned to and [annul the right to legal assistance](#) prior to deportation. The new administration is also expected to begin the process of [returning Syrian nationals](#) to their country of origin imminently. At the state level, too, there are signs that an increasingly hostile environment is being created for asylum seekers: the state of Baden-Württemberg, for instance, in emulation of policies already enacted by Denmark, has suggested that it could begin [confiscating money and valuables](#) from asylum seekers to cover costs.

Proposed legislation on “return hubs” alarms human rights groups

The benefits of the EU's policies of containment and exclusion are dubious at best, according to a [new MMC report](#): years of increased securitisation and surveillance by member states have done little to curb the drivers of migration, while greatly increasing the dangers that migrants face. In this context, much of the focus of the proposed [Common European System for Returns](#), announced on 11 March, was on how to expedite deportation processes across the EU. While the wording of the draft was careful to emphasise the importance of having safeguards in place to protect migrants, as well as the need to “incentivise” voluntary returns rather than forced expulsions, many of its provisions have [alarmed human rights groups](#). The text, which has been [criticised for its lack of consultation](#), outlines a variety of restrictive measures including higher time limits for immigration detention (24 months, compared to 18 months before), longer entry bans (10 years, up from 5 years) and mutual recognition of return decisions, meaning member states can enforce a return notice issued in another EU country rather than initiate a new process of their own.

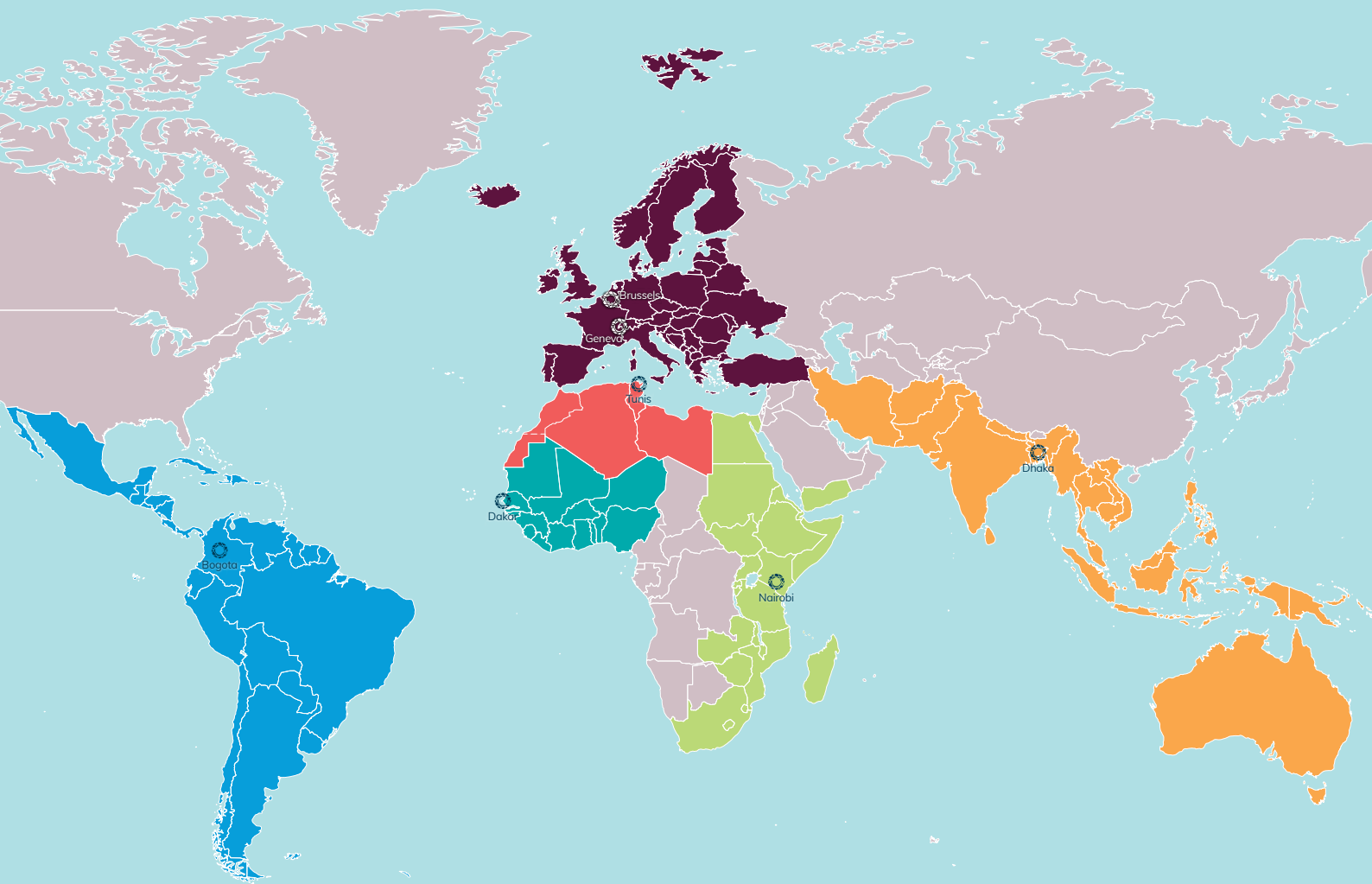
Most controversial, however, was its provision on “[return hubs](#)” as “innovative solutions for migration management”. Under this model, failed asylum seekers could legally be sent to a third country pending their return to their country of origin. The proposals have been roundly criticised by activists who argue that this “[dystopian](#)” system could result in [protracted detention](#) and leave rejected asylum seekers stranded indefinitely in an unfamiliar country. A [UNHCR briefing paper](#) published in response, however, has suggested that if properly implemented, return hubs could have a valid role to play in facilitating returns. Noting that “the safe and dignified return of individuals found not to be in need of international protection is critical to the effective functioning of the international protection regime”, it nevertheless emphasised the importance of appropriate human rights safeguards and monitoring.

Spain to regularise the status of 25,000 migrants who were victims of the Valencia floods

In October 2024, [devastating flash floods in Valencia](#) left hundreds dead and destroyed homes, businesses and communities. Among those affected were thousands of migrants, many of whom in the aftermath were unable to meet the administrative requirements for legal residency. Recognising this, in February the Spanish government announced that it would be granting [one-year residency and work permits to up to 25,000 foreign nationals](#) who were directly affected by the disaster. Migrants who lost relatives in the flooding would also be eligible for five years of residency.

Poland suspends the right to asylum

While Polish authorities have been engaged in pushbacks systematically for some time, a new law enacted in March 2025 allows the government to [suspend the right to asylum](#) for up to 60 days at a time. The move, which is [similar to a measure introduced by Finland](#) in 2024 that was again extended at the end of March 2025, has been condemned by human rights organisations. The legislation was approved despite a presentation to the Polish parliament by Médecins Sans Frontières in February that outlined the prevalence among migrants of [extreme mental and physical trauma](#), including dog bites and injuries from rubber bullets, as well as hunger, dehydration and hypothermia.



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).

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