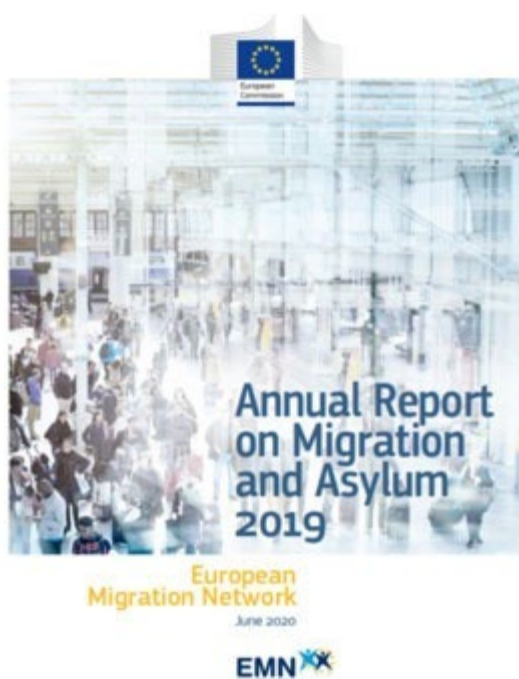


August 2020

Welcome to the news flash of the 31st EMN Bulletin, our selection of the key developments in the areas of migration from April to June 2020. **The full PDF version of the EMN Bulletin can be found [here](#).** If you know someone who is interested in receiving the news flash share this [link](#) so they can subscribe.

Latest EMN Publications



[EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2019 \(PDF, 8.6 MB\)](#)

[Comparative overview of national protection statuses in the EU and Norway \(EMN Study, PDF, 6.4 MB\)](#)

[Missing unaccompanied minors in the EU, Norway and the UK \(EMN Inform, PDF, 740 KB\)](#)

Special update: COVID-19 impact on migration and asylum

Throughout the EU, Member States are taking measures to respond to the COVID-19 situation, with implications for migration policy. Here are some highlights:

International protection: Member States and Norway have adopted measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, while continuing asylum and resettlement and other international protection procedures. These measures include suspending interviews, extending permits and, where possible, replacing paper registration and in-person visits with digital and telematic options.

Borders and Schengen: The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on border management throughout the EU. Taking stock of deconfinement trends, some Member States and Norway have eased travel restrictions and/or supplemented them with security measures, depending on the country of origin of incoming travellers.

Guidelines for legal migration: Immigration procedures have been adapted in the majority of the Member States to maximise safety: from deadline extensions and permit acceleration to online submission options and fee reductions. Some Member States have been able to resume standard operations.

Integration: Support for integration programmes has remained a priority. Working with NGOs, multilingual information campaigns about COVID-19 have been launched; other integration projects support struggling business and individuals.

Return: Member States and Norway have adapted irregular migration and return operations, given the travel restrictions imposed. This has entailed postponing or suspending return operations and increasing surveillance and protection at detention centres. Some Member States have resumed return operations, when aligned with deconfinement processes or on a case-by-case basis.

External policies: The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the external dimension of migration policies in Member States and Norway. In response, national authorities have developed innovative digital platforms and funding schemes to help third countries struggling to cope with COVID-19.

All details on national responses to COVID-19 during April - June 2020 can be found [here](#).

News from the EU

On 20 May 2020, the European Commission issued a guidance note on citizens' rights relating to the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community. The note includes definitions and guidance on rights and obligations relating to residence, residence documents, workers and self-employed persons and on professional qualifications.

Recent figures published by the Commission show that the consulates of the Schengen States have received a considerable increase in requests for short-stay visas in 2019, compared to 2018. Applications in Russia topped 4 million for the first time in 5 years, demands in China reached almost 3 million, and applications in India exceeded, for the first time ever, 1 million .

In April, the Commission published updated information and factsheets on the Regional Development and Protection Programmes (RDPPs) in North Africa. Set up in 2015, RDPPs aim to assist third countries in addressing the protection and

development needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, supporting migrant and refugee hosting communities and building capacities.

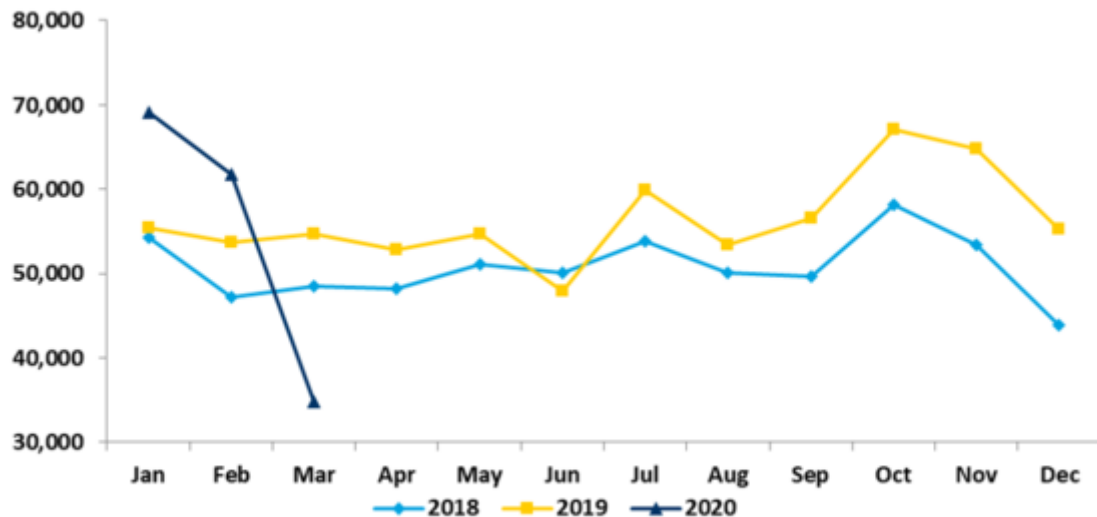
News from the Member States & Norway

General policy developments

In **Ireland** and **the Netherlands**, migrants' rights were in focus: the Irish Supreme Court held that by acquiring Irish citizenship, a refugee did not extinguish their right to apply for family reunification in Ireland under the Refugee Act 1996. In the Netherlands, the Council of State reviewed the consequences of a foreign national losing their EU citizenship once their Dutch citizenship has been revoked. It was determined that the applicant should regain Dutch citizenship if the burden of losing EU citizenship is too great.

International protection including asylum

Asylum applications in the EU-27, January 2018 – March 2020



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)] total asylum applicants, extracted on 2 July 2020.

Source: Eurostat

According to Eurostat, the number of first-time asylum applicants in the EU-27 increased by 2% in the first quarter of 2020, compared with the same quarter of 2019, and decreased by 12% compared with the fourth quarter of 2019. The top 3 nationalities were Syrian, Afghan and Venezuelan.

The Italian National Asylum Commission published data about asylum applications in **Italy**, indicating that most applicants in 2019 were from Asia (40%), Africa (37%), America (17%) and Europe (6%). In **Lithuania**, 2019 marked a record number of asylum applications: in the last 5 years the average number of asylum seekers was 477, whereas in 2019, 646 foreigners applied for asylum.

On 14 May, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) published a judgement concerning the situation of asylum seekers in the Rösztke transit zone at the **Hungarian-Serbian** border. According to this judgement, the placing of asylum

seekers or third-country nationals who are the subject of a return decision in Rösztke must be classified as detention. Following this decision, the transit zones of Rösztke and Tompa were closed on 20 May.

In **France**, the validity periods for asylum application certificates were extended such as the allowance for asylum seekers, whereas legislative changes took place in **Greece** regarding asylum procedures and issuance of travel documents to applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. In **Ireland**, an Expert Group identified measures to improve the asylum seeker accommodation system (direct provision).

Unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups

Initiatives to improve conditions for vulnerable migrants and asylum seekers were taken in many Member States.

Changes to the law fostering the protection of unaccompanied minors were introduced in **Greece**. In addition, Greece is forging a partnership with **the Netherlands** for the purpose of improving the reception and protection of unaccompanied minors arriving in Greece. Solidarity schemes were established with Greece and Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Finland regarding unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable migrants. The Finnish Immigration Service will receive EUR 12 million in EU financial support for receiving 175 asylum seekers from the Mediterranean. The first persons to be relocated to **Finland** in July consist of approximately 25 minors from Greek refugee camps. Finland will also be receiving relocated asylum seekers from **Cyprus** and **Malta**. In April, **Luxembourg** received 12 unaccompanied minors of Afghan and Syrian origin, and 47 unaccompanied children and young people arrived in **Germany** from Greece. On 19 June, **Ireland** welcomed 8 unaccompanied minors from a refugee camp in Greece.

In **Lithuania**, an agreement with the State Border Guard Service now allows the Lithuanian Red Cross Society to provide psychological, social, legal and other support to vulnerable migrants. In **Croatia**, trainings were initiated in the field of gender, sexual orientation, inclusion and Dublin III, and in **Estonia**, a new information-sharing system was introduced by the national authorities to exchange information faster on children and adults in need of assistance. The focus of the authorities in **Malta** has been on capacity building in the area of vulnerability assessment procedures.

While the **French** Senate adopted a law proposal to simplify administrative procedures for foreign minors (over 15 years) deprived of the protection of their family, inter-ministerial discussions were held in **Croatia** on the implementation of family reunification within the Dublin procedure.

Legal migration

Member States are making an increased effort to use digital technology to better manage legal migration. As an example, **Estonia** became one of the first countries in the world to create a digital nomad visa (in force from 1 July), and **Ireland** announced a new online registration renewal system for eligible non-EEA students based in Dublin.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the **Finnish** Immigration Service has granted permits for approximately 8,700 seasonal workers from outside the European Union. In the field of integration, **Belgium** has introduced a legislative proposal on civic integration in the country of origin for foreigners applying for family integration in Belgium. **Estonia** is taking on the possibility of job meditation for short-term foreign

workers, while **Ireland** announced the membership of a new Anti-Racism Committee tasked with drafting an anti-racism plan, and **Luxembourg** launched a call for proposals for the projects carrying out studies on integration. **Croatia** began the implementation of a project that aims to improve the living conditions and social inclusion of migrants who have been granted international protection.

Return

The largest voluntary return operation coordinated by Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, took place on 26 May 2020, when 107 Georgian nationals were returned to their home country from **Cyprus**.

On 10 June 2020, Montassar Yaakoubi, a partner of the Tunisian national Anis Amri responsible for the deadly 2016 attack on a Berlin Christmas market, was repatriated to Tunisia from **Italy** on a special flight.

Addressing human trafficking

On 8 June 2020, the virtual meeting of EU Network of National Rapporteurs and/or Equivalent Mechanisms (NREMs) was held in **Croatia** under the auspices of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The main topic was the New EU Strategy towards the Eradication of the Trafficking in Human Beings (THB).

Hungary, Latvia, Portugal and **Finland** launched projects to address human trafficking or improve the conditions for victims. Some of the projects focus on awareness-raising such as the IOM-Budapest project entitled 'Don't let it happen, don't make it happen!', and the Portuguese campaign 'I'm an immigrant worker. How can I stay in Portugal?' organised in the framework of the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. Finland has launched one of the first European projects to focus on the working life skills of victims of human trafficking.

Poland adopted a National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for 2020-2021, and **Greece** wrote into law the right to compensation for victims of trafficking, not only for victims exploited in Greece but also for those residing in third countries.

Management of EU external borders

Recent developments include the creation of a division of border guard within the Police and Border Guard Board in **Estonia** and preparations for an Integrated Border Management strategy in **Cyprus**. **Croatia** sent police officers and technical equipment for the surveillance of the Greek-Turkish border to support to **Greece** in the context of a Frontex Rapid Border Intervention EVROS.

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