

# Migration Update

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The purpose of these news summaries is to provide a factual base for migration debates within the European centre-right. [Vít Novotný](#) is responsible for the selection of information items from the media, governments and social media. The value of these summaries is in the categorisation of information items and in listing those items that readers might have missed. Facts and opinions are conveyed as they are reported. Original comments are kept to a minimum. These news summaries are not subject to a formal editorial process. Niccolò Mazzocchetti provided some elements of the material for the Judicial Observatory. Tim Beyer Helm kindly supplied information items. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Vít Novotný at [vn@martenscentre.eu](mailto:vn@martenscentre.eu).

- [According to](#) *The Economist* the UK now has a larger share of foreign-born residents than the US. **‘One in six of its inhabitants began life in another country.** The share is rising because, even as it strains to stop the boats, the...government has opened the door to workers, students and selected victims of authoritarianism such as Hong-Kongers and Ukrainians... [Whereas] **in the EU**, foreign-born [non-EU] adults with degrees... have an employment rate ten percentage points lower than natives with degrees... in Britain **the gap is... two points.**’

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### UKRAINIANS

Latest Eurostat figures [reveal](#) that on 31 January 2024, 4.3 million non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine as a consequence of the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 had temporary protection status in the EU.

The **main EU countries** hosting beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine were

- Germany (1 270 150 people; 29.5% of total EU),
- Poland (951 560; 22.1%) and
- Czechia (381 190; 8.9%).

Compared with the population of each EU country, the highest numbers of total temporary protection beneficiaries **per thousand people** were observed in Czechia (35.2), Bulgaria (26.7), Lithuania (26.4), Estonia (26.2) and Poland (25.9), whereas the corresponding figure at the EU level was 9.6 per thousand people.

On 31 January 2024, **Ukrainian citizens represented over 98% of the beneficiaries** of temporary protection. Adult women made up almost half (46.1%) of temporary protection beneficiaries in the EU. Children accounted for almost one-third (33.2%), while adult men comprised slightly more than a fifth (20.7%) of the total.

An analysis of Eurostat data by Politico [demonstrates](#) that ‘not everyone has made a stable home in their host country: While the number of refugees has steadily grown in most EU countries, it has tapered off in some — including France, Czechia, Sweden and Estonia.... In Ukraine, the war rages on, yet the number of temporary protection statuses **isn't consistently on the rise.**’

## FRONTEX

An official enquiry by the EU ombudsman into **Frontex's role in search and rescue operations** [concluded](#) that because of the current rules, ‘the EU's Border and Coast Guard Agency was unable fully to fulfil its fundamental rights obligations and was too reliant on member states to act when boats carrying migrants are in distress. The inquiry was launched... following the *Adriana* tragedy in June 2023, which resulted in over 600 people drowning off the coast of Greece. According to documents inspected during the inquiry, Frontex made four separate offers to assist the Greek authorities by providing aerial surveillance of the *Adriana* but received no response. The current rules mean that Frontex was not permitted to go to the *Adriana*'s location at critical periods without the Greek authorities' permission.

- In response, Frontex's director Hans Leijten [stated](#) “I understand the logic the ombudsman is following. I do not really agree with her on a number of things... We are not the European search and rescue agency. We are the European border and coastguard agency. We don't have the resources to actually do a structural search and rescue effort.”
- According to the *FT*, ‘there is little appetite among the European Commission and the member states to overhaul the agency's responsibilities. EU home affairs commissioner Ylva Johansson said.... that “Frontex is doing well” and its rules should not be changed.’
- Greece's migration minister Dimitris Kairidis [EPP] would like to see a greater role for Frontex, but not in the sense the ombudsman suggests: “I feel it should be strengthened in the direction of guarding borders. I don't believe that Frontex is a human rights organisation... We have to agree that Frontex's primary responsibility is to monitor and guard the external borders of Europe.”

## EU-AFRICA

### Mauritania

On 7 March, the European Commission [announced](#) a strengthening of the 'cooperation between EU and Mauritania by **launching a migration partnership and dialogue**. ...The launch of the partnership follows President Ursula von der Leyen's visit to the country in February, when the President announced mobilisation of **€210 million** for Mauritania'. Five pillars of cooperation include:

- 'Creating job opportunities: reinforcing access to vocational training, access to financing for enterprises, improving skills and competencies for young Mauritians, particularly women.
- Protection and asylum: supporting Mauritanian efforts to address the arrival of refugees, from reception capacity to protecting the most vulnerable.
- Promoting legal migration: by encouraging mobility, including of students, researchers and entrepreneurs. To further explore reinforcing the circular mobility, access to the EU job market for Mauritians living in Europe, as well as supporting their integration.
- Reinforcing cooperation to prevent irregular migration: the aim is to fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, protecting victims... Strengthened cooperation on return and readmission concerning Mauritians irregularly staying in the EU, respecting their rights and dignity.
- Strengthening border management: increasing cooperation on search and rescue operations and strengthening the capacities of border management authorities, also with a reinforced cooperation with Frontex.

The funding will also support Global Gateway initiatives, including investments, infrastructures and job creations primarily in the field of energy.

To finalise the agreement, Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson travelled to Nouakchott, 'in a Team Europe approach, together with the **Spanish** Minister of Interior of Spain, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, and from the **Belgian Presidency** of the Council, State Secretary for Asylum and Migration of Belgium, Nicole de Moor.'

### Egypt

On 17 March, the EEAS and Egypt [announced](#) a new comprehensive agreement. 'The Arab Republic of Egypt and the European Union have mutually agreed to elevate their relationship..., based on the values of equity and on mutual respect and trust.'

The areas covered include: political relations, economic stability, investment, trade, water and security. They also include:

- **Migration and mobility:** The EU will provide the necessary financial support to assist Egypt on migration-related programmes that entail developing a holistic approach to migration including legal migration pathways in line with national competences, and mobility schemes such as the Talent Partnerships, tackling the root causes of irregular migration, combating smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, strengthening border management, and ensuring dignified and sustainable return and reintegration. The EU and Egypt will continue to cooperate in order to support Egypt's efforts in hosting

refugees and both sides are committed to the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees.

- **Demography and human capital:** The EU reaffirms its support on the technical and vocational education and training. This support, working also through the jointly identified priorities and objectives, will assist with matching skills and labour market needs... In addition, the EU will step up cooperation on research and innovation and work towards continued and enhanced participation in PRIMA and Erasmus+.

According to a [press statement](#) and Politico,

- as part of the deal, the EU promised to provide to Egypt **€7.4 billion in grants and loans** in an effort to curb irregular migration. The deal was struck after European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen travelled to Cairo with an entourage that included Italian PM **Giorgia Meloni**, Belgian PM **Alexander De Croo**, Austrian Chancellor **Karl Nehammer**, Cypriot President **Nikos Christodoulides** and Greek PM **Kyriakos Mitsotakis**. 'The deal [would be](#) doled out **over four years**... EU leaders and officials left little doubt that Egypt is expected to better police its borders and **stop migrants from crossing into Europe**.' Giorgia Meloni, who has been a driving force behind such deals, hailed the EU-Egypt accord as a chance to give "residents of Africa" [a chance "not to emigrate" to Europe](#).'

[According to](#) Politico,

- most of the aid (some €5 billion) will come in the form of a **direct transfer to the Egyptian government** — unlike other EU money, which is usually disbursed via co-financed projects or NGOs to ensure it reaches its intended recipients. But the €5 billion in soft loans for 2024-2027 will be doled out as "macro-financial assistance" to Egypt's central bank — which "can be used however the government sees fit," according to the Commission.
- Some aid will be linked to projects, including €100 million for **grain storage** to counter the impact of Russia's war on food security, and smaller sums for wastewater treatment and renewable energy plants. Only around **€200 million is officially earmarked for "migration management."**

"We fund investment so we can create more economic activity in Egypt, so that the younger generation stays there," [said](#) an EU official. "Egypt is also facing a huge migration crisis with **Sudanese, Syrian and Palestinian refugees** arriving en masse. They are dealing desperately with that. Our goal is to help them cope."

The FT previously [reported](#) that 'some €1bn in emergency financial assistance could be paid immediately. Another €4bn in macro-financial assistance, tied to reforms under an expanded IMF programme under discussion, would need to be approved by EU member states. The remainder of the package would be drawn from various EU funding streams.... An official involved in the preparations said: "We're worried about two borders — **the Sudan-Egypt border, where Sudanese are entering the country, and the Egypt-Libya border**, where people are exiting." Egypt already [hosts](#) around **9 million migrants and refugees**, including 4 million Sudanese and 1.5 million Syrians.



## Tunisia and Libya

According to the [Italian interior ministry](#) between 1 January and 15 March, the number of irregular arrivals in Italy was 6560, **three times less than in 2023** and roughly at the same level as in 2022.

## AFRICA

### Sudan

The IOM [reported](#) that as a result of the civil conflict in Sudan and in addition to internal displacement, **1,803,213 individuals** fleeing the country are now in neighbouring countries namely Egypt, Libya, Chad, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Ethiopia. Sixty-three per cent of arrivals tracked in those countries were Sudanese nationals and 37% estimated foreign nationals and returnees. The majority of arrivals were reported in Chad (39%), South Sudan (31%), and Egypt (23%).

## UK

- The number of [Africans entering Britain as care workers](#) nearly trebled over the last year after visa rules were changed to tackle staff shortages exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit... Africans now make up the majority of foreigners given the right to work in Britain's care system. **Some 57,000 Africans entered the country on a Health and Care visa in 2023** — up from just over 20,000 in 2022 and more than half of the approximately 106,000 granted the right to travel to Britain for work. Britain's government in December 2021 added care staff to a list of occupations for which visas would be granted to address a shortage of workers which rose sharply during the pandemic.
- A **record number of asylum seekers** [were](#) granted permission to stay in the UK in 2023. Official figures showed 62,336 people were granted refugee status or other protection, the highest since records began in 1984. Afghans made up the largest share of asylum seekers, arriving in small boats.
- Official figures also showed 1.4 million people were granted UK visas in 2023 as more foreign workers arrived in the UK than at any point since 2005.

## JAPAN

Japan is set to [sharply increase](#) the number of foreigners it accepts under its skilled worker visa with plans to receive up to 800,000 people in the next five years. In an attempt to cope with an acute labour shortage, the government is considering adding the road transportation, railway, forestry and timber industries as targets of the visa system, which was introduced in April 2019.

## NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

### Portugal

On 10 March, Portugal held an early election to elect 230 members to the Assembly of the Republic. All relevant parties included migration in their election programmes. The centre-right **Democratic Alliance** (DA; EPP) [stated](#) in its programme that “we are a country with open doors to immigration, but not wide open doors”. The DA called for a regulated immigration policy and more effective control of the external

border while respecting the fundamental rights of the immigrants. The alliance also wanted to attract skilled professional immigrants to respond to the needs of the labour market. The **Socialist Party's** (PS; PES) [programme](#) focused on combating discrimination against immigrants and refugees in Portugal. The party considered it important to speed up the legalisation of illegally staying migrants and the issuance of residence permits, smoother family reunification as well as combating illegal immigration and human trafficking. The far-right **Chega** (ID) issued numerous [proposals](#). It called for establishing annual immigration quotas, ending automatic residence permit for immigrants from Portuguese-speaking countries, making it easier to repatriate immigrants who committed crimes, and granting social benefits for migrants only after 5 years. The **Liberal Initiative** (IL; ALDE) in its [manifesto](#) focused especially on improving the rules for the entry, stay and exit of foreign workers needed for the Portuguese market. The **Left Bloc** (BE; European Left) [highlighted](#) the right to vote for all people holding residence permits, housing stability for refugees and a support for migration organisations. The result of the parliamentary election is [here](#).

## JUDICIAL OBSERVATORY

### **Italian Supreme Court confirms sentencing of a private ship captain who did not follow legal procedures in rescuing migrants**

Italy's Supreme Court of Cassation [ruled on](#) a case concerning the handing over of rescued migrants to the Libyan coast guard. The court made final the conviction of a captain of a private ship and the captain's imprisonment for one year. The court stated that [Libya is not a safe port](#).

On 30 July 2018, Asso 28, a vessel operated by the maritime company Augusta Offshore that was assisting the Sabratha oil platform, received an alert from the platform staff regarding a dinghy carrying 101 migrants, including women and children, in international waters, 57 nautical miles from the Libyan coast and within the Libyan search and rescue area. The captain intercepted the dinghy and saved the passengers but did not contact the Tripoli or Rome Rescue Coordination Centres. Instead, following instructions of his company, he set course for the Libyan coast. In front of the Tripoli port, he transhipped the passengers to a Libyan patrol boat. The migrants were subsequently detained and mistreated.

The captain of the ship [was accused](#) of the crimes of abandonment in a state of danger of minors or incapacitated persons, pursuant to [Article 591 of the Italian Penal Code](#), and of arbitrary landing and abandonment of persons, as provided by [Article 1155 of the Navigation Code](#).

Regarding the crimes of abandonment in a state of danger of minors or incapacitated persons, the court stated that Libya is not a safe country and has not adopted the Refugee Convention. The captain transported minors and highly vulnerable individuals, such as pregnant women, to Tripoli without prior identification or necessary precautions. Moreover, he exposed the migrants to severe risks since he

did not ascertain the authority entitled to provide custody to the migrants after disembarkation.

[According to Reuters](#), the captain ‘is unlikely to go to prison... as in the Italian system jail terms of under four years are not normally served behind bars.’

## **MARTENS CENTRE PRODUCTION**

T. Virgili and B. Panchetti, *Did Secularisation Kill God? Changes in Religiosity and Values Among Natives and Migrants in Europe*, [Martens Centre](#), March 2024