

Migration Update

October 2024



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

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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. Mihael Koščak assisted with the write-up of the Lithuania election campaign. Andris Petersons and Dimitar Lilkov submitted news items. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Vít Novotný at vn@martenscentre.eu.

- Illegal border crossings from Tunisia to Italy [continued falling](#). Between January and October 2024, they numbered 55,000. This represented 38% of crossings for the same period in 2023 and 65% for the same period in 2022. The overall tendency for 2024 so far has been one of a [substantial decrease](#) in illegal border crossings into the EU as compared to 2023.

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NEW PACT

The Spanish, French and German governments [are attempting](#) to speed up the implementation of the New Pact. The French IM Bruno Retailleau (EPP) said: ‘We are in very close dialogue with the Commission on whether we could even bring forward the provisions of the pact’. ‘I think it would be really good if we could implement it as soon as possible,’ said the German IM Nancy Faeser (PES). In contrast, Sweden does not see acceleration as ‘realistic’ and the Hungarian minister poured cold water on the fact that the ‘general deadline’ for implementing the pact is 2026. Among those who want to move faster, the divergence arises when it comes to establishing where to start. While France and Germany place the emphasis on

border control, Spanish IM Fernando Grande-Marlaska (PES) warned that the pact cannot be ‘chopped up’ so that elements such as the distribution of refugee quotas come last in comparison with other measures, such as border control.

The outgoing Home Affairs Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, ‘welcomed’ that countries are deciding to implement the rules ahead of the agreed deadline of 2026 and recalled that 14 member states have already done so in the case of [border asylum procedures.]

SCHENGEN

In October, more members of the Schengen zone [introduced](#) systematic border checks. Others prolonged existing checks. Austria, Germany, Norway, Denmark, France, Sweden, Slovenia, Italy either announced the introduction of such measures in November or already put in place border controls on some or all of their borders. Justifications given by the member states included the Russian aggression against Ukraine and security threats from Russia; and the risk of terrorism. France announced controls on all its borders as of 1 November. One outlet [reported](#) that Germany’s controls were not particularly intrusive and that they had the positive side effect of apprehending criminals, including drug smugglers.

LEBANON

Since Israel launched attacks on its northern neighbour at the end of September, over **100,000 people** have [crossed](#) into **Syria** [information from 13 October].

National governments worldwide have been [evacuating](#) their nationals following Israeli strikes on targets in Lebanon.

[Vessels](#) carrying people fleeing Lebanon are also **arriving in Türkiye**. Since the end of September, more than 1,400 people have arrived in Türkiye by sea. On 6 October, 426 passengers disembarked from a ferry arriving at the Port of Taşucu in the southern province of Mersin. Among them were Turkish nationals and people of various nationalities who reside in Lebanon... Most passengers head to third countries from Türkiye. Mass cancellations of flights due to the conflict have pushed more people to opt for sea voyages.

ITALY-ALBANIA

On 14 October, an Italian Navy ship [transferred](#) a group of migrants to an Italian-run centre in Schëngjin, Albania. This was the first group transferred to Albania under an agreement signed by both countries. The intention was to subject the arrivals to accelerated border procedures. The people who were transferred had been **screened on board** to verify that they meet the following requirements: originating from safe countries, male, and not in a vulnerable category. The Italian interior ministry [confirmed](#) that 16 men – 10 Bangladeshis and six Egyptians – who it said had arrived from Libya and were rescued in international waters by the Italian coastguard were brought to Albania. Women, children and any men with illnesses or who showed signs of torture were instead taken to the southern Italian island of Lampedusa.

Immediately, on arrival, 4 out of 16 were [rejected by the staff of the centre](#) and [taken to Italy](#) for health reasons or because they were minors.

An Italian coastguard vessel collected the remaining 12 migrants and transferred them to Italy on 19 October, after a [ruling](#) of a **court in Rome on 18 October**. The court [stated](#) that migrants sent to Albania by Italy cannot be detained. However, they cannot be released in Albania either. Therefore, they would be vetted for asylum eligibility in Italy or potentially sent back to their countries of origin. The court's rejection of detention was based on concerns about the safety of the migrants' home countries — Bangladesh and Egypt. The court cited a [4 October ruling](#) by the **Court of Justice of the European Union**. Although Bangladesh and Egypt are not at war or facing any large refugee crises, the implication of the CEJU ruling [is](#) that a country cannot be considered safe if even one part of a country is not safe. The CJEU [ruling on a Czech designation of Moldova as only partly safe] [stated](#) that the Asylum Procedure Directive of 2013 does 'not provide any indication that it is open to the member states to designate as a safe country of origin **only the part of the territory** of the third country concerned in which those criteria are met.'

According to [one legal observer](#), the judges in Rome did not evaluate the legality of the Italy-Albania deal; instead, they focused on whether the applicants could be detained under an accelerated border procedure lasting up to 28 days. The court in Rome simply 'held that the accelerated border procedure should not have been applied. As such, it was not necessary to assess the necessity and proportionality of their detention in Albania.' According to the same observer, 'Italy's list of safe countries of origin is accompanied by unpublished country reports obtained by the Italian Association for Judicial Studies on Immigration.... They indicate that some countries, including Bangladesh and Egypt, are considered **safe with territorial limitations** and exceptions for specific at-risk groups, such as the LGBTIQ+ community, victims of female genital mutilation, and human rights defenders. The Roman court thus found that this designation as safe countries of origin was incompatible with the CJEU's ruling, leading to an order for the applicants to be transferred back to Italy.' [Under Italian law](#), each migrant's detention must be reviewed by special courts.

In response to the court's ruling, PM 'Meloni [slammed](#) the judges... and said that deeming countries such as Bangladesh and Egypt unsafe means that virtually all migrants would be barred from the Albania programme, making it unworkable. IM Matteo Piantedosi [not affiliated] said the government would appeal the ruling.'

On 21 October, the Italian government approved [a new decree](#) on migration [defining a \(new\) list of safe countries](#)... The measure... includes a list of safe countries as part of primary legislation rather than as an inter-ministerial decree, "which a judge cannot fail to apply", Justice Minister Carlo Nordio said... A judge will not be able to disapply the law anymore, "but can appeal to the Constitutional court if he or she deems it non-constitutional."

POLAND-LITHUANIA-BELARUS-RUSSIA

Poland will [temporarily suspend the right to asylum](#) as part of a strategy to limit illegal migration amidst tensions with Belarus (and Russia), which Warsaw accuses of channelling migrants across its border. According to PM Donald [Tusk](#) (EPP), the bloc's asylum rights are being actively abused by Belarus and Russia. "This right to asylum is used exactly against the essence of the right to asylum."

- Despite the deployment of 17,000 troops at the start of August as part of enhanced border security measures, Defence Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz [said](#) that "the situation is serious and this pressure at the border has been increasing in recent days and weeks." September had already seen over 2,500 attempted crossings, with 26,000 recorded since the start of the year, more than in the whole of 2023.
- In their meeting in Brussels on 17 October, EU leaders [adopted](#) a statement supporting the Polish government's measures. "Russia and Belarus, or any other country, cannot be allowed to abuse our values, including the right to asylum, and to undermine our democracies."

"Moving in large groups, finding a place to bypass the border fence, and getting into the carriers' cars right near the border" was how the State Border Guard Service [described](#) the latest trends in migrants trying to enter **Latvia** illegally from Belarus. It is unlikely that all this was done without the help of Belarusian border guards. "[They] are looking for some places where it is technically impossible to build a fence. These are swampy places, places where there is still some repair work going on," according to a border guard.

- The fence on the Latvian-Belarusian border has been completed, but other border infrastructure is still under construction. The fence is 145 kilometres long.

14 illegal migrants turned back at the **Lithuanian** border with Belarus on 26 October and 70 migrants on 27 October. So far this year, [Lithuanian border guards](#) have prevented 794 irregular migrants from entering the country from Belarus at unauthorised points.

EU-TÜRKIYE

Türkiye's asylum and **border control system** has so far [received](#) around €1 billion in EU funding. According to *Politico*, 'some of these projects predate the 2016 deal. As part of efforts to align Türkiye, a candidate to join the EU, with the bloc's standards, Brussels paid to set up surveillance towers on Türkiye's eastern border. It also approved funding for six "reception centres" — sites to temporarily house and register asylum-seekers — and one "removal centre," from where migrants deemed to have no right to stay would be deported to their home countries....The six reception centres were "transformed to removal centres following the request of the Turkish Government in 2015, in agreement with the European Commission," states a 2022 letter penned by the Commission's neighbourhood department, obtained by Lighthouse Reports... Turkey now has 32 removal centres with a capacity of nearly 20,000, according to Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya... One EU diplomat said

that the bloc has financially supported 30 removal centres — by funding their construction or renovation, or equipment, staff and management. Documents show that EU money was spent on everything from baby clothes to barbed wire, with total funding for the centres reaching nearly €213 million.'

EGYPT

Egypt's National Committee for **Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons** [launched](#) its fourth national action plan. The plan, which runs from 2024 to 2026, is part of a broader strategy to combat illegal migration, which was first launched in 2016 and is set to continue through 2026... The announcement was made during a ceremony held under the auspices of PM Mostafa Madbouly. The strategy focuses on safeguarding vulnerable groups from exploitation by smugglers, seeking to prevent and penalise irregular migration brokers through stringent measures, while enhancing the capabilities of governmental agencies responsible for its implementation... Raising awareness about the dangers of illegal migration is one of the plan's main goals along with enhancing youth opportunities and engaging both national and international partners to combat this phenomenon. **No boats carrying migrants have left Egyptian shores** since the migration strategy launch in 2016.

- Egypt said 'it plans to adopt [a law to register refugees](#) on its home turf, a task that has traditionally been delegated to the... UNHCR, amid reports of mass arrests and deportation of Sudanese fleeing war. "We are currently preparing ourselves for the transition from UNHCR, who since 1954 has been taking up some of the responsibility," Wael Badawi, a senior migration official in Egypt's foreign affairs ministry, said on 22 October. Badawi said Egypt aims to adopt a law on refugees and asylum seekers this year, noting that it received input from the European Union Agency for Asylum.'
- Egypt currently hosts 10 million refugees and migrants. Around 1.2 million come from Sudan and another 800,000 are registered refugees.
- In March, the EU agreed to provide €7.4bn at a time when Egypt's authoritarian leader, president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, was on the verge of defaulting on massive debts. The money was spread out as a mix of loans, investments and grants.

THE UK, CHAGOS ISLANDS, ST. HELENA AND ROMANIA

The UK government [agreed a deal](#) to deport migrants arriving in the Chagos Islands in small boats to a British island territory in the Indian Ocean. [Future] refugees arriving in the archipelago will be removed to St Helena, another UK territory more than 5,000 miles away in the Atlantic Ocean. The deal was reached in the wake of a political agreement for the UK to hand the Chagos Islands over to Mauritius, following negotiations that began in 2022. ... Under the migrant deal, the government of St Helena has been handed £6.65m to house any migrants that arrive on the Chagos Islands until the full agreement has been worked out. It is understood the arrangement will last for 18 months, with Mauritius taking responsibility of any arrivals after the Chagos handover deal comes into force.

- [According to](#) the BBC, the UK has offered dozens of stranded Tamil Sri Lankans, held for years in a camp on Diego Garcia in the Chagos Islands, to temporary move to a safe centre **run by the UN in Romania**. After six months, they could be moved to the UK. Others in the group are being offered financial incentives to go to Sri Lanka where ‘they say they face persecution’. There are currently **56 Tamils on Diego Garcia**. A further eight are currently in Rwanda after being transferred there for medical care after self-harm or suicide attempts.
- [No migrants](#) have arrived in Chagos since 2022.

CANADA

The government of Canada [decided](#) to reduce immigration. The 2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan ‘will pause population growth in the short term to achieve well-managed, sustainable growth in the long term. For the first time ever, the levels plan includes controlled targets for temporary residents, specifically international students and foreign workers, as well as for permanent residents... We took decisive measures to attract some of the world’s best and brightest to study and work in Canada, and to integrate them into the economy quickly. This meant a faster economic recovery. It also meant that robust immigration helped prevent a recession, while contributing to Canada’s workforce. In response to the evolving needs of our country, this transitional levels plan alleviates pressures on **housing, infrastructure and social services** so that over the long term we can grow our economic and social prosperity through immigration... The 2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan is expected to result in a marginal **population decline** of 0.2% in both 2025 and 2026, before returning to a population growth of 0.8% in 2027.’ The planned figures for 2025 by immigration category are [here](#).

POPULATION SURVEYS

[One in two Poles](#) are in favour of **taking in Ukrainian refugees**, the **lowest proportion** since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of the war-torn country in 2022, according to a poll by CBOS, Poland’s national statistics office. Respondents were also asked whether the Polish authorities should **send males of military age back to Ukraine**. As many as two-thirds of respondents (67%) supported this idea, while just over a fifth (22%) opposed it.

NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Lithuania

A parliamentary election was held in Lithuania on 13 and 27 October 2024. Migration was not a dominant issue. The ruling Homeland Union (EPP) was criticised by the Social Democratic Party (S&D) on a number of points, including the government’s handling of the influx of [Belarussians coming to Lithuania](#) as well as the handling of the [migration pressure orchestrated by the Belarus regime](#), involving migrants from Africa and the Middle East. The result of the election is [here](#).