

Migration Update

September 2024



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

Migration Update September 2024

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. Ana Palčić, Ernest Su and Alessandro de Cicco contributed to the Austrian election write-up. Erik Swärdh provided input for the judicial observatory. Tim Beyer-Helm submitted news items. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Vít Novotný at vn@martenscentre.eu.

- Citizens of **Muslim-majority countries** constituted 72% of recipients of first residence permits in **France** in 2021; they also comprised 61% of first-time asylum seekers in 2022. Algerian immigrant women in France had an average of 3.69 children per woman, twice as many as non-immigrant women, while Tunisian, Moroccan and Turkish immigrants had a fertility rate of between 3.12 and 3.5 children per woman, according to statistical data [presented](#) by the Observatory on Immigration and Demography.

Contents

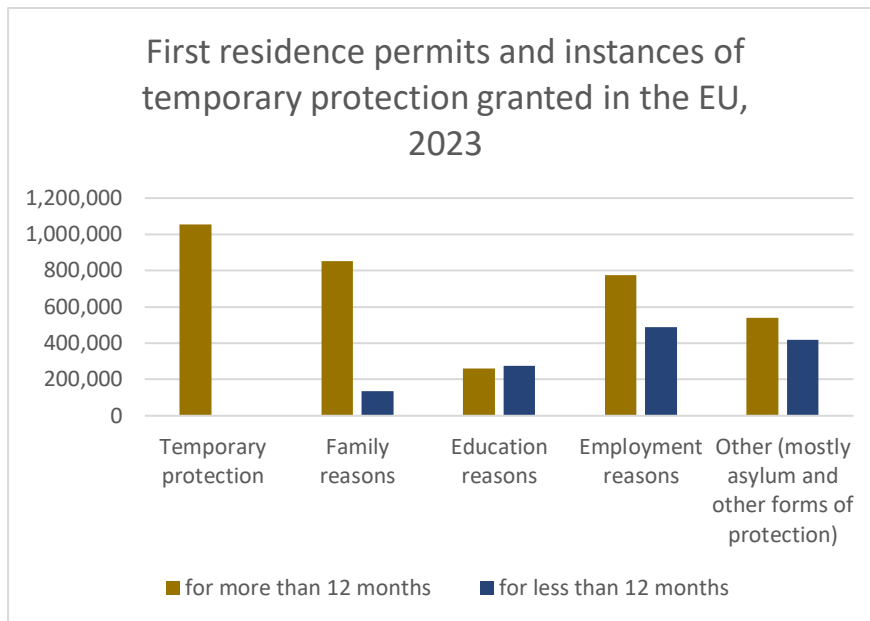
IMMIGRATION AND MOBILITY IN 2023	2
NEW PACT IMPLEMENTATION	3
HUNGARY	3
SCHENGEN	3
TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR UKRAINIANS	4
LABOUR IMMIGRATION	5
EU-TUNISIA	5
GERMANY'S MIGRATION AGREEMENTS.....	5
ACCESS BY RUSSIANS TO THE EU AND THEIR MOVEMENT WITHIN SCHENGEN	6
RETURNS.....	7
TÜRKIYE-SYRIA	7
BORDERS	7
THE US.....	7
NATIONAL ELECTIONS	7
Austria	7
JUDICIAL OBSERVATORY	8
The CJEU rules that persons registered with UNRWA should, in principle, be granted refugee status, unless they are excluded due to Qualification Directive....	8

IMMIGRATION AND MOBILITY IN 2023

Eurostat [released](#) the count of first residence permits issued in 2023. Including temporary permits for periods shorter than 12 months, the member states issued more than 3.7 million first residence permits **to non-EU** citizens in 2023, a 4.7% increase compared with 2022, and the highest number recorded to date. The highest number of first residence permits was issued to citizens of Ukraine (307,313), followed by Belarus (281,279) and India (207,966).

- **'Poland led the list** of first residence permits granted in the EU to non-EU citizens, issuing 642,789 permits (17.2 % of total permits issued in the EU). More than 500,000 first permits were issued by Germany (586,144 permits or 15.7 %), followed by Spain with 548,697 (or 14.7 %), Italy with 389,542 (or 10.4 %) and France with 335,074 (or 9 %). These five countries accounted for around 66.9 % of all first residence permits issued in the EU in 2023.
- When looking at the top 10 countries of citizenship of those granted residence permits, **employment** was the most frequent reason for nationals of Ukraine (71.7%), Belarus (52.3%), India (45.2%) and Türkiye (31.8%). Other reasons, including **international protection**, dominated for citizens of Syria (77.3%) and Afghanistan (85.1%). **Family reasons** accounted for the largest share of permits for nationals of Morocco (50.3%), Russia (39.4%) and Brazil (35.3%), while nationals of China were mostly granted permits for **education** reasons (37.8%).
- Compared with the population of each EU country, the highest ratios of first residence permits per 1,000 population in 2023 were recorded in **Malta** (75.9 permits issued per 1,000 population) and Cyprus (37.4). The lowest ratios were observed in Romania and Bulgaria (3.0) followed by Czechia (4.0).
- [Stripped of temporary mobility](#) data, the member states issued **2,426 thousand (2.4 million) residence permits for periods longer than 12 months**, a very slight increase when compared to 2022, when 2,401 thousand first permits were issued. In 2023, **family reasons** were the largest category with 851 thousand first permits, followed by employment (775 thousand), other reasons (mostly international protection, 540 thousand) and education (260 thousand).

Separately from the first residence permits, Eurostat [issues](#) figures for persons benefitting from **temporary protection**, i.e., persons who left Ukraine due to Russia's invasion. In 2023, 1,056 thousand (1.1 million) new decisions were issued. Please see the graph:



NEW PACT IMPLEMENTATION

The [Dutch government](#), followed by the Hungarian government, requested an ‘opt-out’ from the asylum acquis.

The Dutch government has **committed itself to implementing the New Pact on Migration**. [In her letter](#) to the European Commission, IM Marjolein Faber (Patriots) declared that ‘as long as the Netherlands does not have such an opt-out [from the asylum acquis], we consider the swift implementation of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum essential for increasing European control over migration and limiting the influx of migrants to the Netherlands. We will therefore continue to prioritise the implementation of the Pact.’

HUNGARY

The European Commission [triggered](#) a procedure to **deduct the €200 million fine** that the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has imposed on Hungary over the country’s long-standing restrictions on the right to asylum. The Commission said on 18 September that it would activate the so-called “offsetting procedure” to subtract the €200 million fine from Hungary’s allocated share of the EU budget.

- On 19 September, Hungary [entered](#) talks with the Commission to settle a dispute, with the hope of suspending a daily €1m fine imposed by the ECJ.

SCHENGEN

On 9 September, following a knife attack in Solingen in August, Germany’s ministry of the interior [notified](#) the European Commission of the imposition of temporary internal border controls at the **land borders with France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark** for a period of six months. Temporary internal border controls [were](#) already in place at Germany’s land borders with Austria, Switzerland, Czechia and Poland. These are to be extended and the time periods harmonised.

- The European Commission did not criticise the German government for the measure. This was ‘despite a 2022 European Court of Justice ruling that faulted Germany, Denmark and other Schengen states for extending border checks first imposed in 2015.’
- The Polish PM Donald Tusk (EPP) [sharply criticised](#) the measure, the Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis (EPP) [was](#) ‘furious with Germany’s request that Greece take back migrants who originally obtained their legal documents in the Mediterranean country’ [!]. Austria’s IM Gernard Karner (EPP) [said](#) Germany’s decision was illegal and that Austria would not accept migrants rejected by Germany [Germany did not, in fact, proceed with such ‘hot returns’].
- [According to](#) a commentary by the Migration Policy Institute Europe, ‘the Polish, Austrian, Greek, and other governments affected by German border controls were quick to complain about the economic costs that obstruction to the free movement of goods in the Schengen zone would have. But they remained silent on the role that their policies of deterrence and scaling down investment in reception and asylum capacity have had on arrivals in Germany.... These unilateral actions [including by Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium] have led to Germany standing increasingly alone in its efforts to uphold the international protection regime.’

Following the imposition of the border controls, most of Germany’s borders, including [those with the Netherlands, France and Czechia](#) remained uncongested.

In a joint letter to the European Commission the French and German interior ministers [called](#) for efforts against illegal immigration to be stepped up, in particular by negotiating a migration agreement with the UK. ‘Brexit has seriously affected the coherence of migration policies.’ The migratory routes crossing EU **towards the UK** represent ‘**almost a third of illegal entries**’ into the Schengen area. ‘The absence of legal prospects in the UK encourages people to go underground and feeds the networks of smugglers’ by putting people crossing the Channel and the North Sea at risk.

[According to](#) the EU Observer, the Commission ‘failed to roll-back some 440 notifications by EU states to impose internal border control checks since 2015.’ Also according to the [EU Observer](#), the European Commission has admitted it only ever **once questioned a member state for imposing internal border controls**. “So far, the commission issued an opinion on the reintroduction of internal border controls only once in the past, in October 2015 concerning Austria’s and Germany’s decision to prolong controls.”

TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR UKRAINIANS

As of 21 August, only [refugees](#) from parts of Ukraine deemed to be affected by conflict became eligible for **free housing from the Hungarian state**. There are currently 13 regions on the list, none of them in the westernmost part of the country. Some people were already evicted from their state-sponsored accommodation.

As of 1 September, the **Czech** government introduced [new benefit rules](#) for Ukrainian refugees. The government has put an **end to subsidised**

accommodation, except for new arrivals in their first three months of stay. The government said vulnerable refugees will be able to obtain higher humanitarian benefits. Those who are **economically self-sufficient** and have been under temporary protection for more than two years [can apply](#) for regular long-term stay. The government is also [offering](#) assistance with **voluntary returns** to Ukraine. [According to](#) Marián Jurečka, minister for social affairs (EPP), 75% of the Ukrainian adults are employed. Their overall contribution to the state finances [is positive](#).

LABOUR IMMIGRATION

A [recent](#) poll of more than **900 German companies** by [the Institute for the German Economy](#) also showed that a majority sees the party *Alternative für Deutschland* as a risk, both **for securing skilled workers** and for investment in the region. (The AfD [won](#) the regional election in Thuringia on 1 September and ended up [second](#) in the regional election in Saxony on the same day.)

EU-TUNISIA

[According to](#) *The Guardian*, ‘hundreds of sub-Saharan migrant women have been raped by Tunisian security forces over the past 18 months.... the EU is funding security forces committing widespread sexual violence against vulnerable women, the most egregious allegations yet to taint last year’s contentious agreement between Brussels and Tunis to prevent migrants reaching Europe.’

GERMANY’S MIGRATION AGREEMENTS

On 13 September, the German government [signed](#) a migration agreement with **Kenya**. The agreement ‘aims to strengthen regular migration to combat the shortage of skilled workers and provides a framework for easier returns of citizens who are obliged to leave the country.’

- According to the German government, ‘there are currently around 14,800 Kenyan nationals living in Germany. Some 800 of them are obliged to leave. Kenya is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to agree to the identification of persons obliged to leave the country by means of biometric data matching. In addition, expired passports and ID cards are to be accepted as travel documents to enable repatriation, as is a longer period of validity for passport replacement documents.’
- [Whereas](#) the Kenyan president William Ruto repeatedly stated the agreement would create 250,000 job opportunities for young people from Kenya, the German government said these figures were non-binding and referred to the provisions of the German Skilled Workers Immigration Act.
- In 2023, 459 Kenyan nationals requested [asylum in Germany](#).
- Kenya has a population of almost 58 million. The average age is just over 21. Every year, more than a million young people enter the labour market without any professional qualifications.
- A job fair has been [announced](#) for 27 September in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. It will provide information about the agreement and opportunities for working in Germany. An economic summit is also planned there for December.

On 15 September, the German government [signed](#) a migration agreement with **Uzbekistan**. The agreement covers cooperation on educational and economic migration, ‘with the aim of attracting urgently needed skilled workers and specialists to the German labour market. Closer cooperation in the field of education and training is also planned.’ The agreement [also] contains provisions that... establish uniform procedures for effective return cooperation so that people without the right to remain in Germany can be repatriated more quickly.

- The press agency *dpa* [estimates](#) around 13,700 Uzbek nationals currently live in Germany and while the vast majority do so legally, around 200 are reportedly eligible for repatriation.
- German PM Olaf Scholz and Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed seven other agreements covering areas such as sustainable water resource management and a critical minerals partnership.

On 18 September, the German and **Colombian** governments [signed](#) a joint declaration of intent on a migration partnership between the two countries. A bilateral steering group is to work together on mutually agreed topics. ‘Colombia has a large pool of young workers who would like to work in Germany, either temporarily or permanently. This is an excellent opportunity, particularly for Germany's shortage occupations, to attract motivated and qualified new employees. At the same time, experts on both sides will work to ensure that the number of “hopeless” asylum applications submitted from Colombia declines.’

- IM Nancy Faeser [said](#) Germany will recruit qualified workers and specialists from Colombia and will make it easier for them to reach the country for work purposes.

ACCESS BY RUSSIANS TO THE EU AND THEIR MOVEMENT WITHIN SCHENGEN

The EU's suspension of visa facilitation in 2022 has led to a **88 percent drop of visas issued to Russian nationals**, according to [EU Observer](#). In July and August, Hungary issued only 10 permits to Russian citizens and four to Belarusian citizens, according to a Hungarian official. According to Eurostat figures quoted by the *EU Observer*, there are over 700,000 Russian citizens living in the EU, around 200,000 of them in Germany. Germany issued **some 6,000 permits for Russian employment in 2023**, followed by around 4,000 from Spain.

Separately, *The Telegraph* [claimed](#) that the German government was **blocking tighter restrictions on Russian spies** across the Schengen zone. Czechia, backed by 8 other countries, has proposed ending free movement for Russian diplomats and their families in Schengen amid a series of Kremlin-inspired attacks on EU soil. German officials expressed “fears of a strong Russian reaction”. “Germany has the approach of returning to business as usual with Russia and they think this is escalatory,” according to one diplomat. There are 350 German diplomats posted in Russia between its embassies in Moscow and St Petersburg. Rome has argued that it would not be able to offer consulate services across Russia if the Kremlin responds with tit-for-tat bans on diplomatic movements.

RETURNS

The **Swedish** government wants to [significantly increase the premium for the voluntary return](#) of migrants to their home country. Payments of up to 350,000 kronor (around 30,700 euros) are planned from 2026, the government announced. 'We are in the midst of a paradigm shift in our migration policy,' said Migration Minister Johan Forsell. Currently, immigrants can receive the equivalent of just under 880 euros per adult and 440 euros per child in the event of voluntary departure, with the amount capped at just over 3,500 euros per family.

TÜRKIYE-SYRIA

Across Türkiye, 'the authorities are rounding up undocumented migrants. Over 34,600 Syrians have been caught this year; almost all will be deported back to the war zone,' [according to](#) *The Economist*.

BORDERS

[According to](#) claims by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 'Frontex officers deployed to Bulgaria's border with Türkiye are being intimidated into silence in the face of pushbacks and brutality against migrants and refugees.'

THE US

[Since the end of 2020](#), more than **nine million people have migrated** to the US, after subtracting those who have left, coming both legally and illegally, according to estimates and projections from the Congressional Budget Office. That's nearly **as many as the number that came in the previous decade**. Immigration has lifted US population growth to almost 1.2% a year, the highest since the early 1990s. Without it, the U.S. population would be growing 0.2% a year because of declining birthrates, and would begin shrinking around 2040.

NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Austria

Austria held its national legislative election on 29 September. The **Austrian People's Party** (ÖVP, EPP) said [in its security programme](#) it would stop illegal migration and repatriate rejected asylum seekers. The programme called for establishing asylum centres in third countries. At the same time, it welcomed the adoption of the New Pact on Migration. The **Freedom Party of Austria** (FPÖ, PöE) presented measures to curb immigration in their [campaign manifesto](#). While advocating the need to 'legalise pushbacks', the FPÖ endorsed 'remigration to countries of origin', especially for lawbreakers, and limiting the period for which asylum is granted. The **Social Democratic Party of Austria** (SPÖ, PES) asked in its [election programme](#) for a fair distribution of migrants in the EU. It proposed establishing EU Common Offices for Asylum Applications' while focusing on repatriation, integration, and security measures. The **New Austria and Liberal Forum** (NEOS, ALDE) [advocated](#) welcoming qualified migrants to address labour shortages, reforming asylum procedures, and promoting dual citizenship. The **Greens** (EGF) [emphasised](#) fair asylum procedures and effective integration policies, highlighting the importance of international cooperation in addressing root causes of migration. The election results are [here](#).

JUDICIAL OBSERVATORY

The CJEU rules that persons registered with UNRWA should, in principle, be granted refugee status, unless they are excluded due to Qualification Directive

On 13 June, the Court of Justice of the European Union [ruled](#) on the matter of a mother and her minor daughter, both stateless and of Palestinian origin. They were registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

According to the Court's [press release](#), in July 2018, 'they left the city of Gaza and illegally entered Bulgaria after having transited through Egypt, Türkiye and Greece. Their first application for international protection before the Bulgarian authorities was rejected on the grounds that they had not demonstrated that they had left the Gaza Strip for fear they might be persecuted. They then submitted a second application by asserting their registration with UNRWA. They claimed refugee status in Bulgaria following the *de facto* cessation of UNRWA's protection in their respect. The subsequent application was also rejected on the ground that they had renounced UNRWA's assistance by voluntarily leaving its area of operations.' The Bulgarian court hearing the action asked the Court of Justice to interpret the Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU).

The court ruled that Article 40 of the asylum procedures directive must be interpreted as meaning that the authority ruling on the merits of a subsequent application for international protection is required to examine the factual elements submitted in support of that application. This includes when those facts have already been assessed by the authority that definitively rejected a first application for international protection. The Court further ruled that UNRWA's protection or assistance in that sector of its area of operations must be considered as having ceased vis-à-vis the two applicants concerned, and the latter should be automatically granted refugee status. However, that status must be refused to them if they fall within one of the other grounds for exclusion provided for by the Qualification Directive (2011/95).