

Migration Update

November 2025



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

Migration Update November 2025

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. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Vít Novotný at vn@martenscentre.eu.

- Labour migration to OECD countries [fell by more than a fifth](#) in 2024. Permanent work-related migration to OECD member countries, which had risen steadily since the pandemic, fell by 21 per cent between 2023 and 2024 to 934,000. This reflected a “less favourable” economic situation, as well as the presence of many Ukrainian refugees who had “helped to reduce the pressure” in sectors with chronic labour shortages, according to OECD’s Jean-Christophe Dumont. See more below.

Contents

GENERAL.....	1
Family migration.....	2
Working migrants.....	2
Student migration.....	3
Asylum and resettlement.....	3
Irregular border crossings.....	3
NEW PACT	3
SCHENGEN VISAS.....	4
Russians.....	5
Nigerians	5
SPAIN	5
EU-BELARUS.....	6
AFGHANS.....	6
THE US.....	6
MARTENS CENTRE PRODUCTION	7
SELECT EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS	7

GENERAL

The OECD [issued](#) its *International Migration Outlook 2025*.

- Following three years of sharp post-pandemic increases, **permanent migration** to OECD countries declined by 4% in 2024. The total of 6.2 million

new permanent immigrants remains nevertheless **historically high: 15% above 2019 levels**.

- In 2024, family remained the leading reason for permanent migration to OECD countries. Labour migration declined (-21%), after a sustained increase since 2020. Humanitarian migration increased (+23%) due to the high number of asylum applications in preceding years and a record level of new resettled refugees (+19%).

Family migration

- Family migration to OECD countries **remained at historically high levels** in 2024, with an estimated 2.4 million new arrivals. Although this figure represents a slight decline of 3% compared to 2023, it remains significantly above pre-pandemic levels, with a 27% increase relative to 2019. Around one-quarter of these migrants were accompanying labour migrants, while the remaining three-quarters joined family members already residing in the host country, whether immigrant or native-born. The number of migrants joining family increased by 3% in 2024, whereas the number of accompanying family members declined by 20%, reflecting the broader decrease in labour migration.

Working migrants

- Both permanent and temporary labour migration, despite a slight decrease in 2024, were still well above pre-pandemic levels at 32% and 26% above 2019 levels respectively. Most **immigrants in employment in the OECD did not migrate with pre-arranged employment**. They migrated for family or humanitarian reasons.
- The average labour force participation of migrants **improved** in most OECD countries (22 out of 36), reaching an average rate of 76.9% in 2024 (a 0.2 p.p. increase compared to 2023). The most significant increases were recorded in Denmark (+4.6 p.p.), Poland and Costa Rica (+2.3 p.p. each). Overall, the highest participation rates among immigrants in 2024 were recorded in Iceland (90.1%), New Zealand (84.3%) and Estonia (84%), while the lowest were in Türkiye (49.7%), Mexico (56.4%) and Belgium (68.4%). In the majority of OECD countries (21 out of 36), the labour force **participation rate of immigrants exceeded those of the native-born population**.
- Employment outcomes for **displaced Ukrainians** have continued to improve across many OECD countries, with some reporting significant progress since 2022. Between 2022 and 2024, employment rates more than doubled in Austria and Switzerland, highlighting the results of sustained investment in integration efforts. Between 2023 and 2024, the US recorded the largest year-on-year increase, with a 21 p.p. rise in employment rates among recent Ukrainian arrivals. In 2024, Poland recorded the highest employment rate, 78 p.p.
- Temporary labour migration to OECD countries stabilised in 2024 at a historically high-level. Approximately 2.3 million work permits and authorisations were granted in OECD countries (excluding Poland), a 26% increase relative to 2019.
- Germany is the **largest exporter** of doctors among the OECD countries.

Student migration

- In 2024, OECD countries welcomed over 1.8 million **international tertiary-education students**, 13% fewer than in 2023. This decline was primarily due to decreasing inflows to all top four receiving countries – US (-12%); UK (-14%); Canada (-39%) and Australia (-22%).

Asylum and resettlement

- The number of new **asylum seekers** in the OECD continued to increase (+13%) and was the **highest on record**, with 3 million new applications registered in 2024. The surge was driven by the US, but increases were also recorded in Canada and the UK, while in the rest of the OECD the number of applications decreased.
- OECD countries resettled 189,000 refugees in 2024. This is **19% more than in 2023 and the highest number of resettlements to the OECD on record**. This increase was almost exclusively due to the increase in the number of resettlements to the US. Resettlement arrivals in 2024 were above the 2019 level (+75%) and above the 2016 level (+9%), the record up to 2024. The OECD countries that resettled the most refugees in 2024 were the US (105,000) and Canada, followed by Australia and the largest European OECD countries (Germany, France and the UK). In per capita terms, Canada resettled the most refugees, followed by Australia, the US, New Zealand and OECD Nordic countries (Norway, Finland, Sweden).

Irregular border crossings

- Detections of irregular border crossings at EU borders decreased rapidly in 2024 (-37%), as did Border Patrol encounters in the US (-48%), while detections of attempts to enter the UK irregularly increased by 19%. At the same time, returns from the EU, the UK and the US increased steadily between 2021 and 2024.

NEW PACT

On 11 November, the European Commission [launched](#) its first Annual Migration Management Cycle. The Annual Cycle provides a comprehensive overview of the asylum and migration situation in the EU, identifies the migratory situations member states are facing, and proposes an Annual Solidarity Pool, to be adopted by the Council.... The EU's **Annual Asylum and Migration Report** [provides](#) a comprehensive picture of the asylum, migration and reception situation in the EU, and identifies potential trends and developments for the coming year... Based on the quantitative and qualitative criteria set out in the Pact legislation, the Commission [through the report]... finds that:

- *Greece* and *Cyprus* are **under migratory pressure** due to the disproportionate level of arrivals over the last year. *Spain* and *Italy* [thus 4 countries in this category in total] are also under migratory pressure because of a disproportionate number of arrivals following search and rescue at sea in the same period. These four member states will therefore be eligible to access the Solidarity Pool... when the Pact enters into application in mid-2026.

- *Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, France, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and Finland* [12 countries] are **at risk of migratory pressure**, either because of high numbers of arrivals in the preceding year, ongoing strains on their reception systems or the threat of weaponisation of migration that could create disproportionate obligations in the upcoming year. They will have priority access to the EU Migration Support Toolbox and their situation will be re-evaluated in an expedited manner depending on changes to their situation. In addition, to assist Member States facing hybrid threats and increasing drone incursions, the Commission will shortly launch a €250 million tender supporting the purchase of drone and anti-drone capabilities.
- *Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Croatia, Austria and Poland* [6 countries, 4 of which appear also in the list of countries at risk of migratory pressure] face a **significant migratory situation** because of the cumulative pressures of the last five years. They will have the possibility to request the Council to grant a full or partial deduction from their contributions to the Solidarity Pool for the upcoming year.'
- *Denmark, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden* [9 countries] are not listed in any of the three categories. Denmark is not bound by the solidarity rule.

The methodology used to arrive at this assessment is [here](#). It was developed by the Commission, the [Joint Research Centre](#) and other agencies.

'To preserve the balance between solidarity and responsibility, the Pact ensures that Member States contributing to the Solidarity Pool will **not be required to implement their solidarity pledges** towards a member state under migratory pressure if the **Commission has identified systemic shortcomings** in that Member State with regard to the new responsibility rules. The Commission will assess this situation in July 2026 and again in October 2026....'

The Commission also proposed 'the establishment of the first Solidarity Pool to address the needs of member states under migratory pressure. In line with the rules of the Pact, this proposal is not public.

It is now for the Council to adopt the Commission proposal and agree on the size of the Solidarity Pool and on how each member state will contribute according to its fair share. Once the Council adopts the decision on the Solidarity Pool, the member states' solidarity contributions will be public and legally binding. Member states are free to choose the form of their solidarity contributions between people solidarity (relocation or responsibility offsets if applicable), financial support, and alternative measures or a combination of these measures.'

SCHENGEN VISAS

On 17 November, the Council '[gave](#) its final go ahead for an update of the EU's mechanism to **suspend visa-free travel** for citizens of third countries who do not require a visa when travelling to the Schengen area. The amended rules will allow the EU to react quicker and more vigorously to situations where visa-free travel is being abused or works against its interests... When the new amendments enter into

force, the EU will be able to revoke a country's visa-free status if this third country lacks alignment with EU's visa policy. Furthermore, when a country runs an investor citizenship scheme whereby citizenship is granted to people who have no genuine link to the third country concerned the EU can stop the visa exemption of this country. The same will be the case when the EU's relations with a country deteriorate, for instance in the event of human rights violations. The regulation also makes it easier to trigger the suspension mechanism.'

Russians

The European 'Commission [adopted](#) stricter rules on visas for Russian nationals, in view of the increased security risks stemming from Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, including the weaponisation of migration, acts of sabotage and the potential misuse of visa.... From now on, Russian nationals will **no longer be able to receive multiple-entry visas**. This means Russian nationals will have to apply for a new visa each time they plan to travel to the EU, allowing for close and frequent scrutiny of applicants to mitigate any potential security risk. The goal is to mitigate threats to public policy and internal security while allowing exceptions for limited and justified cases such as independent journalists and human rights defenders... This decision is based on a joint assessment by member states under local Schengen cooperation in Russia and follows the approval by all member states in the Visa Committee.' The Commission's Implementing Decision is [here](#).

Nigerians

Germany [is overhauling](#) its **visa processing system in Nigeria**, with plans to significantly speed up approvals for Nigerian applicants and expand annual capacity beyond 10,000 applications... The move aims to increase the number of approved applications... addressing long-standing complaints about delays and limited appointment slots at the German consulate in Lagos... "We are doubling visa counters, increasing personnel, and exploring external service providers for specific visa categories." ...The consulate is introducing a system to verify academic diplomas, a programme modelled on initiatives in India, which had accelerated student visa approvals... The reforms aim to ensure that all categories of visas can be processed within three weeks, a target that, if achieved, would mark a major improvement over current timeline.... The plan follows the proposed launch of four new Schengen visa centres in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Cyprus.

SPAIN

Reuters [reported](#) that 'the bulk of an 8.2 million rise in Spain's population between 2000 and 2024 was due to net international migration, according to think tank Elcano Royal Institute. ... PM Pedro Sanchez [PES] noted... that immigration represented 25% of Spain's per capita GDP and 10% of its social security revenues, yet only 1% of public expenditures. Credit ratings agency Fitch argues that immigration has **helped boost Spain's productivity** and raise its potential growth – the rate at which its economy can expand without fuelling inflation – to 2.0% from 1.4%. Importantly, Spain's recent immigration appears to have had such a beneficial impact because it has been weighted to skilled workers and toward sectors most affected by

bottlenecks, according to Banco de Espana, the country's central bank. Spain has also been able to tap a deep pool of Spanish-speaking workers from Latin America.'

EU-BELARUS

Poland [is preparing](#) to construct a **second barrier along its frontier with Belarus**.... The existing security structures are to be reinforced with a second barrier consisting of two parts. The two new structures are aimed at stopping people who manage to breach the original barrier. "It turns out that while it is much harder for [migrants] to cross, it is not impossible, and we are all aware that it is not a barrier that is completely impassable," according to a border guard commander. The two new fences are aimed at creating a layered barrier to stop and trap migrants trying to enter Poland illegally... One line—a 4-meter-high steel fence topped with two rows of coiled razor wire—will run parallel to the existing wall along an access and patrol road running along almost its whole length. Another 2-meter mesh fence will create a second back-up line of defence along some stretches.

AFGHANS

Germany has [offered cash](#) to Afghan nationals stranded in Pakistan if they give up efforts to enter [the country] under a resettlement programme, IM Alexander Dobrindt [EPP] said... Around 2,000 Afghans **approved for relocation to Germany** under a programme for people at risk under Taliban rule or who had worked with German forces have been stranded in Pakistan for months after Berlin froze the scheme, set up by the previous government, to curb migration. Individuals with binding approval to enter Germany will be allowed in, subject to security checks, said Dobrindt, but others will not, he said, without providing any numbers.

Following a shooting in Washington DC (see below), the US Citizenship and Immigration Services [announced](#) it would indefinitely stop processing all immigration requests for Afghan nationals.

THE US

The Trump administration has [restricted](#) the number of refugees admitted [resettled] annually to the US to **7,500 and they will mostly be white South Africans**... No reason was given for the new numbers, which were published in a notice on the Federal Register and are a steep decrease from [the 2024] ceiling of 125,000 set under Democratic President Joe Biden. The Associated Press previously reported that the administration was considering admitting... mostly **white South Africans**.

The Trump administration [said](#) it would **end humanitarian protection for Haitians** in the US, saying their legal status will end on 3 February 2026. The notice announcing the end of Temporary Protected Status for some 353,000 Haitians said Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem had determined there were "no extraordinary and temporary conditions" in the country that would prevent migrants from returning.

On 28 November, President Trump [said](#) he wanted to "**permanently pause migration**" from poorer nations. He promised to seek to expel millions of immigrants from the US by revoking their legal status. This announcement came

after the shooting on 26 November of two National Guard members who were patrolling the streets of the nation's capital under his orders. One died and the other is in critical condition. A 29-year-old Afghan national who worked with the CIA during the Afghanistan War is facing charges. The suspect came to the US as part of a programme to resettle those who had helped American troops after US withdrawal.

MARTENS CENTRE PRODUCTION

(Verian Group and Vít Novotný) *Working Migrants Valued for Their Economic Contribution: A Summary of the Findings of an Online Study Carried out in France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden*, [Martens Centre](#), November 2025

Z. El Sayegh, *Can Syrians Return Home? Challenges and Scenarios*, [Martens Centre](#), November 2025

SELECT EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS

L. Dražanová and M. Ruhs, *The moral conflict underpinning public perceptions of fairness in asylum decision-making*, [European University Institute](#), November 2025

V. Hernes and K. Łukasiewicz, 'Restrictive, liberal, selective or universal? A cross-national analysis of European countries' policy response to forced migrants from Ukraine', [Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies](#), November 2025, 1–24.

F. Trauner et al, *Towards a fairer EU asylum policy: Lessons from the Dublin system for the EU's Solidarity Mechanism*, [European Policy Centre](#), November 2025

Disclaimer

This publication receives funding from the European Parliament.

© 2025 Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

The European Parliament and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies assume no responsibility for facts or opinions expressed in this publication or their subsequent use. Sole responsibility lies with the author of this publication.