

# Migration Update

April 2026



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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. Thanks go to Marek Gallo for writing up Hungary’s and Bulgaria’s parliamentary election campaigns. Claudia Masi, Tim Beyer-Helm and Rainer Münz submitted news items. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Vít Novotný at [vn@martenscentre.eu](mailto:vn@martenscentre.eu).

- The number of **immigrants residing in the EU** climbed [to a record high](#) of **64.2 million** in 2025, according to a report by the Berlin-based Centre for Research and Analysis on Migration. The figure compares with 40 million in 2010. See more below.

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### **STOCK OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE EU**

[According to](#) a compilation of data by the Centre for Research and Analysis on Migration,

- between 2024 and 2025, the foreign-born population across the EU increased **by about 2.1 million** (3.4% growth), remaining high by historical standards, although slightly below the 2.6 million increase recorded between 2023 and 2024.
- **Germany** remains the main destination country, with its foreign-born population increasing from around 10 million in 2010 to nearly **18 million in**

- 2025** (approximately +70%). Between 2024 and 2025, Germany's immigrant population grew by about 300 thousand (1.7%) – half the EU average (3.4%).
- France and Spain also experienced sustained growth, reaching approximately 9.6 million and 9.5 million foreign-born residents, respectively, in 2025. This corresponds to a more moderate increase in France (around +30%) and a stronger expansion in Spain (around +50%) since 2010. **Spain, in particular, recorded a sharp increase in 2025**, with its foreign-born population rising from 8.8 to 9.5 million (an 8% increase), more than double the EU average. With an increase of around 700 thousand individuals, Spain accounts for roughly one-third of the total increase in the EU's foreign-born population in 2025.
  - **Italy** experienced more moderate growth, from around 4.6 million in 2010 to approximately 6.9 million in 2025, although its increase between 2024 and 2025 (around 3%) was broadly in line with the EU average. The **remaining member states** combined recorded an increase from about 11.6 million to 20.4 million over the same period (around +75%), reflecting a steady upward trend.
  - As for the share of foreign-born individuals, higher shares are predominantly observed in smaller member states. **Luxembourg** stands out, with immigrant population accounting for around 52% of its population, followed by Malta (32%) and Cyprus (28%). Ireland and Austria also record relatively high shares, at around 23%.
  - As for the total number of **refugees** in 2025, Germany hosts by far the largest refugee population, with approximately 2.7 million refugees, more than double that of Poland, the second-ranked country (around 1 million). France follows with around 751,000 refugees, while Spain and Czechia host 471,000 and 381,000, respectively.

## **LABOUR IMMIGRATION**

In France, 98% of people delivering food through digital platforms (such as UberEats and, Deliveroo) [are migrants](#), according to an analyst. 97% of them entered the country after 1 January 2014. 53% have entered the country since 2021. **Two-thirds (64%) of immigrant couriers are in an irregular situation in the country.** In addition, 12% of profiles have only a residence document valid for less than one year, many of whom are likely to remain on French soil when it expires. Nine out of ten delivery people without a residence permit would stop delivering full-time if their situation was regularised: Delivery workers earn an average of 5.83 euros per hour. This is less than a half of the hourly minimum wage, currently set at 12 euros gross.

By a [parliamentary](#) vote on 12 March and a [Council vote on 31 March](#), the EU established an **EU Talent Pool**, 'a regulation **available to** all member states... in order to... facilitate the recruitment of jobseekers from third countries who reside outside the Union and have the relevant skills and level of qualifications to fill shortage occupations in the Union; promote fair recruitment standards; enhance the Union's ability to attract talent from outside the Union. The regulation lays down rules concerning the facilitation of the recruitment of job seekers from third countries who have benefited from specific support under a talent partnership, a bilateral agreement or a national framework for skills development and validation in a third

country, as well as the protection of the rights of jobseekers, participating employers and other participating entities for the purposes of the regulation... Any member state **may, at any time, decide to participate in the EU Talent Pool**. It should notify the Secretariat of its intention at the latest 9 months before the date from which it intends to participate and indicate the types of entities allowed to make job vacancies available on the IT Platform. A participating member state may withdraw from the EU Talent Pool.'

## **REGULARISATION**

On 14 April, Spain's government [approved](#) plans to give legal status to some 500,000 undocumented migrants, allowing them to be integrated formally into the workforce. PM Pedro Sánchez (PES) described his government's decision as both "an act of justice" and a necessity for Spain. The Funcas think-tank estimates that there are around 840,000 undocumented migrants in Spain, the vast majority of whom are Latin American.

### Legally,

- 'What began in January as a policy initiative and public consultation has now been approved through a Royal Decree. Spain's extraordinary regularisation process is now in force under Royal Decree 316/2026, which amended Royal Decree 1155/2024.
- The measure was approved by the Council of Ministers on 14 April 2026 and published in the BOE (Boletín Oficial del Estado) on 15 April 2026.
- Applications can be filed online from 16 April 2026 and in person from 20 April 2026, with the deadline set for 30 June 2026.
- Applicants must prove they were already in Spain before 31 December 2025, show at least five months of residence, and have no criminal record.
- From the moment the application is admitted for processing, the applicant may obtain provisional work authorisation, access to public healthcare and suspension of any pending expulsion procedure.
- The initial permit granted on approval is a one-year residence authorisation, designed as a bridge towards ordinary immigration routes under the current Spanish immigration framework [...] The measure does not create a separate immigration law outside the existing system. Instead, it inserts an extraordinary and temporary route inside the current regulatory structure [...]

More information on the scope of regularisation is [here](#) and [here](#). See a brief legal / political analysis [here](#).

[According to](#) one observer this residence permit will be granted to beneficiaries, which will allow them to move freely within Schengen and to settle there after the issuance of a long-term residence permit.

The regularisation of nearly 500,000 undocumented migrants in Spain has reignited the debate in France over border controls. According to a CSA poll for CNews, Europe 1 and the JDD, **71% of French people** say they are [in favour of reinstating internal Schengen borders](#) with significant differences depending on political leanings.

## **ENTRY-EXIT SYSTEM**

The EU's new Entry/Exit System (EES) [became](#) fully operational on 10 April. The EES started operations on 12 October 2025 with a progressive roll-out in 29 European countries. 'The system will replace passport stamping with digitally recorded entries, exits or refusals of entry of non-EU nationals coming for short stays. Travellers' **facial image, fingerprints and personal data** from the travel document will be also recorded.' According to the European Commission, 'since the EES started, over 45 million border crossings were registered when travellers entered or left a European country using the system. Over 24,000 people had been refused entry for different reasons, such as not appropriate justification of their visit, expired or fraudulent documents. The system also helped identify over 600 people who posed a security risk to Europe. They were refused entry and recorded in the system. As a result, if they attempt to enter another European country using the system, border authorities will be able to see their previous refusal of entry.'

As of 10 April, 'air, sea and international coach operators are [required](#) under EU law to **perform pre-departure checks for third-country nationals holding a single- or double-entry visa** and travelling to the Schengen Area, using a web service hosted by eu-LISA' (the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice).

The FT [stated](#) that as a result of the new system 'passengers at regional airports and larger hubs including in France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Greece are waiting up to three hours at border checks.'

On 17 April, Eleni Skarveli, the director of the Greek National Tourism Organisation in the UK, [revealed](#) that **British passport holders** are now exempt from biometric registration at **Greek border crossing points**. She said the move is aimed at "ensuring a smoother and more efficient arrival experience in Greece" [...] This unilateral move, she said, "is expected to significantly reduce waiting times and ease congestion at airports".'

## **MIDDLE EAST**

Some 215,700 Syrians and 38,600 Lebanese nationals [have crossed](#) from **Lebanon into Syria** since the start of the crisis; 60,916 individuals reported an intention to return permanently. In Lebanon, more than 1.04 million people remain internally displaced — 35 per cent of them children.

Since 28 February 2026, around 88,600 Iranian nationals have crossed into Türkiye, while some 72,000 have returned between 3 March and 8 April. Movement volumes remain below pre-conflict levels, with crossings largely reflecting routine mobility. According to the government of **Iran**, around 3.2 million people internally relocated in the country, which has resulted in one of the largest internal relocations in Iran in recent decades.

## **THE US**

*The Economist* [detailed](#) some aspects of US policy for deportations and asylum.

- ‘At least **16 countries**, mostly in Africa and Latin America, have accepted deportees from the US who are **not their own citizens**. Mexico has accepted 15,952 non-citizens, by far the largest number. Examples of others include: Panama 299, Uzbekistan 137, Ghana 60, **Poland 50** and Rwanda 7.
- Another 11 have inked such “third-country” removal deals.
- The Trump administration wants to send 1,000 Afghan refugees, who once helped America fight the Taliban, from a camp in Qatar, where they are currently housed, to Congo [...].
- [As one reason for the third-country deals,] about **1.4 million illegal immigrants have been ordered removed** by judges but cannot be deported because their home countries will not accept them.
- Only **17,000 people have actually been deported to third countries**. By contrast, total removals numbered 234,000 over the past six months, the vast majority to people’s home countries.
- If anything, the aim is to get immigrants to “self-deport” and deter others from coming. The schemes are one more knock to the asylum system, to which the Trump administration has taken a sledgehammer. **Denial rates have more than doubled**; the president’s nominee to be deputy head of the UNHCR wants America to withdraw from the global refugee pact.’

The *FT* [reported](#) that ‘only 338 people have submitted requests for Donald Trump’s USD 1m **Gold Card visa**, the scheme for expedited US residency, that was launched last year with great fanfare.’

## **NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

### **Hungary**

Hungary held its parliamentary election on 12 April 2026. The **TISZA** party (Respect and Freedom, centre-right) [advocated](#) a ‘zero-tolerance’ policy on illegal migration, strong external border control, and the rejection of [alleged] EU relocation quotas. In its election programme, TISZA explicitly [pledged](#) to maintain the southern border fence, strengthen border protection in cooperation with Frontex, and reject the EU Migration Pact. The party also heavily [criticised](#) the incumbent government for previously releasing over two thousand convicted human smugglers, as well as for issuing residency bonds without proper scrutiny. Party leader Péter Magyar also [announced](#) ‘that a Tisza-led government would stand by Hungarian people and Hungarian companies and, from 1 June 2026 until further notice, would permit zero importation of non-Hungarian guest workers from outside the European Union.’ Moreover, the party’s programme [mentioned](#) incentives to attract 200,000 Hungarians living abroad through targeted tax, housing, and administrative measures. The **Fidesz-KDNP** electoral coalition (PfE) [insisted](#) on maintaining restrictive border security and asylum policies, while also rejecting the EU Migration Pact and the [alleged] mandatory relocation mechanisms. PM Viktor Orbán [defended](#) the government’s restrictive asylum policies, [presenting](#) the overall migration policies of Fidesz as a safeguard of national sovereignty and Christian Europe. The party previously [articulated](#) a policy position on using temporary non-EU workers as a solution for labour shortages while denying them family reunification. **Our Homeland** Movement (Mi Hazánk, ESN) [called](#) for a halt in bringing in non-

European residents, framing their presence as an orchestrated plan to replace the native population. It criticized the Fidesz government for admitting guest workers from Asia ‘as evidence of ideological inconsistency’. The party [called](#) for a re-establishment of a dedicated Border Guard and a gendarmerie equipped to handle border protection. See the results [here](#).

## Bulgaria

Bulgaria held an early parliamentary election on 19 April. Migration was not a central focus of party campaigns, and the messaging focused mainly on reversing the emigration of Bulgarians. **Progressive Bulgaria** (unaffiliated) [advocated](#) stricter border protection and measures to combat illegal migration, including increasing the personnel and technical capacity of the Border Police. The party, linked to former President Rumen Radev, also emphasised retaining and attracting skilled workers from the diaspora. Similarly, the **GERB** (EPP) [highlighted](#) the need to encourage Bulgarians living abroad to return, through domestic productivity boosts and capital investment. The party’s former PM Rosen Zhelyazkov also [called](#) for the strong protection of the EU’s external borders, strict returns of irregular migrants, and support for a common European return system with mandatory mutual recognition of return decisions. The **PP-DB** coalition (RE/EPP) [promoted](#) strict controls on illegal migration as well as openness to skilled foreign workers. Coalition co-leader Assen Vassilev [supported](#) policies to encourage emigrants to return, including improved public services and higher salaries. Meanwhile, the **DPS-NN** alliance (unaffiliated) [emphasised](#) protection against illegal migration and human trafficking while supporting the EU Migration Pact. **Revival** (ESN) [focused](#) on reducing emigration and criticised rising labour immigration as well as what it described as “artificially induced” refugee flows. Its programme also called for stronger border security and closer coordination with the Visegrad countries. The **Coalition for Bulgaria** (PES) [addressed](#) mainly the emigration problem, proposing tax incentives to reverse this trend. See the results [here](#).

## JUDICIAL OBSERVATORY

### The European Court of Human Rights found that Belgium’s response to the needs of a group of asylum seekers constituted degrading treatment

On 9 April 2026, the Strasbourg court ruled, in [M.V. and Others v. Belgium](#), on the treatment by Belgium of four asylum seeker who were [left homeless](#) and lived in destitution, without access to basic necessities, for periods ranging from several months to nearly a year. According to the [Court’s summary](#), ‘the case concerned four applicants for international protection who had not been provided with accommodation or material support for several months in Belgium. That was despite final decisions by the Brussels Employment Tribunal ordering the Belgian State to grant them such assistance in accordance with its legal obligations. The conditions in which the applicants had had to live – on the street for several months with no means of providing for their essential needs, even during the winter – had exceeded a level of severity sufficient to engage Article 3. The applicants had thus been victims of degrading treatment that had entailed a lack of respect for their dignity. The Court held that there had been a violation of the right to a fair hearing: while the Court was

aware of the difficult situation the Belgian State had been facing, the time taken to enforce the court decisions concerning the applicants could not be regarded as reasonable. The Court also held that the Belgian authorities had failed to fulfil their obligations concerning the right of individual application because the time taken between the indication of interim measures and their application by the authorities had not been reasonable. Those measures, moreover, had confirmed a final order that had previously been issued by the domestic courts.’ Specifically, the Court held that these conditions amounted to degrading treatment in violation of Article 3. It also found violations of Article 6 § 1 (failure to enforce court decisions) and Article 34 (delay in implementing interim measures).

### ***SELECT EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS***

M. Baumgärtel, ‘Legal status, civic stratification, and the structural limit of the human rights of migrants’, *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, moag037, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/moag037>, 19 April 2026

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