

Migration Update

July 2026



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

Migration Update July 2026

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.

- The population of **Ukraine** was estimated at 48.5 million in 2011, 41.8 million in 2021 and at **22-25 million in 2026**, [according to](#) official data cited by *Visegrád Insight*. An estimated 3.9 million people remained internally displaced in Ukraine as of June 2026, [according to](#) the IOM.

Contents

CORRECTION.....	1
TEMPORARY PROTECTION	2
REGULARISATION	2
GIBRALTAR	2
LABOUR IMMIGRATION	3
STUDENT MIGRATION	4
VISAS.....	4
Algerians	4
Guineans.....	4
BORDERS	5
Entry-Exit System	5
Morocco-Spain.....	5
US-EU.....	6
AMERICAS	6
JUDICIAL OBSERVATORY	6
German Constitutional Court rules that the authorities must review each Afghan resettlement case individually	6
SELECT EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS	7

CORRECTION

The June issue of the Migration Update stated, as its headline item, that

During 2025, the US resettled 11,500 refugees. The combined figure for the EU and the UK was 7,800. ‘Most of the Europe-bound refugees went to

France, followed by Germany, Netherlands and the UK', according to the *EU Observer*, citing UNHCR figures.

In fact, *EUobserver*, when making this claim, mistook the US fiscal year 2025 (that included Biden's last 4 months in office) for the calendar year 2025. The outlet thus made a direct comparison between two different time periods. In reality, in the calendar year 2025 Europe resettled more people than the US did.

TEMPORARY PROTECTION

On 15 July, the Council [agreed](#) to **extend the temporary protection** status granted to those fleeing Ukraine until 4 March 2028 'delivering on the EU's commitment to support Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes. Extending protection by one additional year will provide clarity and predictability to all those fleeing the war. In addition, recognising both the need to protect displaced persons and Ukraine's need to defend itself against Russia's illegal war of aggression, EU countries agreed that temporary protection should be granted **only to those complying with their military obligations in Ukraine**' [...] 'The Council will formally adopt the decision to extend temporary protection in the coming weeks. The decision will then be published in the EU Official Journal and will enter into force the following day.' [This agreement contradicts the Council's own [recommendation](#) from September 2025 which outlined the need for a coordinated transition out of temporary protection and replacing it with national statuses.]

REGULARISATION

[According to](#) the MPI, '**Spain's** extraordinary regularisation in 2026 could provide legal status to a record number of irregular migrants. Nearly **1.2 million people applied** by the June 30 deadline, more than **double the government's original expectation** of around 500,000, and two-thirds of applicants were from Central or South America.

- Immigrants of all statuses accounted for a record 20.3 percent of Spain's population as of January 2026, or more than 10 million people. Nearly 300,000 acquired Spanish citizenship in 2025, which speaks to how many have made clear their migration is a permanent one....
- Between 1986 and 2005, under governments of different political parties, the country carried out six mass regularisation processes, collectively granting legal status to approximately 1.2 million immigrants.'

GIBRALTAR

On 14 July, the EU and UK [signed](#) the 'UK–EU Agreement in respect of Gibraltar'. As a result, Gibraltar [became](#) a de-facto part of the **Schengen zone** and [EU customs union](#). As part of the agreement, the EU's **Entry-Exit System (EES)** is being rolled out at Gibraltar's airport and port but not at the land border with Spain.

- The EES [will be used](#) for UK and other non-EU citizens arriving in / leaving Gibraltar by air or boat. Travellers [arriving](#) from countries outside Schengen need to show their passports to Gibraltar and Spanish officials at the territory's airport and port.

- Gibraltar's 38,000 residents [have been exempted](#) from the EES under a UK-EU treaty signed in 2025.
- **For a citizen of any country, the EES does not apply at the Gibraltar-Spain land border.**
- EU citizens entering Gibraltar by any route are not subject to the EES.
- As before, EU citizens can generally enter Gibraltar with a valid national identity card or passport. As before, for stays over 90 days EU citizens require Gibraltar residence/permission under Gibraltar rules. 'British passport holders and other non-EU travellers who do require an EU visa can enter Gibraltar for [up to 90 days without a visa](#), including for business trips, and are subject to Schengen Area restrictions of only being able to spend 90 days in any 180-day period through the area.'
- 'Maroš Šefcovič, the EU Brexit negotiator, hailed the deal as "historic" after signing it in Brussels...with Stephen Doughty, UK minister of state for Europe...
- At midnight, 'police [withdrew](#) from their posts and the **border fence was fully removed** as Fabian Picardo, the region's chief minister, shook hands with Juan Franco, the mayor of La Línea de la Concepción, the neighbouring Spanish town. Thousands rushed across the frontier in both directions, with Spaniards waving flags and wearing football shirts as they also celebrated their country's World Cup semi-final victory over France.'
- According to the *FT*, the Spanish government [won](#) control of EES checks in the prolonged negotiations between the EU and UK. 'It said its systems for passport, fingerprint and face scans were working "optimally" and will be deployed in the territory immediately. [According to](#) the UK government, 'Gibraltar was left out of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement following Brexit, creating the prospect of a devastating 'hard border' for the 15,000 people – over half of Gibraltar's workforce – who cross the land border between Spain and Gibraltar every day.' 'The UK and Gibraltar [accepted](#) having Spanish border police at the airport as the price for removing all passport controls on the adjacent Gibraltar-Spain land border.
- Goods sold in Gibraltar now must [comply](#) with EU regulations.
- The new arrangements are being [provisionally implemented](#) with their approval by the UK and European Parliaments still pending.
- Gibraltar is a British overseas territory and has the UK's only terrestrial border with the European continent. The Spanish government does not recognise British sovereignty over Gibraltar.
- Gibraltar retains its own immigration laws.

LABOUR IMMIGRATION

El País [reported](#) that 'according to the latest report from the Placido Rizzotto Observatory, linked to the FLAI-CGIL union, about 240,000 people are exposed to *caporalato* and other forms of **labour exploitation in Italian agriculture**, almost a quarter of the sector's workforce. More than 70% are non-EU citizens and around 50,000 are women...

- The mafias have found a business in *caporalato*. Researchers and unions have for years denounced that local clans and foreign criminal intermediaries operate in a coordinated way. The sole survivor of the Calabria massacre,

currently under police protection, told investigators there was a large Pakistani mafia network behind control of agricultural labour.'

STUDENT MIGRATION

Starting in the academic year 2021/22, [more international than domestic students](#) have been admitted to **Austria's public universities**. In 2024/25, some 31,000 foreign students were admitted, as opposed to 20,000 domestic students. University fees are very low by international standards.

- The largest group of foreign students continues to be [German nationals](#), constituting 40% (34,700) of all foreign students in 2023/2024. Students from Italy formed the second largest group, making up 10% (around 9,000) of the total.

VISAS

Algerians

The French government [announced](#) its intention to restore the volume of entry visas granted to Algerian nationals. This is in the context of an effort by President Macron to "relaunch" cooperation between Paris and Algiers in the areas of "security, justice and migration issues". According to French ambassador to Algiers, "before the crisis (...) we were issuing around 250,000 visas a year... Our aim is to ensure that this volume of visas (...) can start rising again and probably return to pre-crisis levels."

- 'In August 2025, Paris suspended a 2013 visa agreement and activated its 'visa-readmission leverage' against Algeria' This was in response to Algeria refusing to readmit its own nationals as well human rights issues.' Diplomats, senior officials and applicants for long-stay visas were affected.' At that time President Macron '[requested](#) that France's interior minister ask countries in the Schengen zone... to help France apply the tighter visa policy, notably by consulting France for the issuance of short-stay visas for the Algerian officials in question and the passports covered by the 2013 agreement.'
- [The general rule is that for stays over 90 days (such as for study, employment and family reunification), Algerian nationals must apply for a French national visa (type D), which is issued by France but allows circulation in Schengen under certain conditions.]

Guineans

On 10 July, 'the Council [of the European Union] [decided](#) to **temporarily restrict** visa provision for Guinean nationals. This decision follows an assessment by the Commission, based on the member states' input, which concludes that cooperation by Guinea on readmitting its nationals staying irregularly in the EU is insufficient. As a result of the decision adopted today, it will no longer be possible for member states to: issue multiple-entry visas to Guinean nationals; waive requirements with regard to the evidence visa applicants from Guinea must submit; and waive the visa fee for holders of diplomatic and service passports. Furthermore, the standard processing period for visa applications will be set at 45 calendar days instead of 15.' [This follows a similar step taken on 25 June vis-a-vis the nationals of Somalia.]

BORDERS

Entry-Exit System

‘Airports and airlines across Europe [are demanding](#) that the Entry-Exit System (EES) **be paused** until September to avoid hours-long queues for air passengers. In an open letter to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, they argued that the EES is experiencing so many teething problems that the situation is "unsustainable".

‘A coalition of **nine European countries** [is urging](#) Brussels to prolong emergency flexibility for the Entry/Exit System, arguing the bloc is not yet ready to phase out the current safeguards. In a joint letter dated July ... Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland told Internal Affairs Commissioner Magnus Brunner that the system's first months of operation have exposed "significant difficulties" that cannot be underestimated.’

Morocco-Spain

On 31 July, [Spain and Morocco](#) reinforced the border fence of Ceuta, a Spanish enclave, ‘and appeared to have largely halted mass crossings after tens of thousands of people arrived by sea and land in a day, with at least 19 dead bodies found in the water. The Spanish Department of National Security said on its website that around [60,000 people](#) **were estimated to have crossed** illegally in 24 hours, citing the Interior Ministry. The statement was later deleted from the website with no immediate explanation.

- At the gates into Ceuta, Moroccan authorities had deployed water cannon trucks and pushed people back... Spanish authorities said they would try to expel those who had entered illegally as quickly as possible, despite a court ruling that put some restrictions on special "border rejection" rules that allow immediate expulsions from the enclave’.
- [At least](#) 34 people died. Some drowned, others were killed in a stampede to cross the breakwater fence at Tarajal beach, an urban beach near a border checkpoint with Morocco. Live footage of the border showed hundreds of migrants gathered on a hill overlooking Ceuta being dispersed with tear gas by Moroccan forces, while others continued to swim to the Spanish territory.
- ‘Territorial Policy Minister Angel Victor Torres said that among factors contributing to the surge may have been a **ruling by Spain's Supreme Court** earlier this month that migrants intercepted at sea while attempting to reach Ceuta or Melilla cannot be summarily returned under special rules.’ ‘PM Sánchez (PES) said migrant smugglers misinterpreted the ruling, but acknowledged that it may have played a role in sowing chaos. “It appears that this interpretation of the Supreme Court’s ruling spread like wildfire over the past few hours through the networks of human trafficking organizations, triggering the kind of mass surge we witnessed yesterday”.’
- The Spanish government [said](#) it would return anyone who has crossed the border illegally. According to the Spanish media, Morocco has promised to cooperate and is doing so.
- France said it was increasing checks on its border with Spain.

- Madrid [summoned](#) the Italian ambassador following comments made by Italy's PM Giorgia Meloni (ECR), who said she wanted to suspend Spain from the Schengen Area following the breach of the Spanish border.... 'The images coming out of Ceuta demonstrate how the Madrid government's decision to grant Spanish – and therefore European – citizenship to more than 500,000 irregular migrants (...) encourages human trafficking', according to Italian FM Antonio Tajani (EPP).
- Commissioner Brunner [stated](#) there were no onward movements from Ceuta. 'The Schengen Borders Code provides for special rules that apply to Ceuta and Melilla. Border checks on persons departing from Ceuta and Melilla remain in force.'

US-EU

A judge in the US [has ordered](#) a pause in the Trump administration's visa restriction policy targeting disinformation researchers and platform regulators, including former European Commissioner Thierry Breton. Judge James E. Boasberg of the District of Columbia said in an opinion this week that a State Department policy barring people working against online hate speech and misinformation from entering the US was likely in breach of the First Amendment protecting free speech. The judge didn't make a final decision in the case but ordered a halt to the policy until a final ruling is issued.

AMERICAS

On 25 June the US Supreme Court [issued](#) a decision in *Mullin v. Doe* permitting the federal government to proceed with the **termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian and Syrian nationals**. 'Pursuant to that decision, the Trump administration ended TPS for Syrians on 17 July and for Haitians on 27 July. Now 340,000 Haitians and over 6,000 Syrians are subject to deportation.'

Mexico is pursuing criminal legal action over the deaths of 17 Mexican nationals at the hands of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement...The offensive launched by the Donald Trump administration against immigrants in the US has claimed at least **62 lives in just 18 months**, 52 in detention centres and the remainder during enforcement operations, according to an Associated Press tally that also includes US citizens, and has created a climate of fear in cities across a country where immigrants make up 15.4% of the population. The largest and most deeply rooted immigrant community is the Mexican one, numbering 11.1 million people. It is also the nationality that has suffered the highest number of deaths involving ICE: 17.'

According to [estimates](#) by the Migration Policy Institute, the US 'unauthorised immigrant population reached a new peak of **15.8 million as of mid-2024**, after holding steady at around 11 million throughout the 2010s.'

JUDICIAL OBSERVATORY

German Constitutional Court rules that the authorities must review each Afghan resettlement case individually

Germany's [Constitutional Court](#) ruled on 24 July that the government could not cancel an entire number of resettlement places promised to Afghan nationals. The

decision by the current interior ministry to end the Afghan resettlement scheme ‘in December 2025, [voiding](#) about 640 such promises without examining the individual cases, breached a constitutional ban on arbitrary state action’, the Court said. ‘The government retains broad discretion over whether to admit foreigners under Germany’s residence law and may still decide not to admit the complainants’, the court also ruled. ‘The ruling sends the case back to Berlin’s higher administrative court for reconsideration.’

SELECT EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS

D. Chaves-González and A. Terrón Cusí, *Spain and Latin America Take Diverging Paths on Regularization*, [Migration Policy Institute](#), July 2026

K. Valkova, ‘Employment effects of immigration in Austria’, *Empirica* 53, 867–912 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10663-026-09687-1>

Disclaimer

This publication receives funding from the European Parliament.

© 2026 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.