

On the Move – Latest migration news

EU UPDATES - MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE EUROMED

10/05/2022-24/05/2022

- The European Parliament' Committee on Budgets (BUDG) will be on a [mission](#) to Turkey between 23-25 May 2022, to examine the implementation of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey: *"the Facility is a mechanism to coordinate the mobilisation of resources made available under both the EU budget and additional contributions from Member States integrated into the EU budget as external assigned revenue"*
- The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union is struggling to deliver the progress on the migration reform pact that it had promised at the beginning of its presidency. Now, the focus is on passing an [EU bill](#) on screening mechanism that would increase detention at the borders and apply the legal fiction of non-entry for people detained. There are also talks of including penal sanctions for those who abscond during the screening procedures. Before the end of its presidency, the French want to close the bills on the screening mechanism and Eurodac registration, a biometric database that collects fingerprints and facial imaging of asylum-seekers. However, Member States have different positions regarding the categories of people to be registered in the Eurodac system and it seems unlikely that an agreement will be reached before the end of the rotating presidency.
- Greece is [discussing](#) with the European Commission about the possibility to include the construction of walls and border fences in its migration plan for 2021-2027. Greece wants to build a wall on its land border with Turkey, but the Commission has so far rejected the demand of different Member States to use EU funds for the construction of border fences. However, European Council President Charles Michel said that legally this could be done, and Greece pushing to use the EU funds from the Border Management and Visa Policy instrument to build the wall on the Turkish border.
- [Eight people](#) have been stuck between the Belarus-Poland border for five days and were attacked repeatedly.
- According to Frontex, there has been a sharp increase in arrivals to Europe in the month of April when [15,000 people](#) entered the EU. Arrivals have been on the rise since the beginning of the year, especially on the Balkan route.

- The results from a [Swiss referendum](#) on the funding of Frontex show that a majority of voters supported providing further fundings to Frontex. The referendum was called due to the numerous reports of human rights violations carried out by the agency.
- VoxEurope published an [analysis](#) of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) that was launched in 2015 during the so-called “refugee crisis” and is being now substituted by the new EU financial instrument called Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). The EUTF had the objectives of promoting stability and fighting against “the root causes of irregular migration” and allocated 5 billion EUR to 250 projects in 26 African countries. The EUTF was criticized by the very beginning because Trust Funds are not monitored by the EU Parliament and it was based on a declaration of emergency in all the 26 African countries where the projects took place, which was not conducive of long-term stabilization and development projects aimed at addressing the root causes of migration. The new instrument NDICI approved for the period 2021-2027 allocates 10% of the total budget of €79.5 billion for migration management projects, with the possibility of drawing on a reserve of €9.53 billion in the event of “unforeseen circumstances”.
- The Danish Refugee Council recorded [1,911 pushbacks](#) incidents in the first three months of 2022 along the Balkan route and at EU internal borders. Half of the people who were pushed back were from Afghanistan, and 1 out of 10 was a minor.
- MSF denounces that over [2,500 people](#) are being detained in inhumane conditions in Lithuania, after crossing the border from Belarus.
- Syrian, Iraqis and Yemeni asylum-seekers in Poland [feel abandoned](#), after having crossed the Belarusian border, being detained and finding themselves on their own while Ukrainian refugees are being welcomed in the country.

UKRAINE

- ECRE published an [analysis](#) on the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) after three months since the displacement of millions of people from Ukraine. A few challenges emerge in its implementation. First, there are discrepancies on the scope in which the TPD is applied in different member states: *“While at least 12 Member States have used their discretion to widen the categories covered, for instance to include third country nationals who were resident but without permanent residence permits or Ukrainians who left before the invasion, the majority of Member States have chosen a more restrictive approach”*. Then, challenges to registration considering that so far 2.7 million people have been registered

but up to 2.4 million are still awaiting registration. Lastly, there are widespread difficulties among Member States to provide adequate housing and accommodation options due to the large number of people fleeing the conflict.

- Politico [interviewed](#) different Russian families who fled to Turkey since the beginning of the war with Ukraine. Some of them fled to show disagreement with the government, some were at risk because they showed support to Ukraine.

05/04/2022-10/05/2022

- On 15th May 2022 Switzerland will [decide](#) whether it wants to increase its Frontex contribution, from CHF 24 million to CHF 61 million for enhanced surveillance of European borders.
- Statewatch published the report "*At what cost? Funding the EU's security, defence, and border policies, 2021–2027*". Available [here](#).
- On 27 April 2022, the European Commission presented a new [package of measures](#) to increase legal pathways of migration and address shortages in the European labour market. The proposal also includes a pilot project specifically dedicated to people displaced by the war in Ukraine. As reported by [Politico](#), the reform aims to shorten both the single permit directive to obtain residence while working short term and the long-term residence directive, that would allow "non-EU nationals to accumulate residence periods in different member states in order to meet the 5-year residence criteria needed to stay in the long term, as well as improving the right to family reunification". The measures also include the establishment of an EU Talent Pool, that is supposed to match employers with people looking for jobs in other countries. Finally, the measures aim to establish so-called "talent partnership" with Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco "to improve access to work and training, in a bid to prevent smuggling and also to improve cooperation with countries on returns and readmissions of those who arrived illegally".
- Alarm Phone [reported](#) about 4 people being trapped in the forest at the Poland-Belarus border for over 20 days. They have been beaten by authorities of both countries, pushed back by Polish authorities, and Belarusian authorities did not let them return. Despite multiple alarms by civil society, no one assisted the group.
- The Council of Europe (CoE) [published](#) a report that denounces the "generalised" refoulement of migrants at the borders. A practice punctuated by "serious and systematic violence", according to the organization, which calls on member states to put an end to these human rights violations.

- The German civil rescue organization Sea Watch [sued](#) Frontex for its lack of transparency on the cooperation with the Libyan Coast Guard. The lawsuit addresses a case of a pushback carried out by the Libya Coast Guard from the Maltese SAR zone with the alleged help of a Frontex drone.
- An [investigation](#) by Le Monde, Lighthouse Report, Der Spiegel and Republik presents evidence of Frontex covered up illegal expulsions of migrants from Greece to Turkey. Between March 2020 and September 2021, the agency hid at least 22 cases of illegal expulsion by registering them as prevented departures operations by Turkey.

UKRAINE

- More than [2,5 million](#) Ukrainians have registered for temporary protection status in the EU. So far, 5,6 million people fled Ukraine, and more than 1 million have returned to Ukraine according to the EU Commission.
- Ten EU countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) [signed](#) a joint statement asking the EU Commission for more funds to tackle to refugee influx from the war in Ukraine.
- As [reported](#) by InfoMigrants, about 10,000 displaced Ukrainians who arrived in Ireland risk to remain without shelter by the end of April. So far, about 21,000 Ukrainians have arrived in the country and the reception capacity has already been filled.
- UNHCR has [demanded](#) that the British government provides a more appropriate matching process for Ukrainian women fleeing the conflict. Some of them reported being contacted by predatory men who offer them rooms in their homes as part of the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme.

22/03/2022-05/04/2022

- On 31 March 2022, Members of the European Parliament MEPs [suspended](#) clearance of accounts of EU border control agency Frontex citing as reasons, among others, "findings by the EU's Anti-Fraud watchdog regarding harassment, misconduct and migrant pushbacks involving the Agency".
- On 24-25 March, the European Council adopted a [10-Point Plan](#) for the reception of people fleeing Ukraine, including allocating 17 billion EUR.
- On March 22, an [IOM](#) charter flight repatriated 98 migrants from Belarus to Iraq with EU support.

- On 24 March 2022, EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva [received](#) a legal notice by front-LEX, asking her to table a proposal to get Frontex chief Fabrice Leggeri fired.
- The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe ([PACE](#)) will adopt the report on safe third countries in June 2022 and the report on pushbacks in October 2022.
- On 28 March 2022, the extraordinary meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA) [discussed](#) the implementation of the decision on temporary protection, the reception of refugees from Moldova and “reiterated the need for the continued strict application of external border controls”. It also supported the mobilisation of the EU network to fight organised and serious crime (EMPACT).

UKRAINE

- The European Commission is [creating](#) an index to help determine “fair burden sharing” to manage the roughly 3.6 million Ukrainians already settled in EU states. EU index identifies Poland, Austria, but also Cyprus, as needing refugee aid.
- According to [Lighthouse Reports](#), several people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, India, Pakistan and Sudan are still detained in EU-funded detention facilities in Ukraine and have not yet been evacuated. The European Commission allocated €30 million under its 2007 National Programme for Ukraine to build and equip migrant detention facilities and “Ukrainian police officers routinely ignoring requests for asylum and instead placing those on the move in EU funded detention centres”.
- [Amnesty International France](#) reported on 23 March that racialized people have been discriminated against and abused by Ukrainian forces when trying to leave the country.
- On March 21, the [Ukraine Take Shelter](#) platform was launched to help connect Ukrainian refugees with people around the world who are willing to provide them with a room or an apartment.

08/03/2022 – 22/03/2022

- On 17 March 2022, LightHouse Report [revealed](#) photographs proving that Frontex was aware of a pushback of asylum seekers in the Aegean but denied they knew.
- Frontex [revealed](#) they have 433 documents listing interaction with the Libyan Coast Guard but had denied cooperating with them.
- On 10 March 2022, StateWatch [published](#) a leaked EU document produced as part of the MOCADDEM (*Mécanisme opérationnel de coordination des*

actions pour la dimension externe des migrations) structure within the Council outlining Frontex's increased role in Niger trying to "boost control over the borders between Niger, Algeria and Libya".

- The migration control.info [published](#) a leaked Commission non-paper providing an overview of the distribution of funds on the external migration control.
- On 9 March 2022, [StateWatch published](#) a revised draft action plan by the European Commission on a "comprehensive migration partnership" with Morocco, suggesting that the country should be informed of "the potential benefits of a status agreement with the European Union" that would allow the deployment of Frontex officials on its territory.

Ukraine

- On 18 March, according to [UNHCR](#), [3.27 million](#) refugees fled Ukraine to neighbouring countries and some 2 million are internally displaced. [Poland](#) received 1,975,449 refugees, **Romania** 508,692 and the Republic of Moldova 355,426. Frontex has deployed [150 officers](#) at the border with Romania. On 17 March, the Council [adopted](#) a decision on a status agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova regarding operational activities carried out by Frontex. Austria, France, Germany and [Norway](#) are amongst the countries to have agreed to relocate refugees from **Moldova**.
- An extraordinary EU Home Affairs Council has been [scheduled for March 28](#) to coordinate on the arrival of refugees from Ukraine and Moldova into the EU.
- On 18 March, the Commission published [operational guidelines](#) that advise member states on how the TPD should be implemented.
- On 8 March 2022, the European Commission [outlined](#) support to help people fleeing war in Ukraine, as well as for the European Union (EU) countries receiving them. The Commission also [launched](#) a webpage dedicated to information for people fleeing the war in the Ukraine.
- The UN anticipates that around 18 million Ukrainians will be affected by the conflict in humanitarian terms, 7 million newly internally displaced, and 4 million may flee the country as refugees. The [IRC](#) highlights eight priority actions for a humane and effective refugee response, as the conflict continues to escalate.
- On 17 March, the European Asylum Agency [published](#) a 'Rapid response by EU+ countries to address the needs of displaced people from Ukraine'.

Poland-Belarus border

- Mid-March 2022, Polish Border Guard [announced](#) that it had arrested a group of 73 refugees on the border with Belarus, accused of throwing stones at the military. Among them were people from Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, Ghana and also eleven people from Cuba.
- On the Belarus side around [1500 people are stuck](#) (500 in the Bruzgi camp) mainly Iraqis, Syrians, Yemenis, Afghans, Iranians, Pakistanis, Egyptians and some from Somalia and Cameroon.

22/02/2022-08/03/2022

- Following Russia's military attack on Ukraine, more than 1.5 million refugees from Ukraine have crossed into neighbouring countries in 10 days, [according to UNHCR](#). The EU's response so far has been overwhelmingly more positive than that offered to populations coming from the Euro-Mediterranean region in the past. On 2 March for instance, the European Commission [tabled its proposal](#) to activate the Temporary Protection Directive to rapidly assist people fleeing Ukraine. On 3 March 2022, EU Member States decided, during the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, to trigger, for the first time in history, the Temporary Protection Directive. (read EuroMed Rights' [interview on Redattore Sociale](#) and [Press Release](#) on the topic).
- The European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) [released](#) the 2021 overview of asylum trends. In 2021, the EU received about 617,800 applications for international protection, mostly by Afghans and Syrians. The other main countries of origins of applicants were Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and Bangladesh. The recognition rates among EU countries were highest for Eritreans (81 %), Yemenis (79 %), Belarusians (75 %) and Syrians (72 %). For Afghans, it increased to around 90% in the end of the year.
- At the Poland-Belarus border, another [body was found](#), probably of a 26-year-old man from Yemen. Since the summer, 19 bodies of presumed dead migrants were found at the border, but the actual number is likely to be higher.
- UNHCR [warns](#) of increasing human rights violations at EU borders, where violence, ill-treatment and pushbacks remain widespread both at internal and external land and sea borders. EU states have failed to investigate reports of violent practices at the borders despite abundant evidence, and UNHCR states that *"Progress on preventing human rights violations at borders as well as the establishment of truly independent national monitoring mechanisms to ensure reporting and independent investigation of incidents are urgently needed"*
- Commissioner Johansson [says](#) Poland should not prolong the state of emergency legislation concerning migrants at the border since the situation

has de-escalated. This would imply giving access to the border area to humanitarian organizations, journalists etc.

08/02/2022 – 22/02/2022

- Austria **has disputed** the **French Presidency claim** that an informal agreement on mandatory solidarity was reached among Member States. France is trying to push for a principle of compulsory solidarity, where Member States either have to contribute by relocating asylum-seekers, offer financial aid or help in deportations. But Austria does not agree to a principle of mandatory solidarity. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have similar positions.
- After the justice and home affairs ministers in Lille in the beginning of February, the French Presidency circulated a new **document** to push forward the migration files. The document **focuses** on operationalising the external dimension of migration, by toughening border management, screenings at external borders, appointing a new EU Return Coordinator and focusing on the relocation of asylum seekers *“not manifestly ineligible for international protection”*. In this document, France also **proposes** that *“for the sole duration of the screening process, the persons concerned would be considered as not having fulfilled entry conditions”*. This would create a legal limbo in which asylum-seekers at the external borders are not considered to be legally within the EU and would be placed in monitored detention or house arrest.
- PICUM **published** a comment on the new draft Schengen Border Code proposed in December 2021. The organization denounces how it risks increasing ethnic and racial profiling, and strengthens the narrative that migration is a threat that needs to be dealt with by increasing policing.

Poland – Belarus

- A group of around 100 migrants, mainly Iraqis, started a **hunger strike** to denounce the conditions in Polish detention center in **Wędrzyn**, where they are currently held.
- Poland started building a 180km long wall on the border with Belarus that **endangers** rare species living in the area, which is the protected primeval Białowieża Forest.
- In **Lithuania**, migrants are **stuck in detention centers** close to the Belarus border. They thought they could be freed after the six-months compulsory detention voted by the Lithuanian government in July, but the detention was prolonged up to a year in December. They are mainly from Iraq and Syria, but also Cameroon and DRC.

Frontex

- MEP **Tineke Strik** requested Frontex to access documents that prove its communications with the **Libyan Coast Guard** and the coordination of vessels in distress with the Libyan Coast Guard. Frontex replied it has 119 of such documents for 2020 but refused access because – according to the agency – this would put migrants’ lives at risk.
- On 22 February 2022, Frontex will face a **hearing** in the Federal Parliament in Brussels concerning pushbacks at the EU’s external borders. The Flemish branch of CNCD 11.11.11, Amnesty International, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants Felipe González Morales, Refugee Support Aegean and The Centre for European Policy Studies will also be present at the hearing.
- Frontex reported an **increase** in the number of migrants trying to enter the EU irregularly in January.
- The EU Commission is thinking to **strengthen** the monitoring over Frontex. Commissioner **Yohansson** said that *“we should at least once a year have a political management board for Frontex with ministers (...) to gather and take some political steering and make policies for the development of Frontex”*. These comments may be a result of the recent criticism Frontex faced for its disregard of fundamental rights at the EU external borders and its lavish expenditures.
- On 14 February 2022, the European Parliament’s **LIBE Committee** voted on amendments requesting the postponement of the vote on the discharge of the 2020 budget of Frontex. Despite the numerous allegations of fundamental rights’ violations, and the fact that the agency still has to hire 40 fundamental rights monitors, the Committee decided to vote against the postponement and hence discharged the budget.
- Frontex **suspended** its travel agency contract stating difficulties with travel arrangements for officers. However, the move could also be justified as the agency was strongly criticised for its poor human rights record and high expenses.
- The EU Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** traveled to **Senegal** with the Commissioner for Home Affairs **Ylva Johansson** to push for the deployment of a **Frontex operation in Senegal**. It would be the first operation of the EU agency to be based in Africa. The Commission will follow the negotiations for such agreement, which may come into place by the summer of 2022. On its part, Senegal demands financial assistance for the country’s economy and possibilities for legal migration to the EU. Negotiations will also likely include a deportation deal, by which Senegal will have to accept *“their own nationals but also those of other countries if they can prove that they have travelled through the country to the EU and have received*

an exit order there". Overall, this cooperation is overviewed by the newly established MOCADDEM body ([Operational Coordination Mechanism for the External Dimension of Migration](#)). Even if the plan is still being discussed, the first armed border and coastguard forces [have been sent](#) on mission to Senegal.

- A Swiss coalition of left-wing parties called for a [referendum](#) against the **Swiss government's** contribution to the Frontex budget. The parliament had indeed voted to substantially increase the financial contribution to Frontex, and in response the coalition of more than 30 parties demanded a referendum. Now they need to gather 50,000 signatures in 100 days.
- The Turkish Minister of Interiors [accused](#) Frontex and the EU for being 'partners in crime' in the inhumane treatment refugees receive at the **Greek-Turkish border** and in the Aegean. His comment came after the Turkish Coast Guard rescued a group of migrants who said they had been beaten by Greek police and thrown into the sea without lifejackets.
- Frontex launched a new land operation called [Joint Operation Terra 2022](#), that will cover 62 border crossing points, will deploy more than 450 officers to support national authorities with border management.

25/01/2022 – 08/02/2022

- On 3 February 2022 justice and home affairs ministers [gathered](#) in Lille, France, for two days of meetings together with the European Commission, representatives from Frontex, Europol and the Agency for Asylum. The meetings were focused on migration, with French President Emmanuel Macron calling for a 'rebalancing' of the Schengen free movement system. He made a pitch for a [Schengen council](#), *"a political project which would see EU countries take political ownership of migration issues (...) with a coordinator, so that ministers can regularly take decisions and politically steer this area"*. EU's Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson said she is satisfied and optimistic by Macron's speech and the French Presidency to lead on migration. As reported by [Politico](#), Johansson hopes to progress on specific migration files of the EU Pact – namely the registrations and screening file and the return file – under the French Presidency.
- On 2 February 2022, the AFET Committee of the EU Parliament held an [Exchange of Views](#) on the situation in Libya. Henrike Trautmann, the Acting Director of the Southern Neighborhood Directorate at DG NEAR, presented the Commission's effort to continue supporting the Libyan Coast Guard and the reinforcement of border control capacity among Libyan authorities, as well as strengthening the role of the IRINI mission.

- On 1 February 2022, the Council's Presidency and the EU Parliament [reached](#) a provisional agreement on Europol's new mandate and on strengthening its capacity.
- The French Presidency of the Council [presented](#) amendments to the proposal for emergency measures at the Poland, Lithuania and Latvia's borders with Belarus. The proposed amendments are the following:
 - Asylum-seekers from Belarus will be excluded from these emergency measures, and ordinary asylum law applies for them
 - The possibility to further delay asylum registration by a week (while prioritising applicants with vulnerabilities)
 - The three Member States can decide on all asylum applications at the border
 - The obligation to prioritise applications that are likely to be well-founded becomes optional
 - The derogations on the material reception conditions would be "without prejudice" to rules on vulnerable persons and access to lawyers
 - Article 4 on the Return Procedures is dropped
 - These amendments are not final, and further changes may still take place.
- On 27 January 2022, the DROI Committee of the European Parliament held an [Exchange of Views](#) on the 'human rights situation in Libya and the fundamental rights of migrants'. The speakers presented the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report "[Unsafe and Undignified: The forced expulsion of migrants from Libya](#)", and the report of the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya ([FFM](#)). Among the speakers there were representatives of the European Commission External Action Service and the EU's Head of Delegation in Libya.
- The European Network of National Human Rights Institutions published the report *Gaps in Human Rights Accountability at Borders*. The report is available [here](#).
- The European Agency for Asylum [said](#) that the number of asylum applications in the EU in November 2021 reached the second-highest level since 2016. The [majority](#) of applications since 2016 were lodged by Syrian asylum-seekers, followed by Afghans.
- ECRE published its [comments](#) on the Commission's Proposal on Situations of Instrumentalisation in the Field of Migration and Asylum. ECRE "opposes the measures proposed in the Regulation, which would have an adverse effect on the right to asylum by creating a parallel system of managing

borders and asylum for situations of “instrumentalisation”, based on derogations from the standards in the asylum acquis”.

- Protecting Rights at the Border published a report that registered [11,901 pushbacks](#) at European border, both external and internal. 32% of the pushbacks concern Afghan citizens, who have a right to claim for asylum in Europe. Often the pushbacks entailed episodes of physical and sexual violence, harassment, extortions, destructions of property, thefts and forced separation of families. The report is available [here](#).

Poland – Belarus

- Poland started [building](#) a wall on its border with Belarus. The wall will be 5.5 meter high, topped with barbed wire, and 180 km long. There will be cameras and electronic alarm systems. It is supposed to be finished in June.

11/01/2022 – 25/01/2022

- On 20-21 January 2022, on the occasion of the Conference on Border Management in Vilnius, Lithuania, 16 EU Member States, including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece and Malta, published a [joint statement](#) on the need to “protect EU’s external borders”. They call on the EU to finance border management measures, including “physical barriers and other mobile or stationary infrastructures”.
- A [leaked internal document](#) from the European Commission’s Services, dated 14 January 2022, includes an update on state of play of external cooperation in the field of migration policy. The update covers countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.
- The new President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, commenting on her stance on migration, [stated](#) that “the protection of life comes first. We cannot have a migration policy that does not value life first, but we cannot even leave first arrival countries alone”. She also said that Search and Rescue NGOs should not be criminalised, and that there is a need to strengthen dialogue with countries of origin and transit.
- On 19 January 2022, the European agency EASO was substituted by the newly established [EUAA](#), European Union Agency for Asylum. The latter has a [reinforced mandate](#) “with more tools to support Member States in bringing greater convergence to asylum and reception practices at the EU’s high standards.”
- Following the beginning of the French Presidency in the Council of the EU, a [non-paper](#) was circulated mid-January 2022 detailing the [priorities](#) concerning migration and the EU Pact. The core elements

presented in the non-paper include screening procedures at the border, registration on Eurodac, progress on deportations and readmission policy, and “a new mechanism for the relocation of persons in need of protection”.

- The [UNHCR](#) made recommendations to the French presidency of the Council to preserve the rights to asylum. Among the points addressed, the UNHCR asked for “progress on ending pushbacks, as well as establishment of independent national mechanisms to investigate them, and measures related to rescues at sea, such as enhanced search and rescue”.
- On 13 January 2022, during a [meeting](#) of the LIBE Committee, MEPs criticised the Commission’s Proposal for a Council Decision on provisional emergency measures for the benefit of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Some of the criticisms focused on the restrictions to the right to asylum, questioned the need for emergency measures even if the situation at the border has de-escalated and some MEPs asked for [infringement](#) procedures against Poland, Latvia and Lithuania for their recent legislations that favour pushbacks.
- In 2021, Hungarian police carried out more than [70,000 pushbacks](#) at the border.
- Frontex [demanded](#) the European Court of Justice to reject a complaint filed by the organisation Front-LEX on the case of a minor and an adult refugee who argue “Frontex contributed to the fundamental rights violations they suffered on the journey to Greece”.
- German economy minister [said](#) the country is in need of migrant workers to prevent labour shortages in the future.
- OSCE published the report “Regularisation of migrants in an irregular situation in the OSCE region: Recent developments, points for discussion and recommendations”. The report is available [here](#).

Focus on the Poland-Belarus border

- Since the beginning of the year, Polish border guards said they have stopped [600 people](#) trying to cross the border with Belarus. On 18 January 2022, Polish authorities detained 32 migrants who crossed from Belarus in one of the detention centers at the border, that are inaccessible by journalist and civil society.
- The Lithuanian government will [not prolong](#) the state of emergency at its border with Belarus, that was in place since 9 November 2021.
- Along the Poland-Belarus border, border police [arrested](#) “various people” believed to be human smugglers. In the last five months, 500 have been arrested with smuggling charges.

14/12/2021 – 11/01/2022

- The Telegraph published an [investigation](#) into 'Fortress Europe', detailing how 32 years after the fall of the Berlin wall, 1,800 km of fences were built or are under construction at Europe's borders. The investigation examines the technologies used at land borders in Greece, Hungary and Poland but also the externalisation efforts carried out in North Africa to deter migrants to take the route to Europe.
- According to the Danish Refugee Council, in 2021, almost [12,000 asylum-seekers](#) were pushed back at Europe's border, a number that could be an all-time record.
- A new report titled 'The Torture Roads – The Cycle of Abuse against People on the Move in Africa' exposes the systematic abuses and violence migrants are subjected to while moving from origin to transit and destination countries. The report is available [here](#).
- On 16 December 2021, The European Council held a meeting where it discussed, amongst other things, the external aspects of migration. The main points highlighted are: returns from the EU to countries of origin; countering attempts of 'instrumentalization' of migration by third countries; strengthening measures for border control. [Here](#) are the conclusions.
- During the third High-level Inter-parliamentary Conference on Migration and Asylum, MPs and MEPs [debated](#) over external and internal aspects of migration management, ranging from partnership with third countries to a more humane and dignified internal migration and asylum policy that presents long-term solutions.
- Some EU Member States including Austria and Poland are [pushing](#) for more detention of asylum-seekers, citing hybrid attacks and threats to internal security, health or public order. The document is available [here](#).
- First arrivals countries like [Italy](#) are sceptical about the Schengen reform proposals. Indeed, internal border checks, hindering of secondary movements and facilitation of returns may put more pressure on them.
- On 14 December 2021, EU Commissioners Ylva Johansson and Margaritis Schinas [presented](#) the [proposed updates](#) to the Schengen Border Code. The updates aim at strengthening external borders and cross-border police cooperation to reduce internal border checks and secondary movements. Internal border checks can be put in place for a six-months period, with possibility of extension up to 18 months. The proposal also puts forward a legal definition of a situation of instrumentalization of migration by third countries and allows for longer registration periods, for the detention of migrants at the borders and for tougher border militarization to be

deployed in such circumstances. The proposal is now examined by the Parliament and the Council.

30/11/2021 – 14/12/2021

- During the [Press Conference](#) following the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council on 9 December 2021, Commissioner Johansson stated that 15 EU countries announced 40,000 additional resettlement pledges for Afghan people in need of protection.
- According to a leaked report, Frontex registered a record number of [deportations](#) in the first six months of 2021, returning a total of 8,239 individuals. This shows how EU Member States are increasingly resorting to the EU agency to manage migration and border control.
- An [EU interpreter](#) working for Frontex said that in September 2021 Greek authorities mistook him for an asylum-seeker, assaulted him and expelled him to Turkey. According to his testimony, he was together with a group of people who also were exposed to violence by Greek authorities and were pushed back to Turkey via the Evros river.
- The incoming German government signed a coalition treaty which presents a [shift](#) of policies concerning migration. Amongst the various points, the coalition aims to “reduce irregular migration and enable more regular means of migration” by facilitating family reunifications, resettlements, possibilities for humanitarian corridors and speeding up asylum procedures. The coalition also stated that voluntary repatriations will be a preferred method for returns rather than deportations. New measures should also grant an easier access to citizenship and the possibility for maintaining dual citizenship.
- The Guardian published the [investigation](#) ‘Fortress Europe: the millions spent on military-grade tech to deter refugees’. The investigation details how hundreds of millions of euros are spent on advanced technologies and military equipment to monitor and deter migrants at the borders. Among the high-tech tools employed, there are high performance drones, sensors and cameras, and lie detectors based on artificial intelligence.
- According to a [leaked document](#), some EU Member States are opposing the Commission’s proposal to relocate people saved following search and rescue operations.
- According to the Presidency Compromise proposal on the EU Pact’s Screening Regulation, which was [published by Statewatch](#), the

Council is trying to decrease rights protection and add the incorrect term “illegal” migrants.

Focus on the Poland-Belarus border

- Eileen, a four-year-old from Iraq went [missing](#) during the night of the 7th of December after she was separated from her parents during a pushback at the Polish border.
- On the 1 December 2021, the European Commission presented a [proposal](#) for a Council decision to deploy exceptional measures to tackle the situation at the borders of Poland, Latvia and Lithuania with Belarus. These measures extend the deadline to register asylum applications to four weeks, allow the countries to detain asylum-seekers at reception centers at the border up to 16 weeks, generally reduce access to asylum, expand accelerated border procedures and make returns easier and faster. The measures are supposed to be temporary but can be renewed after 6 months if the ‘emergency’ continues. Civil society stands together in criticizing these measures, as they expose asylum-seekers to increased risks of abuses and pushbacks at the border and set a dangerous precedent on weakened refugee rights. Poland seems to be [critical](#) of the proposal as it wished to ‘suspend asylum procedures, and not extending them’. The proposal is available [here](#). Read EuroMed Rights press release on the proposal [here](#).
- Despite talks of de-escalation at the Belarus-Polish border, many migrants are still stranded between the two countries. Official data on the death toll said 15 people have lost their lives since the summer, but according to testimonies collected by [Infomigrants](#), the death toll could be much higher as many people have gone missing.
- On 30 November 2021, the Polish Interior Minister [declared](#) the area along the border with Belarus off-limits to everyone, besides residents and people working or studying there. The measure comes after the state of emergency declared by the government expired and will be in place for three months.

16/11/2021 – 29/11/2021

- On the 15th of November 2021, the European Parliament and Council reached a deal on the 2022 EU [budget](#). MEPs managed to increase funding on health, research and climate action. Regarding external assistance and humanitarian aid, extra funding is assigned to the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) especially to tackle the pandemic. Increased budget was also agreed to help Syrian refugees in Turkey and in the region.

- European Council President Charles [Michel](#) stated that the EU could legally fund the construction of border barriers. This statement represents a new positioning of the EU, which has historically refused to finance border walls. The ultimate decision is up to the Commission.
- On the 17th of November 2021, a leaked internal [document](#) revealed an EU plan to make over 1,400 arrests of people smugglers in 2022, mostly through Frontex.
- Slovenian interior minister Aleš Hojs [stated](#) during a conference in Sarajevo that “external borders must be secured, even with fences if necessary” and that illegal migration is destabilising the EU.
- Emmanuel Macron [stated](#) that France will push for a stop in the set-up of long-term refugee camps, to dismantle smuggling networks and to strengthen cooperation with migrants’ origin countries when it hosts the European Union presidency from January.
- The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders published the [report](#) *Europe: Open Season on Solidarity, A study on the patterns of criminalisation of solidarity through the voices of migrants’ rights defenders*. The study identifies three key patterns on the criminalisation of solidarity: the creation of a hostile environment around migration; the use of administrative law to impede human rights defence work; the use of criminal law to silence their voices.
- Human Rights Watch has published a [report](#) *Dismantling Detention: International Alternatives to Detaining Immigrants* where it explores possible alternatives to detention in Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the US.

EU-Belarus border

- The victims’ count on the Belarus-Poland border increases, now reaching a dozen deaths since the summer:
- On the 10th of November 2021, a 14-year-old [boy](#) froze to death on the Polish-Belarus border. He was in a camp on the Belarusian side of the border. Officials brought him to the hospital, but he died there.
- A one-year-old Syrian [child](#) died in the forest on the Polish side of the border. The family had been living in the forest for over a month. The cause of death remains unclear.
- On the 15th of November 2021, Alexander Lukashenko [said](#) he would start repatriate migrants at the border with Poland to de-escalate the situation. Following this statement, Belarus started moving [1,000 migrants](#) from a camp on the border with Poland to a temporary shelter.

- On the 18th of November 2021, Belarus [stated](#) that it would repatriate 5,000 migrants to de-escalate the crisis at the Polish border, but it wants the EU to take 2,000 migrants in.
- On the 18th of November 2021, almost [400 Iraqi](#) citizens were repatriated on a flight that left from Minsk. Some of them later reported being [abused](#) by Polish and Belarusian authorities.
- On the 19th of November 2021, the Polish army [detained](#) hundreds of migrants who crossed the Belarus border.
- Local doctors and activists on the Poland-Belarus border who try to help migrants feel increasingly [intimidated](#) by the police and hostile groups. Local organisations received threats of being charged as smugglers for providing food and shelter to migrants, and had their vehicles attacked.
- The [Estonian](#) government announced that it would start building a new border fence to Russia as a response to the crisis at the Belarusian border. Even if Estonia does not have a border with Belarus, the government fears that Russia is helping Belarus orchestrating the migrants' crisis.

25/10/2021-15/11/2021

- On 26 October 2021, the LIBE committee in the European Parliament held [debates](#) on the draft report on the Asylum and migration management Regulation by [rapporteur Tomas Tobé](#) and of the draft report on the regulation on a common procedure for international protection in the Union by [rapporteur Fabienne Keller](#). Most MEPs [criticized](#) the report of Tomas Tobé, mainly because it would strengthen the core issues within the [Dublin](#). The draft report is available [here](#). [Keller's](#) report was received more positively. It generally expresses support to the Commission's proposal and adds amendments to improve the refugee camps at the external borders, proposing that they should be financed with EU budget.
- The situation at the Belarus-Poland-Lithuania border is severe:
- Lithuania started building a 3.4-metre high [border fence](#) topped with razor wire on its shared border with Belarus. The fence will be 500km long and should be completed by September 2022.
- The crisis is particularly severe at the [Belarus-Polish](#). Migrants fly to Belarus from Middle Eastern countries and are pushed by Belarusian authorities at the Polish border. At least [2,000](#) migrants are currently camped on the Belarus side of the border. Polish authorities have declared a state of emergency along the border with Belarus and are sending thousands of border guards, soldiers and the police in the area. Journalists are not allowed in the area.

- The border crisis is the result of Lukashenko's response to the sanctions imposed on him by the EU. Given the rapid worsening of the situation, European defense ministers are alert on the possibility of a violent conflict escalation that would spur a [military crisis](#).
- Poland, Latvia and Lithuania all declared a state of emergency and passed laws to [push-back](#) asylum-seekers to Belarus without allowing them to file asylum claims, in breach of international human rights law. The EU Commission will likely [demand](#) the countries to amend them.
- Ursula von der Leyen stated on the 8th of November that third country airlines "[active in human trafficking](#)" risk being sanctioned and blacklisted in the EU. This statement comes after the incident with [Turkish Airlines](#) and FlyDubai, who were accused of flying migrants and asylum-seekers to Belarus and contributing to the worsening of the Belarus-Polish border crisis. On [Friday](#), Turkish airline companies announced that citizens of Iraq, Syria and Yemen travelling to Belarus will not be allowed to buy tickets any longer.
- On the [15th of November](#), EU foreign ministers met in Brussels to discuss new sanctions on Belarus for its responsibility in the migrant situation at the Polish border.
- The [tenth migrant](#) was found dead at the Belarus-Polish border. Since the summer, 9 other victims were found on both sides of the border. Migrants die while trying to cross unsafe rivers or swampy grounds or die of cold and exhaustion. There has also been an increase in the number of migrants who cross the Polish-German border. (Read EuroMed Rights' [Press Release](#) on EU-Belarus border: fences, pushbacks and human rights violations and watch [EuroMed Rights' interview on Aljazeera](#) on the situation at the EU-Belarus border).
- The OECD has published the [2021 edition](#) of the International Migration Outlook. According to the report, the impact of COVID-19 on migration flows to the OECD countries resulted in a record drop in migration flows. Despite that, the number of asylum requests remained high. The report also shows that in the last three months of 2020 the employment rate of migrants is growing again and reaching pre-pandemic figures. Finally, the report shows how migrant populations in OECD countries contribute more to taxes than they receive in benefits, health and education.
- Der Spiegel recently released a [long-read](#) based on months of reporting at Europe's external borders. The article shows the systematic [violence and abuses](#) migrants face at the Greek border, the Balkans, Libya and the Mediterranean. The article emphasizes the widespread use of pushbacks at the external borders, stressing how they breach asylum-seekers rights.

- On the 9th of November, an [EU court verdict](#) established that children in refugee families who only have one parent with asylum status, have the right to live in Europe. The case was about a family of a Syrian father with asylum status, Tunisian mother without asylum status and their daughter.
- On the 9th of November, C40 Cities and the Mayors Migration Council released the Global Mayors Action [Agenda](#) on Climate and Migration and received a \$1,000,000 USD contribution by the Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH. The agenda includes measures that aim at a green and just transition to protect the people most affected by climate displacement. These measures include investment to improve the living conditions of climate refugees while on the move and in urban areas. The agenda has been endorsed by the mayors of Barcelona, Bristol, Dakar, Dhaka North, Freetown, Houston, Lima, Los Angeles, Milan.

5/10/2021 – 25/10/2021

- Two Dutch lawyers, Flip Schüller and Lisa-Marie Komp, filed a [complaint against Frontex](#) in the European Court of Justice for a pushback of a Syrian family in 2016 who were forcibly transferred from Greece to Turkey where it was detained and then deported to Northern Iraq. The lawyers are for the first time seeking damages.
- On 21 October 2021, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, sent a strong message to Member States to "take a stand [against pushbacks](#) at borders and clearly oppose attempts to legalise this illegal practice".
- On 21-22 October 2021, the [European Council's conclusions](#) on migration focused very much on externalisation, protecting the EU's external borders and increase returns. During the [press conference](#) following the Council, the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von Der Leyen, stated that EU funds will not be used to finance barbed wire fences or walls.
- On 20 October 2021, the European Parliament held a [plenary debate](#) on pushbacks at the EU's external borders.
- On 20 October 2021, three MEPs from The Left group wrote an op-ed calling against the 2019 budget [discharge of Frontex](#), which was voted in plenary on 21 October 2021. MEPs [voted in favour](#) of a discharge of the budget but asked that part of the 2022 budget be made available if there are improvements in fundamental rights monitoring (read CNCD-11.11.11 note [Frontex: Human rights in danger](#)).
- On 20 October 2021, three MEPs from the S&D group wrote to the President of the European Commission raising [concerns on pushbacks](#) at the EU's

external borders and asking for conditioning EU migration funding to stopping pushbacks and to implement by Member States an independent mechanism to monitor pushbacks at borders. They also asked the Commission to start an infringement procedure against Greece and Croatia.

- On 12 October 2021, during the G20 summit, the EU pledged EUR 1 billion in support to [Afghans](#). [Amnesty International](#) released an advocacy briefing on 20 October 2021, denouncing the fact that Afghanistan's neighboring countries have closed their borders to Afghans without travel documents and "countries across Europe and Central Asia have subjected Afghans to illegal pushbacks, detention and deportation". Human Rights Watch published on 21 October an [analysis](#) on 'Policy Responses to Support Afghans Fleeing Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan'.
- On 7 October 2021, 12 EU Member States, including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark and Greece, [sent a letter](#) to the European Commission asking for increasing physical barriers at the EU's external borders by using EU funds.
- EU Home Affairs Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, [called](#) for a thorough investigation into pushbacks allegations from Croatian and Greek police revealed by an [investigation](#) by German media outlets Der Spiegel and ARD.
- [National reports](#) authored by the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) of Croatia, France, Greece, Serbia, and Slovenia outline the findings from monitoring activities at their borders over the last two years. The European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) [regional report](#) examines the human rights of migrants at borders.
- **Lithuania-Poland-Belarus border:** According to a Frontex fundamental rights monitoring report, Lithuania [carried out](#) at least 14 collective expulsions involving at least 42 officers, "some of whom were partly financed and equipped by EU budgets". On 13 October 2021, the Director of the EU border agency Frontex, Fabrice Leggeri, [reported](#) around 20 incidents of violation of fundamental rights in Lithuania. On 20 October 2021, [Amnesty International](#) denounced the pushback of 17 Afghans from Poland to Belarus. On 14 October 2021, the Polish Parliament voted to [legalise pushbacks](#) at the border with Belarus where it is building a EUR 350 million wall and [deployed](#) an additional 6,000 soldiers. On 20 October 2021, the [dead body of a 19-year-old Syrian man](#) was found in the river Bug at the Belarus border, amounting to the eight confirmed tragic death at the Belarus border. [UNHCR appealed](#) States to save lives and prevent suffering at the Belarus-EU borders.

- On 29 September 2021, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has [published](#) a set of training materials on access to justice for migrants.
- UNHCR Chief, Filippo Grandi, [condemned](#) countries externalising and outsourcing asylum procedures, by accusing them of betraying their responsibilities.
- On 15 October 2021, Privacy International, together with 5 other human rights organisations, has submitted a complaint to the European Ombudsman calling for an [investigation into EU surveillance aid to non-EU countries](#).
- The foreign ministers of the African Union and the European Union [will meet](#) on 26 October 2021 in Kigali, Rwanda to prepare the summit of heads of state and government of EU and Africa to be held early 2022.

23/09/2021 – 05/10/2021

- **Poland-Belarus border:** Human rights activists have [warned](#) that there will be more deaths at the Polish-Belarus border, where migrants are stuck in the forests and in worsening health conditions. Polish Members of Parliament on 1 October 2021 [extended](#) the “state of emergency” at its border with Belarus for an additional 60 days, thus preventing journalists and activists to access the border and document violations. On 26 September 2021, the [sixth migrant death](#) at the Polish-Belarus border was registered. Thanks to special reconstruction techniques, [Amnesty International](#) was able to document the [illegal pushback](#) of around 32 Afghan asylum seekers, including a 15-year-old girl, on 19 August from Poland to Belarus. Alarm Phone [denounced](#) that 15 people stranded for four days without food nor water are dying of hypothermia at the Poland-Belarus border.
- On 8 October 2021, the [EU Home Affairs Council](#) will [discuss migration](#) in relation to the screening and detention of migrants, the situation in Afghanistan, the external dimension of migration and it is expected to adopt the blue card directive. On the Blue Card Directive, aiming at attracting highly-qualified migrant workers to Europe, [Hungary](#) is the only EU country against the bill. At the same times, reports [denounce](#) that Hungary resorted to pushing back at least 40 000 people since the beginning of 2021.
- On 29 September 2021, the European Commission [presented](#) the [Report on Migration and Asylum](#), including key developments in migration and asylum policies and data on migratory routes in the last year.
- An EU-Turkey High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Security is [planned](#) in October 2021.

- On 25 September 2021, the so-called MED5 – the Interior Ministers of Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain – released a [joint statement](#) calling on the need “for common European participation in returns, and an active role of the EU’s organisations in the external dimension”.
- According to the discussion paper “EU return policy – gaps and opportunities” from the Slovenian Presidency to the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA), the EU is looking for ways to step up the [number of deportations](#).
- The Slovenian Presidency of the Council, following concerns by some EU Member States, suggested to [increase the detention periods](#) in the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation from four to five weeks.
- According to a [draft action plan](#) for strengthening comprehensive migration partnerships with priority countries of origin and transit, the European Commission intends “to step up border management support at **Libya’s Southern border**”.

6/09/2021 – 22/09/2021

- On 20 September 2021, according to EU Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas, in an [interview with Euractiv](#), a final deal on the EU Migration Pact could be reached after the French Presidential elections next year.
- On 19 September 2021, four Iraqi migrants were found [dead](#) on the Poland-Belarus border, three men in Poland and one woman in Belarus.
- The Slovenian Council Presidency seeks to accelerate negotiations for an agreement on expanded migrant [biometric database](#).
- On 16 September 2021, Members of the European Parliament [called](#) for special visa programmes for Afghan women seeking protection.
- According to a draft European Commission action plan, seen by Statewatch, the EU is suspending [forced returns to Afghanistan](#) “but encourages EU member states to continue deporting Afghan nationals to other third countries, where permitted by readmission agreements”.
- According to EUobserver, the Netherlands is against [voluntary returns](#) for rejected asylum seekers, for fears of granting them more rights.
- According to the [European Court of Auditors](#), “ineffective EU deals to return migrants to home countries are “encouraging” arrivals”.
- On 8 September 2021, Frontex chief Fabrice Leggeri, told that “[Afghan exiles](#) living in Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan would be among the first to try to enter the EU via Belarus, Greece, and Turkey”.

- EASO published an [update](#) on the security situation in Afghanistan.
- 31 non-governmental organisations sent a letter to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) “to rethink plans to overhaul the [Eurodac database](#) of asylum seekers’ fingerprints”.
- On 8 September 2021, Statewatch [published](#) the comments from the EU Member States on the proposed Asylum and Migration Management Regulation.
- On 7 October 2021, the European Commission’s DG HOME and EEAS will jointly [host](#) a High-level Resettlement Forum dedicated to the situation in Afghanistan.
- According to the latest [EASO asylum trends](#), applications by Afghans increased for the fifth consecutive month, to about 7,300 in July 2021 and the gap between Afghans and Syrians has been shrinking.

19/08/2021 – 6/09/2021

- During a visit to a Spanish reception centre for **Afghan refugees** on 21 August 2021, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen [said](#) the EU Commission was ready to provide “funding to EU countries that help resettle Afghan refugees and more humanitarian aid for the country” amounting to EUR [57 million](#) for 2021. At the G7 meeting on 24 August 2021, she [announced](#) an increase in EU funds in humanitarian support to Afghanistan to EUR 200 million, the need for [close cooperation with UNHCR](#) for resettlement operations and the importance that [development assistance](#) must be **condition-based**, linked to fundamental values, human rights, and women’s rights. The UK has pledged to resettle [20,000](#) Afghan refugees. The [first 36 Afghan refugees](#) will be resettled in Denmark, Germany, Poland and Lithuania, from Spain. So far, [no EU country has pledged concrete numbers](#) for resettlement of Afghans from countries of first arrival or transit. [European Council President](#), Charles Michel, declared that the EU is determined to keep “the EU’s borders protected”. On 19 August 2021, the High Representative, Josep Borrell, mentioned before the European Parliament the possibility of [triggering the Temporary Protection directive](#) (TPD), which could require a qualified majority vote (and not based on unanimity) in the Council. EU Commissioner Ylva Johansson [told Euronews](#) that the TPD is “not the issue for today” and that the EU “must intervene before Afghan refugees arrive at external borders”. Following a request from the US, Uganda will [temporarily host](#) around 2,000 Afghan refugees for three months. On 25 August 2021, in a [letter addressed to the European Commission](#), 66 Members of the European (MEPs) asked for the urgent evacuation of Afghan staff working for EU missions and programmes

while in another letter [80 MEPs called on the European Commission](#) to activate humanitarian corridors and the temporary protection directive. On 30 August 2021, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told the Austrian newspaper Kronen Zeitung that his government would be willing to accept [Afghan rejected asylum seekers](#) who would then face court. A senior EU official said that the EU is “discussing [safe passage with Pakistan](#) and central Asian countries for a limited number of Afghan refugees”. On 31 August 2021, EU interior ministers released a [statement](#) following the **Justice and Home Affairs Council** meeting on Afghanistan, focusing on externalising migration control by supporting third countries and increasing border management instead of presenting concrete resettlement pledges and reception for Afghan refugees. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, [Dunja Mijatović](#), had called on member states not to undermine human rights protections in their response to Afghan displaced people. On 2 September 2021, EU Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministers discussed the possibility to create a future [deployable force](#) totalling 5,000 to 20,000 EU troops. Deployment however should not depend on an unanimous decision by the EU’s 27 states.

- Poland has sent more than [900 soldiers](#) to strengthen security on the border with **Belarus** and has [started building](#) a 2.5-metre high wall. In August alone, more than [2,100 people have crossed into Poland from Belarus](#), but Poland is denying them entry. The [UNHCR called](#) on Poland to admit a group of refugees, including Afghans, children and women, stuck at the border for days. According to [an official in Latvia](#), the Belarusian authorities “ask for EUR 2,000 for the airline tickets and EUR 3,000 for transportation to the border and provide accommodation in government properties”. There are also reports that Belarus is arranging for new flights from Morocco and Pakistan. Lithuania [announced](#) on 23 August 2021 that it will “complete a 508-km fence along its border with Belarus by September 2022 to stop migrants”. In a letter to Lithuania’s Prime Minister published on 24 August 2021, the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović](#), calls to ensure “fair asylum procedures and prevent summary returns without adequate safeguards”. On 25 August 2021, the European Court of Human Rights [released an interim order](#) asking Latvia and Poland to provide Iraqi and Afghan refugees stuck at the border with Belarus with “food, water, clothing, adequate medical care and, if possible, temporary shelter”, specifying that “this measure should not be understood as requiring that Poland or Latvia let the applicants enter their territories”.
- On 2 September 2021, following the hearing in the European Parliament’s Petition Committee (PETI) with the NGOs ARCI, ASGI and GLAN on the EU programme “Support to Integrated border and migration

management in Libya” – which allows for the unlawful pullbacks of migrants in the Central Mediterranean – the European Commission will be [required](#) to update and transmit the programme’s periodic monitoring report, and to send the information in the petition to the European Court of Auditors for inclusion in the special evaluation report on the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

- On 1 September 2021, the Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT) [discussed](#) the second draft discharge report for Frontex in relation to the 2019 Discharge procedure. The Civil Liberties Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) Committee [refused to grant budgetary discharge](#) to Frontex, following allegations of human rights violations. Plenary vote is scheduled for October.

27/07/2021 – 19/08/2021

- On 18 August 2021, European ministers responsible for migration met after the Slovenian presidency of the Council called a ministerial meeting of the [Integrated Political Crisis Response](#) mechanism in order to discuss Belarus’ instrumentalization of migrants and refugees at borders with **Lithuania**, Latvia and Poland and the [situation of Afghan refugees](#). On 30 July 2021, the High Representative issued a [declaration](#) on behalf of the European Union on the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees by the Belarus regime. On 27 July 2021, [Lithuania](#) detained 171 Iraqi migrants who tried to cross from Belarus, while [Latvia](#) has started to push back migrants at borders, including women and children on 11 August 2021. On 11 August 2021, the European Commission [announced](#) that it will provide Lithuania with EUR 36.7 million to support migration management, including the setting up of shelter, medical care and asylum procedures.
- On 18 August 2021, EU interior ministers held an informal video-conference discussing, among others, the situation in **Afghanistan**. EU Home Affairs Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, [said](#) that “the instability in Afghanistan is likely to lead to increased migratory pressure. We are therefore preparing for all scenarios”. On 9 August 2021, Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece and Denmark sent a [letter to the European Commission](#) asking to continue deportations of **Afghan refugees** despite the critical situation in the country. From 2008 to 2020, EU Member States [repatriated](#) 70,000 Afghans seeking asylum, among them 15-20,000 women, classifying Afghanistan as “safe”. A few days later, some of them reversed their positions ([Germany](#) and the [Netherlands](#) on 11 August 2021 and [Belgium](#) on 16 August 2021). Germany also [declared](#) that “the focus must be on humanitarian aid on site, unlike in 2015”, while Greece’s Migration Minister, Notis Mitarachi, also stated that they want to “avoid any pressure [on] our country similar to the one we experienced in previous

years, in similar crises". French President, Emmanuel Macron, [said](#) that we must "protect ourselves against major irregular migratory flows" and suggests implementing a European plan for cooperation with transit and host countries such as Pakistan, Turkey or Iran, while [rights groups](#), including [EuroMed Rights](#), are urging the EU to ensure safe passages for all at risk through emergency visas, evacuations, relocation and resettlement and by suspending all deportations and forced returns. On 16 August 2021, according to U.N. [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), about half of Afghanistan's population, need humanitarian assistance. UNHCR published its [position](#) on returns to Afghanistan. Some Members of the European Parliament [called](#) on the urgent tackling of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Following the emergency meeting of foreign affairs ministers on Afghanistan on 17 August 2021, High Representative, Josep Borrell, [declared](#) that "the EU will engage in dialogue with the Taliban in Afghanistan to prevent a "humanitarian and potential migratory disaster".

- Following the informal videoconference of interior ministers on 18 August 2021, the European Commission announced that it will present, at the end of August, a [migration preparedness plan](#) for the migratory situation in the Central Mediterranean.
- The NGO Privacy International [denounced](#) that, in the framework of a Frontex pilot project, private satellites companies are deployed to tracking and intercepting migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea in order to push them back.
- In July 2021, Bulgaria, Denmark and France have been [condemned](#) by the European Court of Human Rights for asylum and border policies.
- The European Parliamentary Research Service [published](#) the Horizontal substitute impact assessment on the European Commission's New Pact on Migration and Asylum.
- The World Health Organisation published a [report](#) titled "Refugees and migrants in times of COVID-19: mapping trends of public health and migration policies and practices".

5/07/2021 - 27/07/2021

- More than 150 people [crossed to Lithuania](#) from Belarus in less than 24 hours beginning of July 2021, amounting to a total of 800 people crossing in July 2021 and of [1,600 since January](#). The country declared itself in a "state of emergency". Frontex deployed a team there and [EASO announced](#) it will deploy up to 50 personnel in Lithuania to support with asylum processing of applications. The main nationalities are Iraq, Syria, Guinea, the Gambia and India, but also the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon. EU Home Affairs Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, [declared to Euronews](#) that it

is unacceptable that Belarus' president Alexander Lukashenko uses "human beings in this instrumentalist way of putting political pressure".

- FRONTEX: The European Parliament's Frontex Scrutiny Working Group published the [Report on the fact-finding investigation on Frontex concerning alleged fundamental rights violations](#) (rapporteur: Tineke Strik) denouncing that Frontex has failed to investigate reports of fundamental rights violations during migrant pushbacks by EU states and calling for the resignation of Frontex's Chief, Fabrice Leggeri. In response to the publication of the report, Frontex [continues](#) to deny any evidence of the Agency's involvement in fundamental rights violations. On 15 July 2021, Statewatch [published](#) the first of four reports examining Frontex's search and rescue obligations since its foundation in 2004. For the first time in 17 years of operations, Frontex has been [referred](#) to the European Court of Justice for human rights violations for its activities in Greece, following an appeal by the Amsterdam-based non-profit legal aid organisation Front-Lex.
- On 15 July 2021, the European Commission [decided](#) to refer Hungary to the Court of Justice of the European Union for unlawfully restricting access to the asylum procedure for violating Art. 6 of the Asylum Procedures Directive. On the same day, the European Commission [proposed](#) temporary restrictive visa measures for Bangladesh, Iraq and The Gambia to improve cooperation on return and readmission.
- On 14-15 July 2021, [EU interior ministers met in Slovenia](#) in an informal meeting to discuss migration matters. They announced step forwards in the adoption of less sensitive files of the EU Pact, such as the Eurodac Regulation, and confirmed their focus on cooperation with third countries and returns.
- [Interviewed by the BBC](#), EU Home Affairs Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, said that the pushbacks by Greece to Turkey are in contradiction to European values and any violation of fundamental rights should be properly investigated. The Greek migration and asylum minister, Notis Mitarachi, rejected the claims that Greece is breaching EU fundamental rights and said that allegations of pushbacks are unfounded.
- During the [EU High-Level resettlement forum](#) on 9 July 2021, EU Home Affairs Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, [announced](#) that she's working to secure EUR 300 million for the resettlement of 30,000 refugees until the end of 2022.
- On 9 July 2021, the Council of Europe and the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) have published a joint note titled "[European standards on legal remedies, complaints mechanisms and effective](#)

investigations at borders” for effective remedies at European borders for migrants, asylum applicants and refugees.

- On 8 July 2021, in the [European Parliament resolution on the Annual Report on the Functioning of the Schengen Area](#), Members of the European Parliament called for the establishment of an independent mechanism for monitoring human rights violations at borders.
- On 7 July 2021, the European Commission published the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. In addition to the EUR 6 billion already contracted since 2016 – and most of it already disbursed – the EU [agreed to allocate](#) an additional EUR 3 billion to Turkey for 2021-2023. According to the [Mid-Term Evaluation](#), 2,735 migrants were returned from Greece to Turkey between March 2016 and March 2020, 20% of those were Syrians.

21/06/2021 – 05/07/2021

- A document published by Statewatch shows diverging comments by 14 EU Member States on the **Screening Regulation**. A report by the French Bar Association stated that the screening procedure “would be introduced solely in the interest of the Member States and to the detriment of the exiled persons.”
- According to a recent analysis from [Human Rights Watch](#), Frontex fails to investigate or safeguard people against serious human rights violations at the EU’s external borders.
- On 6-8 July 2021, the Slovenian presidency of the Council organizes an informal meeting of the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA).
- On 29 June 2021, the European Council and the European Parliament reached an agreement on **the new EU Asylum Agency** (EUAA), former EASO, which will have a stronger role in liaising with third countries. EASO published its 2021 [Asylum Report](#).
- On 29 June 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons calls on States to effectively protect victims of trafficking instead of punishing them “for any unlawful activity carried out as a direct consequence of their trafficking situation”. The UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) [denounced](#) that human smugglers who subject migrant to violence, torture, rape and kidnapping are rarely persecuted by authorities.
- On 24-25 June 2021, the European Council discussed, among others, migration, with a strong focus on the external dimension and cooperation with third countries. On 25 June 2021, EU leaders confirmed another [EUR 3](#)

billion to **Turkey** over the next years to increase border controls and provide assistance to Syrian refugees. The plan has been widely criticized by rights groups and experts as it risks returning migrants to Syria, Iran and Iraq. Additional funds for Lebanon and Jordan “will soon be formally endorsed.” Member States still have very diverging positions on relocation measures and further discussions under **the EU Pact** are postponed to the autumn.