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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**on the Report on Migration and Asylum**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, the EU has been faced with a series of events with major repercussions for migration, asylum and border management. Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine caused the largest forced displacement of people in Europe since the Second World War, and the recent escalation of the war is expected to bring an increase in arrivals of Russian citizens to the Union's external borders. The continued pressure on the routes across the Mediterranean and the Western Balkans added to the challenge of increased migratory flows. The instrumentalisation of migrants for political purposes by the Belarusian regime raised unprecedented legal and operational challenges. In parallel, Member States faced the need to scale up border and visa management as the travel restrictions caused by COVID-19 were lifted and tourism and business restarted.

The EU has shown itself able to react quickly, with concrete solidarity and effective coordination. The unprecedented activation of the Temporary Protection Directive and the welcome given by so many individual Europeans to people fleeing Ukraine has been a vivid demonstration of European values. Practical, direct action on the ground showed how the EU helps both people in need of protection and Member States under pressure.

The reaction to the impact of the war has epitomised the EU's growing capacity for collective response. The Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint Network provided a new way to strengthen communication and mutual awareness as the foundation for a coherent EU response. The Solidarity Platform has provided a hub for coordinating the reception of those fleeing Ukraine. The new EU Agency for Asylum, Frontex and Europol stepped up their assistance to support Member States facing the new challenges.

The Union's reactivity and agility is helping us to navigate the challenges. Nevertheless, the year since the last migration report<sup>1</sup> has confirmed that structural reforms to the EU's asylum and migration system are needed, to equip the EU to address both crisis situations and longer-term trends. Work during the French Presidency has created a positive dynamic that made possible substantial progress both on the internal and the external dimensions of the Pact on Migration and Asylum<sup>2</sup>. A new Solidarity Declaration served as a basis for Member States to relaunch cooperation with Commission support. Our partnership with key countries of origin and transit deepened on all aspects of migration and forced displacement. Diplomatic outreach brought results, both in broader cooperation on migration and in key cases such as the instrumentalisation of migrants by the Belarusian regime.

The reality of labour shortages across many sectors and in all Member States is pointing to the need to attract a dynamic workforce, as well as to create safe pathways to reduce the incentives for irregular migration. The new set of Skills and Talent proposals reflects the Pact's comprehensive partnership approach at international level.

The Commission welcomes the joint roadmap agreed between the European Parliament and the rotating Presidencies of the Council, which confirm a commitment to make all efforts to adopt the legislative proposals related to asylum and migration management outlined in the Pact before the end of the 2019-2024 legislature.

This report takes stock of the progress achieved and the key developments in the area of migration and asylum over the past year. It identifies the key challenges ahead and recalls the steps needed for a more robust and fair migration and asylum policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Communication on the Report on Migration and Asylum (COM(2021)590 final, 29 September 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Communication on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum (COM(2020) 609 final, 23 September 2020).

## 2. THE EU RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

Europe has offered an unprecedented welcome to millions of people fleeing the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The Commission swiftly responded to the scale of the challenge<sup>3</sup>, harnessing every tool available at EU level to support Member States, and drawing on the extraordinary generosity of individual Europeans. This work to bring help inside the EU is taken forward in close connection with work to help address humanitarian needs and start reconstruction inside Ukraine itself (see Section 7 below).

The centrepiece of the EU's welcome was the first-ever activation of the **Temporary Protection Directive**<sup>4</sup> on 4 March 2022<sup>5</sup>, which offered those fleeing the war a clear legal status and unprecedented protection across the EU, with rights to accommodation, education, and healthcare, as well as access to work. More than **4 million registrations** for temporary protection or adequate protection under Member States' national law have been recorded.

The Commission, EU Agencies and Member States have worked together to give life to these rights. The Commission swiftly issued Operational Guidelines on checks at the EU's borders with Ukraine<sup>6</sup> clarifying the flexibility offered by the Schengen Borders Code to manage the situation. Further guidelines on temporary protection<sup>7</sup> have been regularly updated<sup>8</sup>, to help to ensure beneficiaries enjoy consistent rights across Member States.

Since 24 February 2022, the **Blueprint Network** – one of the elements of the Pact already up and running – has ensured that all actors have the situational awareness for an effective and coordinated EU response, coordinating closely with other fora, notably the EU Integrated Political Crisis Response and the Solidarity Platform.

### *The Solidarity Platform*

The Commission established the Solidarity Platform to accompany the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive. It has become the hub of the coordinated European response. Chaired by the Commission, it brings together Member States, Schengen Associated Countries, the European External Action Service, the EU Asylum Agency, Frontex and Europol, the International Organisation for Migration and the UN refugee agency UNHCR, also involving Ukraine and Moldova. It also provides a channel for discussion with international partners, notably the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The Solidarity Platform monitors emerging needs in the EU and coordinates the operational response. It has mapped reception capacity in Member States, helped to ensure displaced people know their options, and supported their safety through the EU Common Anti-Trafficking Plan developed under the lead of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator.

<sup>3</sup> Communication “European solidarity with refugees and those fleeing war in Ukraine” (COM(2022) 107, 8 March 2022); and Communication “Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine: Ready Europe to meet the needs” (COM(2022) 131, 23 March 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof.

<sup>5</sup> The Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 established the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and had the effect of introducing temporary protection. 26 Member States have transposed the Temporary Protection Directive into national law. Due to its opt-out, Denmark is not bound by the Temporary Protection Directive, and has adopted a bill on temporary residence permits for displaced persons from Ukraine (the Special Act).

<sup>6</sup> Communication Providing operational guidelines for external border management to facilitate border crossings at the EU-Ukraine borders (C(2022) 1404 final, 2 March 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Communication on Operational guidelines for the implementation of Council implementing Decision 2022/382 (C/2022/1806, 21 March 2022).

<sup>8</sup> [Frequently asked questions received on the interpretation of the Temporary Protection Directive and Council Implementing Decision 2022/382](#)

The Platform has driven efforts to provide education, employment and sustainable accommodation, help with onward movement out of Moldova, and support those choosing to return to Ukraine. The constant focus has been protection of the most vulnerable, in particular children.

### *Implementation of the 10-point plan*

The EU response has been framed by a **10-point plan** set out by the Commission in March<sup>9</sup>. A key part of that plan, the **temporary protection registration platform**, allows Member States to exchange information in real time on the registrations for temporary protection and adequate protection under national law, while preventing possible abuse. 24 Member States<sup>10</sup> are already using the Platform and the intention is to broaden it to include Denmark and the Schengen associated countries.

A map of **transport and information hubs**<sup>11</sup> facilitates onward movement, with the aim to ensure the transport needed to reach reception capacity in Member States.

A key priority has been **enhancing reception systems, ensuring inclusion in local communities, and finding safe and suitable accommodation**. The EU Agency for Asylum presented practical recommendations on emergency placement in private accommodation<sup>12</sup>. The Safe Homes initiative<sup>13</sup> supported the many organisations making possible the hosting of Ukrainians by private homeowners, such as with guidance showcasing how to make private accommodation suitable and safe.

Preparedness for future developments now includes a **common European contingency and response plan**. Work on the national contingency plans is under way, with particular focus on preparations for the winter.

About half those arriving from Ukraine are children, whether accompanied, or on their own. Targeted guidance<sup>14</sup> for **protecting children** at every stage of their journey to a safe home was complemented by specific attention to the transfer of unaccompanied children from Moldova and to adequate care for children previously residing in Ukrainian institutions.

The **EU Common Anti-Trafficking Plan**<sup>15</sup> seeks to minimise the risk that people on the move or seeking jobs, in particular women and children, are targeted by organised crime. Actions at EU level, as well as recommendations to Member States, cover awareness-raising, prevention, strengthened law enforcement and judicial cooperation, identification and protection of victims, and cooperation with non-EU countries, in particular Ukraine and Moldova. The number of confirmed cases of trafficking is currently low, but the risks are clear. All cases and investigations should continue to be reported to Europol. The Commission will also propose revised legislation on combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting victims before the end of the year.

EU missions on the ground, including the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine, assist the Ukrainian authorities in border management. The EU expanded the mandate of the EU

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<sup>9</sup> [The 10-Point Plan: For stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war from Ukraine \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> At the time of drafting, Slovenia and Sweden are not yet part of the Platform.

<sup>11</sup> [Information for people fleeing the war in Ukraine - Information about national authorities and free travel options](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Private accommodation for displaced persons from Ukraine \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Safe Homes initiative \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Unaccompanied and Separated Children fleeing from war in Ukraine – FAQs on Registration, Reception and Care](#)

<sup>15</sup> [A new Anti-Trafficking Plan to protect people fleeing the war in Ukraine \(europa.eu\)](#)

Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) to Moldova and Ukraine to allow its staff to also support the Moldovan Border Police.

**Moldova** needs EU solidarity, and has received dedicated help. Member States have made around 20 000 pledges to welcome people sheltering in Moldova, although so far, many Ukrainians prefer to remain close to their home country. Thanks to the rapidly concluded status agreement with Moldova<sup>16</sup>, Frontex is now supporting border management. A new **EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management**<sup>17</sup> is also helping Moldova meet security challenges including firearms trafficking, drugs trafficking and trafficking in human beings.

The Commission is working with its **international partners** to offer safe destinations to those fleeing the war. Third country nationals have been helped to return home safely, and so far, close to 250 000 persons have been welcomed in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom<sup>18</sup>. The Commission and the European External Action Service have worked closely with Member States and international partners to support the repatriation of Ukrainian citizens who were stranded abroad following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The 10-point plan also reflected the **internal security implications**. The fourth Security Union progress report<sup>19</sup> outlines the activities of Europol, and the coordination of full implementation of EU sanctions against Russia by national authorities through the “Freeze and Seize” Task Force.

### ***Guaranteeing rights under the Temporary Protection Directive***

The EU has also put in place a series of targeted sectoral initiatives to give force to the different rights accorded under the Temporary Protection Directive.

Work on **education** for those fleeing Ukraine has included a particular focus on preparing for the 2022-2023 academic year<sup>20</sup>. All children should have the possibility to attend a local school in the EU, but activities should also allow children to keep a strong connection to Ukraine. The Commission has provided support and guidance through European platforms, including the School Education Gateway<sup>21</sup>, eTwinning<sup>22</sup>, and the New Ukrainian School Hub<sup>23</sup>. The EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine is helping to pool expertise across the EU<sup>24</sup>. There is also targeted support for students, recent graduates, teachers and trainers through the Erasmus+ programme<sup>25</sup>, and a dedicated action under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions<sup>26</sup> will provide fellowships for displaced researchers from Ukraine. These

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<sup>16</sup> Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the Union, and provisional application of the Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova on operational activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in the Republic of Moldova (Council Decision (EU) 2022/449, 17 March 2022)

<sup>17</sup> [EU launches the Support Hub \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/europa/en/press-room/news/2022-09-01-eu-launches-the-support-hub-for-internal-security-and-border-management)

<sup>18</sup> Over 29 000 to the U.S. as of the end of July; around 126 000 to the UK as of mid-September; around 87 000 to Canada as of mid-September.

<sup>19</sup> Communication on the Fourth Progress Report on the implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy (COM(2022) 252 final, 25 May 2022).

<sup>20</sup> [Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education | European Website on Integration \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/europa/en/press-room/news/2022-06-30-supporting-the-inclusion-of-displaced-children-from-ukraine-in-education)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/latest/news/education-support-ua-refugees.htm>

<sup>22</sup> <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>

<sup>23</sup> <https://nushub.org/en/>

<sup>24</sup> See also Commission staff working document “Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education: Considerations, key principles and practices for the school year 2022-2023” (SWD(2022) 185 final, 30 June 2022).

<sup>25</sup> A call under preparation for this year would support the creation of an open education digital environment, offering quality higher education for students fleeing from Ukraine or internally displaced students.

<sup>26</sup> A call was launched in September 2022 to help Ukrainian researchers continue their work in EU institutions.

efforts are undertaken in parallel to the EU's support to help school life resume in Ukraine itself (see section 7).

Beneficiaries of temporary protection also have the right to **access the labour market**. To ensure people can work at the level of their qualifications, the Commission issued a recommendation on the recognition of professional and academic qualifications<sup>27</sup> and presented guidance on access to the labour market, vocational education and training, and adult learning<sup>28</sup>. The Ukrainian language was added to the skills-profiling tool for third-country nationals<sup>29</sup>, the Europass portal<sup>30</sup> and the classification of skills and occupations<sup>31</sup>. Prepared together with the European Labour Authority, a Talent Pool Pilot on the EURES platform facilitates access of beneficiaries of temporary protection to the EU labour market. This allows jobseekers to register CVs, consult published vacancies and to be found by prospective employers. Working with the European Training Foundation, the Commission is finalising a project on the comparability of the Ukrainian and EU qualification frameworks. The EU Pact for Skills<sup>32</sup>, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs<sup>33</sup> and an initiative for women entrepreneurs<sup>34</sup> also support people displaced from Ukraine. The European Child Guarantee contributes to integrating children and promoting their parents' access to the labour market.

Temporary protection also offers the right to **medical care**, to include at least emergency care and essential treatment of illnesses. In practice, many Member States have gone beyond the formal requirements of the Directive and offered broader access<sup>35</sup>. A dedicated stakeholders' network<sup>36</sup> supports displaced patients and healthcare professionals, as well as civil society organisations. The Commission is at the same time working to assist the return of those wishing to return home after having undergone a medical treatment in the EU through the Medevac programme. The EU is also contributing to tackling the **mental health** consequences through psychosocial support under the EU4Health programme, from which Ukraine now benefits under the same conditions as EU and associated countries. In particular, the mental health support programme implemented through the International Federation of the Red Cross, initially set up to support those arriving in the Member States bordering Ukraine, will now be extended to cover all Member States, with funding to be doubled.

Clear and timely **information** through the EU Solidarity with Ukraine website<sup>37</sup> and a helpline in Ukrainian and Russian are part of a wide-ranging communication strategy to help ensure that beneficiaries know their rights, and understand the options for accommodation, jobs, education and healthcare. This has helped build confidence to move within the EU.

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<sup>27</sup> Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Recommendation (EU) 2022/554, 5 April 2022); and Guidelines on fast-track recognition of Ukrainian academic qualifications | European Education Area (europa.eu).

<sup>28</sup> Guidance for access to the labour market, vocational education and training and adult learning of people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (C(2022) 4050 final, 14 June 2022).

<sup>29</sup> Skills Profile (europa.eu).

<sup>30</sup> Europass portal: <https://europa.eu/europass/select-language?destination=/node/1>

<sup>31</sup> ESCO is available in Ukrainian: <https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en/news/esco-now-available-ukrainian-language>, 14 June 2022

<sup>32</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://wegate.eu/>

<sup>35</sup> [Report on access to health care in EU Member States Implementation of Temporary Protection Directive \(2001/55/EC\) and Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/382 \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>36</sup> [EU Health Policy Platform - EU Health Policy Platform \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>37</sup> [EU solidarity with Ukraine | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

### *Operational and financial support*

As well as the support offered to Member States through coordination and common guidelines, EU Agencies and rapidly recalibrated EU funding have been key in implementing temporary protection across the Union.

EU Agencies swiftly provided support on the ground to the Member States bordering Ukraine and to Moldova. The **European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)** deploys nearly 260 officers from the Standing Corps, as well as technical equipment, to Romania, Slovakia, Poland and Moldova, and is on alert for new deployments in the area, depending on needs. The **EU Agency for Asylum** has significantly expanded its operations, concluding new operating plans with Bulgaria, Czechia and Romania and amending others to provide additional support on the implementation of temporary protection. Over 60 experts and interpreters are currently deployed to the Member States and Moldova. **Europol** deploys operational teams in Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and in Moldova, to support national authorities in the early detection of criminal activities connected to the war, including migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

#### *Addressing funding needs*

The Commission has provided unprecedented flexibility in the use of **EU funding** to underpin the efforts of Member States, key organisations and civil society to support those in need.

The Commission has taken swift action to mobilise available resources from **Cohesion Policy Funds**. The Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) proposals<sup>38</sup> made in the immediate aftermath of the invasion allowed Member States to flexibly use resources still available under the 2014-2020 Cohesion envelope, including REACT-EU<sup>39</sup>, for measures supporting people fleeing from Ukraine. These were followed up by FAST-CARE<sup>40</sup>, covering the 2021-2027 period. These both help Member States to rapidly access as much funding as possible through increased pre-financing, 100% EU co-financing and simplified procedures.

Programmes adopted under the **European Social Fund (ESF)/ESF+** already concentrate significant efforts towards addressing the consequences of the war. The new flexibilities will be able to support education, employment, and social inclusion, as well as provide food and basic material assistance to those fleeing the invasion. The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** programmes also make an important contribution through investment addressing the challenges arising from the migratory needs.

Flexibility<sup>41</sup> introduced for the use of the 2014-2020 **Home Affairs Funds**<sup>42</sup> has also supported first-reception needs (emergency accommodation, food, healthcare etc.) and implementation of temporary protection (initial processing and registration activities, referral of persons to specialised support services etc.). Part of support should be channelled to civil society organisations and local and regional authorities, which play an

<sup>38</sup> Regulation (EU) 2022/562 of 6 April 2022 as regards Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE); Regulation 2022/613 of 12 April 2022 as regards increased pre-financing from REACT-EU resources.

<sup>39</sup> Regulation 2020/2221 of 23 December 2020 as regards additional resources and implementing arrangements to provide assistance for fostering crisis repair in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its social consequences and for preparing a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy (REACT-EU).

<sup>40</sup> Proposal for additional flexibility to address the consequences of the military aggression of the Russian Federation FAST (Flexible Assistance for Territories) – CARE (COM(2022) 325, 30 June 2022).

<sup>41</sup> Regulation 2022/585 of 6 April 2022 on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

<sup>42</sup> Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), Internal Security Fund–Borders and Visa (ISF-BV) and Internal Security Fund–Police (ISF-P).

essential role in delivering the emergency assistance.

Member States can also use the **Technical Support Instrument**<sup>43</sup> to enhance their capacity to welcome people fleeing Ukraine and to facilitate their integration.

For **longer-term needs**, significant funding is available under the 2021-2027 financial framework. Member States also have the possibility to include measures to support the integration of people with a migrant background, under both Cohesion Policy and national programmes under the Home Affairs funds.

Technical-level visits of the Commission services to all key Member States ensured support to the national authorities and a **one-stop-shop** was established to facilitate optimal and complementary use of available EU funds.

The EU commitment to protect those fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine is unwavering. The Commission intends to make full use of the possibilities available under the Temporary Protection Directive, and allow for the temporary protection granted to be extended for a further year until March 2024. This gives certainty and stability to millions. It is crucial that Member States ensure that beneficiaries continue to enjoy their rights, helping people to transition to more stable work and children to settle in education. The EU will continue to support Member States' efforts to ensure smooth and mutually beneficial **integration and inclusion** of new arrivals in EU societies.

Many people will need to move between EU and Ukraine several times, while sustainable support will also be needed for those who choose to return home permanently. The Commission will support the reintegration of Ukrainians who return home, as part of the wider relief and reconstruction commitment towards Ukraine. It will work with Member States and the Ukrainian authorities through the Solidarity Platform, to develop practical guidance and solutions so that those who go back home de-register or notify the competent authorities, safe in the knowledge that they can re-enter the EU easily and access again the rights that temporary protection affords.

### 3. MOVEMENTS ALONG THE ESTABLISHED ROUTES

In 2022 so far, irregular arrivals on the Eastern Mediterranean, Central Mediterranean, and Western Mediterranean/Atlantic routes have exceeded pre-pandemic figures, while remaining significantly below the levels of 2015<sup>44</sup>.

The **Central Mediterranean route** remains the most frequently used route. Almost all arrivals were to **Italy**, with **Malta** seeing a substantial decrease. Currently, Tunisians, Egyptians and Bangladeshi are the main nationalities along the route. Most departures continue to come from Libya and Tunisia, though Turkey now accounts for 16% of total irregular arrivals. 2022 also saw migratory movements from Lebanon directly to Italy.

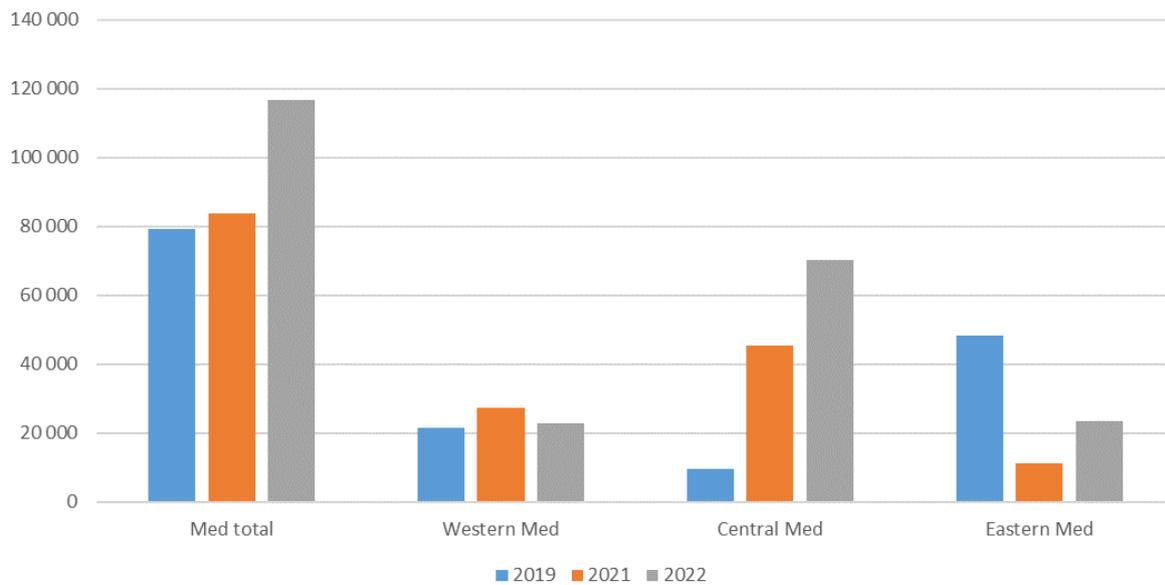
Irregular arrivals along the **Eastern Mediterranean route** doubled compared to 2021, mostly due to heightened migratory pressure in **Cyprus**, which currently accounts for roughly 60% of arrivals along the route. The number of arrivals in Greece remains lower than before the pandemic. Syrians, Nigerians and Turks are the main nationalities on this route.

On the **Western Mediterranean/Atlantic route**. Algeria and Morocco/Western Sahara remain the main countries of departure towards mainland Spain and the Canary Islands. Main countries of origin are Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

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<sup>43</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 February 2021 establishing a Technical Support Instrument.

<sup>44</sup> In 2015, there were 1 047 210 irregular border crossings recorded on the three main routes.



*Irregular border crossings on the three Mediterranean routes until 25 September<sup>45</sup> (source: Member States)*

Along the **Western Balkans route**, there were over 86 000 detected irregular border crossings in the first eight months of 2022, nearly three times more than in 2021 and more than ten times the total in the same period in 2019<sup>46</sup>. The main nationalities were Syrian, Afghan and Turkish. Factors influencing the high number of flows include movements by migrants already present in the region, as well as people arriving by air to Serbia due to visa-free regimes. There is a particularly strong increase on the route through North Macedonia and Serbia route. Given the sharp increase of arrivals, the Commission is monitoring the situation via the Blueprint Network with increased vigilance, with a first dedicated meeting on 4 October.

The situation at the **Eastern border with Belarus** continues to be stable, with a significantly lower number of irregular border crossings than at the peak of the instrumentalisation crisis in 2021<sup>47</sup>. However, there is recent evidence of a slight increase in attempts of irregular border crossings – still significantly below the peak in 2021 – at the border with Lithuania, Poland and Latvia<sup>48</sup>, while nationalities and routes appear to be shifting, with many arriving in Belarus after travelling legally to Russia.

The first seven months of the year saw a rise in **asylum applications** compared to the same period in 2021, a year when figures were depressed by the pandemic, from around 290 000

<sup>45</sup> Until 25 September 2022, the number of irregular arrivals along the Mediterranean routes was 116 610, a 39% increase compared to the same period in 2021 and a 47% increase compared to the same period in 2019. On the Central Mediterranean route, there were 70 088 irregular arrivals, a 55% increase compared to 2021 and a 634% increase compared to 2019. On the Eastern Mediterranean route, there were 23 601 irregular arrivals, a 111% increase compared to 2021 and a 51% decrease compared with 2019. On the Western Mediterranean/Atlantic route, there were 22 921 irregular arrivals, a 16% decrease compared to 2021 and a 7% increase compared to 2019. On this route, arrivals to the Canary Islands, amounting now to 12 347, are 5% lower than in 2021, almost 13 times higher than in 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Source: <https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-map/>

<sup>47</sup> So far in 2022, there have been over 800 irregular border crossings, compared to around 8 300 in 2021 and 19 500 prevented illegal entries recorded, compared to 48 200 in 2021, to Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The main nationalities of those apprehended in 2022 are so far Iraqis, Belarusians and Syrians.

<sup>48</sup> Between April and mid-July, the average of overall weekly prevented irregular border crossings was around 270. Since mid-July, this figure has increased to around 790 per week.

applications to almost 480 000<sup>49</sup>. This compares to 375 288 in the same period of 2019. Afghans, Syrians and Venezuelans lodged the most applications, and, as in 2021, most were received by Germany, France and Spain.

#### 4. MANAGING THE MIGRATORY SITUATION

Whilst the pressure may not be evenly distributed, no Member State has not felt the impact of the dramatic external events of the past year, whether arrivals from Ukraine, or the significant increase in irregular arrivals on other routes, or a combination of the two. Absolute figures do not always reflect the relative impact on individual Member States, given their size, absorption capacity or history of large numbers of arrivals.

##### *Supporting Member States on the ground*

The Commission and the EU Agencies have continued offering targeted expert support to the Member States in managing migration and reception challenges.

The Commission's **Task Force on Migration Management**, established in September 2020, has continued its work to improve the reception conditions on the **Greek islands**. Given the high number of arrivals on the Central and Western Mediterranean/Atlantic routes, the Task Force has also supported **Italy, Malta and Spain** in managing the migratory flows, as well as offering active support to **Cyprus**, and to the Member States bordering Belarus and Ukraine.

Over recent years, European solidarity with **Greece** has been unprecedented. This includes financial support and the presence of staff from the Commission and EU Agencies to support Greece in border management, asylum and return procedures, as well as operational planning and coordination. Progress has been made on the construction of new reception facilities on the Greek islands, with the new centres on Samos, Kos and Leros now established. EU Emergency Assistance is supporting the construction of Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centres on five islands. Thanks to transfers to the mainland and over 4 800 relocations to other Member States supported by EU funds, the total number of residents in camps across the Greek islands is now some 4 400 people (down from 42 000 in 2019). Reception conditions on the islands and on the mainland (shelter, hygiene, access to health and education for all children etc.) have been substantially improved and are in line with the European standards. More efficient asylum procedures have seen the backlog of applications halve in the first four months of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. Specific reception and care are provided for unaccompanied minors, new pre-integration measures for asylum seekers in reception centres such as language and skill development courses are in place, and new projects for integration of recognised refugees have been launched.

Commission support to **Spain** for the management of migratory flows, including through the contribution of staff from the Commission and EU Agencies (Frontex and EUAA), has focused on the reform of the national reception system, recognising the pressures stemming from the increased migratory pressure. Reception capacity for asylum seekers increased from some 10 000 places in September 2021 to some 18 000 in September 2022. EU funding has also supported the reform of the Asylum Office, with a major increase in recruitment. Further funding will support the reception system in Ceuta and in the Canary Islands.

Continued support to **Italy** includes coordinating with the Italian authorities the long-standing work of Frontex, the EU Agency for Asylum and Europol, including via the EU Regional Task Force in Catania, and the presence of EU staff on the ground, as well as EU funding.

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<sup>49</sup> Around 21 600 asylum applications were lodged in this period by Ukrainian nationals, the majority during a short-lived spike before the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive.

This goes hand in hand with the work together with the Italian authorities in addressing migratory flows from Libya and along the Central Mediterranean route.

As several Member States noted in 2022 an increasing number of asylum applicants from visa-required third countries benefiting from visa-free regimes in the **Western Balkan** region, the Commission is pursuing this issue with the relevant partners bilaterally, in the framework of the visa suspension mechanism, and under the enlargement process. It remains crucial that Western Balkan partners align their visa policies with the EU for the good functioning of the EU's visa free regime.

### ***Support to Cyprus***

Cyprus is facing a 122% increase in irregular arrivals compared to 2021, mainly due to arrivals from Turkey to the non-government controlled areas and then over the Green Line. Currently, Cyprus has the highest number of asylum seekers *per capita* in the EU. The Commission, with the EU Agencies, has stepped up support. A comprehensive action plan supports the implementation of a joint Memorandum of Understanding on migration management agreed between the Cypriot authorities, the Commission and the Agencies in February 2022. This support includes more than 160 experts deployed on the ground by the Commission, Frontex, Europol and the EU Asylum Agency combined.

Following the setting up of a tripartite Return Working Group with Frontex and the Commission, Cyprus is steadily increasing returns, including through joint return operations organised by Frontex. Cyprus now ranks third among Member States for non-EU nationals returned by commercial flights with the support of Frontex, with the escort of forced returns helped by the deployment of return specialists in March. These efforts are backed up by EU outreach to the countries of origin and transit most relevant for Cyprus, including Turkey, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan and Cameroon. A key issue in these contacts has been enrolments in fake “universities” in the non-government controlled areas of Cyprus, with those entering the island from Turkey on the basis of such enrolments and subsequently attempting to cross the Green Line. The Commission has engaged in intense outreach, in particular towards Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriot administration, to put an end to practices that facilitate such irregular arrivals. EU-funded information campaigns in countries of origin are complementing this work.

Funding for Cyprus under the 2021-2027 Home Affairs Funds includes support to the construction of a new open reception centre and pre-departure detention centre, with safe zones for vulnerable people, recreational and common areas, medical and quarantine areas.

As part of the gradual approach proposed by the French Presidency of the Council, particular attention was given to the solidarity dimension of the Pact. A large number of Member States endorsed a political **Solidarity Declaration**<sup>50</sup> in June 2022, establishing a **voluntary solidarity mechanism**, also paving the way for continued discussions on the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation. The signatory States<sup>51</sup> asked the Commission to coordinate the mechanism, including by assessing the needs of the Member States of first entry, and monitoring the respect of the commitments made. This aims to ensure adequate support for the Member States of first entry on the Central, Eastern and Western Mediterranean/Atlantic routes, while also taking account of the pressure on all Member States caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The mechanism is temporary, spanning one

<sup>50</sup> [First step in the gradual implementation of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum: modus operandi of a voluntary solidarity mechanism - French Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2022 \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>51</sup> Along with 18 Member States, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein are also signatories of the Declaration, for which the voluntary solidarity mechanism is also open.

year, and voluntary. Relocation is the preferred type of solidarity, but Member States can also provide financial contributions, under the coordination of the Commission. It is kept under active review and may be extended. While relocations concern persons in need of international protection and prioritise the most vulnerable, funding contributions can also be directed to projects in partner countries.

To coordinate the implementation of the mechanism, the Commission has established a Solidarity Platform on the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (**Solidarity Platform ‘Pact’**), which it chairs in cooperation with the Presidency of the Council. So far, 13 Member and associated States have agreed to offer relocations, and others have agreed to provide financial contributions. The first results of the Declaration are starting to be seen, with a transfer of asylum seekers already in August and more in the pipeline. The Commission is working with pledging countries, the EU Agency for Asylum and IOM to accelerate the pace of transfers. As the Declaration itself underlines, this temporary mechanism will provide useful lessons for the solidarity elements in the legislative proposals, and will be taken into account in the ongoing negotiations to put in place a permanent, structured and predictable solidarity mechanism.

### ***Funding***

The ongoing adoption of national programmes for 2021-2027 will allow Member States to draw on significant additional financial resources. The Home Affairs Funds give direct support to strengthening national asylum and migration systems and building long-term, sophisticated border management and surveillance solutions in line with EU values and Union law. By mid-September, 15 out of 78 Member States programmes had been adopted, with remaining programmes to be adopted by the end of the year. The Commission is progressing in line with the envisaged planning for the implementation of the Thematic Facility Work Programmes 2021-2022.

### ***EU Agencies’ support to Member States***

The **EU Agency for Asylum**, succeeding the European Asylum Support Office, stepped up its operations in January 2022 when the Regulation establishing the Agency entered into force<sup>52</sup>. The Agency currently supports 12 Member States<sup>53</sup> with their asylum, reception and temporary protection needs, deploying over around 1000 experts.

**Europol** also plays an essential part in working with Member States to ensure that migration management comes with the necessary degree of security. Europol currently supports nine Member States and Moldova with deployments of Europol officers and guest officers.

**Frontex** has more than 2000 **officers deployed**, as well as **technical equipment**, at land, sea and air external borders and in support of returns. To address persistent capability gaps, resulting in shortfalls in planned deployments, it is crucial that Member States fulfil their obligations and contribute their share.

#### ***Frontex***

Recent events have confirmed Frontex’ essential role in assisting Member States, on border management, surveillance and returns. It has also extended its work with partner countries, including through formal status agreements (*see Section 7*).

As Frontex’s role has expanded, it has undergone a challenging transition process. While protecting the EU external border, it is imperative that any measures taken are in full compliance with the **Charter of Fundamental Rights and EU values**. The Commission takes allegations of inappropriate conduct of European border and coast guards very

<sup>52</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum.

<sup>53</sup> Bulgaria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, Greece, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Romania.

seriously, and follows up with the Member States concerned, while monitoring the progress made by the Agency in the implementation of all relevant recommendations. The Commission welcomes the Agency's reinforced framework for fundamental rights monitoring, with the Fundamental Rights Officer and Deputy now in place. By November 2022, the total number of fundamental rights monitors will reach 46. In June 2022, the Fundamental Rights Officer published an annual report for 2021, with overview of the monitoring and advisory activities<sup>54</sup>. The Fundamental Rights Officer also reports regularly to the Management Board.

As provided in the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation<sup>55</sup>, the Commission will conduct an **evaluation** by 5 December 2023, looking at the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and coherence of the actions undertaken by Frontex, and their EU added value, including the governance structure of the Agency and the oversight by the Management Board. In the lead up to the evaluation, the Commission will launch a dialogue with Parliament and Council on the Agency's governance.

### *Unauthorised movements*

Secondary movements within the EU undermine the credibility and integrity of the Common European Asylum System. While it is difficult to collect reliable data on such movements, Eurodac can provide data on departures and destinations, and can show if a person registered in one Member State had already registered at least one asylum application in another Member State<sup>56</sup>. Similarly, it can show if, following the registration of an asylum application in one Member State, a person was apprehended as staying irregularly in another Member State<sup>57</sup>.

In June 2022, the Member States, the Commission and the EU Asylum Agency agreed to work on a **roadmap in order to ensure better implementation** of transfers under the Dublin III Regulation<sup>58</sup>. The roadmap will set out the practical steps Member States should commit to take to overcome the main obstacles Member States currently face with transfers. The first meeting of the expert group formed of volunteer Member States took place on 8 September 2022. The roadmap is expected to be finalised and endorsed by the end of the year.

The Pact aims to bring **structural solutions** and reduce incentives for unauthorised movements, with more accurate and complete data. In the Solidarity Declaration, Member States stressed their commitment to tackle secondary movements by increasing the pace of Dublin transfers<sup>59</sup>, while acknowledging the importance of ensuring that beneficiaries of international protection have access to legal mobility between Member States.

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<sup>54</sup> [Frontex Fundamental Rights Office releases annual report \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/press-room/en/infographic-1000-frontex-fundamental-rights-office-releases-annual-report)

<sup>55</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard.

<sup>56</sup> In the first half of 2022, 166 864 asylum applications registered by national authorities generated a "Category 1 - Category 1 hit" in Eurodac, meaning that the person had already registered at least one asylum application in another Member State/ Associated State.

<sup>57</sup> In the first half of 2022, 83 339 searches in Eurodac in connection with fingerprints of illegal stayers (Category 3 data in Eurodac) generated hits with Category 1 data, meaning that, following a registration of an asylum application in one Member State/ Associated State, a person was apprehended as illegal stayer in another Member State/ Associated State.

<sup>58</sup> Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast).

<sup>59</sup> In case a person applies for international protection in a Member State that is not responsible for examining that application pursuant to the criteria set out in the Dublin III Regulation, the Member State can request a transfer to the Member State that is responsible for examining the application.

The proposal to amend the **Schengen Borders Code**<sup>60</sup> introduces a new transfer procedure to address unauthorised movements and allows Member States to revise existing or to conclude new bilateral readmission agreements between themselves. Whereas the reintroduction of internal border control should remain a measure of last resort, the proposal also provides for the possibility to justify the reintroduction of internal border controls due to large-scale unauthorised movements.

## 5. EXTERNAL BORDER MANAGEMENT AND RETURN

External border management is a core part of the approach of the Pact. It is also one of the priorities of the **Schengen Strategy**<sup>61</sup>, now taken forward through an annual Schengen cycle - a new governance model for the Schengen area - and with progress tracked in the first report on the State of Schengen<sup>62</sup>, adopted in May.

A key tool for strong border management is **European integrated border management**<sup>63</sup>. The Commission has consulted the Parliament and the Council on the future direction, calling for a strong and cohesive operational approach on border control, search and rescue, risk analysis, inter-agency, EU and international cooperation, return, fundamental rights, research and innovation, and training.

The Commission, eu-LISA and the Member States have stepped up efforts to develop and implement the new **IT architecture and interoperability**. This will give border guards improved means to control entry into the EU and to manage risks related to security, health or irregular migration. The Schengen Information System (SIS) is the largest and most widely used information-sharing system for security and border management in Europe. From autumn 2022, information on return decisions will be shared in the system, to improve enforcement. New information systems, such as the Entry/Exit System (EES), will help improve the quality and efficiency of controls and the detection of document and identity fraud. The European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) will help identify any security or irregular migration risks from visa-exempt visitors before they reach the EU borders. Interoperability will further help to correctly identify persons whose data are stored in these IT systems, and thus to combat identity fraud. As set out in the Commission Report on the Implementation of the Interoperability Regulations<sup>64</sup>, it is essential that eu-LISA and Member States catch up on the delays and ensure that the IT systems for border and migration management become fully operational by the end of 2023.

External border management would also be facilitated by the Commission proposal on the **digitalisation of visa procedures**<sup>65</sup>. Its main goal is to modernise the lodging and processing of visa applications, making them more efficient and harmonised among Member States, reinforcing both security and the EU's attractiveness as a travel destination.

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<sup>60</sup> Proposal for a Regulation on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (COM/2021/891 final, 14 December 2021).

<sup>61</sup> Communication "A strategy towards a fully functioning and resilient Schengen area" (COM(2021) 277 final, 2 June 2021).

<sup>62</sup> Communication "State of Schengen Report 2022" (COM(2022) 301 final/2, 24 May 2022).

<sup>63</sup> Policy document developing a multiannual strategic policy for European integrated border management (COM(2022) 303 final, 24 May 2022).

<sup>64</sup> Report on the state of play of preparations for the full implementation of the Interoperability Regulations (COM(2021) 688 final, 10 November 2021).

<sup>65</sup> Proposal for a Regulation as regards the digitalisation of the visa procedure (COM(2022) 658 final, 27 April 2022).

### *Actions to step up returns*

The **common EU system for return** is taking shape and important steps have been taken to build the foundation for more efficient, sustainable and humane returns from the EU. While working on the structural reform of the migration and asylum policy, it is also important to ensure the full respect of existing EU law. On 29 September 2022, the Commission adopted a series of infringement cases related to the non-compliance of Member States' legislation and practice with EU law standards and procedures in the area of return.

A particular theme of action has been to step up the rate of returns from the EU, notably with the lifting of restrictions triggered by the pandemic. The return of people with no right to stay in the EU is an indispensable part of a fair and effective migration policy. After a Covid-related drop in 2020, the effective return rate increased to 21% in 2021, while remaining below the 2019 level of 29%. In absolute terms, over 70 000 third-country nationals returned following an order to leave in 2021, around half the number that returned in 2019. The EU and Member States need to continue work both to ensure return procedures work correctly inside the EU, and to enhance cooperation on readmission with partners worldwide. Such cooperation has proved fruitful in enhancing returns to countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, and helped those Member States most directly affected by irregular migration flows, such as Greece, Malta, and Cyprus.

Since June, the **Return Coordinator** announced in the Pact has been steering a **High-level Network** including Member State representatives and Frontex. The first meeting of the Network took place on 8 September 2022. To guide their joint work, the Coordinator and the Network will define and implement a common and coherent approach and an operational strategy on returns, which is under preparation. This operational strategy will identify practical priority activities for addressing shortcomings and increasing mutual coherence. The result will be to further develop national policy and legal frameworks – including better links between asylum and return procedures in practice – removing the barriers hampering returns, reinforcing national capacities, addressing knowledge gaps and improving cooperation between Member States and with Frontex.

This strategic approach is backed up with practical action. First, **Frontex** has established itself as a key actor in the area of return, significantly stepping up the support it provides to Member States in all phases of the process – in particular on voluntary return and reintegration. So far in 2022, Frontex had coordinated 210 **return operations** for 7 210 non-EU nationals through charter planes organised by the Agency, and 10 115 through commercial flights. 2022 saw the first two Frontex-led operations to return 40 irregular migrants to Albania and 40 to Nigeria. Since April 2022, Frontex also offers support for reintegration in 24 countries of origin. The high expectations and growing role of this Agency in support of Member States means that clear priorities need to be identified and resources strategically allocated.

The April 2021 **EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration**<sup>66</sup> has been taken forward. The framework, structures and tools are now largely in place to ensure that voluntary return and reintegration are streamlined in the common EU system for return. Early signs from the figures reported for 2021 suggest that uptake of voluntary return is increasing. In addition, for the first time, in 2021 more than half of the returns by scheduled flights facilitated by Frontex were voluntary (57% in 2021, 58% so far in 2022, up from 38.5% in 2020). Key tools such as the Frontex Joint Reintegration Services, a common framework for reintegration providers and training for return counsellors, are now in place to improve the quality of the support provided to irregular migrants willing to return. Work needs to

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<sup>66</sup> Communication on the EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration (COM(2021) 120 final, 27 April 2021).

continue on this path to make full use of these new tools, in full coordination with the European External Action Service and EU Delegations in third countries, and to ensure that voluntary return and reintegration become a central part of Member States' return systems.

Finally, return and **readmission** are now firmly anchored in the new comprehensive approach to deepening partnerships with third countries on migration set out in the Pact. Section 7 below sets out how migration is becoming embedded in modernised, comprehensive partnerships worldwide. Readmission is being addressed as an essential part of relations so that progress can be made across a variety of issues of mutual interest.

The Commission has stepped up the political focus on readmission in external relations, by relaunching discussions during high level bilateral contacts and missions, and coordinating relevant messages with Member States. It is using all the tools at its disposal to underline the importance of return as one integral part of migration policy. The Commission and the Member States have assessed the existing mandates for negotiations of EU Readmission Agreements and discussed a pragmatic, tailor-made and flexible approach to make concrete progress in ongoing negotiations. The Commission is actively pursuing this approach, and the European External Action Service and EU Delegations raise readmission in their contacts with key partner countries on migration.

The implementation of the mechanism set up by Article 25a of the Visa Code<sup>67</sup> provides a structured approach to improving cooperation on readmission with third countries by setting a framework to look at this in the context of the overall state of relations and linking cooperation on readmission with the EU visa policy (see Section 7 below).

The international situation has also required action by the EU to reverse previous visa facilitation. On 9 November 2021, the Council adopted the Commission proposal on the partial suspension of **EU-Belarus** visa facilitation<sup>68</sup>. A partial suspension of the **EU-Russia** Visa Facilitation Agreement<sup>69</sup> was adopted on 25 February 2022, targeting holders of Russian diplomatic passports, Russian government officials and business people. On 9 September 2022 the Visa Facilitation Agreement with Russia was suspended<sup>70</sup>, and the Commission issued guidelines<sup>71</sup> on granting of visas and handling of existing ones. The Commission has issued guidance<sup>72</sup> on arrivals of Russians in the context of the escalation of the war.

## 6. ADVANCING ON THE PACT

Recent migration-related developments, coupled with the continuous pressure stemming from irregular migration on several routes, show a sustainable and fair EU migration system is indispensable. The Pact on Migration and Asylum is ever more relevant.

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<sup>67</sup> Regulation 810/2009 of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code).

<sup>68</sup> Council Decision 2021/1940 of 9 November 2021 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Belarus on the facilitation of the issuance of visas.

<sup>69</sup> Council Decision 2022/333 of 25 February 2022 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation.

<sup>70</sup> Council Decision 2022/1500 of 9 September 2022 on the suspension in whole of the application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation.

<sup>71</sup> Communication from the Commission "Providing guidelines on general visa issuance in relation to Russian applicants following Council Decision (EU) 2022/1500 of 9 September 2022 on the suspension in whole of the application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation" (COM (2022) 6596, 9 September 2022).

<sup>72</sup> Communication updating guidelines on general visa issuance in relation to Russian applicants and providing guidelines on controls of Russian citizens at the external borders (C(2022) 7111 final, 30 September 2022).

The political agreement reached on 7 September 2022 on a **joint roadmap between the European Parliament and the rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU**<sup>73</sup> lays the groundwork for an increased dialogue on the Pact, providing impetus for the conclusion of negotiations by February 2024 on all pending legislative files related to asylum and migration management. Negotiations from autumn 2022 should ensure equivalent and balanced progress, and the follow-up work involving the members of the European Parliament Asylum Contact Group and the rotating Presidencies of the Council will be key in this respect.

On the Council side, the gradual approach of the French Presidency, implying an equivalent level of commitment by Member States in both areas of solidarity and responsibility, has brought significant progress towards the adoption of the full legislative framework. The Council adopted negotiating mandates on the **Screening** and **Eurodac**<sup>74</sup> legislative proposals. Advancing on these files is crucial for strengthened protection of the EU external border to alleviate pressure on the Schengen area. The new Eurodac will help track unauthorised movements and irregular migration, improve the prospects for returns, record the arrivals following search-and-rescue operations, and complete the interoperability framework. The Screening proposal will ensure fast identification of the correct procedure – asylum or return – at the border or within the territory. The Commission welcomes the Czech Presidency’s work on solidarity and the Asylum Procedures Regulation. Member States are encouraged to find agreement on the **Asylum and Migration Management** and the **Asylum Procedure Regulations**, as well as on the proposals that address various forms of crises in the field of migration<sup>75</sup>.

On the Parliament side, the rapporteurs presented draft reports on all legislative proposals that accompanied the Pact in 2020, as well as on the recast of the Return Directive proposed in 2018. The European Parliament Asylum Contact Group is helping in the work towards swift adoption of all reports, in line with the commitment taken in the joint roadmap. Starting negotiations on **Eurodac**, the **Asylum and Migration Management** and the **Asylum Procedures Regulations** and finalising the work on the well-advanced files proposed in 2016 as part of the broader asylum reform would bring immediate benefits in terms of enhancing migration management and giving a coherent EU response to evolving challenges. In particular, the provisional agreement on the **Union Resettlement Framework Regulation**<sup>76</sup> reached in 2018 needs to be taken forward, to give the EU a stable and predictable framework for resettlement and humanitarian admission policies. Provisional agreement between Parliament and Council was also reached in June 2018 on the recast of the **Reception Conditions Directive**<sup>77</sup> and the **Qualification Regulation**<sup>78</sup>. Work should also advance on the new legislative framework on return, with a view to reach an agreement on the proposal for a recast of the **Return Directive**, as set out in the Pact. Negotiations should restart to address the outstanding points in these files.

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<sup>73</sup> France, Czechia, Sweden, Spain and Belgium.

<sup>74</sup> Proposal for a Regulation introducing a screening of third country nationals at the external borders (COM(2020) 612 final, 23 September 2020), and Amended proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of “Eurodac” (COM/2020/614 final, 23 September 2020).

<sup>75</sup> Proposals for a Crisis and *Force Majeure* Regulation (COM (2020) 613 final, 23 September 2020), and the Regulation to address situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum (COM(2021) 890 final, 14 December 2021).

<sup>76</sup> Proposal for a Regulation establishing a Union Resettlement Framework (COM(2016) 468 final, 13 July 2016).

<sup>77</sup> Proposal for a Directive laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) (COM(2016) 465 final, of 13 July 2016).

<sup>78</sup> Proposal for a Regulation on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted (COM/2016/0466 final, 13 July 2016).

In December 2021, the Commission proposed a **Regulation to address situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum**<sup>79</sup>. This would set a stable framework under the EU asylum and return rules clarifying how Member States could manage such situations in full respect of EU law, fundamental rights and international obligations. It would end the need to resort to *ad hoc* measures in future situations of instrumentalisation of migrants, as defined in the revised Schengen Borders Code. The Commission invites Parliament and Council to step up their work on this proposal, which completes the comprehensive approach to migration and asylum put forward in the Pact, and examine it alongside the proposal on a Crisis and *force majeure* Regulation.

The Commission is also looking forward to the start of negotiations between Parliament and Council on the proposal of December 2021 to amend the **Schengen Borders Code**, following the adoption of the Council's negotiation mandate in June.

Two to three million non-EU nationals already come legally to the EU every year. An ambitious and sustainable **legal migration policy** is a key component of the Pact's comprehensive approach. The **Skills and Talent package**<sup>80</sup> aims to address labour market needs linked to current demographic trends and skill shortages in the EU and prepare for future needs. The package includes legal, operational and policy initiatives to benefit the EU's economy, strengthen cooperation and partnerships with non-EU countries and improve long-term migration management. Forward-looking policies for legal migration to the EU in the medium to the longer term will be focused around three areas of action: care, youth and innovation. These policies aim to attract skills and talent in sectors where there are pressing labour shortages and needs. The recast of the **Directive on long-term residents**<sup>81</sup> will further improve the rights and the intra-EU mobility of those migrants who are already well integrated in our societies, while the recast of the **Single Permit Directive**<sup>82</sup> will further streamline and simplify the admission procedures for the benefit of employers, migration authorities and migrants themselves, and improve the protection of non-EU workers. The start of the discussions in Parliament and Council on these proposals will contribute to establishing a solid framework to attract new talent to the EU. In addition, as announced by President von der Leyen in her State of the Union address, 2023 will be the European Year of Skills. The Commission will work on targeted action on recognition of qualifications of third country nationals to further help to attract talents to the European labour market from third countries.

An ambitious and sustainable legal migration policy also builds on the correct transposition, as well as effective application and **enforcement**, of the legislation in place. The Commission will continue to step up its efforts in cooperation with the Member States to ensure the proper and effective implementation, application and enforcement of the Seasonal Workers Directive<sup>83</sup> and the Employers Sanctions Directive<sup>84</sup>. To better protect third-country nationals – including Ukrainians – from labour exploitation, the Commission cooperates with the

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<sup>79</sup> Proposal for a Regulation addressing situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum (COM(2021) 890 final, 14 July 2021).

<sup>80</sup> Communication "Attracting skills and talent to the EU" (COM/2022/657 final, 27 April 2022).

<sup>81</sup> Proposal for a Directive concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents (recast) (COM(2022) 650 final, 27 April 2022). The negotiations on this proposal should also take into account the proposal from the Commission amending the Directive to allow for long-term residence for beneficiaries of internal protection after three years in the proposal for an Asylum and Migration Management Regulation.

<sup>82</sup> Proposal for a Directive on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State (recast) (COM(2022) 655 final, 27 April 2022).

<sup>83</sup> Directive 2014/36/EU of 26 February 2014 on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers.

<sup>84</sup> Directive 2009/52/EC of 18 June 2009 providing for minimum standards on sanctions and measures against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals.

European Labour Authority, including in the European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work. The Commission proposed a Regulation on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market<sup>85</sup>.

## 7. WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

### *Engagement with key partners on migration and forced displacement*

The external dimension is an essential component of the comprehensive approach put forward in the Pact. Over the past year, the EU has intensified its engagement with partner countries and stepped up its work to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation in the area of migration, including in the multilateral context. To build lasting cooperation, it is crucial for the EU and its Member States to speak with one voice with the partner countries in a Team Europe approach, as well as to provide tailor-made support addressing their needs. Partnerships span the full range of cooperation on migration and forced displacement. The partnership approach equally relies on partner countries' engagement with the EU and Member States in a true spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

Responding to the European Council Conclusions of 24-25 June 2021<sup>86</sup>, comprehensive **action plans** are in place to enhance cooperation with ten key partner countries, building on earlier progress and setting out further concrete objectives, timelines and support measures to enhance international cooperation. These action plans, built on discussions with Member States, aim to ensure coordination and synergy of actions, projects and resources, focusing on operational cooperation with individual partner countries.

As part of the gradual approach and to build strong coherence between the EU's and Member States' bilateral work on the external dimension of the Pact, the French Presidency of the Council launched a new coordinating body in the Council: the **Operational Coordination Mechanism for the External Dimension of Migration (Mocadem)**. Together with the strategic discussions in the **External Migration Working Party (EMWP)**, Mocadem's operational focus helped to consolidate a common strategic tailor-made approach towards specific partners. Work continues to ensure coordination and complementarity between activities funded by Member States and EU funds. The Commission and Member States share information and coordinate their approach on the regional and bilateral actions they plan to finance in the area of migration and forced displacement, in line with the political objectives set in the EMWP and Mocadem, and with the agreed Multiannual Indicative Programmes, in the **Coordination Group on Migration under the NDICI-Global Europe and the Member States bilateral cooperation instruments**.

**In visits and political dialogue** this year, a comprehensive and balanced approach has placed migration and forced displacement in the context of our broader bilateral and regional relations, in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Niger, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the Western Balkans, the African Union, as well as the Rabat, Prague and Khartoum processes.

### *Successful outreach – countering the instrumentalisation of migrants by Belarus*

Timely, resolute and united EU outreach to partners can bring impressive results, as demonstrated by the response to the Belarusian regime's instrumentalisation of migrants. The High Representative, Vice-President Schinas and several Commissioners had high-level contacts with countries of origin and transit, as well as with airline companies and

<sup>85</sup> Proposal for a Regulation on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market (COM(2022) 453 final, 14 September 2022).

<sup>86</sup> [2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

civil aviation authorities, to build a coalition to counter this hybrid attack. In coordination with high-level outreach by the Member States, Vice-President Schinas visited Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Joint demarches were made by EU Delegations with Member States, and by Member States acting bilaterally, in Kazakhstan, India, Georgia, Ukraine, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The result was a substantial reduction of flights to Minsk, travel limitations for certain nationalities at key airports and a significant number of returns and repatriations, notably due to the impressive efforts of Iraq. The Commission adapted ongoing projects to spread awareness of the dangers of instrumentalisation (for example, in Iraq, Turkey, and Syria) and worked with IOM to support the voluntary return and reintegration of migrants from Belarus to their countries of origin.

The EU also acted swiftly to protect both the instrumentalised people and the Union's external borders<sup>87</sup>. The Commission and EU Agencies worked closely with the Lithuanian, Polish and Latvian authorities to reinforce border protection, fight migrant smuggling, strengthen asylum and reception capacity and improve returns. The EU border with Belarus needs continued vigilance. The proposed norms on sanctions for airline operators remain relevant and need to be adopted quickly.

The significant flows across the Mediterranean have required continued attention from the EU in 2022. Engagement with **Morocco** this year confirmed a strong joint commitment to continue the dialogue and cooperation in all areas related to migration, including the regional dimension, return, Talent Partnerships and fighting migrant smuggling<sup>88</sup>. In **Libya**, despite the challenging political environment, the EU is engaging to address fundamental needs in terms of protection of vulnerable migrants and refugees, and the combatting of migrant smuggling, including through CSDP missions. EU engagement with **Niger** and **Mauritania** also demonstrated clear willingness on both sides to address migratory flows and to cooperate with the EU. Trilateral cooperation between the **African Union (AU), the EU and the UN** has been particularly effective in addressing protection issues in the country over the last five years and work is now under way to reinvigorate cooperation.

At the February 2022 **European Union (EU)-African Union (AU) Summit**, leaders agreed on an enhanced partnership for migration and mobility, as set out in the Summit Joint Declaration (A Joint Vision for 2030)<sup>89</sup>. Throughout the year, partners have also deepened their cooperation in the context of the AU-EU Continent-to-Continent Migration and Mobility Dialogue.

The EU welcomed the adoption of the Progress Declaration on the implementation of the **Global Compact for Migration** at the May 2022 International Migration Review Forum.

The EU is working in unprecedentedly strong cooperation with the **United States and Canada**, through a series of high-level dialogues on migration-related issues from Afghanistan to Latin America, in addition to the close cooperation on support to those fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine (see Section 2 above).

### ***Protecting forcibly displaced people and supporting host countries***

By the end of 2021, those displaced by war, violence, persecution, human rights abuses, stood at over 89.3 million, up 8% compared to a year earlier and well over double the figure of 10 years ago. Since then, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and other emergencies, in cases

<sup>87</sup> See Joint Communication "Responding to state-sponsored instrumentalisation of migrants at the EU external border" (JOIN(2021) 32 final, 23 November 2021).

<sup>88</sup> According to the Spanish authorities, in 2022 as of September, the Moroccan authorities intercepted about 25% of the departures.

<sup>89</sup> [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54412/final\\_declaration-en.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54412/final_declaration-en.pdf)

like Afghanistan, Syria, Venezuela, and South Sudan, has pushed the figure over 100 million. In line with the EU's global commitments, engagement in this area has moved progressively from a short-term humanitarian approach to a longer-term developmental approach, promoting durable solutions for forcibly displaced people and their host communities, in line with the humanitarian/development/peace nexus<sup>90</sup>. The EU is a leading global actor and donor in improving the protection and assistance to forcibly displaced people and their hosts, saving lives and laying the foundations for durable solutions.

- *Support to internally displaced persons in Ukraine*

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine remains alarming, with an enormous toll on civilians, notably in the south and east. 17.7 million people are in need, over a third of the total population. Despite difficult access, the international humanitarian response has helped over 13.3 million people across the country, through good cooperation between the EU, United Nations, international NGOs and international organisations. EU humanitarian funding has also supported those who fled to Moldova.

The EU is drawing on all possible means to help alleviate the situation inside Ukraine. The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) has run its largest ever operation delivering by the end of September over 68 500 tonnes of assistance, including shelter units. 300 generators and fuel were delivered, and preparations for the coming winter needs are under way. Almost 1 500 patients with severe conditions have been evacuated to the EU.

The EU is also supporting Ukraine's Fast Recovery Plan for schools, most recently, with a commitment to fund €100 million urgent repairs of schools and kindergartens.

- *Support to forcibly displaced people and host communities in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq*

After eleven years, the **Syrian crisis** continues to affect regional stability, leaving many in need of assistance. The EU and its Member States remain committed to support efforts for a political solution in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 2254<sup>91</sup>, allowing displaced Syrians to return home when safe, voluntary and dignified conditions are in place<sup>92</sup>. The Commission's priority remains to promote a transition in Syria, while mitigating the impact of the crisis, through direct support to the population. All support is implemented under strict operational parameters. The EU continues showing solidarity with **Lebanon** maintaining its level of support for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese alike, ensuring access to basic services, while also helping host communities, as well as monitoring departures. The EU also provides support to help **Jordan** cope with the health and socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, and actions linked to the Syrian crisis. Support for the integration of Syrian refugees into national systems is also foreseen in Iraq.

The March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement remains the key framework governing EU-Turkey cooperation in the area of migration, and the EU underlines the importance of implementing all commitments under the Statement. The EU continues in particular to urge Turkey to resume return operations from Greece, in line with the commitment taken under the Statement, as well as to prevent irregular migration to EU Member States. Turkey is hosting one of the largest refugee populations worldwide, some 4 million people, including 3.7 million Syrians. The EU continues to assist Turkey's efforts and is mobilising additional funding for refugees and their host communities. The Facility for Refugees in Turkey will transition from humanitarian to development assistance for education and basic needs by early 2023. The EU has deepened its migration dialogue with Turkey, including through the

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<sup>90</sup> EU action takes place in line with the Communication "Lives in Dignity" (COM(2016)234, 26 April 2016) and the Global Compact on Refugees.

<sup>91</sup> <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2254>

<sup>92</sup> In line with UNHCR's Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Refugee Return to Syria.

first EU-Turkey High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Security on 12 October 2021 in Ankara, where discussions highlighted common challenges and the mutual need to work on the prevention of new migratory routes and security threats.

- ***Support to displaced people in other parts of the world***

Despite the massive call on available funds for the Ukraine crisis and to assist Syrian refugees in Turkey and the region, the EU remains committed to helping forcibly displaced people and their host communities across the globe – for Venezuelans hosted in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, for displaced people in and from Myanmar, for internally displaced people and refugees hosted in Iraq, Ethiopia and Sudan, and for Afghans hosted in Iran and Pakistan.

The EU is an active member of the **regional support platforms**<sup>93</sup> launched at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, providing political and financial support, through humanitarian assistance and development cooperation.

In **Africa**, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration continued to respond to the needs of stranded and vulnerable migrants in 26 African countries, assisting those who are *en route*, offering voluntary return assistance to those who decide to return, and supporting returnees and their communities in the reintegration process. The **Emergency Transit Mechanism** continues to provide a safe space and long-term solutions for the most vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees in Libya, allowing for their evacuation to Niger and Rwanda with a view to onward resettlement to Member States and other partners.

In **Asia**, the EU has assumed a political and financial leadership role on regional displacement from **Afghanistan**, including through the Chairmanship of the Core Group of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees Support platform<sup>94</sup>, through support to the over 5.9 million Afghans estimated to be internally displaced in Afghanistan, as well as to those displaced and their host communities in **Iran and Pakistan**. In **Myanmar**, the EU has provided humanitarian aid funding in 2022 to address the immediate needs of the most vulnerable, in conflict affected communities, and both those internally displaced, as well as the around one million Rohingya refugees living in the camps and settlements in Bangladesh.

Building on the strengthened dialogue following the Belarusian regime's instrumentalisation of Iraqi migrants, the EU and **Iraq** are working together on the reintegration of returnees and displaced populations.

***Building economic opportunity and addressing root causes of irregular migration***

EU **development cooperation** has both a medium- and long-term impact on addressing the structural root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. Actions in areas such as good governance, conflict prevention and climate mitigation, as well as socio-economic development, can have a direct consequence for migration. Through the **Global Gateway**<sup>95</sup>, the EU is contributing to narrowing the global investment gap, supporting global economic recovery and accompanying the twin green and digital transitions beyond European borders. Dedicated initiatives delivered as part of the Global Gateway target specific regions, such as the Southern Neighbourhood, Africa, and Latin America<sup>96</sup>, stimulating long-term socio-economic recovery and sustainable development in general. There are also actions directed specifically at opportunities and employability for migrants and host communities.

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<sup>93</sup> Intergovernmental Authority on Development in the Horn of Africa; Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework in Central America; and Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees.

<sup>94</sup> <https://ssar-platform.org/support-platform>

<sup>95</sup> Joint Communication The Global Gateway (JOIN(2021) 30 final, 1 December 2021).

<sup>96</sup> Examples include the Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours (see SWD(2021) 23 final, 9 February 2021) in the wider framework of the New Agenda for the Mediterranean (see JOIN(2021) 2 final, 9 February 2021), the EU-African Union Global Gateway Investment Package and the future EU-Latin America and Caribbean Global Gateway Investment Package.

## ***Partnerships to strengthen migration governance and management***

Partnerships with key third countries need to reflect a balance of their needs and EU interests. Over the past year there has been progress in addressing issues of returns, readmission, border management and smuggling networks.

**Operational cooperation on border management** is being pursued with a growing number of key partners. European Border and Coast Guard status agreements<sup>97</sup> with Albania, Montenegro and Serbia enable Frontex to deploy teams of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps and technical equipment on the territory of these partner countries. This is having a direct impact on addressing irregular migration and organised crime. A status agreement is under way with North Macedonia<sup>98</sup> and the Commission is preparing to recommend a mandate to negotiate a status agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. A status agreement with Moldova was negotiated and entered into force in record time. The mandates for negotiation of status agreements with Senegal and Mauritania<sup>99</sup> are the first with partner countries in Africa, and aim to support border management, fight migrant smuggling and reduce irregular migration on the Atlantic route. A working arrangement between Frontex and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission EUCAP Sahel Niger is already in place. Frontex and Niger are also close to agreeing a working arrangement. Working arrangements are being negotiated with EUBAM Libya and EUAM Ukraine.

**CSDP missions and operations** continue to make an important contribution where the fight against irregular migration or migrant smuggling is part of their mandates. Civilian missions in Libya, Niger, Mali, Iraq, Kosovo, Palestine support host State authorities in their efforts to strengthen their capacities in the field of border management, to address irregular migration and migrant smuggling, as well as security issues such as trafficking in human beings.

As mentioned above, **return and readmission** is an essential aspect of relations on migration management. The annual assessment under Article 25a of the Visa Code contributes to identifying specific issues in cooperation on readmission with third countries and to ensuring that these are regularly addressed, through targeted engagement on readmission, or as part of broader dialogues on migration. This enhanced engagement helps to ensure that progress on readmission and on the other areas of the partnerships with third countries proceed in parallel. Following the adoption of the first assessment report on readmission cooperation for the year 2019, the Commission proposed to the Council to adopt temporary restrictive measures on short-stay visas for Bangladesh, Iraq and The Gambia<sup>100</sup> in view of their insufficient levels of cooperation on readmission, and taking into account the EU's overall relations with these countries. In October 2021 the Council adopted temporary restrictive measures for The Gambia. These are still in force, but important steps forward have been taken, by lifting the moratorium on forced returns (March 2022). Following enhanced engagement with Bangladesh and Iraq, the Council decided not to impose measures on Bangladesh, in view of progress made. Cooperation with Iraq remains under scrutiny. In December 2021, the Commission adopted its second assessment of the cooperation on readmission for the year 2020, and with the High Representative stepped up engagement with several partner countries where insufficient cooperation on readmission required further action. The results

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<sup>97</sup> Under these agreements Frontex has executive powers but operates under the guidance of the partner countries' authorities.

<sup>98</sup> On 29 July 2022, the Council adopted Council Decision (EU) 2022/1350 authorising the opening of negotiations on a status agreement on operational activities carried out by Frontex in North Macedonia.

<sup>99</sup> Council Decision 2022/1169 of 4 July 2022 authorising the opening of negotiations on a status agreement with the Republic of Senegal and Council Decision 2022/1168 of 4 July 2022 authorising the opening of negotiations on a status agreement with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

<sup>100</sup> Proposals for Council implementing decisions with respect to Bangladesh (COM(2021)412 final, 15 July 2021); The Gambia (COM(2021)413 final, 15 July 2021); and Iraq (COM(2021)414 final, 15 July 2021).

of this engagement will inform the Commission's decision on possible visa measures, taking into consideration the EU's overall relations with the third countries concerned. The adoption of the third assessment report is foreseen at the end of the year.

On 6 April 2022, the Commission proposed to exempt **Qatari and Kuwaiti** nationals from the visa requirement for short stays in the EU<sup>101</sup>. The Commission maintains its assessment of July 2018 that **Kosovo** has fulfilled all visa liberalisation benchmarks<sup>102</sup> and that visa-free travel for the people of Kosovo should be granted.

In addition, the Commission continues to screen all agreements it has with third countries to allow visa free travel for their migratory or security risks. As a result, the EU's visa waiver agreement with Vanuatu has been partially suspended<sup>103</sup> since 4 May 2022 in order to mitigate the security risks raised by Vanuatu's investor citizenship scheme. As the EU's concerns have not been addressed, this suspension could be extended for a further 18 months.

In July, the Commission, in cooperation with the European External Action Service, launched the first **anti-smuggling operational partnerships** with **Morocco** and **Niger**, following the renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling 2021-2025<sup>104</sup>. The partnerships aim to strengthen the legal, policy, operational and strategic frameworks in partner countries in response to migrant smuggling, and to increase the ownership, impact and long-term sustainability of their efforts. The partnerships will include support for border management, enhanced police cooperation (including joint investigations), awareness-raising on the dangers of irregular migration, and enhanced cooperation with EU agencies.

### ***Developing legal pathways to Europe***

An ambitious and sustainable EU legal migration policy is needed to create safe pathways to Europe and to help attract skills and talent that our economies need, given an ageing population and urgent skills gaps. It is also an important component in successful partnerships. The **EU Talent Pool** proposed in the Skills and Talent package would create the first EU-wide platform and matching tool to help employers find the staff they need and make the EU more attractive for non-EU nationals looking for opportunities. As mentioned above, an **EU Talent Pool Pilot** in an initial phase will help Ukrainians build on their skills and experience.

#### ***- Talent Partnerships***

Talent Partnerships with key partners will seek to boost international labour mobility and develop talent to the benefit of Member States, partner countries, and business communities on both sides, as well as for the individuals concerned. The Commission will take concrete steps towards the first Talent Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt by the end of 2022, based on the strong continuous cooperation on all aspects of migration management. This will build on a pilot now under way<sup>105</sup>, as well as consultations with all stakeholders. The specific interests and commitment of partner countries will be key to their success, as well as those of Member States, which retain competence on labour migration. The Commission calls on Member States to engage actively in discussions with partner countries on Talent Partnerships and present concrete proposals on how these could help address their

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<sup>101</sup> Proposal listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt (Kuwait, Qatar) (COM/2022/189, 27 April 2022).

<sup>102</sup> Annexes to the Report "Update on the implementation of the remaining benchmarks of the visa liberalisation roadmap by Kosovo\*" (COM(2018) 543, 18 July 2018).

<sup>103</sup> Council Decision (EU) 2022/366 of 3 March 2022 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Vanuatu on the short-stay visa waiver.

<sup>104</sup> Communication "A renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025)" (COM(2021) 591 final, 29 September 2021).

<sup>105</sup> 'Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa (THAMM III)'.

labour market needs, notably by identifying the number of places available in key sectors and involving private companies. Subsequently, Talent Partnerships with additional countries could be considered.

- ***Legal pathways to protection: resettlement and humanitarian admission***

**Resettlement** is an integral part of the Pact and an important element of the EU migration policy. The EU contributes a sizeable part to global resettlement efforts and is committed to maintaining this commitment. The 2021-2022 pledging exercise resulted in almost 65 000 pledges in total, combining resettlement and, for the first time, humanitarian admission<sup>106</sup>, including places earmarked for Afghans at risk following the fall of Kabul in August 2021. The EU also continues to respond to the Syrian and the Central Mediterranean needs and up to June 2022, Member States reported more than 36 000 resettlement and humanitarian admission arrivals combined. To ensure continuity in EU efforts, the Commission recently called on Member States to provide new pledges for 2023, backed by continued EU funding.

Even in times of pressure, it is essential that the EU sustains its resettlement leadership. Innovative solutions can help addressing bottlenecks in reception - in particular community sponsorship programmes can play a key role for providing accommodation and give civil society a stronger role in reception and integration of newcomers. The Safe Homes initiative will support this, drawing lessons from the reception of those fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine to enhance reception systems through community welcome. In the fall, the EU will gather a second High Level Resettlement Forum to discuss such innovations with key global partners and international organisations.

***Financial and operational tools***

- ***Funding***

To forge comprehensive migration partnerships and complement the increased political engagement, the EU dedicates substantial support and funding to increase the partner countries' capacities to address all aspects of migration and forced displacement.

The new **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)** identifies migration and forced displacement as a key area for cooperation with partner countries. The programming process undertaken in 2021 and 2022 factored in the indicative 10% migration spending target, to ensure it would be met, with relevant migration and forced displacement considerations integrated in a tailor-made yet flexible manner, touching on protection, legal migration, border management, as well as on return and reintegration and the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. The NDICI-Global Europe spending target for migration and forced displacement laid the groundwork for the Commission to adopt an ever more comprehensive and coherent approach when addressing the challenges – and seizing the opportunities – related to those issues. The basis of the EU's overall financial assistance to third countries for the coming years are the country and regional multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs). The first annual report on NDICI Global Europe will be published this autumn and will also include an overview of migration-related spending.

The **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)** funds bilateral and regional migration programmes in pre-accession countries. Actions in the **Western Balkans** strengthen migration management, asylum systems and border management. Key priorities include improving return management and expanding assisted voluntary and non-voluntary return programmes, and preventing and combating migrant smuggling.

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<sup>106</sup> See Annex 2.

In **Turkey**, following the June 2021 European Council conclusions<sup>107</sup>, support will continue for refugees and host communities, to follow up on the operations of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. Actions will continue in the areas of education, health, protection, basic needs and socio-economic development, notably to ensure access to more sustainable livelihoods for refugees, and support host communities.

The EU remains a leading donor in the international response to the **Syrian crisis** and remains committed to supporting Syrian refugees and host countries in the region. The successful **Sixth Brussels Conference on Supporting the future of Syria and the Region** held on 10 May 2022 exceeded 2021 pledges from international donors, thus maintaining funding and support to major host countries.

Other relevant programmes, such as the **Home Affairs Funds**, are expressly designed to serve policy interests within the EU, but certain activities can be supported outside the EU, especially in a spirit of continuity of ongoing activities (such as the Migration Partnership Facility and the Regional Development and Protection Programme).

#### - **Team Europe Initiatives on Migration**

The EU and interested Member States are coming together to strengthen operational coordination on migration through the regional Team Europe Initiatives on the **Atlantic/Western Mediterranean route**, under the lead of Spain, **and on the Central Mediterranean route**, led by France and Italy. The thematic components under this framework correspond to the five pillars of intervention recognised by the Joint Valletta Action Plan<sup>108</sup> and in line with the Pact.

The EU has also put forward a regional Team Europe Initiative on **Afghan displacement**. It will focus on policy dialogue and migration management, protection, fight against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, provision of basic services, skills development and creation of livelihood opportunities, targeting displaced Afghans and host communities in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, including in Central Asia.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The past year has shown the EU's capacity to act as a Union of determination and solidarity to address the constantly shifting challenges and opportunities of migration towards our continent. As President Von der Leyen made clear in the State of the Union address, it is important that this solidarity continues to be present in our migration debate, and the unprecedented efforts to welcome millions fleeing Ukraine should be an inspiration for future actions – a blueprint for coordinated, collaborative response at EU level.

The year ahead will be decisive for legislative work on migration and asylum that is urgently needed to complete the EU's ability to respond with solidarity, responsibility and fairness, to all challenges. The Commission looks forward to progress on the roadmap agreed between the Council and the Parliament in order to reach agreement on key legislative files by Spring 2024.

#### ***As key next steps, the Commission calls on***

- Parliament and Council to implement the joint roadmap with the aim of adopting all proposals on the table by March 2024.
- Parliament and Council to swiftly adopt their positions on all the pending proposals.
- Parliament and Council to swiftly progress in the negotiations on the Skills and Talent package (the recast of the Directive on long-term residents and the recast of the Single

<sup>107</sup> [2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>108</sup> Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP) (europa.eu)

Permit Directive).

- Member States to implement the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism.

The Commission will continue to support these efforts, and to build on other aspects highlighted by this report, including border management, returns, solidarity and addressing secondary movements, while deepening our partnerships worldwide, and facilitating legal migration for migrants – while strengthening integration of new arrivals in Europe, who can bring needed skills to our economy.

Developments in migration call for the EU to act with combined strength and collective political will, with each actor taking responsibility for managing migration with dignity and respect, and showing solidarity with others. It is in this way that we will show Europe at its best, equal to the challenges we will face in the coming years.