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**SCH-EVAL 45
SCHENGEN 11
COMIX 106
JAI 243
FRONT 68
MIGR 80
ASIM 30
ENFOPOL 90**

NOTE

From: Services of the Commission
To: Delegations

Subject: Overall state of the Schengen area – Schengen Barometer +

Delegations will find in the Annex the Schengen Barometer + provided by the Commission for the purposes of the meeting of the Schengen Council on 9 March 2023.

SCHENGEN BAROMETER+

The Schengen Barometer+ is an essential part of the Schengen cycle allowing to identify the key elements having an impact in the Schengen area in view of steering the political discussions in the Schengen Council. It provides a regular overview of the state of the Schengen area, highlighting main developments, trends and risks in all relevant fields. It is prepared by the Commission before each Schengen Council, during which the Commissioner presents the key takeaways.

The Schengen Barometer+ is based on the input provided by the JHA Agencies (Frontex, EUAA, eu-LISA, Europol and Eurojust)¹ and information available to the Commission. Unless otherwise stated, the included data is annual data for 2022.

¹ Data provided by Frontex, EUAA, eu-LISA, Europol and Eurojust are provisional and therefore may differ from validated data published by Eurostat or national authorities. Discrepancies between different data sources are possible due to dissimilar definitions and collection methodologies. The figures provided in this document should be understood as giving an estimation of the current situation in as near to real time as possible.

- 2022 was characterised by **resuming international travel** on a large scale, making the Schengen area one of the most visited destinations in the world.
- **Irregular migration is at its highest since 2016** and 66% higher than in 2021, although far from the levels of 2015. This is the second year in a row with an increased number of irregular arrivals². The Western Balkan route accounted for nearly half of the total. Nevertheless, this number is on a decreasing trend in the recent period amid the Western Balkans partners taking steps to align their visa-policies with the EU.
- **Asylum applications** are also at highest level since 2016 and up by more than half from 2021. Around 20% of all asylum applications were lodged by third-country nationals coming from visa-free countries³. In 2022, the overall number of Eurodac hits was the highest since 2017 and increased by 22% compared to 2021. While this is a notable increase, it falls short of that of irregular border crossings (+66%) and asylum applications (+48%).
- **Main threats** to the Schengen area relate to trafficking in human beings, drugs trafficking, firearms trafficking, organised property crime and terrorism.
- Record amounts of **drugs** have entered the EU in 2022, in the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam or through south European countries. This trend appears to continue in 2023.
- **Cross-border cooperation** actions implemented in 2022 revealed to be key for a stronger and more resilient Schengen area.

EXTERNAL BORDERS AND MIGRATORY SITUATION

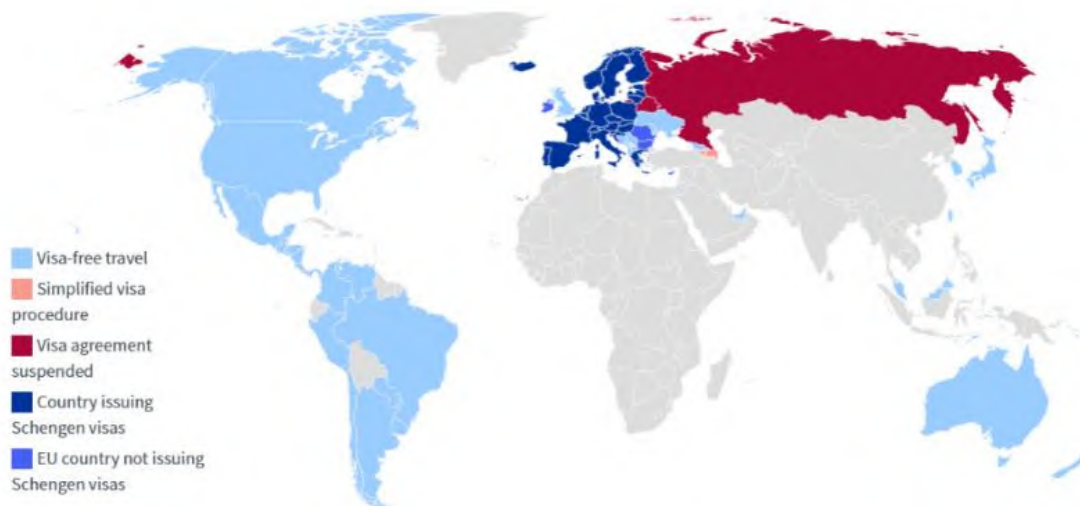
1. REGULAR MIGRATION, INCLUDING VISA

- 3 million **first residence permits** were issued in the EU to non-EU citizens in 2021. The number increased by 31% compared to 2020, reaching the pre-pandemic level observed in 2019. At the end of 2021, there were 21,914,892 **valid residence permits** in the EU of which 10 799 791 were long term (more than 12 months). [Eurostat]

² Attempted irregular border crossings (proxy for measuring migratory pressure) do not correspond to single individuals, as one person may attempt to cross a border several times.

³ The seven visa-free countries with the highest number of third-country nationals applying for asylum in the EU+ (not counting Ukraine) accounted for over 160 000 asylum applications in 2022, representing 17% of the total number of asylum applications lodged in the EU in 2022. There is no data available yet for 2022 for all third countries and a precise percentage could thus not be calculated. Please see section 3.

- 483 million regular **border crossings**⁴ in 2022 (+118% compared to 2021). This is expected to continue in the same vein in the first half of 2023. [Frontex]
- Scheduled commercial passenger traffic has returned faster than predicted to 83% of its peak levels in 2019. [Frontex]
- 7 414 941 **visa applications** were lodged in 2022. A high increase compared to 2021 when only 2.9 million Schengen visa applications were processed by Member States' consulates worldwide, due to Covid19 travelling limitations. [eu-LISA]
- In 2022, 5 994 354 **visas were issued**, a 150% increase compared to 2021 when 2 396 279 visas were issued. [eu-LISA]
- While this number is 51% lower than the number of applications lodged in 2019 (15 million), an increase in the number of applications is expected in the coming years. [eu-LISA, Frontex]



- Currently, it is **very time-consuming to obtain a Schengen visa**. Deadlines set out in the Visa Code are almost systematically not complied with, making the process to last several months even for frequent, *bona fide* travellers. The underlying reasons of the delays vary, but the two main explanations relate to staff shortages in consulates not able to process the sharp increase of applications following the Covid-19 period when visa issuance had almost stopped and the role of intermediaries in the application process. [evaluations conducted under Regulation 2022/922]

⁴ Passenger flow relates to the number of third-country and EU nationals crossing the external borders of an EU Member State or Schengen Associated Country on entry/exit from/to a third country or between a Schengen and a non-Schengen EU Member State, between two non-Schengen EU Member States. Excluding Cyprus, Portugal, Spain and Sweden air borders, Belgium, France, Netherlands and Spain land borders and Malta, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain sea borders – caveats imposed by Member States reporting gaps – Frontex foresees with medium confidence in the first half of 2023 between 220 to 250 million passengers as per the above definition (towards pre-pandemic levels but taking into account changes in Ukraine and Russia passenger flows as well as changed transportation prices/inflation).

The consequences of the delays in processing Schengen visas are numerous. In particular, reputational damage for the Member States and the EU, economic loss, especially in the tourism sector, and disruption of family contacts and business relations.

Increased passenger flows also require reinforced measures at the EU's external borders

Data from eu-LISA reveals that, on average, only 45% Schengen visas issued between January-July 2022⁵ have been checked at the border within the Visa Information System (VIS), of which only 42% are checked with biometrics (fingerprint).

According to Frontex, not all Member States are systematically consulting the Schengen Information System (SIS) at the external borders when performing border checks.

The timely implementation of the Entry-Exit System is key for an effective management of the external borders

There are significant delays due to important challenges for eu-LISA to deliver the central system, since the contractor had failed to deliver critical components within the foreseen timeframe. This is currently being addressed to obtain a stable situation by the end of April so that Member States can proceed with testing at national level in view of having EES and ETIAS becoming operational as soon as possible.

State of play according to the questionnaire eu-LISA collected in February 2023 from the Member States as confirmed by all Member States during the Advisory Group of 15 February⁶:

- Member States on track: DK, ES, HU, IS, LI, LU, RO, SE
- Member States not on track: AT, BG, CH, CZ, FI, FR, EL, HR, IT, LT, NO, PL, PT, SI, SK, Europol and Frontex
- Member States at risk: BE, DE, EE, LV, MT, NL
- Not applicable: CY⁷

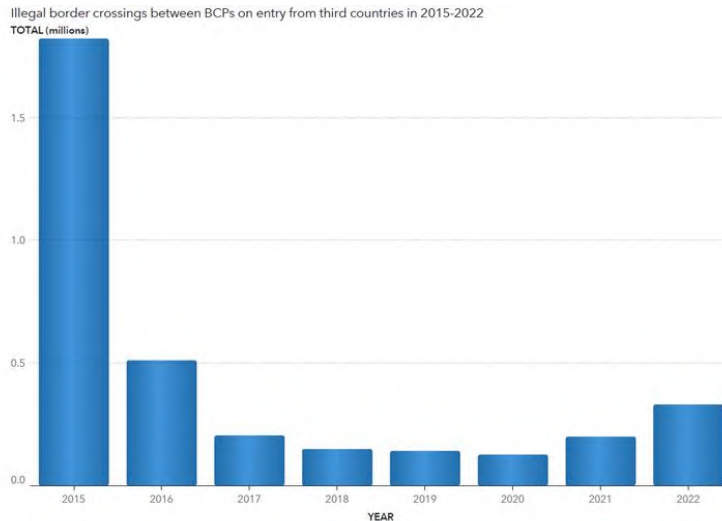
2. IRREGULAR MIGRATION

- 330 000 irregular border crossings detected in 2022, the highest since 2016 and a 66% increase from 2021. [Frontex]
- Evolution in the number of irregular border crossings since 2015 [Frontex]:

⁵ The Commission requested eu-LISA to send the complete data for 2022. Subject to the timely response of the Agency, this data will still be taken into account to complement this section ahead of the March Schengen Council.

⁶ In parallel to this monitoring process, the Commission is in continuous contact with Member States authorities through bilateral meetings. Following the most recent meetings, the Commission considers that the Netherlands and Germany belong in the category "Not on track", instead of the category "At risk", whilst Bulgaria is now assessed as being "At risk". This means that currently, five countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia and Malta) are at risk of not being ready at national level for the entry into operation of the Entry-Exit System.

⁷ Although the Entry-Exit System will not be operational in Cyprus, important components of the system need to be implemented before ETIAS can go live. Since the implementation of these components has a serious delay, Cyprus has reached out to the Commission to assist them in getting the implementation process on track.



- In absolute numbers, the highest increase concerned the Western Balkan (+82 000 irregular border crossings) and Central Mediterranean routes (+38 000 irregular border crossings). Important increases have also been observed in the Eastern Mediterranean route (+113%). [Frontex]
- 43% of all irregular entries in 2022 occurred via the Western Balkans. [Frontex]
- Nationals of Syria, Afghanistan and Tunisia most frequently reported, in line with 2021. [Frontex]
- Following the introduction by Serbia of visa requirements to specific third countries, reduced numbers of irregular border crossings and asylum applications of **Tunisian** and **Burundian** nationals have been reported⁸.
- **South-eastern land route**: 24% increase in apprehensions reported during October and November 2022, compared to the same period last year. The magnitude of this route has a significant impact in the Western Balkans route, given subsequent movements. [Frontex]
- Increase in **Russian nationals** detected possessing fraudulent documents, seeking to enter the EU, or arriving from Turkish, Georgian and Armenian airports. Most claim asylum on arrival – almost 1 000 in 2022. Some also misuse the transit without visa concession for Russian nationals to claim asylum, mainly in Amsterdam and Frankfurt. [Frontex]

⁸ According to Frontex operational data, 67 Burundians have been detected in the whole Western Balkans region in January 2023, compared to 152 in December 2022 and 901 in November 2022. According to Frontex operational data, 70 Tunisians have been detected in the whole Western Balkans region in January 2023, compared to 163 in December 2022 and 709 in November 2022. According to ESTAT data, the number of Burundian asylum applicants decreased from 1 510 in October 2022 to 1 040 in November 2022, while the number of Tunisian asylum applicants decreased from 3 470 in October 2022 to 1 960 in November 2022. Furthermore, non-public, operational weekly data from EUAA shows that there have been less than 300 asylum applications per week since November 2022 by Tunisian national compared to around 800 per week in October 2022.

| Route | 2022 Total number of irregular border crossings ⁹ | Percentage change from last year | Frontex deployments (EBCG Standing corps officers and other staff) |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Western African | 15 463 | -31% | 52 officers (JO Canary Islands) |
| Western Mediterranean | 15 134 | -18% | 100 officers (JO Indalo) |
| Exits towards the UK | 71 081 ¹⁰ | +37% | 1 Frontex Surveillance Aircraft + 1 officer (JO Opal Coast) |
| Central Mediterranean | 105 561 | +56% | 280 officers (JO Themis) |
| Western Balkan ¹¹ | 144 197 | +134% | 664 officers |
| Eastern Mediterranean | 43 906 | +113% | 370 officers (JO Poseidon, JO Leda and JO Terra (BGR-TUR and GRC-TUR border only)) |
| Eastern Land Border ¹² | 6 373 | -22% | 534 officers (JO Terra minus Bulgaria and Greece plus JO Moldova) |

- The overall EU-level staffing deficit¹³ was estimated at over **5 000 border guards** in 2020 and around **6 000 – 7 000** in 2021¹⁴. [Frontex]
- Member States intercepted 15 436 facilitators who assisted third-country nationals to irregularly enter or exit at the external borders in 2022 (13 626 detected facilitators in 2021). 26 175 false or forged documents were detected at the external borders in 2022 (25 056 in 2021). [Frontex]
- EUROSUR impact levels at external border sections: no changes since the last Schengen Barometer of December 2022. [Frontex]

⁹ Irregular border crossings do not include the number of attempts, unless otherwise specified.

¹⁰ This figure includes both successful and prevented attempts to cross the Channel.

¹¹ Data includes irregular border crossing and attempts to cross the border, which could be done more than once by a single person.

¹² This route concerns irregular border crossings from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. It does not include attempts. Prevented attempts from Belarus to Lithuania, Poland and Latvia: 31 181 in 2022, compared to 48 241 in 2021. [source: Member States reporting via the Blueprint Network]

¹³ This figure is an estimate of the number of effective staff dedicated to border control (annual full-time equivalent - FTE). The figure is solely based on the data reported by the Member States. Information concerning some authorities partially responsible for border control may differ from Member State to Member State due to data-quality and reporting issues.

¹⁴ Preliminary data pending final adoption.

Western Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean routes (main flows from Türkiye and Serbia)

Route 1 (from TK via BG and SRB) [source: Frontex / DG HOME]

- Entry point: TK-BG (2022: 1 832, 2021: 905)
- BG-SRB (2022: 7 723, 2021: 2 785)
- BG-RO: 2022: 827 (2021: 601)
- Onward movements
 - ✓ Option 1: SRB – HU: 2022: 133 862 *to HU from third countries* (2021: 58 969)
 - ✓ Option 2: SRB – RO: 2022: 3 560 (2021: 11 752)
RO-HU: 2022: 1 059 (2021: 5 810)
 - ✓ Option 3: SRB – HR: 2022: 1 526 (2021: 1 572)

Top 3 nationalities using this route: Syria, Afghanistan, India.



Route 2 (from TK via EL and HR) [source: Frontex / DG HOME]

- Entry point: TK-EL (2022: 20 267 *to EL from third countries*, 2021: 10 736)
- Onward movements:
 - ✓ EL – AB: 2022: 7 674 (2021: 16 851)
 - ✓ AB – MNE: *no complete data available*
 - ✓ MNE – BiH: 2022: 7 674 (2021: 16 851)
 - ✓ BiH – HR: 2022: 2 879 (2021: 1 733)

Top 3 nationalities using this route: Afghanistan, Syria, Türkiye.



Route 3 (from TK via EL and Serbia) [source: Frontex / DG HOME]

- Entry point: TK-EL (2022: 20 267 to EL from third countries, 2021: 10 736)
- Onward movements:
 - ✓ Option 1: **EL – MKD**: 2022: 23 673 (2021: 17 322)
MKD – SRB: 2022: 47 597 (2021: 14 653)
 - ✓ Option 2: **EL – AB**: 2022: 7 674 (2021: 16 851)
AL – SRB: *no data available*
 - ✓ Option 3: **EL-BG**: *no data available*
- Movements from SRB as in route 1.

Top 3 nationalities using this route: Syria, Pakistan, Türkiye.



Arrivals to Cyprus: 144% increase. While the pressure remained high in 2022, the monthly totals are showing a decrease with peaks in March and September.

[source: Frontex]



The **Western Balkans partners' visa policies** play an important role in migration, as some of the visa-free nationals misuse their status to legally reach one of the Western Balkans partner countries (particularly Serbia) and then irregularly leave the region.

Overall, Indians, Turkish, Tunisians, Bangladeshis and Cubans were the main nationalities observed misusing their visa-free status in 2022. Together, between January and November 2022 these nationalities engaged in around 29 500 irregular border crossings at regional level (accounting for roughly 13% of all irregular border crossings by non-regional migrants).

Nevertheless, this number is on a decreasing trend in the recent period amid the Western Balkans partners (mainly Serbia) taking steps to align their visa-policies with the EU.

- In January 2023, 5 751 detections reported on the EU's external borders with this region. This represents a 24% drop from December 2022 (7 541), continuing a decreasing trend which began in November (14 105).
- According to Frontex operational data, 67 Burundians have been detected in the whole Western Balkans region in January 2023, compared to 152 in December 2022 and 901 in November 2022. According to Frontex operational data, 70 Tunisians have been detected in the whole Western Balkans region in January 2023, compared to 163 in December 2022 and 709 in November 2022.

[Frontex, DG HOME]

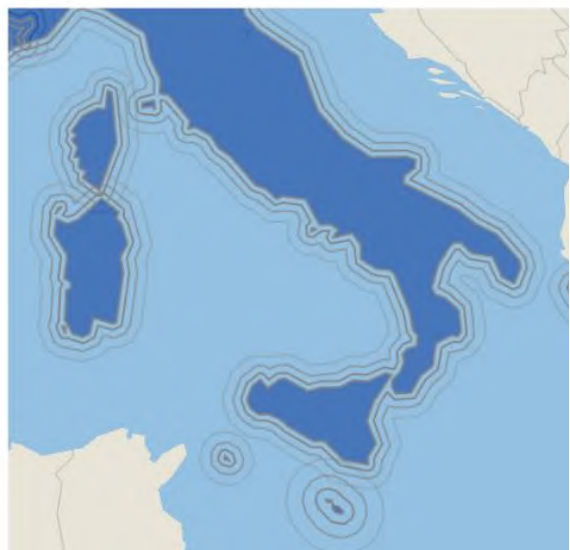
EU-Russian land border: significant reductions given the temporary measures restricting Russian citizens with short-term Schengen visas from entering EU MS/SACs bordering Russia (that coincides with the announced partial mobilization in Russia).

Belarus: enhanced border-control remains on EU border, since closure in November 2021 of the air route to Minsk. Low number of irregular border crossings (1017 entries from Belarus to the EU in 2022) but high migration pressure due to high number of attempted irregular entries from Belarus.

Moldova: stable situation with a sharp decrease in August and September (approx. 40 apprehensions on the border with Ukraine). On exit to Romania: 200 persons were detected without proof of legal entry, which is associated with the efforts of the Moldovan authorities to regulate the irregular flow of Ukrainians transiting its territory.

Ukraine: Passenger traffic remained relatively stable. Similar number of entries and exits to the EU.

[source: Frontex]



Points of departure in 2022:

Türkiye – Italy: 16% of the total. Total number of arrivals already surpassed the historical record previously established in 2021.

Libya – Italy: account for 52% of the total. In 2022, there has been a gradual shift of departure towards the east of Libya – only in November 2021, about 70% of migrants registered in Italy came from the eastern Libyan coast.

Smuggling activities in eastern Libya involving fishing vessels continue having significant impact in the number of arrivals. Around 400-500 migrants average on board.

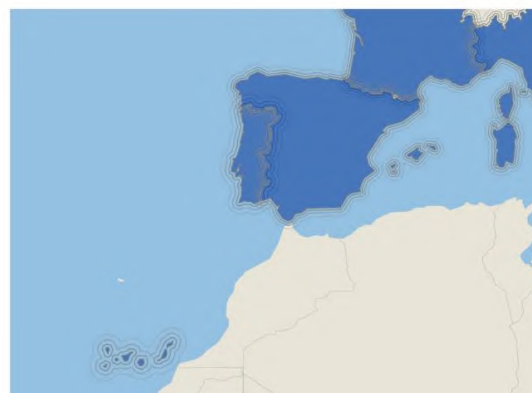
Tunisia – Italy: 29% of the total. Only in October and November the increase was of 251%. Main reason is the increase of sub-Saharan migrants reaching Lampedusa with makeshift metal boats.

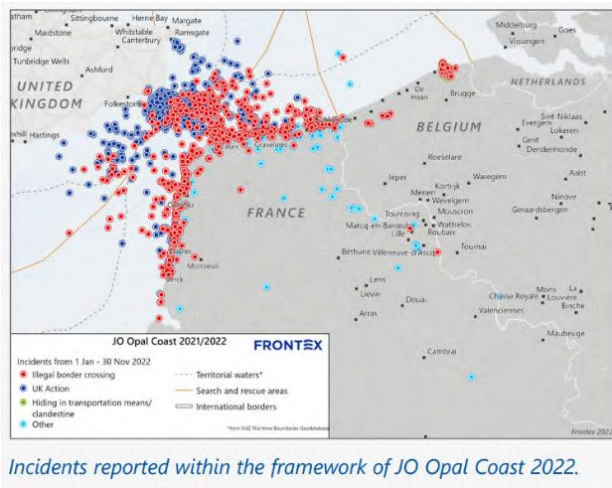
Lampedusa and Pelagic islands were the most affected areas (42% of the arrivals reported in this border section).

[source: Frontex]

Western Mediterranean sea route: highest migratory flow observed in October 2022. Reduced number of Algerian nationals apprehended in this route (-36%) and of Moroccan nationals (-20%), as compared to the same period in the previous year.

Western African route: Highest numbers were observed in October, which were still considerably lower than in 2021 (77% of the total were Moroccans). The smugglers operating between Safi and Tarfaya have intensified their efforts to disembark many Moroccans (with increased fees). Significant increase of Moroccans disembarked in the Canary Islands: 80% of the total arrivals. [source: Frontex]





Channel route: over 71 000 irregular border crossings were registered on both sides of the Channel in 2022 (+37% compared to 2021).

Nationals from Afghanistan and Middle East countries are mostly reported, followed by nationals of the Horn of Africa.

The sea crossings continue to be a viable route with a high success rate of attempts (57%). The risk of fatalities remains very high

Outlook

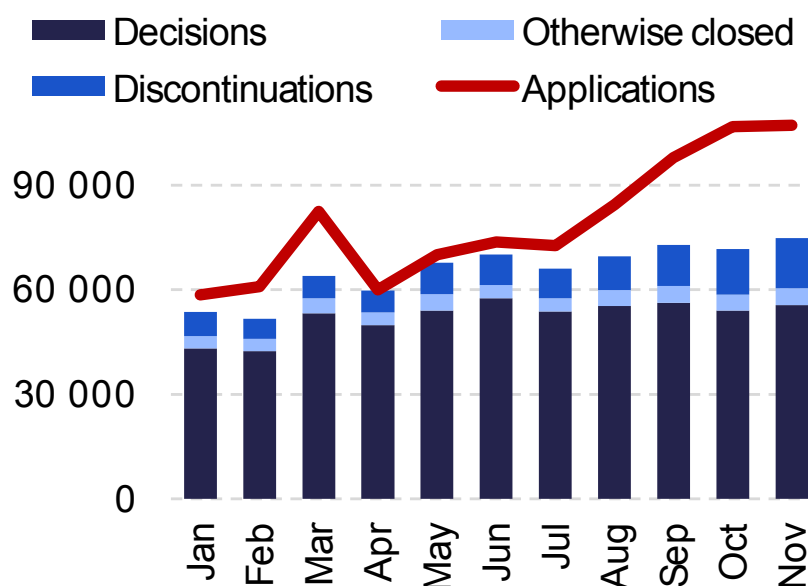
- Given the recent steps taken by the **Western Balkans partners** to align their visa-policies with that of the EU (e.g., Burundi, Tunisia, India, Guinea Bissau, Egypt, Bolivia, Cuba eliminated (or soon to be eliminated) from the visa-free access list by Serbia; Cuba in Montenegro and Cuba and Russia in North Macedonia etc.)¹⁵ a reduced number of irregular arrivals may ensue. However, some nationalities may continue to misuse their visa-free access to the region driven by the situation in their own countries (e.g., Türkiye and Russia) while a diversion in the flows could also occur, for example to Moldova as some of these nationalities can enter with an *e-visa* (electronic entry permit that can be obtained online). [Frontex]
- In light of economic and humanitarian challenges in **Türkiye**, the secondary effect of the Eastern Mediterranean route on the Western Balkan route may dominate the composition of the migratory flow in the Balkans. Measures to return migrants stranded in Türkiye to their countries of origin may continue eastwards but the likelihood of returns towards Syria may have been reduced by the impact of the earthquakes on this country too. This leaves high uncertainties pertaining to the estimated 4 million migrants hosted by Türkiye. There is a high demand of smuggling services on this corridor. [Frontex]
- Irregular migration from **Russia and Georgia** is expected to continue. Increased flows of Russian nationals of Chechen origin to travel as tourists from Turkey to Sarajevo may also be observed. [Frontex]
- The Russian aggression on **Ukraine** could create additional pressure at the border. Instrumentalisation of migration has not been observed yet at the EU-Russian border, although it cannot be excluded considering the current socio-political environment. [Frontex]
- Figures are expected to remain high in the **Central Mediterranean and Western African routes** [Frontex]
- **Channel route:** outflows are expected to remain as high as 2022 during the first 6 months of 2023, unless the resumed measures of the UK plan (April 2022) are fully implemented, and the announced new joint statement of France and the UK (November 2022) has effective deterrence impact in this route. In a short term, this situation will challenge the sheltering capacity of **France and Belgium** to cope in 2023 with a higher volume of migrants stranded in its territory. [Frontex]

¹⁵ As per latest MOCADDEM - Draft Action file to follow up on the EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans - WK 937/2023 INIT, ACTION V, point 17

3. ASYLUM APPLICATIONS AND SECONDARY MOVEMENTS¹⁶

Asylum applications: almost 965 000 applications for international protection in the EU+ in 2022, the highest since 2016 and up by 55 % from 2021.

- Main nationalities¹⁷: Syria (131 697), Afghanistan (128 949), Türkiye (55 437) and Venezuela (50 833). [EUAA]
- Recognition rates¹⁷ for third countries with highest number of decisions taken in 2022: Syria – 94%; Afghanistan: 54%; Venezuela: 3%; Iraq: 30%. [EUAA]
- Almost all EU+ countries received more applications in 2022 than in 2021. There were record highs in several countries. [EUAA]
- Germany, France, Spain, Austria and Italy received 75% of all applications. [EUAA]
- Decisions issued at first instance (EU+): 531 674 (48% of the decisions granted refugee or subsidiary protection).
- Persistently more applications than case closures. Caseload accumulation: 635 500 pending cases in first instance at the end of 2022 – the most in five years. [EUAA]



Source: EUAA

¹⁶ Information provided by the EUAA is based on data regularly exchanged under the umbrella of the Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS). The data provided to the EUAA by the EU+ countries are provisional and unvalidated, and therefore may differ from validated data submitted to Eurostat (according to Regulation (EU) 2020/851 amending Regulation (EC) 862/2007).

¹⁷ Recognition rates do not include humanitarian status or other protection status potentially granted by Member States.

- Around 20% of all asylum applications come from nationalities that enjoy visa-free travel to the EU. Record high number of Georgian nationals was observed in 2022: more than 28 000 applicants in 2022. In November alone, there were 3 000 Georgian applicants in the EU+, the highest number since at least 2008. [EUAA, Frontex]

Asylum applications lodged by third-country nationals from visa-free third countries:

| Visa-free third country | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | Number of asylum applications in 2022 | Recognition rate in 2022¹⁸ |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--|--|
| Venezuela | 22 440 | 45 405 | 30 815 | 17 900 | 50 833 | 3% |
| Colombia | 10 245 | 32 305 | 29 485 | 13 835 | 43 279 | 6% |
| Georgia | 19 980 | 22 110 | 8 650 | 14 600 | 28 797 | 4% |
| Albania | 20 790 | 20 415 | 6 925 | 11 300 | 13 043 | 6% |
| Peru | 1 545 | 6 850 | 6 160 | 3 235 | 12 828 | 6% ¹⁹ |
| Moldova | 4 005 | 6 360 | 4 830 | 7 885 | 8 330 | 1% |
| North Macedonia | 4 885 | 4 230 | 1 360 | 5 345 | 6 476 | 1% |

There are currently no statistics at EU-level²⁰ on the number of asylum applications lodged by third-country nationals who have entered the EU with a Schengen visa. [EUAA, eu-LISA]

¹⁸ Recognition rates do not include humanitarian status or other protection status potentially granted by Member States.

¹⁹ Recognition rate for Peru only concerns Q1-Q3 2022. [source: Eurostat]

²⁰ Some Member States use the Visa Information System to identify asylum applicants who have entered the EU with a Schengen visa.

Dublin transfers:

- In 2022, there were 151 223 decisions on outgoing Dublin requests. Decisions on Dublin requests in 2022 were at the highest level since at least 2018. 60% of Dublin requests were accepted. Germany and France led the number of decisions by far. [EUAA]
- 14 213 Dublin transfers were implemented in 2022. Main nationalities were: Afghanistan (2 543), Algeria (1 190) and Syria (1 008).

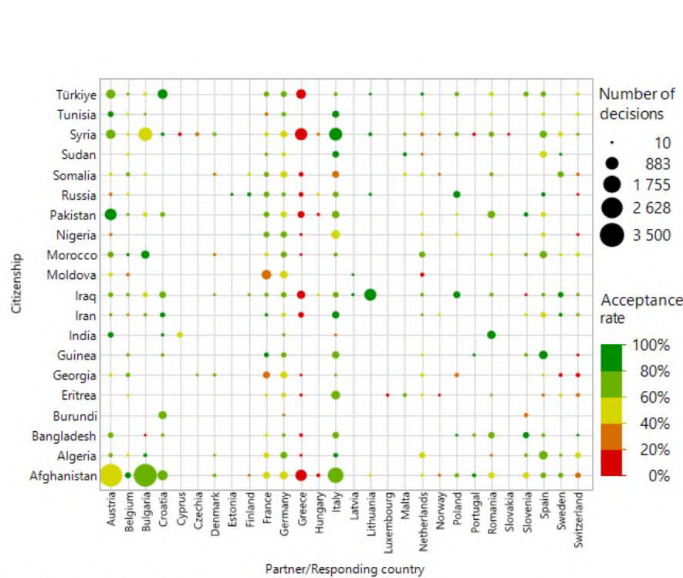


Figure 4: Decisions and acceptance rates of Dublin requests for top 20 citizenships, per responding country

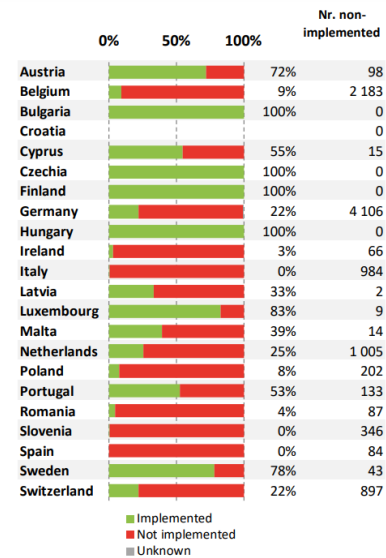
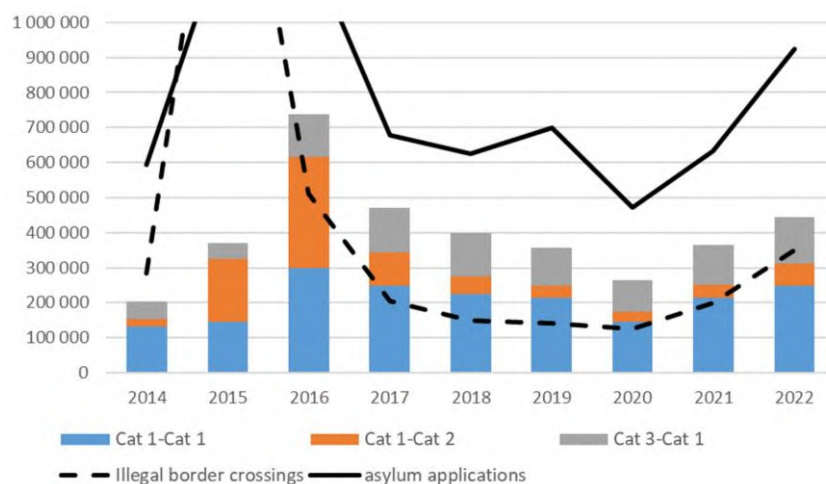


Figure 10: Implemented and non-implemented transfers for all EU+ countries reporting on non-implemented transfers

EURODAC

- In 2022, the overall number of hits amounted to 443 116, the highest level since 2017. Compared to 2021, the number of hits increased by 22%. [eu-LISA]
- While this is a notable increase, it falls short of that of irregular border crossings (+66%) and asylum applications (+48%). [DG HOME based on eu-LISA data]



| Eurodac registrations by Member States with highest number of irregular border crossings | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| Member State | Irregular border crossings in 2022 | EURODAC – category 1 registrations²¹ | EURODAC – category 2 registrations²² | EURODAC – category 3 registrations²³ | Total EURODAC registrations |
| Hungary | 133 862 | 2 468 | 116 | 5 752 | 8 336 |
| Italy | 105 121 | 91 626 | 99 224 | 38 160 | 299 010 |
| Spain | 30 597 | 91 269 | 29 574 | 1 768 | 122 611 |
| Cyprus | 22 539 | 20 207 | 18 238 | 3 | 38 448 |
| Greece | 20 267 | 32 683 | 24 038 | 24 875 | 81 596 |

Source: Frontex and eu-LISA.

Note: while the figures are not automatically directly comparable, as the number of irregular border crossings does not reflect the total number of individuals but the number of detected irregular border crossings, the intention is to present the main trends. Article 14 of the EURODAC Regulation imposes the obligation on Member States to take and transmit fingerprints of every third-country national at least 14 years of age apprehended in connection with the irregular crossing of an external border, with the exception of those who are turned back or who remain physically on the territory of the Member States and are kept in custody, confinement or detention during the entirety of the period between apprehension and removal on the basis of the decision to turn him or her back.

- Main departure/transit countries of secondary movements in 2022:
 - **EL as departure/transit country:** 76 004 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of destination: DE (31 173), AT (8 501), FR (8 258), IT (7 809), NL (4 036).
 - **AT as departure/transit country:** 60 039 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of destination: DE (18 558), IT (12 809); FR (12 711), BE (5 747).
 - **IT as departure/transit country:** 51 558 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of destination: DE (17 981), FR (15 623), NL (4 761), BE (4 443).
 - **DE as departure/transit country:** 50 795 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of destination: FR (12 829), BE (10 920), NL (5 926), IT (5 611).
 - **BG as departure/transit country:** 34 472 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of destination: AT (10 326), DE (10 219), FR (4 725), BE (2 176).
 - **FR as departure/transit country:** 29 637 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of destination: DE (10 757), BE (5 531), IT (4 676), NL (2 150).
 - **HR as departure/transit country:** 21 445 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of destination: DE (7 923), SI (5 044), BE (2 482).

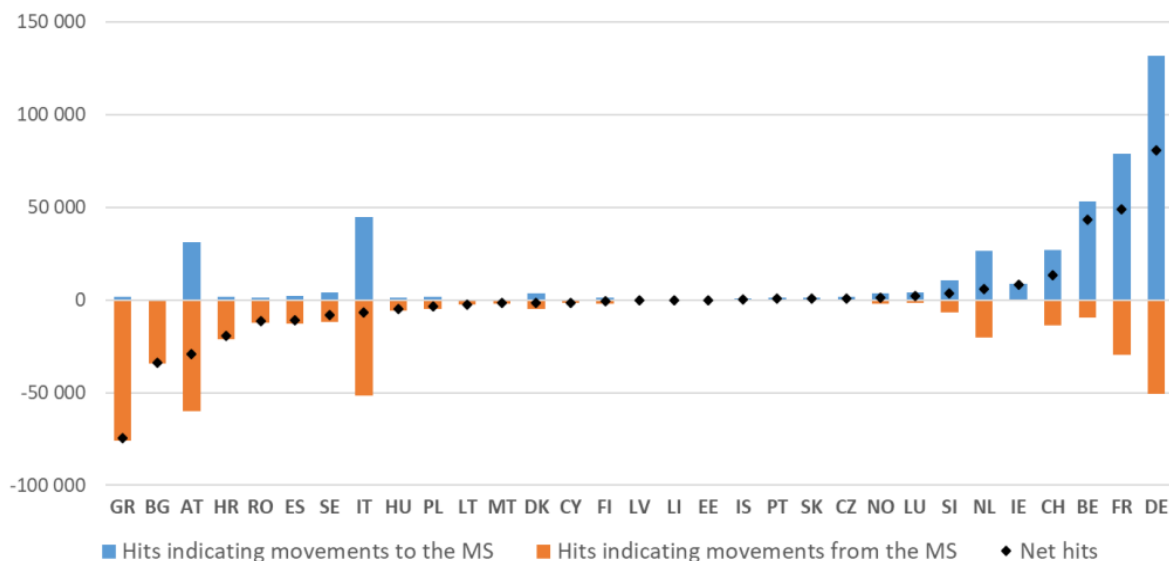
²¹ Registrations of asylum applications, in accordance with Article 9 of Regulation 603/2013.

²² Registrations of third-country nationals or stateless persons apprehended in connection with the irregular crossing of an external border, in accordance with Article 14 of Regulation 603/2013.

²³ Registrations of third-country nationals or stateless persons found illegally staying in a Member State, in accordance with Article 17 of Regulation 603/2013.

- Main destination countries of secondary movements in 2022:
 - **DE as destination country:** 131 542 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of departure/transit: EL (31 173), AT (18 558), FR (10 757), BG (10 219), HR (7 923).
 - **FR as destination country:** 78 703 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of departure/transit: IT (15 623), DE (12 829); AT (12 711), EL (8 258).
 - **BE as destination country:** 53 225 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of departure/transit: DE (10 920), NL (7 238), AT (5 747), FR (5 531).
 - **IT as destination country:** 44 685 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of departure/transit: AT (12 809), EL (7 809), DE (5 611), FR (4 676).
 - **AT as destination country:** 30 984 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of departure/transit: BG (10 326), EL (8 501), DE (2 929), IT (1 945), RO (1 920).
 - **CH as destination country:** 27 019 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of departure/transit: AT (5 662), DE (4 299), EL (3 057), IT (2 949).
 - **NL as destination country:** 26 406 total Eurodac hits. Main Member States of departure/transit: DE (5 926), IT (4 761), EL (4 036).
- In addition to the movements from countries of first entry to the typical countries of final destination, there are also many movements among destination countries, in particular Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and, to a smaller degree, Denmark and Sweden. [DG HOME based on eu-LISA data]

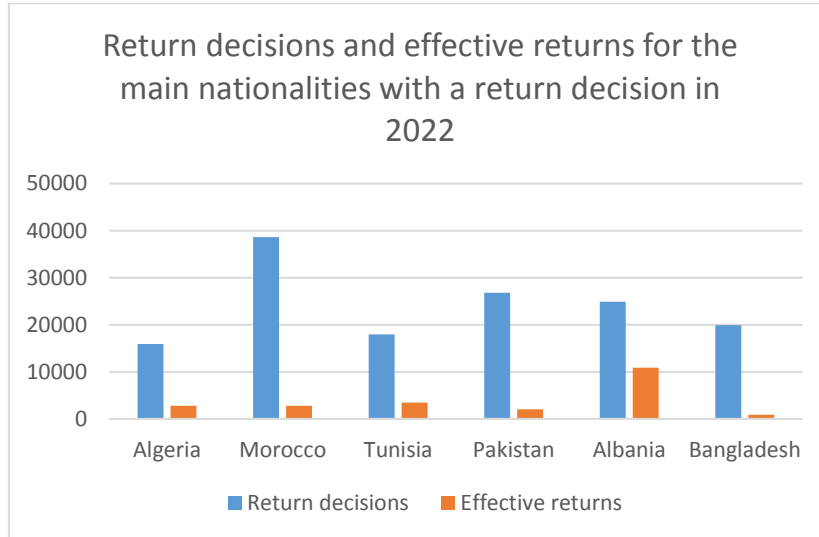
Annex 3: Eurodac hits by Member State in 2022



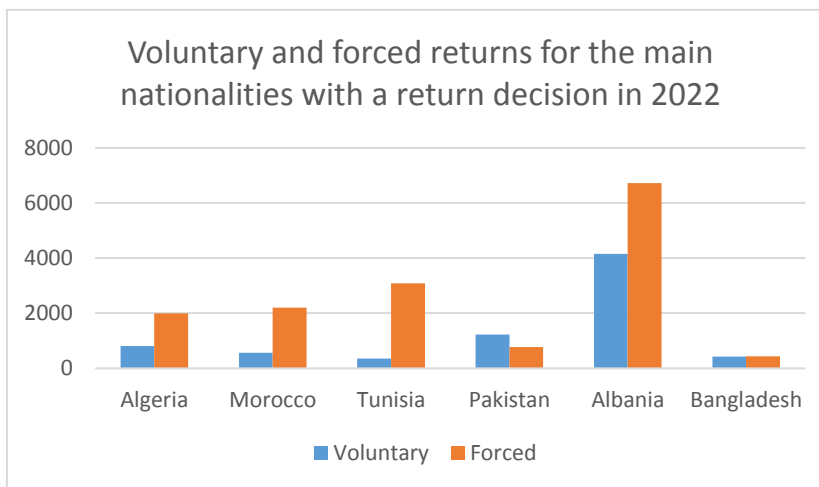
Source: DG HOME based on eu-LISA data; net hits is the difference between hits indicating secondary movements to the country and hits indicating secondary movements from the country

4. RETURN

- Number of **return decisions**²⁴: 502 545. Number of **effective returns**: 80 225, out of which 56% were voluntary returns. [Frontex²⁵].



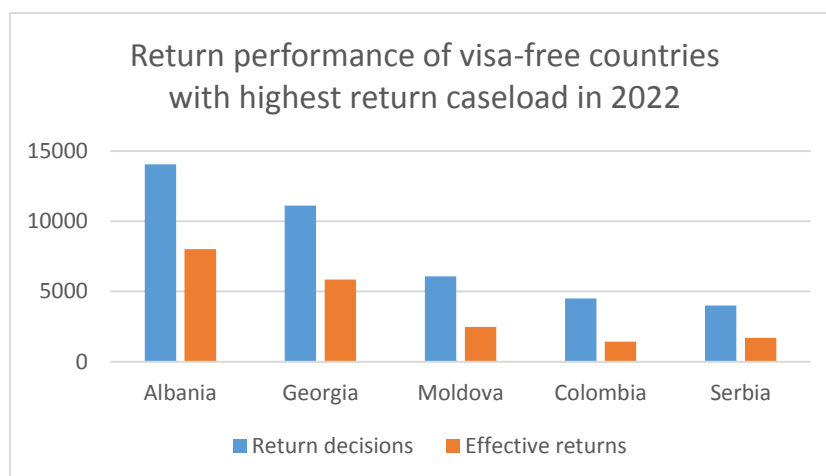
Frontex



Frontex

²⁴ Number of return decisions do not count individuals, as third-country nationals may receive more than one return decision. According to Frontex, in 2022 approximately 326 729 third-country nationals received a return decision. This number does not include data from France, Iceland and Lithuania. Data may be incomplete as not all Member States sent monthly statistics to Frontex. Given the reporting deadlines of Member States to Frontex, data from December 2022 may still be adjusted.

²⁵ Annual data from Eurostat concerning 2022 is not yet available. This is preliminary data gathered by Frontex as reported by Member States. Data may be incomplete as not all Member States sent monthly statistics to Frontex. Given the reporting deadlines of Member States to Frontex, data from December 2022 may still be adjusted.



Frontex

- **Frontex support in the area of return:** 24 856 third-country nationals returned with Frontex support in 2022, which represents a 26% of all returns from the EU (+36% compared to 2021). Top three countries of return with Frontex support: Albania, Georgia and Tunisia.
 - In 2022, 39% of the total was voluntary based return. Growing support to voluntary-based returns (61% of all scheduled flights).
 - France, Germany and Italy: 50% of the total number of third-country nationals returned by charter and scheduled flights in 2022.
 - Four most active Member States (France, Cyprus, Sweden and Belgium): organised 63% of all returns by scheduled flights.

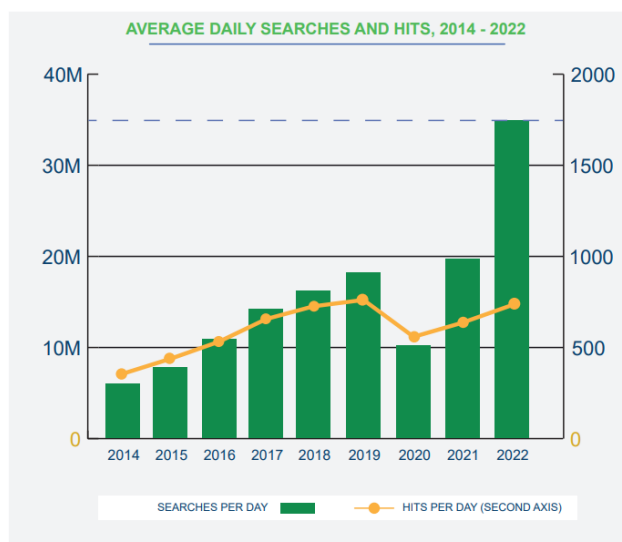
SCHENGEN INTERNAL SECURITY

- The **Schengen Information System (SIS)** continues to be the most widely used information system within the EU and the Schengen area. In 2022²⁶, searches and hits in the SIS were at a record high. In 2022 there were a total of 12,733,815,938 accesses to SIS II by Member States. This represented an increase of 82% compared to 2021. Comparing to 2019 pre-Covid-19 levels, accesses increased by 91%. [eu-LISA]²⁷
- In 2022, there were 12,714,610,758 searches performed by the Member States. [eu-LISA]
- In 2022, there were over 19 million operations in terms of alert management, increasing of over 3 million compared to 2021. However, the number of operations is still far from the pre-Covid-19 levels, when over 26 million were performed in 2018 and over 28 million in 2019. [eu-LISA]
- Since March 2018, in addition to alphanumeric searches, it is possible to perform fingerprint searches. In 2022, such searches were regularly performed by 28 Member States, whereas Poland and Estonia did not perform any AFIS searches. [eu-LISA]
- In absolute terms, the Member State²⁸ accessing SIS II the most in 2022 was the Netherlands (with almost 27% of the total access to the system) as in 2021; followed by Belgium (23%) France (9%) and Spain (8%). [eu-LISA]
- An increasing number of Member States is systematically using ANPR systems, resulting in more than double of the automated searches reported, as compared to 2021, rising to 8.3 billion. [eu-LISA]
- On 31 December 2022, there were 86,461,806 alerts stored in SIS II. [eu-LISA]
- In line with the trend observed in the last years, by the end of 2022 alerts on persons represented 1% of the total amount of alerts stored in the data base. The biggest category was issued document, counting for almost 81% of the total alerts stored. [eu-LISA]
- In 2022, a total of 263,452 hits on foreign alerts were reported via the SIRENE Bureaus. This is an increase of 18% compared to 2021, but still 7% less than the record level reached in 2019 (pre-Covid19 levels). [eu-LISA]
- The share of hits per type of alert are stable, and in line with the trend seen in the past years. The majority of hits are triggered by alerts pursuant to Article 36 SIS II Decision, alerts on persons and objects for discreet or specific checks. [eu-LISA]

²⁶ This is preliminary information, as at the time this technical fiche is prepared, consultation with Member States is ongoing.

²⁷ Given the importance of the Schengen Information System for the internal security of the Schengen area, and in view of having an integrated analysis of main risks, the Commission requested eu-LISA to provide data on a number of indicators. In particular, total number of alerts per alert category, further broken down per type of offence (including the number of alerts which do not contain any 'type of offence'), number of hits per alert category, as well as the total number of SIS alerts (refusal of entry or stay and alerts for arrest) issued for nationals of specific third countries. Subject to the timely response of the Agency, this data and key information included into the SIS will still be taken into account to complement this section ahead of the March Schengen Council.

²⁸ It is complex to compare Member States when it comes to the usage of SIS II. This depends on many factors, including the definition at national level of business processes and workflows. Furthermore, each Member State has its own crime level, and geographical situation, which determine the number of border crossing points and the length of the external land borders.



Drug trafficking

- Record amounts of drugs have entered the EU in 2022, in the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam or through south European countries. Roughly 110 tonnes of cocaine entered the EU in 2022 through the port of Antwerp in Belgium, a stark increase from the 90 tonnes recorded in 2021²⁹. [Europol]
- Trafficking routes: besides the traditional involvement of Latin American criminal networks, networks from the Western Balkans have become more visible in terms of both their drug portfolio and geographical presence, both in the importation and distribution of drugs within the EU. Smaller ports are used more frequently to import drugs. Drugs are also imported by land via the Balkan route. Within the EU, drugs are trafficked mostly by road, concealed in vehicles. [Europol]
- The war in Ukraine could be an opportunity to orchestrate shipments of drugs from and to the EU under the guise of humanitarian aid. [Europol]
- Europol operational support:

| Analysis Project DRUGS | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|----------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Number of Operations | 343 | 226 | 335 |
| Number of Action Days | 1 | 27 | 37 |
| Number of JITs | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Number of accepted contributions | 8650 | 7348 | 6666 |
| Number of operational reports | 2052 | 1090 | 757 |

- In the past five years, Eurojust has seen more and more cases requiring cross-border judicial cooperation concerning drug trafficking. In 2022, it provided support to a record high of 1 061 cases. 59 Joint Investigation Teams were working on these cases in 2022. [Eurojust]

²⁹ Press release Ministry of Finance Belgium, 10.01.2023, https://financien.belgium.be/nl/douane_accijnzen/over-de-aada/persberichten.

- In 2023, a thematic Schengen evaluation to identify best practices in combating drug trafficking into the EU is taking place, involving experts from national law enforcement as well as Europol, Frontex and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. The best practices identified will help to boost the capacities of all Member States to fight drug trafficking.

Trafficking in human beings

- Figures and evolutions of suspects and victims: about half of the victims are EU-citizens. Of the third-country nationals, more victims are now coming from Latin America, following the higher involvement of Latin American criminal networks. Ukrainian refugees remain vulnerable to exploitation. Following the earthquake in Türkiye, more vulnerable people may be targeted for exploitation in the EU. [Europol]
- Trafficking routes: the Western Balkans have emerged as a new entry point for victims of trafficking in human beings from Latin America, besides Spain and Portugal. Once in Europe, victims are moved frequently from country to country to avoid detection. [Europol]
- *Modi operandi*: in recent months, the criminal actors involved have resorted more frequently to manipulation (rather than physical violence) by posing as legitimate business structures, offering contracts to deliver certain services, depending on the regulatory framework of the Member State. As such, they try to stay under the radar of law enforcement. [Europol]
- In the past five years, Eurojust has assisted in 761 cases of trafficking in human beings requiring cross-border judicial cooperation. [Eurojust]
- Europol operational support:

| Analysis Project PHOENIX | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|----------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Number of Operations | 55 | 67 | 64 |
| Number of Action Days | 9 | 9 | 22 |
| Number of JITs | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Number of accepted contributions | 3235 | 3294 | 3,104 |
| Number of operational reports | 249 | 185 | 247 |

Terrorism / Foreign Terrorist Fighters

- Humanitarian and security crises outside of the EU's external borders continue to cause concern with regards to the possible infiltration of terrorists in migration flows into the EU. In the weeks following the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, a limited but not insignificant number of individuals flagged as possible terrorist suspects trying to enter the EU within the flow of refugees were detected. These individuals came from the Caucasus, Central Asia, but also the Middle-East and Africa and were identified based on SIS alerts or Interpol hits. [DG HOME]
- The recent earthquake in Türkiye and Syria may lead terrorists (either escaped from jail or foreign terrorist fighters present in the region) to attempt to travel or return to the EU, profiting from the crisis situation and possibly using the established migrant smuggling routes. [Europol]
- The high number of asylum applicants from areas with a high presence of terrorists groups such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan continues. Yet information in SIS II on these nationalities is limited. On 22 February 2023, the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security endorsed a revised version of the 'process for evaluating and possibly entering information from third countries on suspected Foreign Terrorist Fighters in the Schengen Information System', which aims at ensuring that appropriate and timely action is taken on lists of third country Foreign Terrorist Fighters received by Europol. [DG HOME]

Firearm trafficking

- On 27 October 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal to recast the Regulation on import, export and transit of civilian firearms. The objective is to balance the need for harmonised procedures in order to support the legal trade with an increase of security through a larger focus on the traceability of civilian firearms.
- Sources of firearms: hybrid firearms are assembled and sold on the black markets in the EU. This involves the acquisition of parts from countries where they can be legally acquired, such as the US and even EU countries for certain parts. They arrive to the EU via postal and parcel services to circumvent shipping restrictions. They are subsequently combined with illegally manufactured weapon parts which are trafficked into the EU. [Europol]
- There is a risk of firearm trafficking from Ukraine into the EU in light of the Russian war in Ukraine, though incidents were still limited in 2022. [Europol]
- The Western Balkans remains one of the main regions of origin for the trafficking of firearms into the EU. [Europol]
- Links between 3D-printed weapons and right-wings violent extremists and terrorists have been detected. [Europol]
- Europol operational response:

| AP WEAPONS & EXPLOSIVES | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|----------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Number of Operations | 46 | 61 | 103 |
| Number of Action Days | 6 | 39 | 26 |
| Number of JITs | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Number of accepted contributions | 1822 | 1713 | 1,353 |
| Number of operational reports | 487 | 410 | 263 |

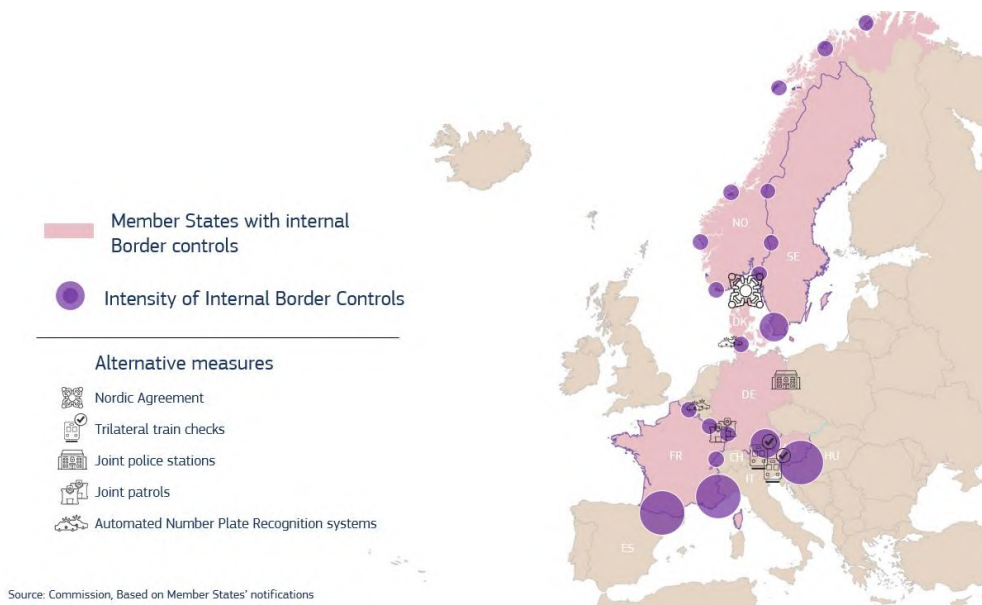
- Eurojust is more and more involved in firearm trafficking cases, supporting 46 cases in 2022.

Organised Property Crime

- Intra-Schengen trafficking routes: there are indications that cultural goods have been trafficked into the Schengen area (NL, CH) from Ukraine. [Europol]
- International dimension of criminal networks involved: the mobile organised crime groups (MOCGs) originate both from within the EU and from the outside, particularly the Western Balkans. [Europol]
- Eurojust supports and coordinates a high and steadily increasing number of cases related to organised property crime. Most requests for support come from Germany, Austria and France.

SITUATION AT THE INTERNAL BORDERS

- There are currently six Member States with temporarily reintroduced border controls at some or all of the internal borders. These are all long-lasting internal border controls.
- Article 26 of the Schengen Borders Code determines the criteria for the reintroduction of internal border control, including its impact on free movement of persons. As a result, the intensity of these controls is currently uneven with non-systematic border controls being implemented in some border sections.
- In the absence of detailed reports providing comparable data (not provided by Member States), it is difficult to have a full picture of the measures applied. The Commission gathered (extensive) information of the situation at the specific border sections through numerous meetings with the Member States concerned and those affected by the reintroduced border controls. The intensity represented in the map below is based on the received notifications, outcome of the discussions with the Member States and individual complaints received by the Commission.
- *Intensity of controls at the internal borders and cross-border actions³⁰:*



Source: DG HOME based on notifications of Member States and feedback provided to the Schengen Coordinator

- The ongoing dialogue allowed for lifting controls at the land borders with Slovakia, as reintroduced in September 2022 by the Czech Republic and Austria. It has revealed the good practices developed at the French/Italian border and among the Nordic states. It has also led to the intensification of contacts between France and Spain as well as Austria and Slovenia. In the latter case, the recent bilateral discussions led to the intensification of joint patrols, which should pave the way to

³⁰ Based on the received notifications, outcome of the discussions with the Member States and individual complaints received, the Commission prepared an approximate visualisation of the intensity of internal border controls, divided by three levels. At the lower level, the controls being carried out are reported to be targeted; at the medium level, despite systematic controls being carried out at the specific border section, they may not concern all travellers; and at the higher level, the controls are reported to be systematic at all authorised border crossing points established along the border section.

replacing current border controls by such compensatory measures, should the type of threats remain unchanged.

- However, there is still room for improvement, as Member States are still not giving full effect to the possibilities of carrying out alternative measures, such as targeted police checks and more structured forms of law enforcement cooperation in intra-EU border areas instead of reintroduced internal border controls.
- Some of the reasons these Member States evoked not to resort to alternative measures, concern the possibility to refuse entry during the reintroduced internal border controls, legal obstacles or the possibility to use external border instruments (e.g. Advanced Passenger Information).

EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE MEASURES TO INTERNAL BORDER CONTROLS

- ✓ Deployment of **Automated Number Plate Recognition systems** along main roads near intra-EU borders that can check the SIS and relevant national databases (e.g. NL, DE/DK).
- ✓ **FR/DE:**
 - Joint pool of police officers ready to be deployed in case of mass gathering or serious incidents.
 - Joint patrols organised at the FR / DE internal border with a focus on irregular immigration and migrant smuggling.
- ✓ **PL/DE:** Joint Police Stations coordinating the deployment of joint patrols at the internal borders.
- ✓ **DK joint crime analysis centre** with the presence of **SE** police officers.
- ✓ **Trilateral train patrols:** AT-DE-HU (route Budapest-Vienna) and AT-DE-IT. Reinforcement of police checks on trains between SK (Bratislava trains station) and AT.
- ✓ **Liaison officers:**
 - FR: part of the network is dedicated to irregular migration, facilitating exchange of information with local authorities (document fraud, cross-border rules, combating channels, etc.) and migratory flows analysis (modus operandi, routing).
 - DE: secondment of liaison officers in Athens contributed to the lifting of controls on flight connections from EL.
- ✓ **EMPACT – Joint centre migration AT:** specialised in international investigations against organised crime groups involved in the trafficking in human beings and migrants smuggling. It facilitates fast and effective information exchange, joint operations and common investigations in particular with neighbouring or nearby EU countries (DE, HU, HR IT, SI). It has introduced innovative solutions such as common access to live interpreting assistance in third-countries' languages.
- ✓ **Agreement on Cooperation between Police Authorities in the Nordic Countries:** contains provisions on cross-border participation in police interviews, exchange of criminal records, serving subpoenas, search for persons and objects, execution of surrender decisions, exchange of information, sharing equipment and transit through each other's territories. Since its last revision in 2021, this agreement also provides for the possibility for the participating police services (including their special units) to assist each other by mutually sending police officers and to organise joint operations, as well as to take part in joint training and exercises.
- ✓ **Bilateral agreements between neighbouring Schengen countries:**
 - BENELUX Treaty: provides for the most extensive forms of police cooperation in the Schengen area. It allows, amongst others, for direct, mutual access to police databases (for limited data objects and under certain conditions) and hot pursuits without any conditions.
 - SK and neighbouring Schengen countries: allows cross-border hot pursuits in the territory

of Slovakia without any time and territorial restrictions and going beyond extraditable offences. According to the agreement with Austria, hot pursuits can be carried out through more than one Schengen internal border (e.g. from HU through AT to SK). In addition, provisions of the SK-HU Agreement extend the right of hot pursuit beyond land, to waterways. The SK-AT and SK-CZ agreements extend it to waterways and air space. The bilateral agreements, extending the provisions of the CISA, give permission to hot pursuit also in cases of someone avoiding police or border checks.

- CZ-AT and CZ-DE: enable the exchange of information on administrative offences, provide for the transfer and transit of persons through the territory of the other state by officers of the other contracting party, contain provisions extending the traditional scope for cross-border hot pursuit and surveillance and grant German and Austrian police officers carrying out their activities on the Czech territory with the same police powers as Czech police officers. These agreements also organise a wealth of cross-border joint police cooperation initiatives.

