FRONTEX

EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY

Risk Analysis for 2019

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DISCLAIMERS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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List of acronyms used

BCP	border-crossing point
CRI	common risk indicator
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EASO EPS	European Asylum Support Office Early Warning and Preparedness System
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Union Document-Fraud
EDF-RAN	European Union Document-Fraud Risk Analysis Network
EMN	European Migration Network
EU	European Union
EU+	28 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland
Eurodac	European Dactyloscopy
Eurojust	European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit
Europol	European Police Office
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Union
FRAN	Frontex Risk Analysis Network
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency (formerly European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union)
FTF	foreign terrorist fighter
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ID	identification document
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JO	Joint Operation
MRCC	Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre
MS	EU Member State
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SAC	Schengen-Associated Country
SAR	search and rescue
UK	The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution

Portuguese Navy on patrol – Themis Operation, 2018
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1. Preface

In 2018, the number of detections of illegal border-crossings reached its lowest level in five years, but migratory pressure remained relatively high at the EU's external borders. The total figure fell 27 % from the previous year to 150 114 and was 92 % below the peak of the migratory crisis in 2015. This was in large part due to the dramatic fall in the number of migrants on the Central Mediterranean route, where the number of detections plunged 80 % to 23 485.

Meanwhile, both the Western Mediterranean and the Eastern Mediterranean routes saw an increase in the detections of illegal crossings last year.

The Western Mediterranean became the most frequently used route into Europe. The pressure on Spain has been rising over the last years, and the number of detections in 2018 reached 57 034, double the number from 2017. The number of departures from Morocco increased fivefold. Most of the migrants taking this route last year came from sub-Saharan countries, but the number of Moroccan nationals also increased significantly.

The Eastern Mediterranean saw only slightly fewer detections than the Western Mediterranean route. With 56 561 illegal border-crossings, the pressure was 34 % higher than in the preceding year due to the increase in land crossings from Turkey to Greece.

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, maintains a strong presence at Europe's external borders. The Agency ran three permanent operations in Spain, Greece and Italy, assisting EU Member States that faced the highest migratory pressure. On average, some 1 500 border guards are deployed in Frontex joint operations, along with vessels, planes, helicopters, patrol cars and other equipment.

Last year, Frontex began to collect detailed data on the sex and the age of irregular migrants. Nearly one in five of all the detected migrants last year claimed to be under the age of 18. This new development is crucial not only for a better monitoring and understanding of the dynamics and composition of incoming migratory flows, but also for the effective identification of vulnerable groups.

Checks at the external borders are one of the main safeguards of the Schengen Area. Frontex monitors Europe's borders 24 hours a day, seven days a week, helping the EU face challenges and threats at its borders, including threats related to cross-border crime and prevention of terrorism. The Agency is able to respond quickly and effectively to challenges at the external borders, shoulder-to-shoulder with EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. This integrated approach, which brings together the efforts of Frontex and other EU agencies, along with EU institutions and national authorities, is a key factor to address irregular migration and cross-border crime at the external borders.

Despite the falling migratory pressure in the Central Mediterranean, the fight against criminal smuggling networks at the external borders remains in our focus. In 2018, Frontex continued collecting information from voluntary

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interviews with migrants in the Central, Eastern and Western Mediterranean area in the framework of PeDRA (Processing Personal Data for Risk Analysis). The vast majority (84 %) of the migrants interviewed claimed that they were facilitated by smuggling networks. Border guards are also the first filter at the external borders when it comes to the detection of potential terrorist threats. This is done through screening, registration, document checks or voluntary interviews. We work closely with Europol and other European agencies sharing this information.

Over the last few years, the European Union and its Member States have been facing major challenges related to migration and security. As a response, a number of changes have been implemented when it comes to border control and management. These include the amendment of the Schengen Borders Code, the establishment of the EU Entry / Exit System and the adoption of the regulation establishing the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

Frontex will play a central role in implementing the regulation governing the ETIAS, a system for granting electronic pre-authorisation to travellers who do not need a visa to visit the Schengen area. The Agency will set up and manage the ETIAS Central Unit, which will provide operational support, as well as

reinforcing and coordinating border control activities in Member States.

In 2018, the Agency substantially strengthened its activities aimed at returning irregular migrants to their countries of origin. Last year, we helped Member States return 13 729 people who do not have the right to remain in the EU to their countries of origin. We launched a successful trial of conducting returns on commercial flights to nearly 50 destinations and we have significantly increased our pre-return assistance to Member States.

To help Member States better prepare for potential challenges at their borders, for the second year Frontex conducted the vulnerability assessment to evaluate the border control capabilities of EU member states.

Last year, the Agency further developed its network of liaison officers to EU Member States. Those officers help Frontex in the exchange of information with partners at national level, and contribute to the vulnerability assessment by collecting relevant information and data.

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency is moving towards owning or leasing an increasingly larger portion of its equipment, including vehicles, planes and vessels, to be able to better support Member States. Last year, the Agency leased surveillance planes and tested the use of remote piloted aircraft systems in its operations.

The situation in the countries outside the EU also has a direct impact on Europe's borders. Frontex is monitoring the countries neighbouring the EU identified through risk analysis as countries of origin and/or transit for illegal immigration. The aim is to better address challenges at EU borders. Frontex has become more active in countries neighbouring the EU that are affected by migration and cross-border crime, including the Western Balkans, where the EU signed an agreement on cooperation on border management between Albania and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. The Agency also has three liaison officers outside the EU based in Turkey, Niger and Serbia.

Together with its partners, Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, will continue to contribute to the safety and security at the EU's external borders and its citizens and to the well-functioning of the European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

2. Summary

Member States reported 150 114 illegal border-crossings in 2018, 27 % fewer than in 2017. The most decisive development for the overall level of migratory pressure in 2018 in fact dates back to July 2017, when the sudden reversal in the number of irregular migrants detected in the Central Mediterranean took place. This reversal continues to stand as the most significant development at the EU's external borders since the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement. The decreasing trend in migrant arrivals on the Central Mediterranean route, which lasted throughout 2018, was the primary reason for the decrease in the number of illegal border-crossings vis-à-vis 2017. On this route, the other third countries of departure – Tunisia, Algeria and Turkey – equally had fewer successful departures. Egypt in 2018 did not see any departures of migrants to Europe on the sea route.

With the number of illegal border-crossings plummeting on the Central Mediterranean route, the spotlight moved onto the Western Mediterranean route, where in 2018 in particular Moroccan and sub-Saharan migrants crossed the Strait of Gibraltar or the Alboran Sea in record numbers, making the Western Mediterranean route the most frequently used route into Europe in 2018. Morocco was also the country of departure for a little more than half of the migrants that targeted the Canary Islands on the Western African route.

On the Eastern Mediterranean route, the most significant development of 2018 was arguably the implementation of a relocation and return programme in Turkey for irregular Syrian migrants, which shifted the nationality makeup on the Eastern Mediterranean Sea route in the second half of the year.

The Western Balkan route in 2018 saw shifts between the Greek-Albanian corridor and the Serbian-centred corridor. Throughout the year, most of the migratory pressure on the route materialised at the Bosnian and Herzegovinian-Croatian border, and also, to a lesser extent, on Serbia's border with Hungary, Croatia and Romania.

At the Eastern Land Border in 2018, another third country, Russia, created with a temporary change in its visa policy an opportunity to reach the EU's external borders. For the 2018 FIFA World Cup™, Russia allowed travelers visa-free entry to the Russian Federation for those in possession of match tickets. This enabled migrants to reach the EU's external borders via Russia, but also via Belarus and Ukraine, with migrants attempting to enter the EU illegally. This contributed to an increase in detections compared with 2017, however remaining at much lower level than on other routes.

Corresponding to the changes in the flows of the main migration routes, the migrant population in 2018 changed its nationality makeup – while Syrians remained the most common nationality due to the effects of the Turkish relocation and return programme only taking effect during the second half of the year, Moroccans were the second most common, before Afghans and Iraqis. Turkish nationals, as mentioned above, increased in number and were the fifth-most common nationality in 2018.

In 2018, Member States reported an increase in the detection of clandestine entries. Nevertheless, the number of detected attempts of clandestine entry continued to be arguably below that to be expected in times of tightened border surveillance at the green and blue borders.

Secondary movements continued on a large scale during 2018. Countries without external land and sea borders reported thousands of inland detections of illegal stay. These could however be overstays after having entered via the air borders. Yet Eurodac hits of both categories, combined having registered a total higher than illegal border-crossings in 2018, are evidence of the scale of secondary movements. In this context, the increase in the inland detection of people smugglers (+13 %) is also an indication of the reliance on organised crime networks to smuggle migrants to their countries of destination. In addition, a significant increase in document fraud detections on secondary movements was recorded in 2018. In fact, the number of

document fraud detections on secondary movements inside the EU/Schengen area reached its highest level since 2013.

The year 2018 once again signified a year of heavy workload for border guards in Member States, who were faced with another increase in entry and exit checks to be performed at border crossing points with a further rise in passenger flows and the 2017 expansion of systematic checks on those passengers enjoying the right of free movement under EU law. This meant at times delays for passengers at certain border-crossing points. The second line, too, was in many Member States kept busy by for instance an increase in refusals of entry along the external borders, but also by the aforementioned increase in document fraud detections on secondary movements. In particular, at the borders with Ukraine, the increase in issued refusals of entry to Ukrainians was significant. The categories of refusals reported imply that visa liberalisation wrongly suggests to travellers that they no longer need to justify the purpose and conditions of stay and present sufficient means of subsistence on request. As regards exit checks, illegal stay detections on exit at air, land and sea borders increased slightly. This too then meant an increase in workload in particular for the second line of border checks.

The number of effective returns in 2018 once again fell short of the decisions issued by Member States to return migrants: Around 148 000 migrants who were not granted asylum or subsidiary protection were returned to their countries of origin, little more than half the total number of return decisions issued. In particular, no measurable progress was made as regards returns to West Africa – while the number of return decisions issued increased by roughly 80 % compared with 2017, effective returns remained unchanged, reflecting deficits in cooperation and administrative capacity in countries of origin.

Looking ahead, there is no indication that the workload for border guards will decrease anytime soon, with systematic checks in an environment of increasing passenger flows on the one hand and persistent migratory pressure on the green and blue borders on the other. European border management will continue to be tested by unforeseeable events and factors – beyond irregular migration and into cross-border crime.

Latest situation 2018

Reported cases (2017) / **2018**

(1 622) **2 258**	Detections of illegal border-crossing at BCPs
(6 670) **6 667**	Detections of fraudulent document users
(10 246) **10 642**	Detections of facilitators
(155 945) **148 121**	Returns (effective)
(204 750) **150 114**	Detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs
(183 019) **190 930**	Refusals of entry
(282 075) **286 875**	Returns (decisions)
(435 084) **361 636**	Detections of persons staying illegally

3. Introduction

The Frontex Risk Analysis for 2019 has been specifically designed to provide an overview to help in making informed decisions on both common European investments and concerted actions to improve the management of external borders and uphold the internal security of the Union.

Frontex operational activities aim at strengthening border security by supporting Member States' actions regarding the implementation of EU measures for the management of external borders. The coordination of operational activities contributes to a more efficient allocation of Member States' resources and better protection of the area of freedom, security and justice. In this context, the Risk Analysis for 2019 concentrates on the scope of Frontex operational activities and, in particular, on irregular migration at the external borders of the EU and the Schengen Associated Countries.

Since the Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 came into effect, the mandate of Frontex has significantly been enhanced to ensure an efficient implementation of European Integrated Border Management as a shared responsibility of the Union, the Agency and of the national authorities of the Member States.

The European Integrated Border Management consists of 11 strategic components defined in Article 4 of the Agency's Regulation. These are: border control, including measures in relation to trafficking in human beings and terrorism, search and rescue operations, analysis of risks for internal security, cooperation with Member States, inter-agency cooperation, cooperation with third countries, measures within the Schengen area related to border control, return of third-country nationals, use of state-of-the-art technology, quality control mechanisms and solidarity mechanisms. These components, together with the three horizontal components – fundamental rights, training, research and innovation, collectively form the main elements of the technical and operational strategy for European Integrated Border Management.

Clearly, this major change has important implications for the analytical work performed by Frontex as its risk analysis should cover all aspects of Integrated Border Management and develop an early warning mechanism. Therefore, as much as possible, these new elements have been integrated into this annual risk analysis.

This annual report is structured as follows: (1) situational picture for the European Border and Coast Guard with emphasis on identified migratory trends and surveillance activities utilising a set of reliable indicators on irregular migration; (2) featured analyses on key risks affecting the security of the external borders and/or internal security; and finally (3) a presentation of outlook.

The Agency and in particular its Risk Analysis Unit would like to express its gratitude to all members of FRAN in Member States and third country partners for their efforts in providing data and information, as well as EASO, Europol, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, and all colleagues involved in the preparation of this report.

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4. Methodology

A coherent and comprehensive analysis of the risks affecting security at the external borders requires, above all, the adoption of common indicators. Consistent monitoring of these indicators allows effective measures to be taken on the ground. The analysis needs to identify the risks that arise at the external borders themselves and those that arise in third countries.

The backbone of the *Risk Analysis for 2019* is the monthly statistics exchanged among Member States within the framework of the FRAN. For the *Risk Analysis for 2019*, the key indicators collected through the FRAN were: detections of illegal border-crossing at the green and blue border or at BCPs; refusals of entry; detections of illegal stay; detections

of facilitators; detections of fraudulent documents; return decisions; effective returns and passenger flow data (when available). Data on asylum applications for 2018 were still being collected within the FRAN, but Frontex increasingly works with data collected by EASO, which has provided the dedicated section on asylum.

The data were categorised by border type (land, air or sea) and those on land borders were additionally grouped by border section with neighbouring third countries. The data exchanged within the FRAN are compiled and analysed on a quarterly basis. Priority is given to the use of the data for management purposes and to their fast sharing among Member State border-control authorities.

Member States' data processed by Frontex are not treated as official statistics and thus may occasionally vary from those officially published by national authorities. Throughout 2018, some FRAN members performed backdated updates of their 2017 statistics. These updates have been accounted for in this document, hence some data presented here may differ from those presented a year ago in the *Risk Analysis for 2018*.

Member States were not requested to answer specific questions in support of this analysis. Rather, bimonthly analytical reports and incident reports of Member States routinely collected within the FRAN, as well as other Member States' contributions submitted in 2018 were important sources of information, especially

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as regards the analysis of routes and *modi operandi*. Additionally, the outcomes of debriefing activities carried out in the framework of Joint Operations constituted essential analytical material.

Open-source information was also effectively exploited, especially in identifying the main 'push and pull factors' for irregular migration to the EU. Among others, these sources included reports issued by government agencies, international and non-governmental organisations, as well as mainstream news agencies and official EU reports.

External borders, a term often used in this report, refer to the borders between Member States and third countries. The borders between the Schengen Associated Countries (Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland) and third countries are also considered as external borders. By contrast, the borders between the Schengen Associated Countries and Schengen Member States are considered as internal borders. For the indicators on detections of facilitators, illegal stay and asylum, statistics are also reported for detections at the land borders between Schengen Member States and those Member States that have either not joined the Schengen area yet in full (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania) or have opted to stay out of it (the UK, Ireland). Thus, a total for Member States and Schengen Associated Countries as a whole can be presented. It was not possible to make the aforementioned distinction for air and sea borders because Member States do not habitually differentiate between extra-EU and intra-EU air and sea connections but tend to aggregate data for all arrivals per airport.

Consistent with other law-enforcement indicators, variation in administrative data related to border control depends on several factors. In this case, the number of detections of illegal border-crossing and refusals of entry are both functions of the amount of effort spent, respectively, on detecting migrants and the actual flow of irregular migrants to the EU. For example, increased detections of illegal border-crossing might be due to a real increase in the flow of irregular migrants, or may in fact be an outcome of more resources made available to detect them. In exceptional cases, increased resources may produce a rise in reported detections while effectively masking the actual decrease in the migratory flow, resulting from a strong deterrent effect.

5. Situational analysis of 2018

Operation Themis, 2018
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Detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU's external borders, 2018

150 114

(204 750 in 2017)

Route

in 2018
(in 2017)

Top three nationalities
Syria 14 378
Morocco 13 269
Afghanistan 12 666

Eastern Borders route
1 084
(872)

Black Sea route
0
(537)

Western Balkan route
5 869
(12 179)

Afghanistan 1 669
Pakistan 1 017
Iran 980

Circular route from Albania to Greece
4 550
(6 396)

Eastern Mediterranean route
56 561
(42 319)

Syria 13 906
Afghanistan 10 738
Iraq 8 970

Western Mediterranean route
57 034
(23 063)

Unknown 25 293
Morocco 11 723
Guinea 4 971

Western African route
1 531
(421)

Central Mediterranean route
23 485
(118 962)

Tunisia 5 182
Eritrea 3 529
Sudan 2 037

Please note that selection of these border sections does not adequately capture developments at other, internal, sections of the route.

5.1. Surveillance: Overview

For the third year in a row following Europe's migration crisis of 2015, the number of detections of illegal border-crossing along the EU's external borders fell significantly. In 2018, Member States reported 150 114 detections of illegal border-crossing along the EU's external borders, which represents a 27 % decrease compared with 2017 (around a twelfth of the 1.8 million detections at the height of the migration crisis). The decrease in 2018 was almost exclusively due to fewer detections on the Central Mediterranean route. The continuously mounting migratory pressure on the Western Mediterranean route and the once again rising pressure on the Eastern Mediterranean route caution – *inter alia* indications attesting to the persistent migratory pressure – against overemphasising the fact that the total number of detections stands at its lowest level since 2013. Thanks to enhanced data collection, the share of women in the overall irregular migrant population can be more accurately determined at 18 %. Nearly one in five of the detected migrants claimed to be under the age of 18.

Central Mediterranean route

On the Central Mediterranean route, departures from all third countries dropped in 2018. Noteworthy, Tunisia replaced Libya as the main country of departure for migrants detected on the Central Mediterranean route in September, October and December (in the other months it was Libya). Importantly, departures from Libya, having fallen by 87 %, accounted for the vast majority of the drop in detected migrants on this route. Departures from Algeria fell by almost half compared with 2017, while departures from Turkey via the Aeagan and Ionian Sea fell by 37 %. The route hence recorded its lowest number of intercepted migrants since 2012. The share of claimed minors on this route increased slightly in 2018 compared with 2017, recording a share of 19 % (84 % of them unaccompanied). Tunisians and Eritreans were the two most represented nationalities on this route, together accounting for more than one third of all detected migrants.

Western Mediterranean route

After more than doubling between 2016 and 2017, detections on the Western Mediterranean route once again more than doubled between 2017 and 2018, to 57 034 detections, thus making this route the

most frequently used route into Europe in 2018. Hence, Morocco was the main departure point to Europe for irregular migrants. The majority of the increase stems from departures from Morocco, which more than doubled. Most of the migratory pressure registered on this route was linked to migrants originating from sub-Saharan countries; however, towards the end of 2018, the number of Moroccan migrants began to increase. On this route, those that claimed to be minors accounted for a 9 % share of arrivals in 2018. Overall, on both land and sea routes, Moroccans were the top detected nationality, followed by Guineans, Malians and Algerians.

Eastern Mediterranean route

With only slightly fewer detections than on the Western Mediterranean route, the Eastern Mediterranean route registered 56 561 illegal border-crossings in 2018. Because of Turkish preventions of departure, the number of detections in the Eastern Aegean Sea was roughly unchanged. The implementation of a relocation and return programme in Turkey for irregular Syrian migrants slightly shifted the nationality makeup on the Eastern Mediterranean route in the second half of 2018 with smuggling networks increasingly offering Afghans the possibility of reaching the Greek Eastern Aegean islands, thereby offsetting the lower number of Syrian migrants. Nevertheless, Syrians were still the most commonly detected nationality. The number of recorded Turkish migrants more than tripled in 2018 with 7 918 arrivals thereby becoming the fourth most common nationality on this route behind the aforementioned nationalities and Iraqis.

Western Balkan route

The Western Balkans continued to be transited by irregular migrants trying to reach Western Europe from Turkey. Two main routes through the region stood out in 2018 with pressure shifting between them as border control activities were enhanced and reinforced in certain areas. Both, the central route via Serbia and the route stemming from the Greek-Albanian border section projected pressure northwards, along the Bosnian and Herzegovinian–Croatian–Slovenian corridor and to a lesser extent on Serbia's EU borders with Hungary, Croatia and Romania. The top nationalities detected transiting the region were largely similar to those reported on the Eastern Mediterranean route, with the exception of Iranians who reached the Balkans via Serbia having mostly abused visa-free access to Serbia, which was rescinded in October.

Western African route

On the Western African route, a strong increase in detected irregular migrants was registered (+264 % to around 1 500), mostly in the second part of the year and mostly Moroccans who had the Canary Islands as their final intended destination, oftentimes with family links on the Islands. A little more than half of these migrants departed from Morocco while the rest mostly departed from Senegal.

Eastern Land Border route

The Eastern land border in 2018 saw an approximately 24 % increase in detections compared with 2017, partly due to migrants abusing the FIFA Fan ID, which allowed travelers visa-free entry to Russia, from where, coming also via Belarus and Ukraine, the migrants attempted to enter the EU illegally. With a share of around 34 %, Vietnamese nationals represented an even larger portion of illegal border-crossings at the Eastern Land Border route compared to 2017, followed at a distance by Iraqis, Russians and Ukrainians.

Figure 1. **Detections of illegal border-crossing, by main nationalities (scale in absolute numbers, with labels showing percentages of total) in 2018**
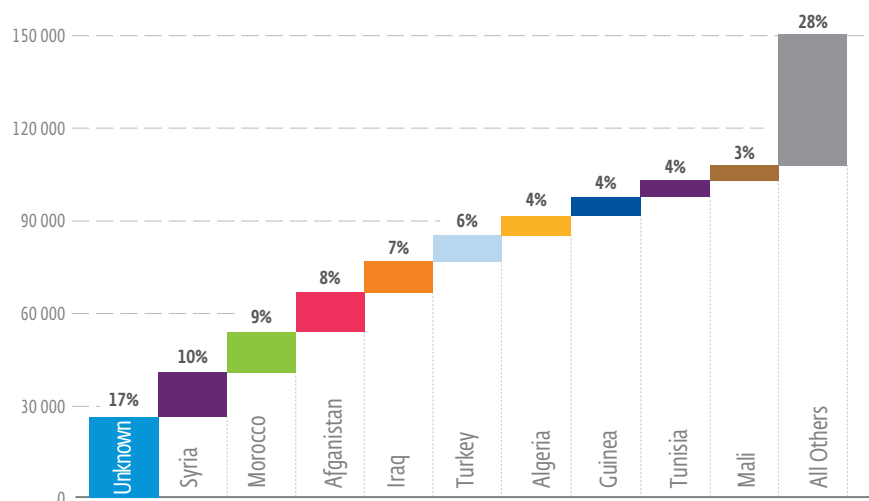
**Detections of illegal border-crossing at BCPs
by border section (people hiding in vehicles), 2018**

2 258 (1 622)

Number in parenthesis is for 2017

◆ 200

Croatia-Serbia

Bulgaria-Turkey

Italy-Sea

Spain-Morocco

5.2. Border checks: Clandestine entry

In 2018, Member States reported the highest total in detections of clandestine entry (people hiding in trains, lorries and other vehicles seeking to enter the EU at the external borders on both land and sea routes) since 2015, testimony to a persistency in migratory pressure, in particular at certain border sections at the EU's external borders. At the same time, falling detections at many border sections in times of tightened border surveillance at the green border – which could increase the incentives for clandestine entry – actually reveal differences in procedures and data reporting among Member States.

At EU seaports, a lower number of clandestine entry attempts reported by Italy have led to a significant decrease in the total (-35 %), whereas all other sea borders reported fewer or roughly similar numbers. As regards Italian ports, the nationalities of persons attempting to enter clandestinely reflected both diverse port connections southwards (Tunisians and Moroccans) and eastwards (Iraqis and Turks).

© Frontex
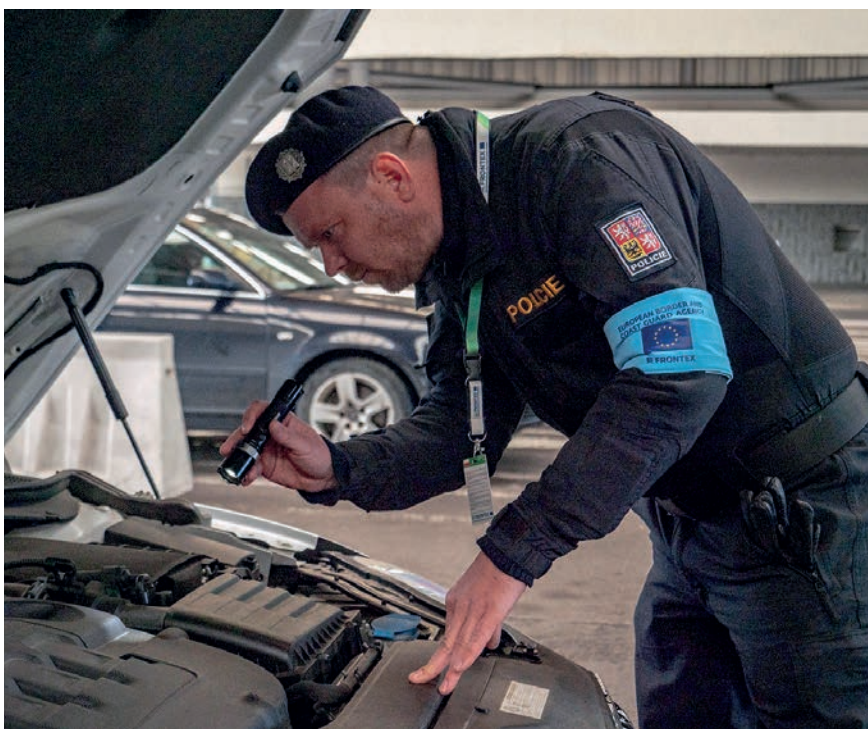
Figure 2. A Czech police officer checking a vehicle, Joint Action Day Mobile, 2018

**Refusals of entry
per border type, 2018**

(only values higher than 1000 are stipulated)

131 641 (126 456)

Number in parenthesis is for 2017

Land

54 780 (48 924)

Number in parenthesis is for 2017

Air

4 481 (7 639)

Number in parenthesis is for 2017

Sea

Poland

Romania

Hungary

Croatia

Greece

United
Kingdom

Germany

France

Italy

Spain

Italy

Spain

Trend of the total

Land		Air		Sea	
2017	126 456		48 924		7 639
2018	131 641		54 780		4 481

5.3. Border checks: Refusals of entry

In 2018, 190 930 refusals of entry were reported along the external borders of the EU, a slight increase compared with 2017. While the increases were at the air and land borders, refusals issued at sea borders decreased by 41 %.

More than half of the refusals continued to be issued to three nationalities – Ukrainian, Russian and Albanian. Refusals issued to Ukrainians increased by almost 60 %, whereas Russians (by roughly one-third, meanwhile the number of Russians at the EU's borders without a valid visa or residence permit decreased) and Albanians (by roughly one-fourth) recorded strong decreases.

Refusals of entry issued to Ukrainians have been steadily increasing since 2014, but the increase from 2017 to 2018 was more pronounced than in the previous year. Unsurprisingly, nine out of ten refusals were issued at the EU borders with Ukraine. The increase was in particular due to increases in refusals issued because of a lack of appropriate documentation justifying the purpose and conditions of stay and the inability to present sufficient means of subsistence. The increases in both categories of reasons for refusals was most likely linked to visa liberalisation, which started in June 2017, oftentimes meaning that the

visitors were unaware of the existing requirements to be fulfilled to enter the Schengen zone.

At sea borders, a decrease in refusals of persons for whom an alert had been issued in the Schengen Information System or in a national register is notable. Italian seaports reported much of the decrease with refusals being issued to passengers coming from Albania.

At air borders, there was little change in the airports that issued most refusals of entry.

issued alert for the purpose of refusing entry
in the SIS or national register (H)

no sufficient means of subsistence in relation to
period and form of stay, or the means to return (G)

already stayed for three months
during a six months period on MS territory (F)

no appropriate documentation
justifying the purpose and conditions of stay (E)

no valid visa or residence permit (C)

2017
2018

0   5 000   10 000   15 000   20 000   25 000

Figure 3. **Selected reasons for refusals of Ukrainain nationals, 2017–2018**

Nationality of users

- ≤100
- ≤150
- ≤250
- ≤400
- ≤977

Percentage change Trend between 2017 and 2018

Increase (from 1% to 120%)   Decrease (from -10% to -49%)
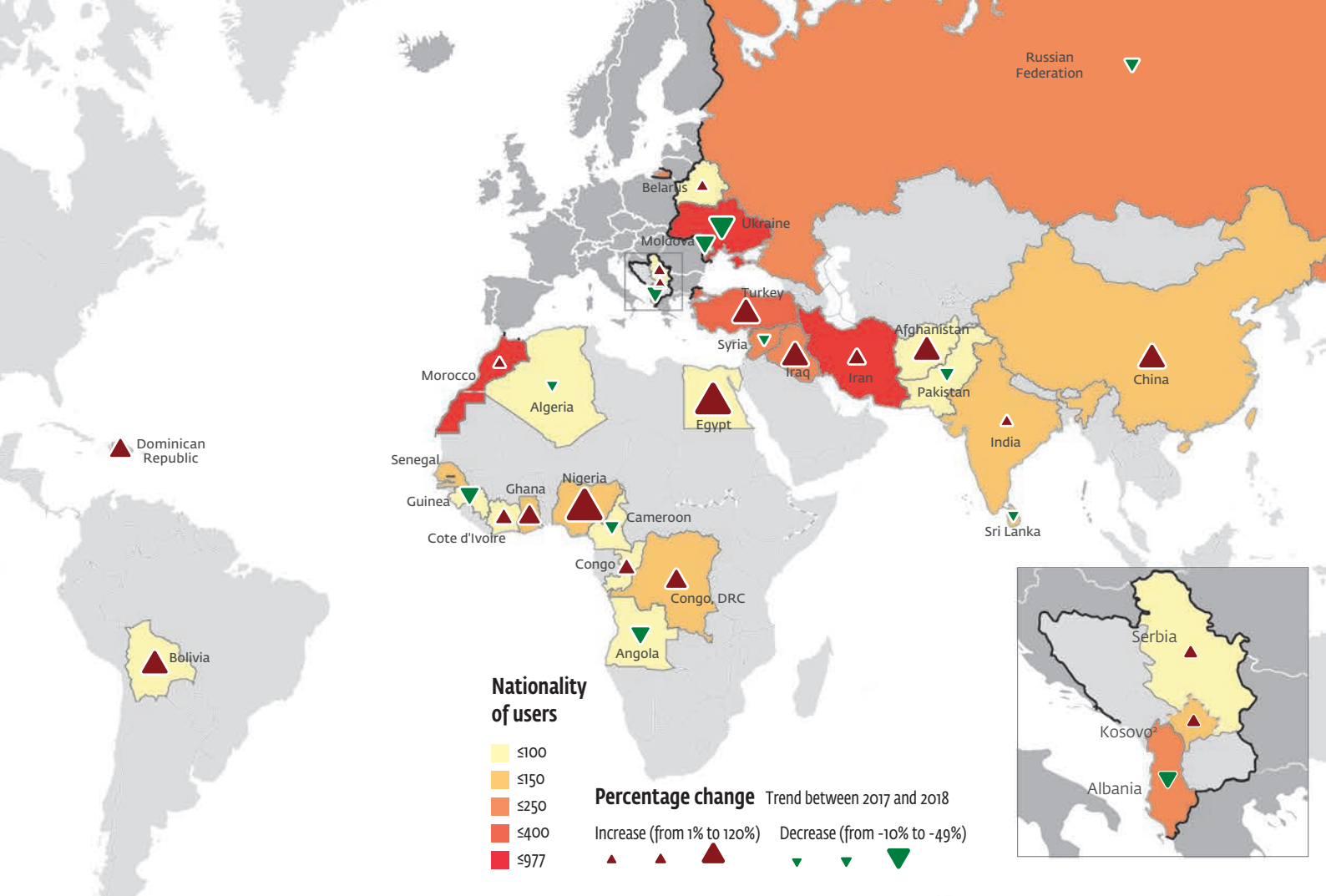
5.4. Border checks: Fraudulent documents

In 2018, Member States reported 6 667 individuals from third countries presenting fraudulent travel documents at BCPs on entry to the EU/SAC. The number of detections continues to follow its decreasing trend started in 2014, when exceptionally high numbers were reported on account of the Syrian diaspora. In contrast, the number of document fraud detections on secondary movements inside the EU/Schengen area increased in 2018 for the second year in a row. The figure increased by almost 42 % compared with 2017 and reached its highest level since 2013. Following a trend already observed during 2017, this development was mainly caused by the significant increase in departures from Greece involving Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish nationals. Of these nationalities, Turks recorded the most marked increase compared with 2017.

At EU level, of the 135 nationalities detected using fraudulent documents to illegally enter the EU/SAC from a third country, the most commonly detected as in the previous year were Moroccan (977), followed by Iranian (450), Ukrainian (401) and Turkish (394). The number of Ukrainian fraudulent document users decreased dramatically from 785 in 2017.

The remarkable progress recorded in the case of Ukrainian nationals was mostly brought about by visa liberalisation for the rightful holders of Ukrainian biometric passports, which entered into force in June 2017. The same goes for Georgian nationals due to visa liberalisation in March 2017. Apart from Turks, the number of Nigerians and Chinese detected with fraudulent documents crossing the external EU borders recorded a slight increase. After the relatively high number of Iranians detected on exit from Serbia, the trend has become stable during 2018 until the decision of the Serbian authorities to revoke visa-free travel for Iranians in October 2018. Serbia's decision to rescind visa-free travel for Iranians will probably result in a further decrease in the number of arrivals of Iranian fraudulent document users at the South-East EU border with Serbia in 2019.

In 2018, the top five most reported nationalities detected with fraudulent documents on entry to the EU/Schengen area from third countries remain almost the same as in the 2017 apart from Turks, who have replaced Albanians (due to their lower number) amongst the top five. The anticipated increase during and immediately after the 2018 FIFA World Cup™ did not materialise and figures have been not particularly affected, apart from a few cases registered mainly in the Baltic republics on entry from Russia and Belarus.

Istanbul's Atatürk Airport remains the top departure airport for detections of fraudulent documents from third countries despite a sharp decrease in numbers

As in previous years, most detections of fraudulent documents were reported on air routes. With 335 detections, the

Passports check – Joint Action Day Danube III 2018
© Frontex, 2018

number of document fraud cases from Istanbul's Atatürk airport decreased by 30 % in 2018 compared with 2017. Both Atatürk and Sabiha Gökçen (Istanbul) airports reported the lowest number of document fraud cases since 2013.

The second – most reported last airport of departure in 2018 was Mohammed IV airport in Casablanca with 211 detected persons using fraudulent documents in their attempt to cross the external EU borders.

At the land borders most of the detections of document fraud continued to be inbound from Ukraine and Serbia but to Hungary, instead of Poland, as the primary destination

Whilst in 2017 most of the document fraud cases at the land borders were reported between Ukraine and Poland, during 2018 the border between Hungary and Serbia saw the brunt of cases. The visa liberalisation regime for Ukrainian nationals that entered into force in June

2017, however, already led to a decrease in the number of Ukrainians abusing fraudulently obtained visas in the latter part of that year.

At the external sea borders, no significant change was observed in comparison with previous years.

Abuse of fraudulent documents for secondary movements is more and more in the spotlight

While detections of fraudulent document users inbound from third countries were stable, the same cannot be said about fake document users on secondary movements. The sustained increase in demand from within the EU for fraudulent documents has prompted established counterfeiters to increase their production and to establish new print shops.

The number of irregular migrants stuck in a nation different from their final destination increased in frontier Mediterranean states like Greece, Italy

and Spain. As a consequence, these migrants explore any possible option to move further towards their final destination, even purchasing fraudulent travel documents.

5.5. Situation of asylum in the EU by EASO

Until the end of December 2018, some 634 000 applications for international protection were lodged in the 28 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland (EU+), about 10 % fewer than in 2017.[1] At least one in 10 applicants in 2018 had previously lodged an application in the same EU+ reporting country (repeated applicants).

After the peak in asylum applications in the second half of 2015 and the high level sustained in 2016, the number of asylum claims began to decrease, and has remained relatively stable ever since (Fig. 4). In 2018, the number of

applications fluctuated between some 47 000 and 57 000, except for October when it went up to some 61 700. Throughout 2018, detections of illegal border-crossing continued to be at a consistently lower level than asylum applications, similar to the pattern in 2017 as well as prior to the migration crisis. This difference is probably related to multiple factors, including applications by persons crossing external borders undetected, repeated applicants in the same reporting country, secondary movements across the EU+, and applications by nationalities who entered the EU+ legally. The latter category includes arrivals with genuine visa, and also those from countries exempt from a Schengen visa which in 2018 represented 18 % of all asylum applications (Fig. 5).

The main countries of origin of applicants for international protection in the EU+ were Syria (74 680 applications), Afghanistan (45 273), Iraq (42 042), Pakistan

(28 797), and Iran (25 397), jointly representing about a third of all applicants (Fig. 5). All of these countries, except for Iran, were also in the top five in 2017. In addition to Iran, there were considerable increases in the number of applicants from Venezuela and Turkey. Similar to 2017, the population of applicants remained diverse with citizens of about 60 countries lodging over 1 000 applications in the EU+. There was a notable increase in the share of applicants from Schengen-visa exempt countries, from 13 % in 2017 to 18 % in 2018. The rise was most notable for citizens of Venezuela, Georgia and Colombia.

In 2018, over 67 000 applications were withdrawn in the EU+, about four fifths of them implicitly which is when an applicant is no longer present and thought to have absconded. The citizenships of applicants with most withdrawn applications were Iraqi, Pakistani, Afghan, Nigerian, and Syrian.

[1] EASO Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data are shared between EASO and the EU+ countries. They are provisional, unvalidated data and therefore might differ from validated data submitted at a later date to Eurostat (according to Regulation (EC) No 862/2007). The data included here are the latest as of 24 January 2019.
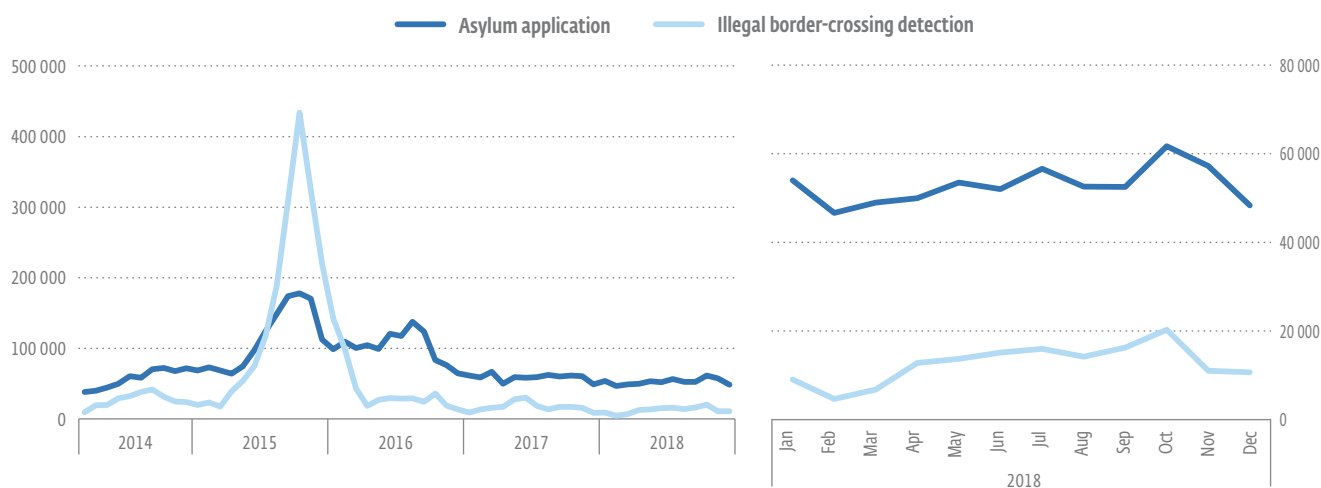
Figure 4. **Asylum applications in the EU+ and illegal border-crossing detections, March 2014 – December 2018, and a focus on 2018 (Source: EASO EPS data as of 24 January 2019 and Frontex public data)**
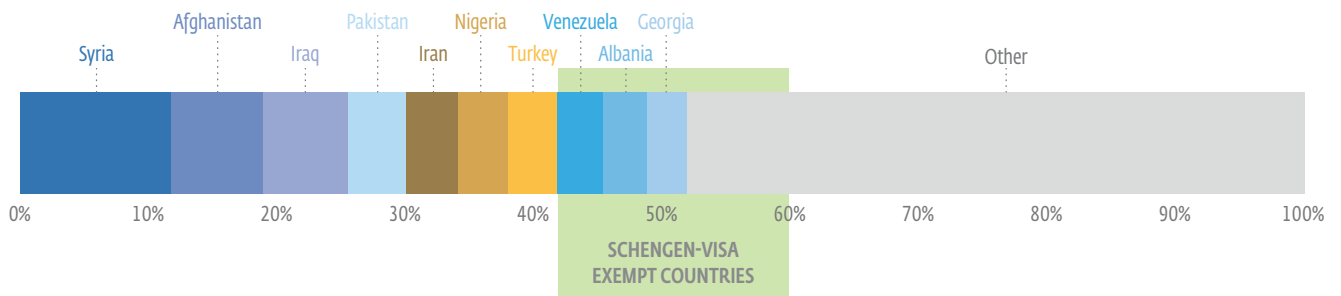
Figure 5. **Main nationalities of asylum applicants in the EU+, 2018** (Source: EASO EPS data as of 24 January 2019)

In 2018, over 590 500 decisions were issued at first instance, a decrease by two fifths compared to 2017. As in previous years, fewer decisions were issued over the summer months (Fig. 6). The share of positive decisions i.e. those granting either refugee status or subsidiary protection was 34%, declining for a second year. As earlier, this recognition rate differed substantially across nationalities. Among the applicants with more than 10 000 issued decisions, Syrians (87%) and Eritreans (82%) continued to have the highest recognition rate.

Conversely, the lowest rates in this group were for applicants from Georgia (3%), The Gambia (4%), and Bangladesh (5%).

At the end of December 2018, about 440 000 cases were pending at first instance in the EU+ countries.
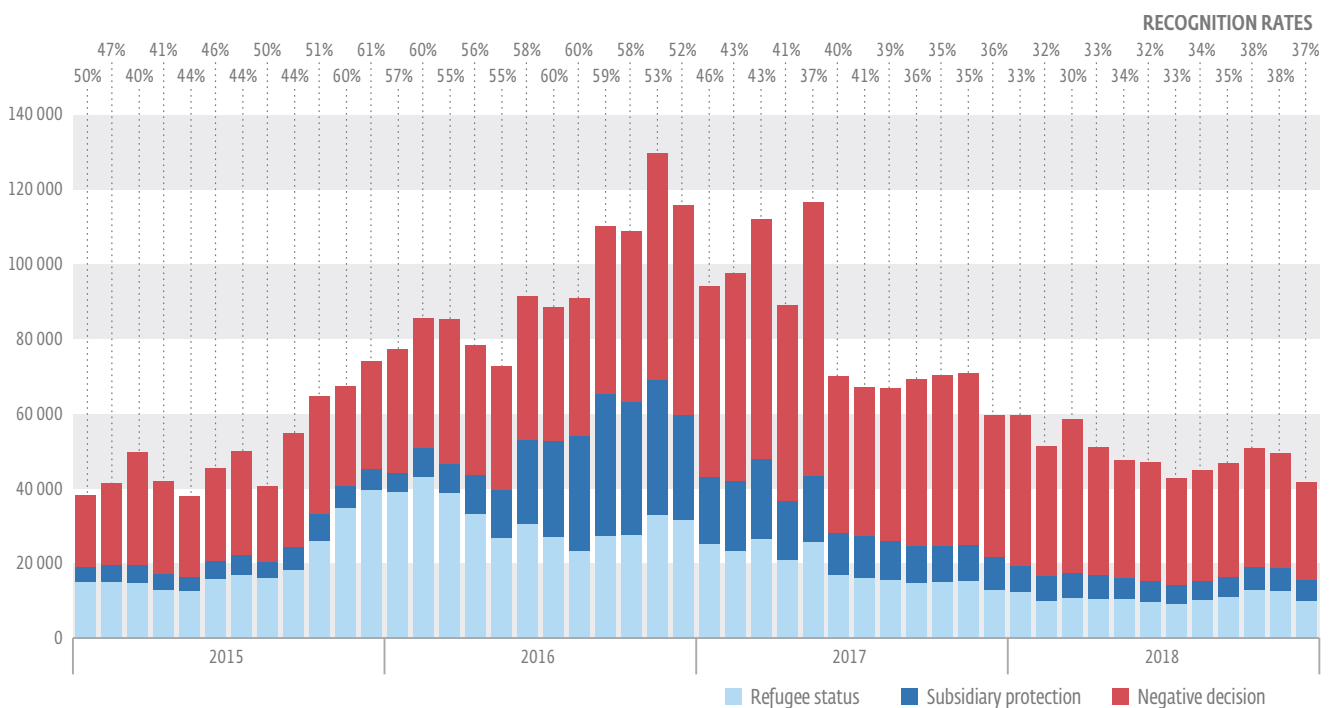
Figure 6. **First-instance decisions on asylum applications in the EU+ and recognition rates, January 2015 – December 2018** (Source: EASO EPS data as of 24 January 2019)

Illegal stayers

Number of detected cases of illegal stay, 2018

361 636 (435 084)

Number in parenthesis is for 2017
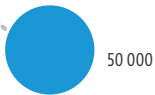
50 000

(only highest values are displayed)

Poland

Germany

France

Italy

Greece

5.6. Illegal stayers and arrested people smugglers

Illegal stayers

In 2018, Member States reported a significantly reduced number of detections of illegal stay, entirely due to a decrease in inland detections. Detections on exit at air, land and sea borders on the other hand increased slightly.

Illegal stay detections inland fell by 23 % compared with 2017, which is unsurprising considering its inherent link to the overall number of irregular migrants arriving on EU territory. A look at the Member States reporting the most detections – as well as at the nationalities – confirms the continuing link to the strong increases in irregular migratory movements on the Western and to a lesser extent on the Eastern Mediterranean routes. Among the general trend of falling detections, unsurprisingly Greece and Spain buck this trend. So too does Portugal, which however is not altogether related to the traditional migration routes but rather is the result of migrants having arrived on air routes from Latin America. Brazilians were by far the largest group detected, with detections more than doubling compared with 2017.

As regards illegal stay on exit, totals on land, air and sea borders all increased moderately. Looking at the nationalities concerned, Ukrainians were the most commonly detected by a distance, recording an almost linear increase since data collection on this indicator began, mostly attributable to exit checks at the Polish and Hungarian land borders. Illegal stay on exit at air borders saw few changes – however, the number of Albanians detected for illegal stay on exit at airports, who in 2017 were the most common nationality detected, fell by half compared with 2017.

People smugglers

Member States reported 10 642 detected people smugglers in 2018, only slightly more than in 2017. The Member States that are reporting the most detected people smugglers equally have not changed in order. Considering the nationalities of the people smugglers involved, while there are some increases and decreases, it is more or less the same mix of nationalities from transit countries, countries of entry, countries heavily affected by secondary movements, and finally countries associated with well-known organised crime groups. Increases in detections associated with migratory pressure from the Western Balkan route and secondary movements thereafter are notable in Croatia and Slovenia. At the sea borders, a disproportionate decrease in detections beyond the overall decrease in illegal border-crossings on sea routes suggests that smuggling groups have further excelled in successfully operating out of the reach of Member States' law enforcement.

Detected facilitators

Number of detected facilitators, 2018

- Spain
- France
- Italy
- Greece
- Slovenia

1 000

| Ukraine | | | | 33 682 27318 | | Others 107 209 50 418 | |
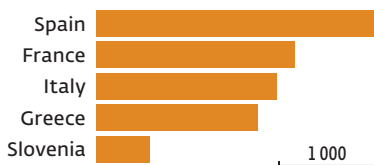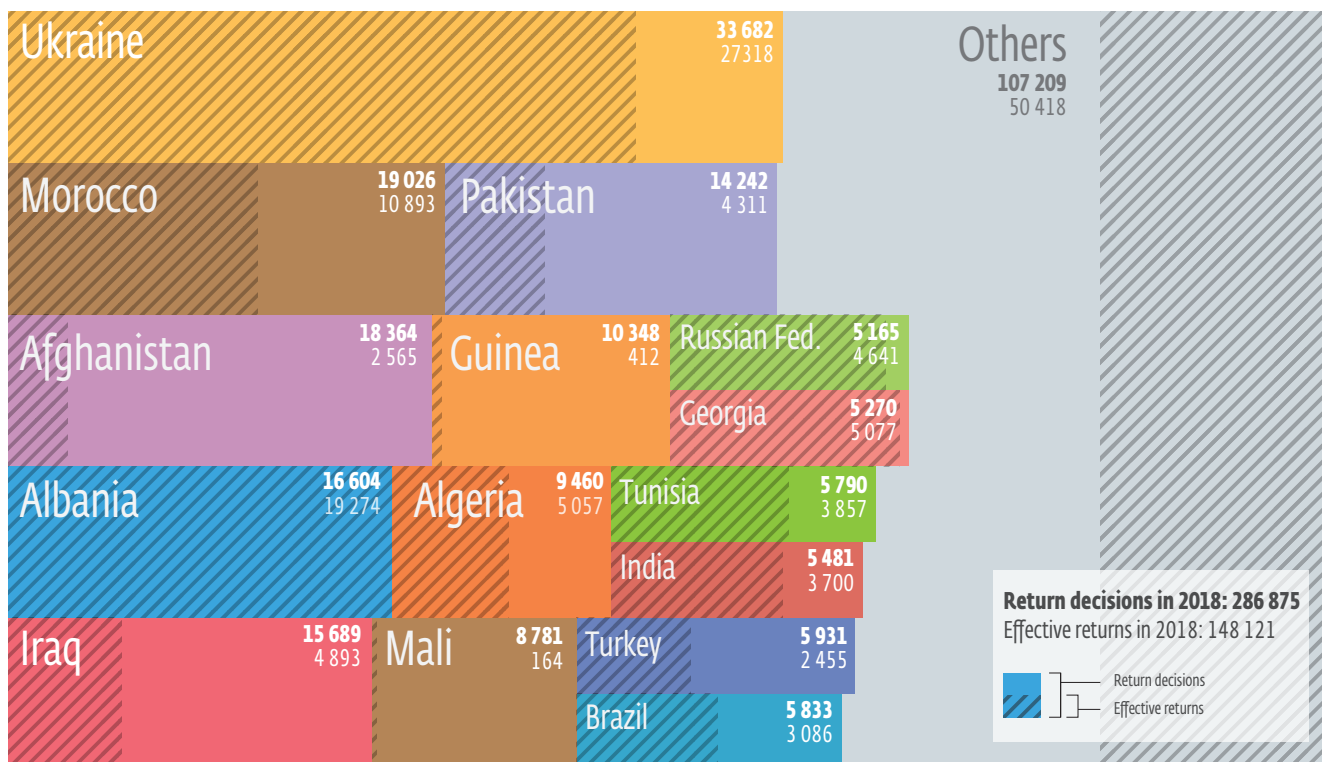
Please note that the number of effective returns may sometimes be larger than return decisions, as a return decision issued in a given month may be effectively enforced at a later date. Also, return decisions may be issued without prejudice to the person's right to apply for asylum. Readmissions between Member States are not included (for example between France and Italy). Effective returns do not necessarily mean returns to the country of origin and, for example in the case of Syrians, they include returns of persons to third countries considered to be safe (for example from Hungary to Serbia).

The chart shows the following data labels:

- Ukraine 33 682 / 27318
- Morocco 19 026 / 10 893
- Pakistan 14 242 / 4 311
- Others 107 209 / 50 418
- Afghanistan 18 364 / 2 565
- Guinea 10 348 / 412
- Russian Fed. 5 165 / 4 641
- Georgia 5 270 / 5 077
- Albania 16 604 / 19 274
- Algeria 9 460 / 5 057
- Tunisia 5 790 / 3 857
- India 5 481 / 3 700
- Iraq 15 689 / 4 893
- Mali 8 781 / 164
- Turkey 5 931 / 2 455
- Brazil 5 833 / 3 086

Return decisions in 2018: 286 875
Effective returns in 2018: 148 121

Return decisions
Effective returns

5.7. In the EU: Returns

In 2018, Member States reported around 287 000 return decisions issued to third-country nationals, which is around 2 % more than in 2017. The absolute total number of migrants subject to return decisions might still be higher, as data on decisions were unavailable from Austria, France and the Netherlands. Germany and the UK also do not report all data on return decisions to the FRAN.

As in previous years, the number of return decisions was much larger than the total number of effective returns to third countries, which decreased by 5 % to around 148 000 in 2018. Between 2012 and 2015, this indicator has remained rather unaffected by peaks in irregular migration, varying between a level of 150 000 and 175 000 effective returns. The main reasons for non-return are related to practical problems in the identification of returnees and in obtaining the necessary documentation from third country authorities. In addition, many decisions to return voluntarily do not materialise as the persons decide to abscond and stay illegally.

In relation to most Member States, both return indicators correlated and showed a similar annual downward or upward trend. A decline in the number of issued return decisions and conducted effective returns in 2018 was particularly visible in those Member States that were most affected by the migration peak of 2015/2016, e.g. Germany, Sweden or Hungary. On the other hand, countries that played a larger role as transit or destination countries in 2018 reported higher figures in relation to the return indicators, e.g. Spain and France.

In general, within the number of effective returns to third countries, around 50 % were reported to be on a voluntary basis and 50 % were forced returns.

A breakdown by third-country nationalities reveals clearly diverging developments. The nationalities with the largest increase in effective returns compared to 2017 were Ukrainian and Georgian nationals, who have in common that their Schengen visa obligation was waived in 2017. Frontex-supported operations have contributed to this increase: in

2018, 1 114 Georgians and 114 Ukrainians were returned in the framework of Frontex-supported operations. Current Frontex data do not only show an increase in cases of abuse of the new visa policy by these two nationalities, but also a level of cooperation with the Ukrainian and Georgian authorities that allows the return of an increasing number of their citizens.

Albanians are the nationality with the largest absolute decrease in effective returns compared to 2017 (-25 % to fewer than 20 000). Similar to other Western Balkan nationalities, this was in line with a general decline in the irregular migration pressure of Albanian nationals, reflected by a lower number of asylum applications, illegal stays, illegal border crossings, refusals of entry, and issued return decisions.

In contrast, the number of effective returns of Afghan nationals decreased by 32 % in 2018 in spite of a 67 % increase in illegal border-crossings compared to 2017. The reason for these converse trends is that the number of irregularly arriving Afghans started to rise only by the second half of 2018, and that the national asylum authorities have not yet concluded the related asylum procedures.

6. Featured analyses

Documents check, Minerva Operation
© Frontex, 2018

6.1. Interviews of migrants

In 2018, Frontex continued collecting information from voluntary interviews with newly arrived migrants in the Central, Eastern and Western Mediterranean area in the framework of PeDRA (Processing Personal Data for Risk Analysis). Migrants coming from more than 60 countries were interviewed upon their arrival in Italy, Greece and Spain.

As regards the nationalities interviewed Iraqis, Syrians, Algerians, Tunisians and Afghans featured among the top five, followed by Moroccans, Guineans, Pakistanis, Ivorians and Eritreans.

Most of the interviewed migrants belonged to the age group 18–35 years old (82 %) and were unmarried (65 %) males (89 %) from the Middle Eastern, African, and Asian countries – together accounting for 60 % of interviews.

In 2018, a significant number (77 %) of the interviewed migrants stated a preference regarding their final destination countries. Based on their answers, France was the most common final destination country, followed by Spain, Germany, Italy, and Greece. In 2017, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Greece and United Kingdom were at the top of the list. This reoccurring trend suggests that migrants prefer a few final destination countries. This represents a stable trend observed at least over the last three years.

The vast majority (84 %) of the migrants interviewed in 2018 claimed that they had been smuggled and only 7 % declared that they had arrived in a European country without using a people smuggler. About 9 % did not reply to this question. This high number shows the massive role played by people smuggling

networks. In terms of the smugglers' nationalities, the top ranking nationalities were Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi, Libyan and Moroccan followed by suspects from Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria, Guinea and Iran.

Regarding smuggling networks the three main observations are:
- Migrants turn to their fellow nationals to be smuggled into the EU. These persons usually play the role as recruiters.
- The people smugglers are not only based or operate in the country of departure but operate mainly in third countries bordering the EU (Turkey, Libya, Morocco, etc.)
- The people smuggling networks are well established and have been active for many years. Although the leading figures are often nationals of the last country of departure the associates of the smugglers are from different countries.

Where are the people smugglers from and where are they based?

Even though some of the interviewees claimed that the people who smuggled them were based in their country of origin, arranging the whole journey, the vast majority of the interviewed migrants claimed that the people smugglers were based in the last country of departure (71 %). This does not necessarily exclude the possibility that networks organised the whole facilitation from beginning to end, although it strongly indicates that the presence of people smuggling networks is predominant at the last point of departure.

Interviews found that Somali migrants were mainly smuggled by Somali suspects and to a lesser extent by Libyans and Eritreans. The same pattern appears for all the other groups of migrants. They are primarily in contact with fellow nationals or individuals from their neighbouring countries who cooperated with smuggling networks.

In 2018, Iraqi and Syrian migrants headed mainly to Izmir and were smuggled by criminal networks involving primarily Syrian and Iraqi suspects and to a lesser extent Turkish suspects. Similarly, migrants from Afghanistan and Pakistan showed the same pattern of behaviour, being smuggled via Istanbul by fellow Afghan and Pakistani.

It appears that the journey of migrants who can afford to spend more money to get into Europe are planned in advance, before their departure. For example, the majority of the migrants who reached Italy by sailing boats from Turkey, spending around EUR 5 000 per person, claimed that they had access to the smuggling networks before their departure and agreed on the route, method and the amount of money before they started their journey.

The people smugglers offering full-package migration function almost similar to a travel agent and they are multinational as well. They maintain recruiting agents/contacts in the country of origin who possess the same nationality or are from the same country as the migrants. The interviews suggest that in 2018, there were criminal networks active in Turkey who were in a position to offer these services, entailing complex

Interview, Triton Operation
© Frontex, 2017

coordination and financial capital to procure accommodation, flight tickets and transport by sailing boats.

Information from interviews suggests that members of migrant smuggling networks typically work with a number of lower-level contacts who are part of their personal network. Based on Frontex interviews, it is quite evident that many migrants, after one or more unsuccessful attempts to cross the border easily find a different network. This shows the high availability and flexibility of criminal networks offering their services.

Regarding the methods of operating and recruiting, the smugglers make use of social media, predominantly Facebook, to advertise their services. Some are openly advertising smuggling services, while there are closed groups that are only accessible through trusted partners and associates.

6.2. Children in migration: overview of arrivals at the external borders in 2018

In January 2018, Frontex considerably enlarged the scope of its data collection by starting to collect migration data disaggregated by age and sex from the Member States via the Frontex Risk Analysis Network (FRAN). This new development ensures better monitoring and greater understanding of the dynamics and composition of migratory flows. It also marks an important step for EU border management by allowing the Agency to compile more comprehensive and tailored risk assessments, effectively identify vulnerable groups and and target its operational responses.[1]

As regards children, the newly collected data (which includes, besides age and sex, if children are accompanied or unaccompanied) is instrumental in determining vulnerabilities, as well as sex and age-specific protection needs. This knowledge is enabling Frontex and Member States to tailor their border management activities accordingly, for example by deploying technical equipment, forming migration management support teams comprised of different profiles (i.e. female officers, child protection experts, cultural mediators and interpreters), and providing specific child-related training (i.e. covering child appropriate communication insert: or training on how to identify potential child victims of trafficking in human beings).

The analysis below provides a situational overview of the children arriving at the EU's external borders in 2018, drawn from Frontex's newly collected data.

Demography of arriving children

The year 2018 was marked by a lower number of arrivals of children at the EU's external borders (14 % fewer than in 2017). Nevertheless, one out of five arrivals was a child (19 %). More than half (55 %) of those who arrived (28 313) were boys, whereas girls represented slightly more than one fifth (28 %) of child arrivals. For the remaining 17 %, the sex of the child was not provided. Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Morocco and Turkey were the main source countries of arriving children, together accounting for 71 % of the total number. Similar to adult arrivals, the Eastern, Western and Central Mediterranean routes represented the main entry points for arriving children, each presenting a different demographic and nationality makeup.

In 2018, the **Eastern Mediterranean route** became the main entry point for children on their way to the EU, registering a 36 % increase in arrivals of this group (from 13 431 children in 2017 to 18 259 in 2018), mostly due to a peak in the influx of Afghan and Turkish children, whose numbers rose by 199 % and 202 % respectively. While the status of children (whether accompanied or unaccompanied) travelling via this route could not be unequivocally determined, available statistics and information suggest that many of them were accompanied by family members, as the rise in child arrivals corresponded to an increase in adults arriving from the same countries. 89 % of all children reported on the Eastern Mediterranean route in 2018 hailed from four countries alone: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkey. The remaining originated from various Middle Eastern, South Asian and African countries, including Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, Somalia and Iran. As regards sex, the Eastern Mediterranean saw a more balanced distribution, with boys representing 56 % of arrivals and girls 40 %.[2] Around three-fourths of all the arriving children were aged between 0 and 13 years old, with most children in this age group coming from Middle Eastern countries. African children on the other hand,

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1 People below the age of 18.

2 In the remaining 4 % of reported cases, the sex of the children was not available
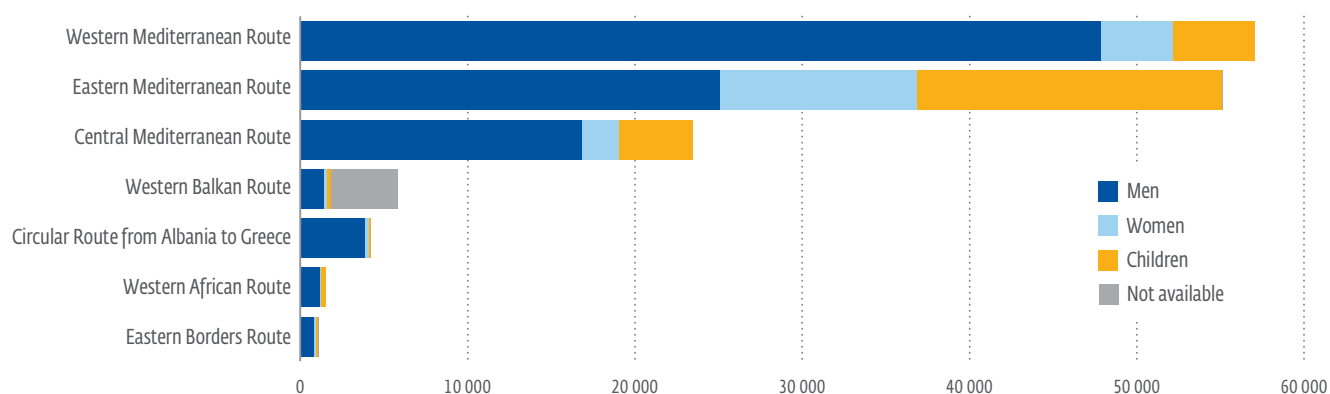
Figure 7. Demography of arrivals, including children

Search and rescue by Portuguese authorities – Themis Operation 2018
© Frontex, 2018 – Francesco Malavolta

tended to be older, mostly aged between 14 and 17 years old (64 % of arrivals).

In 2018, the Western Mediterranean route registered the highest increase in child arrivals (a 405% rise from 961 in 2017 to 4 850 in 2018). Children represented 9% of the total migratory movement via this route. The Western Mediterranean route quickly overtook the Central Mediterranean route in terms of child arrivals, where illegal border-crossings by children have dramatically fallen since mid-2017. Three-fifths of arrivals through the Western Mediterranean route concerned Moroccan children, whose number started to peak in May 2018. Moroccans were followed by Algerians and Guineans, the second and third most highly represented nationality of children, also largely reflecting the main nationalities of arriving adult migrants.

In 2018, the **Central Mediterranean route** registered its lowest number of child arrivals for three years (4 396 children). The number of children travelling via this route was 74 % lower than that registered in 2017 and 73 % lower than in 2016. Nevertheless, the arrival of children via this route is of particular concern, as the great majority of children (84 %) travelled unaccompanied. This situation was reflected in the two countries of arrival, Italy and Malta, where the share of unaccompanied children was, respectively, 85 % and 76 %. But whereas unaccompanied children from Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea were the three largest groups in Malta (accounting for between 19 % and 23 %), in Italy unaccompanied children from Tunisia and Eritrea were most prevalent; these two nationalities were further followed by unaccompanied children from Guinea, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Pakistan, Mali and Somalia. 89 % of all the unaccompanied children who arrived in Malta during 2018 were male and mostly aged 14–17 years old. Girls, who accounted for only

11 % of the total share of unaccompanied children, and originated in large measure from Somalia, were similar to unaccompanied boys, mostly aged between 14 and 17 years old.

Besides the three main routes of entry previously described, children were also reported arriving via the Western African route, Western Balkan route, Eastern Borders route and the Circular route from Albania to Greece, albeit in much lower numbers. Together, the four routes accounted for 3 % (808 children) of all child arrivals in 2018. Most of the children arriving on these routes were boys (83 %), with girls mostly present on the Western Balkan route (28 %) and the Eastern Borders route (24 %). Despite the low numbers registered on the Eastern Borders route (120), almost half were unaccompanied children, mostly from countries such as Vietnam, Iraq and Russia.

The year 2018 was also marked by an increase in clandestine entries by children, not only at the external borders,
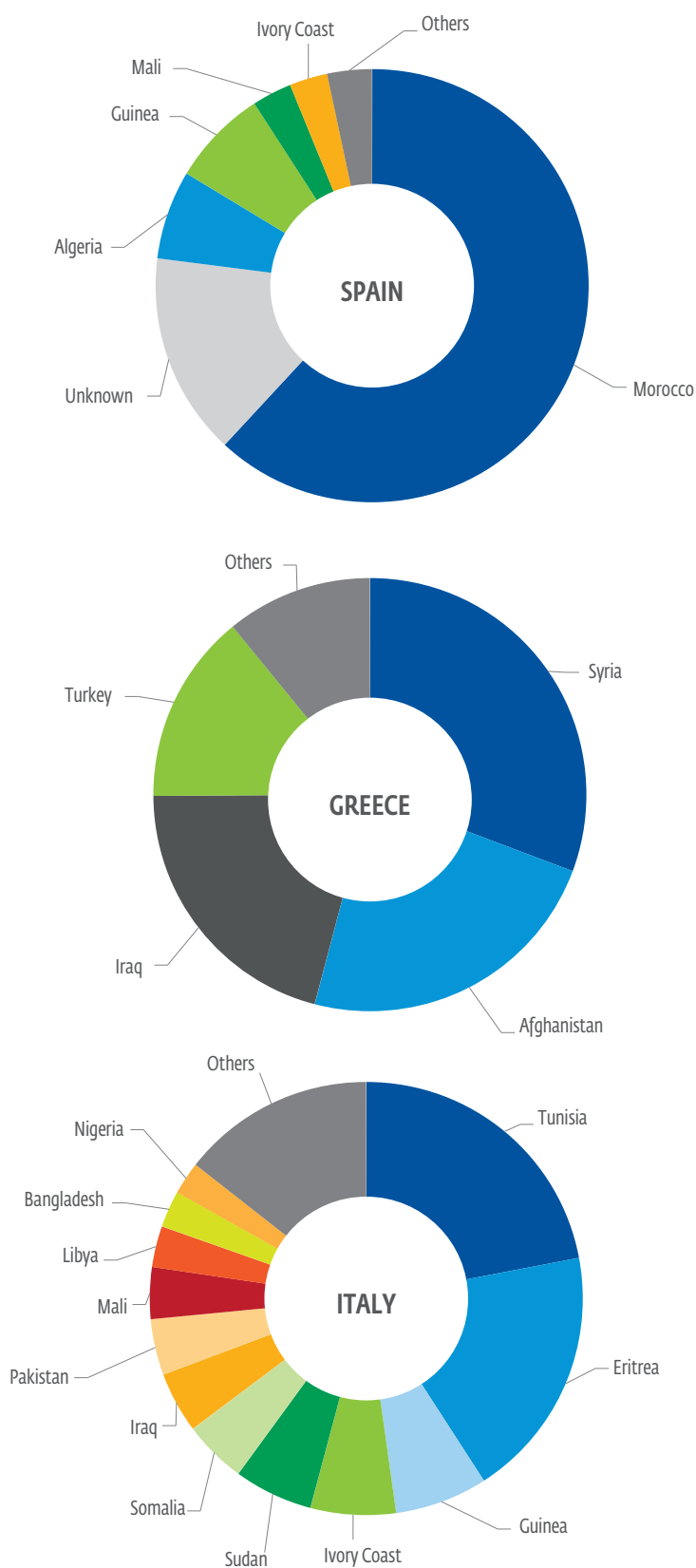
Figure 8. **Nationalities of arriving children**

but also in the Member States. At the external borders, detections were mostly made at the Croatian-Serbian border, involving mostly Afghan boys, few of whom were unaccompanied. Inland, detections of children travelling clandestinely were mostly made at the French-Italian border, as well as in Belgium, where the most detected nationality was Eritrean. In 2018, Eritreans ranked as the top nationality of children travelling clandestinely within the EU, a number that recorded a dramatic increase (five times higher) from 2017, when 115 detections were made. In Belgium in particular, 78 % of Eritrean children detected travelling clandestinely. The protection of such children requires a proactive response and unified approach.

Challenges at the external borders

The continuing arrival of children (albeit at lower numbers) carries with it specific challenges and additional concerns that require a proactive response and unified approach by the various actors present at the external borders.

- One of the challenges relates to the age assessment, a key step in determining whether a person will be treated as an adult or a child (with the respective safeguards and procedural and legal guarantees). Due to differences in treatment between adults and children, there have been a number of instances where adult migrants have falsely claimed to be under the age of 18. These cases are particularly problematic as they lead to abuses of legal systems in the Member States and deprive genuine children of the special protection measures reserved to them.
- No less worrisome however are the cases of children claiming to be adults in an attempt to circumvent the application of protective measures, perceived as a deterrent to the continuation of their journeys to the final destination. This method is often exploited by smugglers and traffickers to ensure that children are placed in open reception centres for adults, where it is easier to reach them.
- Additionally, the exponential increase in children at the external borders during the peak of the migration crisis, as well as their continuing arrival has put a strain on the reception capacity of MSs, especially in frontline countries. Cases have been reported of children placed in general reception centres with adults, which are often congested and ill-equipped and lack services that cater specifically to them. In these arrangements, children become exposed to severe security, physical and psychological risks and are increasingly at risk of

Search and rescue – Themis Operation 2018
© Frontex, 2018 – Francesco Malavolta

sexual abuse and gender-based violence. Furthermore, the different reception conditions and prospects for integration across Member States act as catalysts for secondary movements of children, which create further protection challenges – by exposing them to the risk of trafficking in human beings and exploitation – and place additional pressure on national asylum systems.

The year 2018 saw important developments in the area of child protection at Frontex and in the Member States. Nevertheless Frontex's data collection efforts could be improved to ensure that information about whether children are with their families or unaccompanied is fully reported, as gaps hinder a proper assessment of their situation, the timely identification of those more at risk and the provision of a tailored response that meets the specific needs of children.

Especially important is the provision of information in a language and

manner that the child can understand. Providing children with correct information adapted to their language is crucial, as it can help to counteract the actions of smugglers and traffickers, as well as reassure children and increase their trust in the services and advice provided by the professionals they meet.

Beyond data collection and access to information the provision of accommodation that is age-appropriate and responds to the specific needs of boys, girls, unaccompanied children and families with children must be ensured, particularly in Member States that host a higher number of children. In order to guarantee their protection, it is vital that children are prioritised in all border-related procedures (identification, registration and referral), and supported by specialised staff who use child-friendly and gender-sensitive approaches.

In line with the significant scaling up of the Agency's scope and size, pursuant to its Regulation, the European

Border and Coast Guard is committed to ensuring the respect and protection of the rights of children on the move and Frontex in particular. It will continue to support Member States to ensure that children arriving at the external borders are identified and referred and that their best interests remain a key consideration throughout, whether in operational activities, training, risk analysis and research or other child-related activities.

6.3. Making return data more useful and an outlook for 2019

Sudden increases and peaks in irregular migration pressure, the emergence of new routes to Europe and the arrival of new migrant nationalities require increased return efforts on the national and European level, e.g. for better cooperation with the countries of origin. An analysis of existing data on irregular migration, asylum and returns helps to indicate the likely short- and medium-term caseload for competent authorities.

Limitations however apply. A weakness of the available quantitative data collected at Frontex, EASO and Eurostat is related to the fact that the figures existing under different indicators are not linked, e.g. via the persons subject to return procedures. The data does not for example contain any information about when persons returned to their country of origin were issued their return decision. The lack of a link between the indicators leaves most of the facts related to return performance, length of procedures, and possible reasons why returns could not be implemented in the dark.

Other issues also impede the preparation of a satisfactory situational picture on return. Some Member States reported that, over time, several return decisions were issued to the same individuals.

Although it is not possible to quantify the phenomenon, as data at EU level are anonymised and not linked to identifiable persons, it illustrates the difficulty to effectively implement a return decision.

Outlook – some of the potential return requirements in 2019

In spite of existing deficiencies, an analysis of available indicators on irregular migration, asylum and returns can still reveal at least some of the likely short-term requirements in operational planning and international cooperation and even indicate approximate mid-term needs in relation to returns.

The trend in the number of return decisions issued to a certain nationality for example indicates the imminent return demand for the competent authorities. A more extensive contextual analysis of recent data on irregular migration, asylum and returns could offer a toolset for identifying mid-term return requirements and preparing authorities to cope with the impending caseload. The following selection of nationalities gives some examples in that regard and was created on the basis of large, sudden or extraordinary changes in migration,

asylum and return. The examples reflect potential return needs that are growing rather than those that are continuously significant but stable.

The example of citizens of Latin American countries and the Caribbean

In 2018, the number of EU/SAC-wide first-time asylum applications of citizens of Latin American countries and the Caribbean increased to more than 42 000, which is an increase of more than 50 % compared with 2017 and the highest annual figure ever recorded by Eurostat. The increase was mainly caused by persons from El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela, which amounted to around three quarters of the total in this group. Two thirds of the asylum applications submitted by nationals of Latin America and the Caribbean were reported by Spain.

Persons from Latin America are rarely detected for illegal border-crossing or document fraud, because most nationalities are eligible for visa-free travel to the Schengen area. Many nationals of the region are detected for illegal stay. In 2018, the number of related cases increased by 15 % to almost 21 000 cases.

In the first three quarters of 2018, Member States rejected around 8 700 Latin American applicants for international protection, indicating an asylum recognition rate of 21 %.[1] The indicator of effective returns showed a long-term decrease, from around 15 000 in 2001 to around 9 000 in 2017. Only in 2018, the number started to increase again, resulting in 9 376 effective returns. Around one third of the returns conducted in 2018 were reported to be enforced. Returns to El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela, from where most irregular migrants in that region came from, were reported at a particularly low level, amounting to around 3 100.
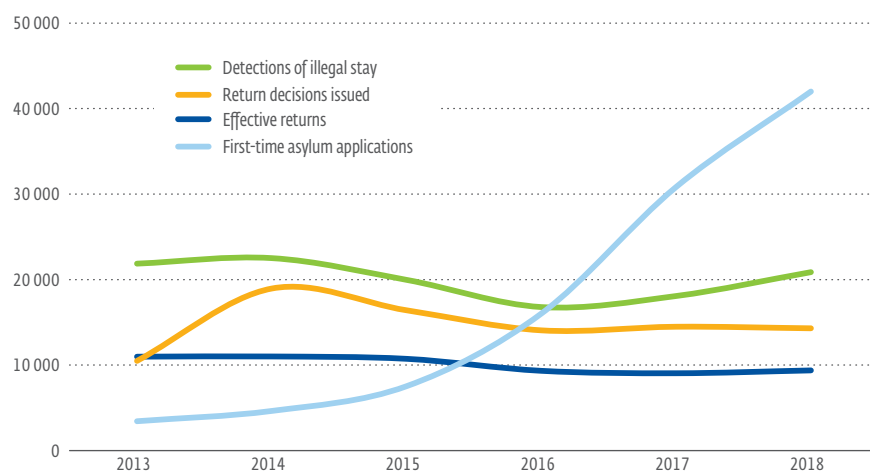
Figure 9. **Nationals of Latin America and the Carribean**

1   According to Eurostat data
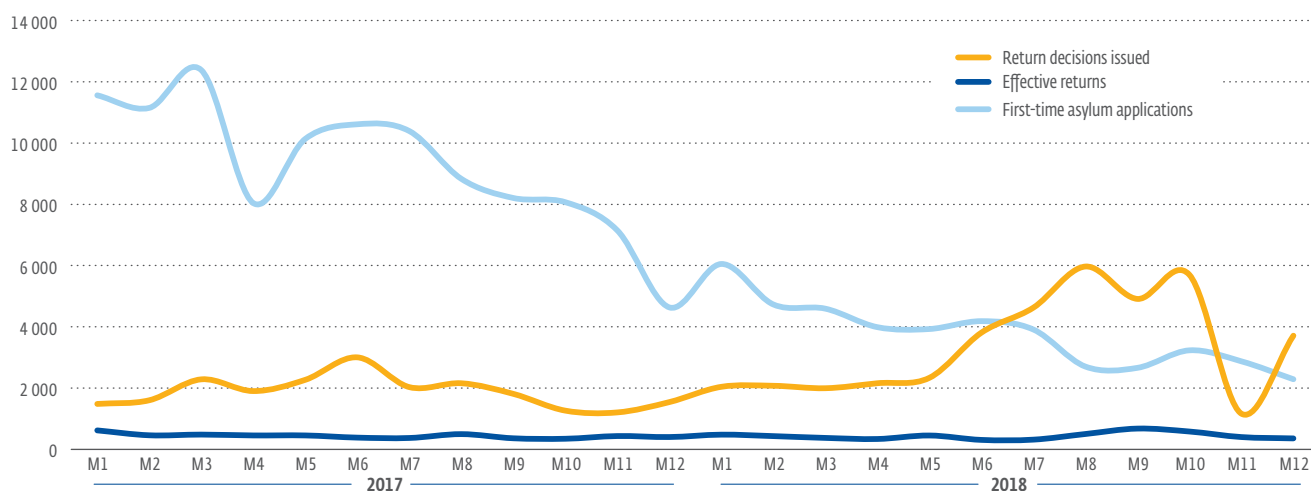
Figure 10. **Western African nationals**

The legend reads: Return decisions issued; Effective returns; First-time asylum applications

Citizens of Latin American countries have been reported for illegal stay in the EU and Schengen area since Frontex data collection began. While before they were trying to remain undetected in order to benefit from the labour black market, only in 2017 and 2018 they increasingly applied for asylum. The increasing number of applications for international protection and the low recognition rate in 2018 indicate the likelihood of an increased number of return cases in 2019.

The example of nationals of West African countries

In 2018, arrivals of West African migrants remained large in absolute numbers, with a shift from the Central to the Western Mediterranean route. While most irregularly arriving West African migrants applied for asylum, only around a quarter received positive asylum decisions, resulting in many persons being subject to return orders. Compared with 2017, the number of return decisions related to this region increased by 80 %, to more than 40 000. In contrast, between 2017 and 2018, the annual EU-wide number of effective returns to this region remained low, at around only 5 200 cases.

The peak in irregular migration from West African countries was in fact recorded in 2016 and 2017, reaching figures of more than 110 000 and 75 000 arrivals respectively, the vast majority of which were reported on the Central Mediterranean route. In those years, the annual number of return decisions issued to West Africans remained comparably low in front-line Member States.

In 2018, in contrast, when the Western Mediterranean became the main irregular migration route for West Africans, the number of return decisions issued to West Africans in Spain considerably increased, despite fewer arrivals. The differences between the described situations of 2017 and 2018 highlight the need to harmonise return procedures in Member States.

Although the EU-wide irregular migration pressure from nationals of West African countries declined, the drastic increase in the number of issued return decisions indicates an increased caseload for European return authorities, especially since past levels of effective returns have remained very low.

6.4. From crisis response to preparedness: changing priorities in Member States' migration policy

Over the last few years, the European Union and its Member States have been facing major challenges related to migration and security. Armed conflicts and political instability in North Africa, the Sahel region and the Middle East have generated an unprecedented number of illegal border-crossings at the EU's external borders, and a ferocious wave of terrorist attacks ideologically related to these conflicts. These challenges have been answered on different levels, clearly highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to migration and security. The migration crisis brought Member States to perform policy changes in every sector concerned: border control, reception, law enforcement, international protection and asylum procedures, legal migration channels, integration and returns. In the last two years, the number of illegal border-crossings has been decreasing, which partly brought Member States to change their priorities and allocation of resources, from reception services and asylum to a greater focus on border control, secondary movements and returns.

At EU level, numerous resources have been allocated with the aim of implementing the new mandate of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, with ongoing projects to expand its manpower and financial capabilities. Facilitating an efficient policy for returns has been a central concern for EU institutions. The European Border and Coast Guard now provides enhanced technical and operational support to Member States in charter flights and scheduled flights, while several regulatory acts have been adopted in order to improve the number of effective returns. Likewise, border control and management have been key sectors concerned by EU

institutions' efforts, with regulation amending the Schengen Borders Code, the adoption in 2017 of the forthcoming EU Entry/Exit System (EES) and the adoption in 2018 of the – equally forthcoming – European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). It is important to note that, in the current negotiations for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021–2027, the EU Commission is proposing a particularly strong focus on migration, protection of the external borders and internal security.

Member States and border management

Several approaches have been adopted by Member States when dealing with the improvement of border control measures. Some have chosen to implement a comprehensive national strategy in order to facilitate the integrated management of external borders, whereas others have opted for the adoption of new legislation, mostly focused on identity checks procedures, management of flows at checkpoints and procedures for surveillance operations along the borders. Measures conceived to improve the effectiveness of border control were also implemented by Member States, such as the recruitment and training of new border guards and staff, the allocation of larger financial resources, the construction or improvement of infrastructure at border control posts and borderlines, and the reinforcement of technical equipment. Several Member States, for example, recently increased their investments in tools for biometric ID checks, kiosks and Easy-Pass posts. Also wide-ranging cooperation with third countries has proven to be paramount in order to improve the

effectiveness of external border controls. Member States have stepped up their dialogue with third countries and signed agreements involving the secondment and training of border guards, the establishment of share border/crossing points, the sharing of documents and data, the coordination of border patrolling and the launch of joint awareness campaigns. In addition to enhancing cooperation, several Member States have also adopted measures to fight fraud in family reunification, abuse of free movement, the use of false travel documents and the facilitation of irregular migration.

Increased focus on returns

Besides border control, return policies are the other topic that has been gaining relevance among Member States' current political focus. It has been understood that return decisions have to lead more consistently to effective returns, in order to maintain a well-functioning asylum system and coherent migration policy. Despite this awareness, however, effective returns remains a challenge. The EU Commission has called Member States to improve coordination among all the services and the authorities involved in the process. Indeed, after the decrease in the influx of asylum seekers, several Member States reported to the EMN that they started scaling down emergency measures they had taken at the peak of the crisis and have reallocated part of the resources into return operations. In order to improve the return process, Member States have pursued cooperation, not only between the authorities at different levels, but also by concluding readmission agreements with third countries.

The practice of voluntary returns is preferred to forced returns by Member States. This is highlighted by a number of recent policies aimed at increasing their numbers, such as raising the cash based assistance to people accepting voluntary return schemes or to spread

Border Crossing Point Kapitan Andreevo, Bulgaria, 2018
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awareness of the existence of this option to asylum applicants, mainly through information campaigns. Entry bans are also being currently used more systematically by some Member States, especially applied to third-country nationals who have committed crimes or represent a serious threat to public order. On the side of forced returns, numerous Member States have adopted measures, which have increased the maximal detention time prior to return operations, in order to mitigate the risk of absconding, while some are also planning to increase detention capacity with the opening of new centres. Nevertheless, these measures often seem to be insufficient.

Frontex Headquarters in Warsaw, 2018
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7. Outlook and conclusions

This chapter reviews the possible evolution of the situation along the external borders of the EU in the coming years. While some developments are likely to materialise, others seem possible, based on current knowledge. Past experiences demonstrate that there are a large number of unforeseeable events and factors that can have a profound and unpredictable impact on the situation at the border.

The likely

Prevention activities by transit countries determine arrivals in the EU

The sudden uptick in activities by the Libyan Coast Guard in July 2017 was one of the key variables in irregular migration to Europe that changed from 2017 to 2018. In all other countries in the direct EU neighbourhood, prevention activities stopped a higher number of irregular migrants arriving in the EU.

In the future, too, the commitment to preventions of departure on every single route will directly determine the number of arrivals. Yet it is not only the political will, but also the institutional capacity to act upon it – the surveillance capacities, their coordination and not least the manpower deployed – that determines the flow.

European border management will continue to be tested

On the other side of the coin, effective preventions may well in the short-term mean a rise in the numbers of would-be migrants in neighbouring third countries as few migrants are initially dissuaded from their goal of reaching the EU. In the longer run of course, numbers may dwindle as migrants make use of return schemes and fewer people follow as the word of decreased chances of success inform the choices of would-be migrants in countries of origin. An increasing number of migrants now have easy access to key neighbouring third countries, most notably Morocco and Turkey. Causing this is a mixture of legal and institutional factors.

The fact that these two countries, receiving vast amounts of support from the EU and bilaterally from Member States, saw, despite effective prevention activities, strong increases in the number of successful crossings in 2018 (compared with 2017) again serves as evidence that the overall migratory pressure has not declined. As displacement due to the effects of conflict and persecution is rising and the wealth gap between Europe and the Global South persists, it is likely that integrated European border management will continue to be tested in the future.

Systematic border checks will require further resources

Regular passenger flows across the external borders will in all likelihood continue to increase. On the demand side, global mobility is rising and on the supply side, global competition among

airline carriers on long-range flights – as well as other effects such as low-cost carriers increasingly serving non-Schengen destinations – has kept down prices and is likely to continue to do so. While the overarching expert view is that in 2019, growth in the Eurozone will be subdued, economic fundamentals are considered strong, meaning variable spending on travel will continue to grow, too, if not at the same pace. This is only in addition to *inter alia* upticks in travel from recently visa liberalised neighbours and an appetite for travel to Europe by Asia's growing middle class.

Increased passenger flows combined with systematic checks of all passengers mean increased responsibilities for border controls. Faced with this, border-control authorities will need to increase resources where needed. The Vulnerability Assessment helps identify where this is the case. In some instances, risk analysis may help to optimize scarce resources.

The possible

Sub-Saharan migrants could lead to new record in arrivals in Spain

Given that around 60 % of the migrants apprehended on the Western Mediterranean Sea route in 2018 were sub-Saharan, and considering the nationality makeup combined with information from debriefing interviews, it is clear that for migrants from West Africa, the Western Mediterranean route has become the preferred pathway to Europe. The Central Mediterranean route is considered slower and more dangerous, and in short, has a lower chance of success.

The ability by sub-Saharan migrants to legally or illegally enter neighbouring countries is therefore critical for the future migratory pressure on the Western Mediterranean route.

Exodus from Syria's Idlib region could trigger a new uncontrollable migration wave

The situation in Syria continues to hold risks for further large-scale outflows of migrants. While the Syrian regime has reconquered much of the country, the opposition stronghold in Idlib province in the country's north awaits an offensive by government forces. At the time of writing, the offensive has been postponed due to a Turkish-Russian agreement (the Sochi agreement) on a buffer zone. However, the Syrian regime is deemed determined to reconquer Idlib and the Sochi agreement has been threatened by clashes between jihadists and the Syrian Arab army. Military action in Idlib could lead to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people northwards into Turkey. On this scale, a new migration wave to Europe could be difficult to rein.

Migratory pressure from Central and South America

Asylum applications in Europe from nationals of Central and South America, especially from Venezuela, have been rising since 2013. In fact, the growth in applications has picked up speed since 2015, more than doubling from 2015 to 2016 and again in 2017 according to Eurostat. In 2018, around 42 000 asylum applications were believed to have been launched in Europe by nationals from Central and South America. As many nationalities in the region can travel to Europe without a visa, they mostly arrived using legal channels on air routes (several hundred document fraud cases from the region were also reported). The countries of destination of course were largely aligned with the native language in the country of origin. Given developments in some countries in the region,

there remains a lot more potential for migratory movements to Europe from the region – most consequential are developments in Venezuela, which has been torn apart by economic and political upheaval. According to the UNHCR, 3 million refugees and migrants have left Venezuela, the largest cross-border displacement of people in South American history. As neighbouring countries are declaring themselves at the limit of their capacity to host more migrants, the numbers attempting to migrate to Europe will possibly rise depending also on whether the visa freedom is upheld.

The unknown

As decisions to migrate are oftentimes rational choices under incomplete information (for those who do in fact face a choice), it is the perception of costs and benefits that are weighed. How these perceptions are in fact formed is an intricate process, and the information gained for example from personal networks and select media consumption is widely different between individuals. While there have been information campaigns to dissuade economic migrants, they are limited in scope. It is the media landscape that ultimately determines how desirable a future in Europe may seem, or what downsides to migration the individual migrant believes he/she will face or will be confronted with.

Finally, the threat of terrorism-related movements across the external borders remains, and is particularly dangerous given undetected arrivals on the shores of the EU continue to be a reality. As future advancements in border checks such as ETIAS will make regular channels less attractive, organised crime groups will face an expanded demand for their services and will innovate to circumvent detection.

8. Statistical annex

Annex Table 1. **Illegal border-crossing between BCPs, on entry**

Detections at the external borders by border type, sex and age group

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Border Type							**Nationality**
Sea	1 033 814	365 295	176 211	114 726	76	-35	Unknown (23 %)
Land	788 363	145 851	28 539	35 388	24	24	Turkey (22 %)
Sex							**Nationality**
Male	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	116 379	78	n.a.	Unknown (21 %)
Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	26 930	18	n.a.	Syria (20 %)
Not available	1 822 177	511 146	204 750	6 805	4.5	-97	Tunisia (14 %)
Age Group✲							**Nationality**
Adult	n.a.	107 974✲	146 736	117 815	78	-20	Unknown (21 %)
Minor	n.a.	20 332✲	32 443	28 313	19	-13	Syria (19 %)
Not available	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	23 795	16	n.a.	Syria (23 %)
Unaccompanied	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3 753	2.5	n.a.	Tunisia (25 %)
Accompanied	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	765	0.5	n.a.	Eritrea (20 %)
Not available	1 822 177	382 840	25 571	3 986	2.7	-84	Afghanistan (38 %)
Total	**1 822 177**	**511 146**	**204 750**	**150 114**	**100**	**-27**	

Annex Table 2. **Illegal border-crossing between BCPs, on entry**

Detections reported by border type and top ten nationalities at the external borders

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year
All Borders						
Unknown	556 345	103 925	1 503	26 203	17	n.a.
Syria	594 059	88 551	19 452	14 378	9.6	-26
Morocco	12 966	6 836	11 279	13 269	8.8	18
Afghanistan	267 485	54 366	7 576	12 666	8.4	67
Iraq	101 275	32 068	10 177	10 114	6.7	-0.6
Turkey	591	1 060	2 957	8 412	5.6	184
Algeria	3 331	5 140	7 443	6 411	4.3	-14
Guinea	5 174	15 985	13 160	6 011	4	-54
Tunisia	1 061	1 368	6 520	5 229	3.5	-20
Mali	6 526	10 270	7 789	4 998	3.3	-36
All Other	273 364	191 577	116 894	42 423	28	-64
Total all borders	**1 822 177**	**511 146**	**204 750**	**150 114**	**100**	**-27**
Land Border						
Turkey	494	921	2 648	7 954	22	200
Syria	97 551	5 777	3 122	6 083	17	95
Albania	9 450	5 316	6 502	4 576	13	-30
Iraq	10 135	4 041	1 778	3 348	9.5	88
Pakistan	17 444	6 519	5 281	2 883	8.1	-45
Afghanistan	55 077	12 171	3 684	2 863	8.1	-22
Iran	1 548	997	395	1 353	3.8	243
Bangladesh	4 413	493	260	855	2.4	229
Guinea	605	622	640	722	2	13
Cameroon	810	364	494	489	1.4	-1
All Other	590 836	108 630	3 735	4 262	12	14
Total land borders	**788 363**	**145 851**	**28 539**	**35 388**	**100**	**24**
Sea Border						
Unknown	87	1 490	1 490	26 194	23	n.a.
Morocco	12 723	6 012	11 190	13 157	11	18
Afghanistan	212 408	42 195	3 892	9 803	8.5	152
Syria	496 508	82 774	16 330	8 295	7.2	-49
Iraq	91 140	28 027	8 399	6 766	5.9	-19
Algeria	2 805	4 575	7 194	6 253	5.5	-13
Guinea	4 569	15 363	12 520	5 289	4.6	-58
Tunisia	1 016	1 306	6 489	5 204	4.5	-20
Mali	6 189	10 226	7 781	4 784	4.2	-39
Eritrea	39 774	21 284	7 274	3 708	3.2	-49
All Other	166 595	152 043	93 652	25 273	22	-73
Total sea borders	**1 033 814**	**365 295**	**176 211**	**114 726**	**100**	**-35**

Annex Table 3. **Illegal border-crossing between BCPs, on entry**

Detections reported by routes and top three nationalities at the external borders

Routes	2014	2015	2016	2017	Share of total	% change on prev. year
Western Mediterranean route	**7 004**	**9 990**	**23 063**	**57 034**	**38**	**147**
Sea	**5 740**	**8 641**	**21 552**	**55 695**	**98**	**158**
Unknown	10	299	899	25 293	45	n.a.
Morocco	631	722	4 704	11 723	21	149
Algeria	1 059	1 693	4 287	4 652	8.4	8.5
All Other	4 040	5 927	11 662	14 027	25	20
Land	**1 264**	**1 349**	**1 511**	**1 339**	**2.3**	**-11**
Guinea	496	604	636	715	53	12
Burkina Faso	79	146	109	247	18	127
Mali	43	33	6	214	16	n.a.
All Other	646	566	760	163	12	-79
Eastern Mediterranean route	**885 386**	**182 277**	**42 319**	**56 561**	**38**	**34**
Sea	**873 179**	**174 605**	**34 732**	**34 014**	**60**	**-2.1**
Afghanistan	212 286	41 775	3 713	9 597	28	158
Syria	489 011	81 570	13 957	8 173	24	-41
Iraq	90 130	26 573	6 417	6 029	18	-6
All Other	81 752	24 687	10 645	10 215	**30**	**-4**
Land	**12 207**	**7 672**	**7 587**	**22 547**	**40**	**197**
Turkey	69	190	2 220	7 468	33	236
Syria	7 329	3 015	2 438	5 733	25	135
Iraq	2 591	1 405	785	2 941	13	275
All Other	2 218	3 062	2 144	6 405	28	199
Central Mediterranean route	**153 946**	**181 376**	**118 962**	**23 485**	**16**	**-80**
Tunisia	880	1 207	6 415	5 182	22	-19
Eritrea	38 791	20 721	7 055	3 529	15	-50
Sudan	8 916	9 406	6 221	2 037	8.7	-67
All Other	105 359	150 042	99 271	12 737	54	-87
Western Balkan route	**764 033**	**130 325**	**12 179**	**5 869**	**3.9**	**-52**
Afghanistan	53 237	10 620	3 388	1 669	28	-51
Pakistan	17 057	5 583	4 355	1 017	17	-77
Iran	1 477	824	230	980	17	326
All Other	692 262	113 298	4 206	2 203	38	-48
Circular route from Albania to Greece	**8 932**	**5 121**	**6 396**	**4 550**	**3**	**-29**
Albania	8 874	4 996	6 220	4 319	95	-31
Iran	.	1	16	41	0.9	156
China	.	.	.	39	0.9	n.a.
All Other	58	124	160	151	3.3	-5.6
Western African route	**874**	**671**	**421**	**1 531**	**1**	**264**
Morocco	42	94	106	831	54	684
Unknown	.	67	11	699	46	n.a.
Algeria	1	1	8	1	0.1	-88
Eastern Borders route	**1 927**	**1 384**	**872**	**1 084**	**0.7**	**24**
Vietnam	461	399	261	370	**34**	**42**
Iraq	120	24	19	90	8.3	374
Russia	100	119	69	84	7.7	22
All Other	1 246	842	523	540	50	3
Black Sea route	**68**	**1**	**537**	**.**	**n.a.**	**n.a.**
Other	**7**	**1**	**1**	**.**	**n.a.**	**n.a.**
Total	**1 822 177**	**511 146**	**204 750**	**150 114**	**100**	**-27**

Annex Table 4. **Clandestine entries at land and sea BCPs**

Detections reported by Member State, border type, age group, sex and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Border Type							**Nationality**
Land	3 288	1 896	1 207	1 998	88	66	Afghanistan (52 %)
Sea	913	323	415	260	12	-37	Iraq (26 %)
Age Group							**Nationality**
Adult	n.a.	467	604	1 709	76	183	Afghanistan (40 %)
Minor	n.a.	200	53	391	17	638	Afghanistan (77 %)
Not available	4 201	1 552	965	158	7	-84	Afghanistan (39 %)
Sex							**Nationality**
Male	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2 101	93	n.a.	Afghanistan (49 %)
Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	145	6.4	n.a.	Iraq (22 %)
Not available	4 201	2 219	1 622	12	0.5	-99	Syria (42 %)
Top Ten Nationalities							
Afghanistan	967	233	490	1 041	46	112	
Pakistan	90	55	47	245	11	421	
Algeria	73	127	90	121	5.4	34	
Iraq	317	221	171	120	5.3	-30	
Iran	36	22	32	118	5.2	269	
Guinea	66	360	246	114	5	-54	
Bangladesh	2	12	11	84	3.7	664	
Turkey	24	35	49	65	2.9	33	
Syria	1 731	667	115	64	2.8	-44	
Tunisia	64	63	47	59	2.6	26	
All Other	831	424	324	227	10	-30	
Total	**4 201**	**2 219**	**1 622**	**2 258**	**100**	**39**	

Annex Table 5. **Facilitators**

Detections reported at the external borders, by Member State, place of detection and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Place of Detection							**Nationality**
Inland	4 669	5 199	4 397	4 954	47	13	France (9 %)
Not available	3 655	3 382	327	3 033	29	828	Morocco (16 %)
Land	2 285	2 833	4 197	2 139	20	-49	France (9 %)
Sea	1 137	962	1 032	402	3.8	-61	Syria (18 %)
Air	277	245	293	114	1.1	-61	Syria (14 %)
Top Ten Nationalities							
Morocco	1 138	1 233	804	696	6.5	-13	
France	469	490	435	655	6.2	51	
Unknown	670	1 948	781	614	5.8	-21	
Albania	611	687	650	609	5.7	-6.5	
Syria	533	318	369	522	4.9	41	
Pakistan	349	367	370	503	4.7	36	
Spain	613	638	475	477	4.5	0.4	
Italy	370	504	477	439	4.1	-8	
Tunisia	197	125	139	353	3.3	154	
China	326	269	255	331	3.1	30	
All Other	6 747	6 042	5 491	5 443	51	-0.9	
Total	**12 023**	**12 621**	**10 246**	**10 642**	**100**	**3.9**	

Annex Table 6. **Illegal stay**

Detections reported by Member State, place of detection, age group, sex and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Place of Detection							**Nationality**
Inland	632 453	409 869	352 750	270 702	75	-23	Iraq (7%)
on exit	66 870	82 029	82 329	89 404	25	8.6	Ukraine (26%)
Not available	51	20	5	1 530	0.4	n.a.	Turkey (26%)
Age Group							**Nationality**
Adult	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	235 961	65	n.a.	Ukraine (14%)
Minor	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	16 377	4.5	n.a.	Eritrea (16%)
Not available	699 374	491 918	435 084	109 298	30	-75	Nigeria (6%)
Sex							**Nationality**
Male	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	153 091	42	n.a.	Ukraine (15%)
Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	38 821	11	n.a.	Ukraine (26%)
Not available	699 374	491 918	435 084	169 724	47	-61	Iraq (8%)
Top Ten Nationalities							
Ukraine	22 652	28 996	32 608	36 251	10	11	
Albania	28 926	24 127	24 801	21 350	5.9	-14	
Iraq	61 462	31 883	21 574	21 307	5.9	-1.2	
Morocco	29 731	30 042	29 859	21 160	5.9	-29	
Algeria	14 948	17 274	19 892	15 577	4.3	-22	
Pakistan	23 179	19 573	19 624	15 472	4.3	-21	
Afghanistan	95 784	50 746	21 177	13 862	3.8	-35	
Nigeria	12 386	14 838	14 997	11 472	3.2	-24	
Tunisia	12 919	11 382	15 912	10 472	2.9	-34	
Serbia	8 585	8 428	11 371	10 397	2.9	-8.6	
All Other	388 802	254 629	223 269	184 316	51	-17	
Total	**699 374**	**491 918**	**435 084**	**361 636**	**100**	**-17**	

Annex Table 7. Refusals of entry

Refusals of entry at the external borders reported by Member State, border type, age group, sex and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Border Type							**Nationality**
Land	90 047	162 162	126 456	131 641	69	4.1	*Ukraine (41 %)*
Air	36 825	45 565	48 924	54 780	29	12	*Albania (10 %)*
Sea	5 309	6 312	7 639	4 481	2.3	-41	*Morocco (44 %)*
Not available	0	0	0	28	0	n.a.	*Bosnia and Herzegovina (39 %)*
Age Group							**Nationality**
Adult	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	140 935	74	n.a.	*Ukraine (39 %)*
Minor	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	14 698	7.7	n.a.	*Russia (65 %)*
Not available	132 181	214 039	183 019	35 297	18	-81	*Albania (40 %)*
Sex							**Nationality**
Male	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	105 079	55	n.a.	*Ukraine (39 %)*
Female	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	42 135	22	n.a.	*Ukraine (36 %)*
Not available	132 181	214 039	183 019	43 716	23	-76	*Albania (33 %)*
Top Ten nationalities							
Ukraine	21 815	27 769	37 114	57 593	30	55	
Russia	16 580	80 213	36 341	25 953	14	-29	
Albania	14 563	19 284	32 050	24 546	13	-23	
Belarus	6 185	5 973	7 661	7 953	4.2	3.8	
Serbia	6 970	6 824	7 728	7 662	4	-0.9	
Moldova	3 043	3 790	5 930	6 368	3.3	7.4	
Brazil	1 934	3 498	3 086	4 984	2.6	62	
Turkey	3 508	3 207	4 665	4 831	2.5	3.6	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3 782	4 081	3 774	4 142	2.2	9.8	
Georgia	4 276	1 787	2 607	4 084	2.1	57	
All Other	49 525	57 613	42 063	42 814	22	1.8	
Total	**132 181**	**214 039**	**183 019**	**190 930**	**100**	**4**	

Annex Table 8. Reasons for refusals of entry

Refusals of entry at the external borders reported by reasons for refusal, Member State and top ten nationalities

	Refusal persons Total	Reasons for refusals of entry (see description below)										Reasons Total
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	n.a.	
Top Ten nationalities												
Ukraine	57 593	94	71	5 829	26	22 735	5 786	15 605	5 995	178	2 264	58 583
Russia	25 953	92	27	22 107	54	1 405	354	688	202	1 159	135	26 223
Albania	24 546	266	117	244	39	8 610	1 593	7 203	6 076	183	605	24 936
Belarus	7 953	64	8	2 552	4	1 142	466	1 274	261	983	1 327	8 081
Serbia	7 662	151	52	298	6	910	3 193	751	2 313	35	58	7 767
Moldova	6 368	25	7	552	15	2 676	608	1 525	995	23	86	6 512
Brazil	4 984	14	8	1 357	12	1 985	135	345	239	40	1 084	5 219
Turkey	4 831	442	106	2 070	42	827	999	220	191	18	60	4 975
Morocco	3 793	157	69	627	66	2 129	153	244	248	190	846	4 729
Georgia	4 084	15	13	144	4	2 119	107	868	947	59	223	4 499
All Other	43 163	4 491	943	8 697	753	13 978	2 146	4 327	2 995	583	8 109	47 022
Total	**190 930**	**5 811**	**1 421**	**44 477**	**1 021**	**58 516**	**15 540**	**33 050**	**20 462**	**3 451**	**14 797**	**198 546**

Descriptions of the reasons for refusal of entry:
A   has no valid travel document(s);
B   has a false/counterfeit/forged travel document;
C   has no valid visa or residence permit;
D   has a false/counterfeit/forged visa or residence permit;
E   has no appropriate documentation justifying the purpose and conditions of stay;
F   has already stayed for three months during a six months period on the territory of the Member States of the European Union;
G   does not have sufficient means of subsistence in relation to the period and form of stay, or the means to return to the country of origin or transit;
H   is a person for whom an alert has been issued for the purposes of refusing entry in the SIS or in the national register;
I   is considered to be a threat for public policy, internal security, public health or the international relations of one or more Member States of the European Union;

Annex Table 9. **Persons using fraudulent documents**

Detections on entry at the external borders, by Member State, border type and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Border Type							**Nationality Reported**
Air	5 329	4 366	4 113	4 404	66	7.1	*Unknown (14 %)*
Land	2 669	2 281	1 876	1 390	21	-26	*Ukraine (26 %)*
Sea	359	351	679	873	13	29	*Morocco (89 %)*
Not specified	4	.	2	.	*n.a.*	*n.a.*	*n.a.*
Top Ten Nationalities							
Morocco	864	752	918	977	15	6.4	
Unknown	1 010	708	525	615	9.2	17	
Iran	340	375	396	450	6.7	14	
Ukraine	1 186	1 200	785	401	6	-49	
Turkey	114	209	275	394	5.9	43	
Russia	51	143	274	227	3.4	-17	
Iraq	243	271	159	223	3.3	40	
Syria	745	233	208	188	2.8	-9.6	
Albania	424	373	237	172	2.6	-27	
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	148	121	106	143	2.1	35	
All Other	3 236	2 613	2 787	2 877	43	3.2	
Total	**8 361**	**6 998**	**6 670**	**6 667**	**100**	**0**	

Annex Table 10. **Fraudulent documents used**

Detections on entry at the external borders, by country of issuance of the document and type of document

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Country of issuance							**Type of Document**
Spain	973	839	997	1 115	14	12	*ID Cards (41 %)*
France	906	779	1 030	953	12	-7.5	*Passports (31 %)*
Italy	929	864	854	734	9.1	-14	*ID Cards (35 %)*
Germany	476	467	499	419	5.2	-16	*Visas (39 %)*
Poland	1 011	883	736	405	5	-45	*Visas (79 %)*
Greece	472	277	278	293	3.6	5.4	*ID Cards (26 %)*
Turkey	138	67	118	279	3.4	136	*Passports (83 %)*
Belgium	476	288	247	242	3	-2	*Residence Permits (35 %)*
Netherlands	128	84	105	163	2	55	*Visas (43 %)*
Lithuania	96	426	279	163	2	-42	*Visas (79 %)*
All Other	4 071	3 247	3 024	3 340	41	10	*Passports (65 %)*
Type of Document							**Type of Fraud**
Passports	4 063	2 755	2 879	3 177	39	10	*Auth-Impostor (31 %)*
ID Cards	1 203	1 147	1 306	1 516	19	16	*False-Counterfeit (40 %)*
Visa	1 934	2 115	1 829	1 458	18	-20	*Auth-Fraud Obt (38 %)*
Residence Permits	1 381	1 166	1 228	1 142	14	-7	*False-Counterfeit (45 %)*
Stamps	903	833	706	605	7.5	-14	*False-Counterfeit (81 %)*
Other	192	205	219	201	2.6	-8.2	*False-Counterfeit (55 %)*
Total	**9 676**	**8 221**	**8 167**	**8 099**	**100**	**-0.8**	

Annex Table 11. **Return decisions issued**

Decisions issued by Member State, age group, sex and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year
Age Group						
Adult	n.a.	n.a.	**n.a.**	152 193	53	n.a.
Minor	n.a.	n.a.	**n.a.**	9 366	3.3	n.a.
Not available	286 725	305 463	**282 075**	125 316	44	-56
Sex						
Male	n.a.	n.a.	**n.a.**	189 463	66	n.a.
Female	n.a.	n.a.	**n.a.**	44 871	16	n.a.
Not available	286 725	305 463	**282 075**	52 541	18	-81
Top Ten Nationalities						
Ukraine	17 709	24 651	**29 303**	33 682	12	15
Morocco	22 360	22 437	**22 028**	19 026	6.6	-14
Afghanistan	18 655	34 440	**18 686**	18 364	6.4	-1.7
Albania	26 453	18 195	**18 015**	16 604	5.8	-7.8
Iraq	16 093	28 454	**19 316**	15 689	5.5	-19
Pakistan	12 777	16 091	**14 281**	14 242	5	-0.3
Guinea	2 915	3 701	**3 641**	10 348	3.6	184
Algeria	6 832	9 490	**9 691**	9 460	3.3	-2.4
Mali	995	747	**764**	8 781	3.1	n.a.
Syria	27 937	9 830	**8 963**	7 059	2.5	-21
All Other	133 999	137 427	**137 387**	133 620	47	-2.7
Total	**286 725**	**305 463**	**282 075**	**286 875**	**100**	**1.7**

* Data for Belgium are not available for December 2017.

Annex Table 12. **Effective returns**

People effectively returned to third countries by Member State, age group, sex and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year
Age Group						
Adult	n.a.	n.a.	**n.a.**	76 293	52	n.a.
Minor	n.a.	n.a.	**n.a.**	2 943	2	n.a.
Not available	175 173	174 810	**155 945**	68 885	47	-56
Sex						
Male	n.a.	n.a.	**n.a.**	56 901	38	n.a.
Female	n.a.	n.a.	**n.a.**	16 206	11	n.a.
Not available	175 173	174 810	**155 945**	75 014	51	-52
Top Ten Nationalities						
Ukraine	14 995	20 990	**24 614**	27 318	18	11
Albania	30 468	27 221	**25 790**	19 274	13	-25
Morocco	8 158	8 672	**10 047**	10 893	7.4	8.4
Georgia	2 493	2 500	**3 446**	5 077	3.4	47
Algeria	3 202	3 414	**4 888**	5 057	3.4	3.5
Iraq	4 829	11 840	**5 482**	4 893	3.3	-11
Russia	4 591	3 683	**4 573**	4 641	3.1	1.5
Pakistan	8 089	6 366	**6 655**	4 311	2.9	-35
Tunisia	2 805	2 982	**3 653**	3 857	2.6	5.6
India	9 419	8 402	**4 794**	3 700	2.5	-23
All Other	86 124	78 740	**62 003**	59 100	40	-4.7
Total	**175 173**	**174 810**	**155 945**	**148 121**	**100**	**-5**

* Data for Austria are not available since October 2015.

Annex Table 13. **Effective returns by type of return**

People effectively returned to third countries by type of return and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Type of Return							**Nationality**
Forced return	**72 839**	**78 574**	**79 606**	**75 241**	**51**	**-5.5**	**Albania (22 %)**
Enforced by Member State	54 408	57 985	59 684	54 005	72	-9.5	Albania (27 %)
Not available	15 878	15 297	16 565	18 962	25	14	Morocco (40 %)
Enforced by Joint Operation	2 553	5 292	3 357	2 274	3	-32	Albania (23 %)
Voluntary return	**82 032**	**91 703**	**76 013**	**72 868**	**49**	**-4.1**	**Ukraine (34 %)**
Without assistance	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	33 329	46	n.a.	Ukraine (66 %)
Not available	13 177	9 365	3 996	27 657	38	592	Iraq (10 %)
Others**	54 464	61 178	53 980	8 442**	12	-84	India (19 %)
AVR	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1 665	2.3	n.a.	Iraq (38 %)
IOM Assisted**	14 391	21 160	18 037	1 538**	2.1	-91	India (17 %)
AVRR	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	237	0.3	n.a.	Ukraine (16 %)
Not available	**20 302**	**4 533**	**326**	**12**	**0**	**-96**	**Nigeria (17 %)**
Total	**175 173**	**174 810**	**155 945**	**148 121**	**100**	**-5**	
Top Ten Nationalities							
Forced							
Albania	10 258	19 508	21 738	16 368	22	-25	
Morocco	7 017	6 901	8 936	10 010	13	12	
Algeria	2 246	2 428	3 410	4 048	5.4	19	
Tunisia	2 268	2 719	3 403	3 548	4.7	4.3	
Ukraine	1 860	2 069	2 249	2 642	3.5	17	
Serbia	4 051	4 311	3 155	2 616	3.5	-17	
Georgia	943	1 173	1 524	2 304	3.1	51	
Brazil	1 334	1 539	1 612	1 926	2.6	19	
Kosovo*	4 743	4 965	2 769	1 869	2.5	-33	
Russia	906	961	1 512	1 687	2.2	12	
All Other	37 213	32 000	29 298	28 223	38	-3.7	
Total Forced Returns	**72 839**	**78 574**	**79 606**	**75 241**	**100**	**-5.5**	
Voluntary							
Ukraine	13 054	18 899	22 362	24 676	34	10	
Iraq	3 648	10 586	4 635	3 968	5.4	-14	
Russia	3 644	2 717	3 057	2 953	4.1	-3.4	
Albania	4 647	5 520	3 984	2 905	4	-27	
Pakistan	4 479	4 262	4 543	2 872	3.9	-37	
Georgia	740	1 187	1 904	2 773	3.8	46	
India	7 400	6 888	3 339	2 478	3.4	-26	
Moldova	616	1 299	2 135	2 439	3.3	14	
Belarus	992	1 114	1 422	2 389	3.3	68	
Afghanistan	694	4 024	2 528	1 631	2.2	-35	
All Other	42 118	35 207	26 104	23 784	33	-8.9	
Total Voluntary Returns	**82 032**	**91 703**	**76 013**	**72 868**	**100**	**-4.1**	

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo* declaration of independence.

** Since January 2018, the breakdown for effective voluntary returns was changed from "IOM and Others" into "AVR, AVRR and Without assistance".
Because at the beggining of the year the old template was still used by some Member States, the breakdowns "IOM and Others" are still reported in 2018.

Annex Table 14. **Passenger flow on entry**

Data reported (on voluntary basis) by Member State, border type and top ten nationalities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
Border Type							**Nationality**
Air	673 144 525	176 572 270	179 475 434	178 632 790	59	-0.5	*Unknown (65 %)*
Land	89 378 297	107 709 052	111 447 809	100 959 561	33	-9.4	*Ukraine (14 %)*
Sea	40 858 722	19 266 616	17 744 312	23 092 414	7.6	30	*Unknown (28 %)*
Groups of nationalities							
EU MS/SAC	47 770 056	56 370 512	61 057 227	93 367 997*	31	53	
Third-country	36 276 833	42 427 205	56 058 408	65 492 709	22	17	
Not specified	719 334 655	204 750 221	191 551 920	143 824 059	48	-25	
Total	**803 381 544**	**303 547 938**	**308 667 555**	**302 684 765**	**100**	**-1.9**	

* The increase is mainly due to the decrease (-26 %) of Unknown nationalities reported in 2018
  and the EU MS/SAC breakdown Bulgaria started to report in 2018.

Notes on FRAN data sources and methods

The term 'Member States' refers to FRAN Member States, which includes the 28 Member States and three Schengen Associated Countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland). For the data concerning detections at the external borders of the EU, some of the border types are not applicable to all FRAN Member States. This pertains to data on all FRAN indicators since the data are provided disaggregated by border type. The definitions of detections at land borders are therefore not applicable (excluding borders with non-Schengen principalities) for Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. For Cyprus, the land border refers to the Green Line demarcation with the area where the Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control. For sea borders, the definitions are not applicable for land-locked Member States including Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Switzerland.

In addition, data on detections of illegal border-crossing at land, air and sea BCPs (1B) are not available for Iceland, Ireland and Spain, and in Greece these detections are included in the data for indicator 1A.

Data on detections of illegal border-crossing between sea BCPs (1A) are not available for Ireland. For 2013, data from Slovenia include detections at the EU external borders only until June 2013.

Data on apprehension (FRAN Indicator 2) of facilitators are not available for Ireland and UK. For Italy, the data are not disaggregated by border type, but are reported as total apprehensions (not specified). Data for Italy and Norway also include the facilitation of illegal stay and work. For Romania, the data include land Intra-EU detections on exit at the border with Hungary.

For the data concerning detections of illegal stay (FRAN Indicator 3), data on detections on exit are not available for Ireland, Italy and the UK. Data on detections of illegal stay inland have not been available from the Netherlands since 2012.

Data on refusals of entry (FRAN Indicator 4) at the external EU borders are not disaggregated by reason of refusal for Ireland and the UK.

The data on passenger flow (shared on voluntary basis) are not available for Austria, Ireland, Sweden and the UK. Data on passenger flow at the air border are not available according to the definition for Spain. Data at the sea border are not available for Cyprus, Malta, Spain, the Netherlands, Romania and Denmark.

For all indicators, data from Croatia are available only starting with July 2013.

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