

# EMN BULLETIN

May 2020

The EMN Bulletin provides policymakers and other practitioners with updates on recent migration and international protection policy developments at EU and national level. The 30<sup>th</sup> Edition provides information from **January to March 2020**, including the (latest) relevant published statistics.

**The Bulletin is organised by policy theme. You can directly access your area of interest by clicking on one of the following themes:**

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## SPECIAL SECTION: COVID-19 (The full version can be found [here](#))

### EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ On 30 March, the European Commission adopted a guidance [document](#) on the implementation of the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU, on the facilitation of transit arrangements for the repatriation of EU citizens, and on the effects on visa policy. The guidance mainly aims at providing advice and practical instructions to implement measures adopted by the Member States and Schengen Associated Countries and assisting action at external border in order to stop COVID-19 from spreading.

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ In the area of **international protection**, several Member States and Norway adopted measures such as information provision and campaigns (BG, HR, IE, IT, LT, MT, SI, SK), the suspension of various on-site services during the asylum procedure (BE, CY, DE, EE, FI, HU, IE, IT, LU, MT, NO, PL, SE, SI), hygienic and preventative measures (BE, BG, CY, CZ, HR, IE, IT, MT, SE, SI, SK and NO), the promotion of alternative remote procedures (BE, DE, MT, SI and NO), not processing new asylum applications (BE, NL, SI) and the suspension of Dublin transfers (BG, CZ, DE, EE, HR, PL).
- ★ Regarding **unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and vulnerable groups**, Croatia initiated the process of amending legislation to make it mandatory for individuals belonging to these groups to be examined by an epidemiologist, while the Slovak Republic adopted a series of measures targeting UAMs with unknown travel history aiming at preventing the spreading of COVID-19.

- ★ Portugal established that during the state of emergency the services of the National Support Centres for the **Integration** of Migrants would remain in operation, with face-to-face assistance, while in Spain, only integration programmes that do not require in-person activities will be carried out.
- ★ **Legal migration** was affected in a variety of ways due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Twelve Member States reported an extension of the deadlines of periods of validity for residence permits and other documents (BG, CY, CZ, EE, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, PL, PT), while the application procedures for visas and other permits were suspended or modified in eleven Member States (CZ, EE, FI, HR, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, SE, SK) and Norway. The use of alternative remote procedures was encouraged or made mandatory in six Member States (CZ, HR, LT, MT, PL, SE), while offices were closed or open during reduced hours only in three Member States (CZ, IE, SE) and Norway. Two Member States adopted measures concerning seasonal and/or temporary workers in the agricultural and other key sectors of the economy (DE, FI). The Czech Republic and Malta implemented procedures concerning healthcare workers. Ireland reported specific measures to allow certain categories of migrants to access the labour market and a general social welfare measure to support those who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 which migrants could access.
- ★ The COVID-19 also impacted the functioning of **Schengen Borders** and the **management of the EU external borders**. Thirteen Member States (AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, HU, LT, LV, PL, PT, SK) and Norway re-established controls at their borders. Moreover, twelve Member States (CY, CZ, DE, EE, FR, HR, HU, LT, NL, PL) and Norway reported to have imposed a travel ban. Two countries asked travellers for a medical certificate for them to be able to access their territory (AT, CY), while three Member States adopted temporary measures to reinforce the capacities of their respective border guards (EE, FI, LV).
- ★ Member States and Norway encountered challenges in continuing the implementation of their regular policies concerning **irregular migration and return**, especially due to the limitations in air transport. As a result, forced returns were suspended or significantly reduced in ten Member States (BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, HR, LT, MT, SK) and Norway, and voluntary returns were suspended or significantly reduced in seven Member States (BE, CY, ES, IE, IT, LT, SK). Belgium and Norway released a number of detainees due to the fact that they could not carry out their usual return operations. Finally, four Member States reported the introduction of preventive measures in detention centres in order to minimise infections (BG, CY, LT, SE).

## SPECIAL NOTE: EMN publications

The EMN published four informs during the period January - March 2020. The first Inform covered **'Statelessness in the European Union'** and was [published](#) on 27 January 2020, providing updated information on the state of play of statelessness in the European Union in 2019.

On 13 February the full **Inform package on return counselling** was [published](#). The first of this series of three EMN Informs explored policies and approaches to return counselling. The second focused on how return counsellors are supported safely in their work to provide reliable, up-to-date and relevant counselling to third-country nationals. Finally, the third Inform looked into the related field of outreach and information activities.

## 1. GENERAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATE

*No new developments.*

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** In January, Austria's new coalition government was sworn in. The [programme](#) of the new government, *inter alia*, pointed towards a more balanced approach to migration, rooted in EU, UN and multilateral cooperation. The government plans to work out a comprehensive 'whole-of-government' strategy on migration, based on a clear separation of migration and asylum. Areas of focus in the migration field will be qualified immigration, creating/improving perspectives in migrants' countries of origin plus promoting secure borders and combatting smuggling.

- ★ **Cyprus:** On 10 March, an action plan was [adopted](#) to holistically manage growing migration flows. The plan will target actions on declaring as manifestly unfounded asylum applications concerning a safe country of origin; immediate issuance of a deportation order when a manifestly unfounded application is rejected; and stricter criteria for the enrolment in private colleges.
- ★ **France:** The 2019 [annual statistics](#) on migration and asylum in France were published on 21 January. The publication provided a first estimate of the number of entries to France in 2019 as well as provisional data regarding issuance of visas to foreign nationals (+1 %), returns of irregular foreign nationals (+19 %), asylum applications (+7.3 %) and acquisitions of French citizenship (-1.4 %).  
The [report to the Parliament](#) regarding 2018 data on foreign nationals in France was published on 30 January. It presents the foreign nationals' situation in France in 2018 providing data on entry flows, residence, related public policies as well as information to measure the share of migrants and foreign nationals in the total population in the medium- and long-terms.
- ★ **Luxembourg:** On 10 February, the Directorate of Immigration of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs presented its 2019 annual [report](#) regarding asylum, immigration and reception. Among other things, the report reflects on the key figures in the field of migration and asylum, as well as legislative and regulatory changes.



## 2. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

*No new developments.*

### LATEST RELEVANT STATISTICS

- ★ On 20 March, Eurostat [published](#) statistics on asylum seekers for the fourth quarter of 2019. The number of first-time asylum applicants in the EU-27 increased by 22 % in the fourth quarter of 2019 compared with the same quarter of 2018 and by 11 % compared with the third quarter of 2019. The top 3 nationalities were Syrian, Afghan and Venezuelan, lodging 21 000, 18 900 and 13 700 applications respectively. Colombians (8 500 more applicants compared with the fourth quarter of 2018) contributed most to the overall increase in first-time asylum applicants in absolute terms, followed by Venezuelans (+7 800) and Afghans (+7 300).

### Judgment of the European Court of Justice

#### [Case C-406/18](#)

On 19 March 2019, the Court of Justice released a judgment concerning the interpretation of different provisions of the Asylum Procedures Directive in light of the right to an effective remedy, as envisaged in Article 47 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Court confirmed that Member States are free to devise a model of review, whereby an administrative decision is annulled by the court and the file is referred to the administrative body for a new decision. The Court also ruled that it is for the national legal order of each Member State to establish procedural rules for actions intended to safeguard the rights of individuals, as long as the principles of equivalence and effectiveness are safeguarded.

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Belgium:** Since 7 January, asylum applicants for whom the Dublin transfer agreement has expired and who reside outside the reception network, can be refused in cases where they present themselves again in order to receive a reception place.
- ★ **Cyprus:** On 10 March, the Council of Ministers approved an extended national list of safe countries of origin, which included the following countries: Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Ghana, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Philippines, Nepal, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Gambia, Egypt, Nigeria.
- ★ **Finland:** The Finnish Immigration Service announced in February that a [review of](#) asylum decisions requested by the ECHR, discovered quality-related problems in ten decisions issued in 2016-2017. As a result, the Immigration Service sent all ten applicants a recommendation to re-apply for asylum at their nearest police station and the personnel of the Asylum Unit received further training and further instructions on assessing future risk.
- ★ **Croatia:** On 13 January and 20 March, the Directorate for European Affairs, International Relations and European Union Funds of the Ministry of the Interior adopted decisions on the allocation of AMIF funds for the design of reception centres in Kutina and Zagreb.
- ★ **Ireland:** On [18 February](#) and [2 March](#), the Department of Justice and Equality announced the opening of two new accommodation centres for international protection applicants. On [28 January](#), an international

protection applicant was found by the Workplace Relations Commission to have been subject to indirect discrimination when refused a learner driver permit.

- ★ **Lithuania:** From 1 January, asylum applicants have been granted the right to take up employment if, within 6 months from the lodging of an application, the Migration Department fails to take a decision on the granting of asylum through no fault of the applicant.
- ★ **Luxembourg:** On 1 January, the [law](#) establishing the National Reception Office (ONA), placing the reception of applicants for international protection under the jurisdiction of the Minister in charge of immigration and asylum, came into force. The ONA replaced the Luxembourg Office of Reception and Integration.
- ★ **The Netherlands:** On 3 March, it was [announced](#) that new measures concerning the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) will be taken to tackle backlogs in asylum applications: € 30-40 million will be spent in 2020 for penalty payments because of the delays in asylum procedures, and a task force will devise and implement various solutions to make the processing of asylum applications more efficient. On 11 March, the Dutch government [decided](#) to send four migration experts and additional relief supplies to Greece to support the reception of refugees and migrants. There will also be two Dutch 'island coordinators' to bring all parties involved together locally. Additionally, € 200 000 will be contributed to projects providing psychological support to refugees.

### Relocation and resettlement

- ★ **Italy:** On 21 January, 68 asylum seekers were relocated from Italy to France as part of the relocation procedures started by the European Commission.
- ★ **Sweden:** During 2020, 5 000 persons will be resettled to Sweden from January onwards, following the proposal from the Swedish Migration Agency to the Government. The resettlement will be carried out by the Swedish Migration Agency in cooperation with UNHCR.



## 3. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (UAMs) AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

*No new developments.*

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Cyprus:** A grant agreement for the "Open Reception Centre for Unaccompanied Minors of Third Country Nationals" was signed on 9 January. The project has a 28-month duration, a total budget of € 1 000 000 and is co-funded by AMIF. The project aims at financing the operation of the reception centre, as well as providing social, psychological and legal support, rehabilitation services and access to educational activities for unaccompanied minors. A second grant agreement was signed in February for the "Open Reception Centre for Vulnerable Persons Applying for International Protection", a project with a 22-month duration, a total budget of € 900 000, also co-financed by AMIF and providing similar services as to vulnerable asylum seekers.
- ★ **Greece:** The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs adopted the legislative framework concerning the semi-independent living of unaccompanied minors over the age of 16 in supervised apartments. Consequently, the AMIF Responsible Authority [published](#) the relevant Call for Proposals entitled "Funding for the operation of supervised apartments for unaccompanied minors over the age of 16", aiming at 500 places with a total budget of € 10 million.
- ★ **Spain:** The Secretary of state for Migration. submitted instruction 1/2020 which authorises unaccompanied minors between the ages of 16 and 18 to work.
- ★ **Finland:** The Ministry of the Interior [announced](#) that government groups agreed to facilitate the humanitarian situation of asylum seekers in EU Member States of the Mediterranean region, by relocating minors and other vulnerable asylum seekers from the Mediterranean to Finland.
- ★ **Luxembourg:** On 13 March, Luxembourg [committed](#) to relocate ten unaccompanied minors and urged the European Commission to start preparations in order to transfer the most deprived minors as soon as possible.
- ★ **Malta:** During the reporting period, several irregular migrants reached Malta by boat. From a total of 1 135 migrant arrivals, up to 283 claimed to be minors, with other migrants are deemed vulnerable due to psychological and health issues. These persons are being closely followed by the Care Team and the Therapeutic Team within the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers.
- ★ **The Netherlands:** 569 children whose cases were reassessed under the new temporary 'Closing Regulation for Long-term Resident Children' are [allowed](#) to stay in the Netherlands and they will receive a residence

permit. The IND intensified cooperation for children in the aliens policy through [enhanced cooperation](#) with The Child Care and Protection Board and the Repatriation and Departure Service which focuses on exchanging data and knowledge in cases involving children.

- ★ **Portugal:** The [Decree-Law no. 164/2019](#) that came into force in January, established the implementation regime for residential care, a measure to promote the rights and protection of children and young people in danger, including unaccompanied minors, aiming at providing care and an adequate satisfaction of their physical, psychological, emotional and social needs.



## 4. LEGAL MIGRATION

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 8 January, the European Union and Belarus [signed agreements](#) concerning visa facilitation and readmission. Such agreements constitute the foundations for improved mobility of citizens, thus helping to strengthen the links between the EU and Belarus. The visa facilitation agreement will make it easier for Belarusian citizens to travel to the EU. Belarus has also taken measures to facilitate short-term visa-free travel for EU citizens arriving in Minsk. Furthermore, procedures will be put in place to facilitate the safe and orderly return of persons who reside irregularly in the EU or Belarus.
- ★ On 23 March, the European Commission [reported](#) on the state of play regarding the situation of non-reciprocity in the area of visa policy. According to this communication, the United States remained the only country on the EU's visa-free list which does not grant visa-free travel to all EU citizens. As a result of active diplomatic engagement and international cooperation, Poland entered the United States Visa Waiver Programme. The Commission continues to encourage the United States to further cooperate with Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania to make headway towards visa-free travel to the United States for their citizens.
- ★ [New rules](#) on short-stay visas to the EU applied since 2 February 2020. Such new rules are aimed at facilitating travel for legitimate travellers who come to the EU. This would facilitate tourism and business (e.g. the possibility to apply for visas earlier in advance, multiple-entry and long-validity visas for frequent travellers) while also providing more resources for curbing irregular migration and security threats.

### Judgment of the European Court of Justice

#### [Case C-341/18](#)

On 5 February, the Court of Justice stated that, where a seaman who is a third-country national signs on with a ship in long-term mooring in a sea port of a State forming part of the Schengen Area, for the purpose of carrying out work on board, before leaving that port on that ship, an exit stamp must, where provided for in the Schengen Borders Code, (1) be affixed to that seaman's travel documents not when he signs on, but when the master of that ship notifies the competent national authorities of the ship's imminent departure.

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** On 1 January, three regulations entered into effect regulating (a) [the contingents](#) of short-term and temporary employment, (b) the [annual list](#) of shortage occupations and (c) [professions](#) that allow for the issuing of residence permits for very highly qualified workers.
- ★ **Greece:** As of 23 January, the possibility of a short term stay was provided for strictly as regards professional visitors. Third-country nationals may enter Greece with a Schengen entry visa following a business invitation.  
On 24 January, a set of provisions were laid down concerning the admission of third-country nationals with a view to learning the Greek language and the possibility to stay in the country for up to one year with a national entry visa, while in case the Greek language learning programme was extended, for up to 3 years with a residence permit.  
In 11 March, the Greek Nationality Code was amended as far as procedural issues in the naturalisation and Greek nationality acquisition and the composition of the Nationality Council are concerned. For acknowledged political refugees, seven years of previous legal and permanent stay in the country are now required before applying for naturalisation (instead of three).
- ★ **Estonia:** The government proposed [changes](#) to the Alien's Act, Income Tax Act and Taxation Act in order to prevent the misuse of employment regulations, as well as to ensure that enterprises do not avoid paying taxes and pay foreigners the required Estonian average monthly wage.
- ★ **Spain:** The new Minister of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration is forging a "legal, safe and orderly" immigration policy. In the medium term, it is necessary to increase immigration to keep constant the working-age population, and to avoid risks associated with an ageing population and economic slowdown. The Ministry's action plan includes, *inter alia*, improvements in management and changes in the aliens' law of

2000 to strengthen legal access routes to the Spanish labour market and to make the regulations more flexible, simplified and streamlined.

- ★ **Finland:** According to the 2019 immigration statistics, a record high number of applications for a residence permit for employment was [reported](#). In March, a Permit and Nationality Unit within the Finnish Immigration Service was [established](#) to increase automation in the processing of applications, leading to more efficient procedures.
- ★ **Italy:** A 3-year plan (2020-2022) was approved on 20 February by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies to tackle migrants' labour exploitation in agriculture, notably the criminal phenomenon of "caporalato". The plan, funded by the European Commission, is supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and focuses on 4 strategic axes: prevention, surveillance and contrast, protection and assistance; and reintegration.
- ★ **Poland:** [WroMigrant](#) consultation points started operating in February in Wroclaw. The programme is addressed to migrants that arrive or already reside in Wroclaw and aim to help them find their place in the city by providing information and legal support in many important day-to-day and official matters.
- ★ **Portugal:** The [Ordinance no. 33/2019](#) which regulates the process for the recognition of academic degrees and diplomas awarded by foreign higher education institutions was [amended](#) on 14 February. The ordinance allows in an innovative way, the possibility of applying alternative procedures to verify the title of the degree or diploma in cases where applicants come from countries or regions in recognised emergency situations for humanitarian reasons, where armed conflict, natural disaster, widespread violence or violation of human rights prevails.

The [2020 State Budget Law](#) introduced some amendments to the Immigration Law: the granting and renewal of a residence permit was simplified, the validity of travel document for refugees was set at five years, and the definition of global contingent for the purpose of granting a residence permit for the exercise of subordinate professional activity was suspended.

#### STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

- ★ **Estonia:** The Ministry of the Interior proposed [changes](#) to the Aliens Act and Study Support and Study Loans Act, the aim of which is to regulate the conditions for study migration and family migration in Estonia.
- ★ **Sweden:** New rules on residence permits for research and higher education studies now apply after amendments to existing legislation or new legislation, transposing the [Students and Researchers Directive](#). These residence permits should be granted for at least one year, or the shorter time that the research or studies are conducted and can be extended. Researchers and students shall also have the possibility of staying in Sweden for a maximum of one year after finishing research or studies in order to look for work or start a business. New rules were also adopted on residence permits for internships in connection with higher education, voluntary work within the framework for European voluntary work and work as au pair.



## 5. INTEGRATION

#### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ *No new developments.*

#### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** As of 1 January, [an amendment](#) to the Integration Act requires that German language courses are made available to individuals aged 15 and above holding asylum or subsidiary protection status, so as to allow them to achieve the B1 level. Financial support to follow these courses is provided under certain circumstances.
- ★ **Estonia:** Following an [amendment](#) to the Citizenship Act, a minor whose parent or grandparent with undetermined citizenship lived in Estonia before 20 August 1991 and whose other parent is a national of another country, can apply for Estonia citizenship in a simplified manner.
- ★ **Finland:** The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration published a [comprehensive review](#) of integration as part of the integration monitoring system.
- ★ **Greece:** In March, the European Commission accepted Greece's application for the implementation of a Mutual Assistance Programme between Greece, Italy and Austria. Through this programme Member States will exchange experiences and information on (a) how national authorities can design and implement effective awareness-raising campaigns for the host society (concerning migrants' and refugees' integration issues), b) the effective involvement of regional and local authorities and actors in the phase of planning and

implementing social integration programmes and c) how to better coordinate, organise and monitor cooperation of the central government with regional and local authorities.

- ★ **Croatia:** On 26 February, the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities initiated "INCLuDE", a project with the aim to strengthen the preconditions for social inclusion of third-country nationals with a focus on persons who have been granted international protection. The project was co-financed by AMIF and has a duration of 36 months.
- ★ **Italy:** On 20 January, the procedure for allocating funds to municipalities to support reception and integration of migrants was completed. Fifty-five new municipality projects will receive a total of € 24 million to recover and adapt public facilities and real estate confiscated from organised crime and use them for the reception and integration of migrants, asylum seekers and holders of international/ humanitarian and subsidiary protection. The targeted municipalities are situated in less developed regions and specific attention is given to the territories where socio-economic development is hindered by criminal activities. The National Coordination Committee (*Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale*) met on 4 February with the aim of planning interventions and optimizing the reception and integration systems. Participants discussed, *inter alia*, the path toward the autonomy of humanitarian protection holders in reception and integration projects expiring on 30 June 2020 and the update of the National Integration Plan for Beneficiaries of International Protection.
- ★ **The Netherlands:** In February it [was decided](#) that as of 2021, integration courses for Turkish nationals moving to the Netherlands will be compulsory. This means that Turkish nationals will have to pass a basic exam but the new rules do not apply to Turkish nationals already living in the Netherlands.



## 6. MANAGEMENT OF THE EU EXTERNAL BORDERS

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 6 February, the European Commission (DG HOME) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) [co-signed](#) dedicated Terms of Reference to improve collaboration on research and innovation relevant for EU border security. This aims at ensuring that research funded by the EU on security and management of external borders delivers results that are in alignment with the needs identified by the European Border and Coast Guard community. Such research should be aimed not only at responding to current threats, but also at anticipating future threats and opportunities.

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Estonia:** The government sent two [fast responders](#) to Greece in the context of a Frontex cooperation mission to assist in securing the Greek - Turkish borders.
- ★ **Lithuania:** Lithuania sent [support](#) to Greece by appointing officials and equipment to contribute to surveillance of the Greek-Turkish border in response to its request for humanitarian assistance and to contribute to the settlement of the effects of the refugee crisis in Europe.
- ★ **Poland:** On 12 January, the amendment to the Act on Personal Identity Card of 6 August 2010 [entered into force](#). The amendment imposes, among others, the obligation on Border Guard officers to confiscate documents marked as lost in the Register of Identity Cards. This means that if the officer annuls the identity card during border checks, the holder will not obtain permission to leave Poland, unless they have another valid document entitling them to cross the border.  
Polish border guards continued their [support](#) on the Macedonian-Greek border. On 9 March, a third group of 20 officers left Poland. During the service, officers perform tasks arising from international agreements concluded in the field of joint operations in the protection of public order and security and the prevention of cross-border crime.



## 7. IRREGULAR MIGRATION

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

*No new developments*

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

*No new developments*



## 8. RETURN

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

*No new developments*

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Czech Republic:** During January – March 2020, the Ministry of the Interior carried out the voluntary return of 106 third-country nationals.
- ★ **Greece:** On 1 January, new legislation regarding the asylum process came into force. One major development is that an asylum seeker can be put under detention for up to 18 months in total, for reasons of public order and security. Furthermore, migrants that are already detainees and ask for asylum are not released after three months but after 18 months, regardless of the previous detention period for return reasons.  
After the high influx of irregular migrants that Greece recently faced at the borders with Turkey, a new legislation that suspends the right of a newcomer to submit an asylum application for one month came into force in March, as a preventive measure. Migrants that entered Greece illegally after 1 March will be returned.
- ★ **Hungary:** Experts on return and reintegration [gathered](#) on 3-4 March 2020 in Budapest as part of the Budapest Process. The main objective was to better understand what needs to be in place for effective return and reintegration partnerships.
- ★ **Luxembourg:** The two laws of 11 March 2020 approved the Protocol between the [Benelux States and the Ukraine](#) and the Protocol between the [Benelux States and the Republic of Armenia](#), implementing the Agreement signed between the European Union and Ukraine and Armenia for the readmission of persons in an irregular situation, on 17 December 2018 and 20 June 2018, respectively.



## 9. ACTIONS ADDRESSING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ The **Council of the Baltic Sea States** [published](#) a report on trafficking in human beings that provides an overview of recent developments and emerging trends in human trafficking in the Baltic Sea region.

### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Greece:** The first 2-day training program under a project regarding the training of teachers on the introduction of human rights education in Greek schools, including trafficking in human beings, took place in January 2020. The project is an initiative of the Ministry of Education along with the Office of the National Rapporteur and the Council of Europe.  
In February, 400 school students from all around Greece attended a United Nations simulation conference aiming at raising awareness about combating trafficking in human beings among school students.  
In March, the parliamentary sub-Committee on Human Trafficking and exploitation in a joint meeting with the parliamentary Committee for social affairs was [informed](#) about the first year of activity of the National Referral Mechanism for the identification and referral of human trafficking victims
- ★ **Hungary:** On 18 February, the Hungarian Government adopted the country's new anti-trafficking strategy. This foresees the improvement of the anti-trafficking legal environment and aims to exempt minors providing sexual services from criminal liability and to criminalise users of any services provided by victims of trafficking. Respective changes were included in Act V of 2020 on the amendment of certain laws to prevent the exploitation of victims of human trafficking, adopted by Parliament on 10 March.
- ★ **Luxembourg:** The Council of Government [approved the draft grand-ducal regulation](#) amending the grand-ducal regulation of 10 March 2014 concerning the composition, organisation and operation of the Monitoring Committee against Trafficking in Human Beings. The draft regulation took into account some institutional changes as well as added a new member to the Committee - the Victim Support Service of the Central Social Assistance Service (SCAS).
- ★ **Malta:** In January, the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security signed a contract with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to work together on a project entitled 'Enhancing counter-trafficking efforts in Malta through Synergistic Interventions – Encounters'. Through this project, IOM aims to assist the Government in its efforts to enhance identification and referral of victims of trafficking for protection and assisted support by strengthening the capacity of law enforcement authorities, social services,

private associations sectors and migrants associations and Civil Society Organisations with a focus on children.

- ★ **Portugal:** A thematic statistical bulletin “The Gender Dimension in Trafficking in Human Beings – 2008-2018” was [published](#) in January. The bulletin provided a brief statistical analysis on the gender dimension of human trafficking and the differential way in which women and men are victimised. Additionally, it also included a series of testimonies from front-line professionals thus providing also a qualitative dimension to the bulletin.

Upon request from UNODC, Portugal provided support to training action in Angola. This training action, based upon the training modules translated and adapted to Portuguese by the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings entitled “Anti-Human Trafficking Manual for Criminal Justice Practitioners”, took place in Luanda/Angola and had circa 50 trainees professionals from Law Enforcement Agencies.

## 10. EXTERNAL DIMENSION

### EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 9 March, the European Commission [published](#) a Communication titled “Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa”. It suggests a new and comprehensive approach to migration and mobility within the context of a broader partnership with Africa. The communication focuses on the prevention of irregular migration, the fight against smuggling and trafficking as priorities alongside effective border management, and stressed the need to improve cooperation on return and readmission and addressed support for voluntary return.

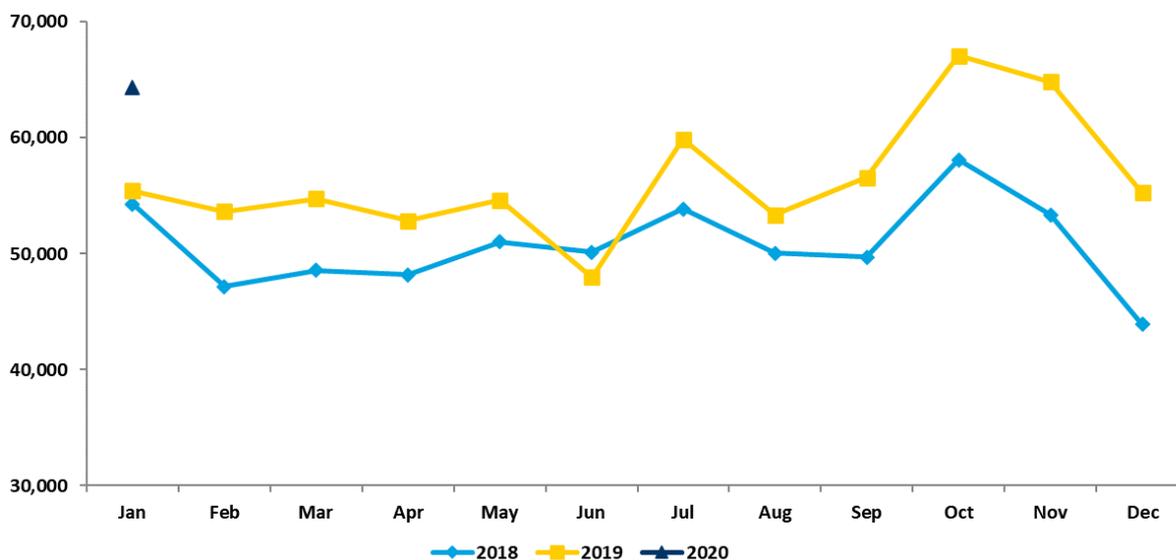
### NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Czech Republic:** The MEDEVAC Programme continued to provide medical support to foreign countries. In February 2020, two Czech medical teams were deployed to Jordan to provide medical care to Syrian refugees and disadvantaged local people. In March, activities were postponed due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus.
- ★ **Italy:** On 31 January 2020, the Italian Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Security and Civil Protection of the Republic of the Côte d'Ivoire signed a declaration of intent to strengthen the cooperation in the immigration and security fields. The bilateral agreement provides for: increased cooperation on return; integration projects and training courses for Ivorian citizens in Italy; initiatives for cooperation between police forces in the two countries to fight against terrorism and organised crime.

On 3 February a meeting between the Minister of the Interior and her Libyan counterpart took place. All the points of the collaboration programme between the two countries have been examined, taking account of the evolving international framework and the desire to continue along the path already undertaken by the governments of Rome and Tripoli has been renewed by both parties.

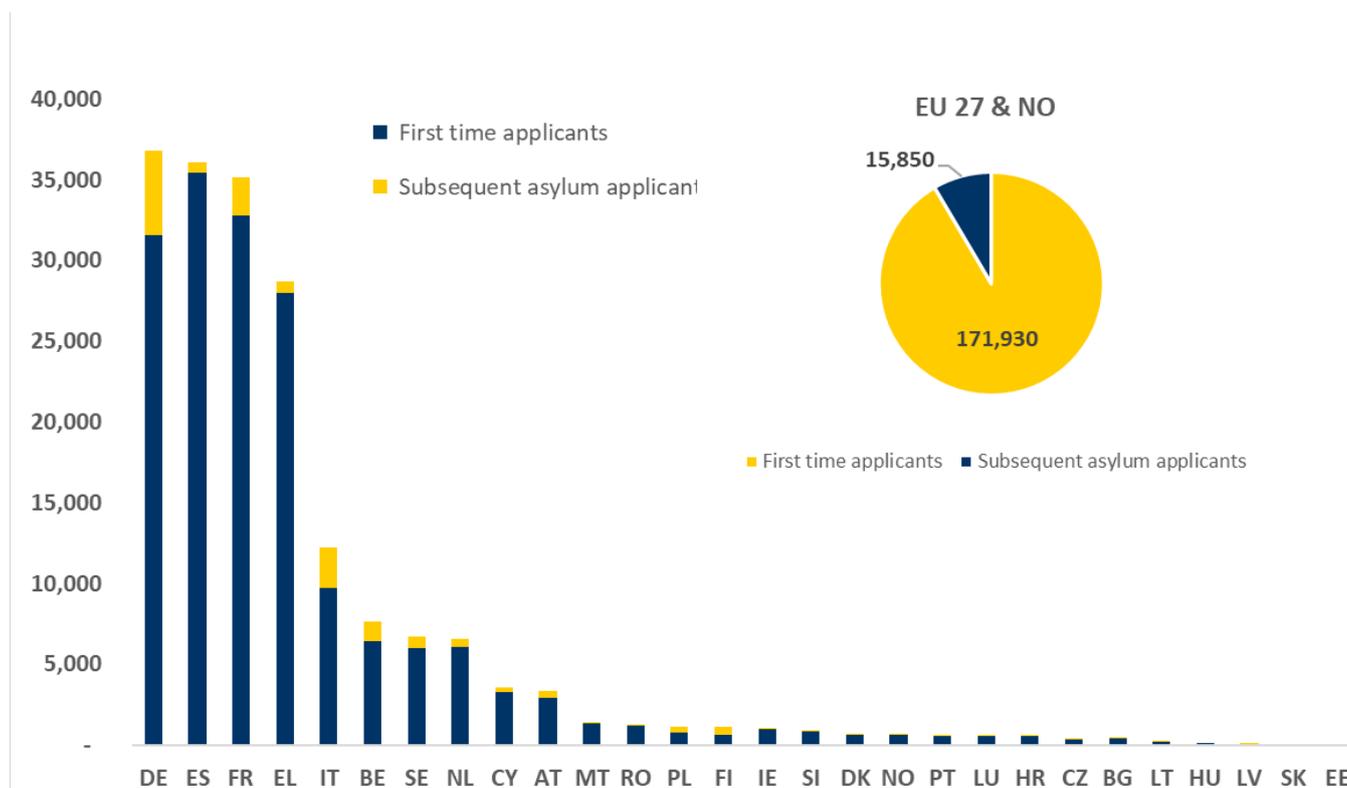
## ANNEX: EU & COMPLEMENTARY STATISTICS, ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, OTHER EMN OUTPUTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Figure 1: Asylum applications in the EU-27, January 2018 – January 2020

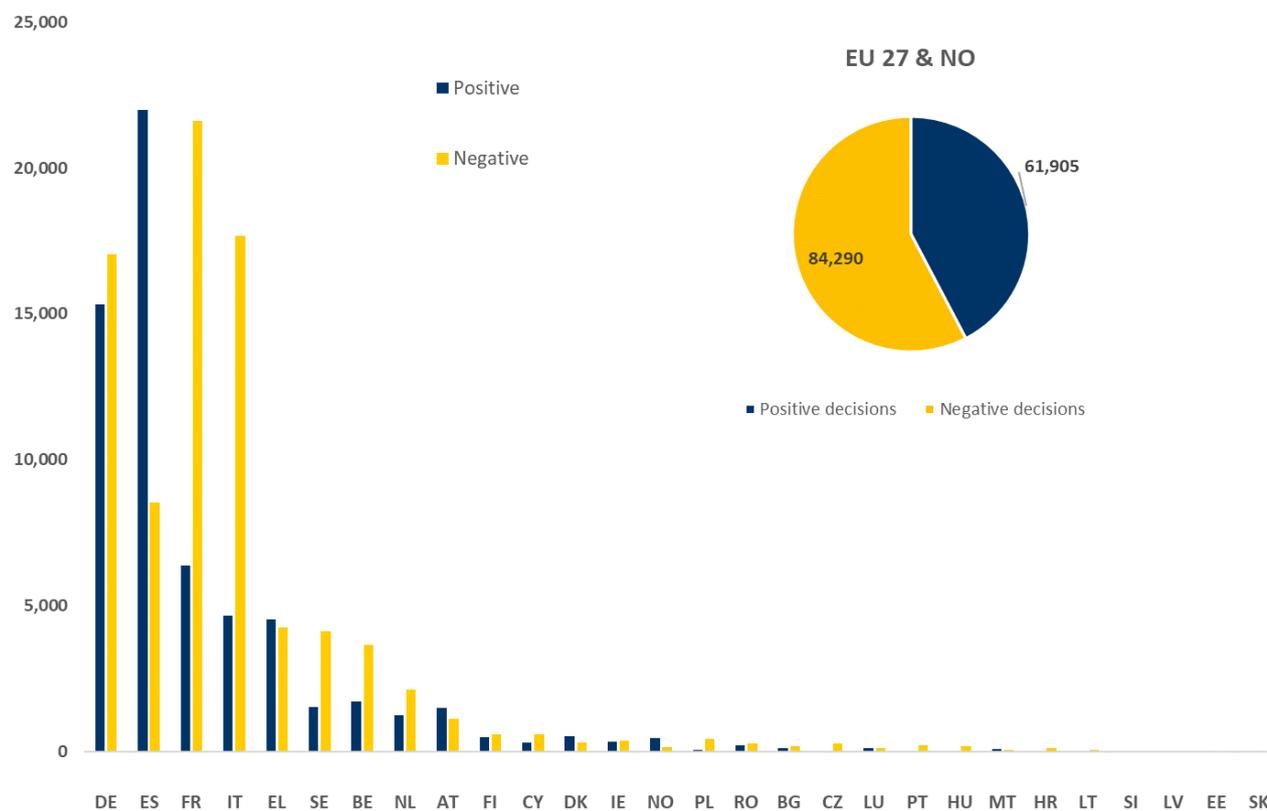


Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctzm](#)], total asylum applicants, extracted on 6 April 2020.

Figure 2: First time asylum applicants and subsequent applicants (together, total asylum applicants) in the EU-27 and Norway, Q3 2019 (quarterly data)



Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctzm](#)], accessed on 6 April 2020.

**Figure 3: First instance asylum decisions in EU-27 and Norway for non-EU citizens, Q3 2019**

Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asydcfstq](#)], accessed on 6 April 2020.

### Updates on EU legislation transposition

- ★ **Greece:** The EU Directive on Students and Researchers was transposed into the Greek legislation and entered into force on 19 February.

### Other EMN outputs and past/upcoming events (see also the [EMN website](#))

The EMN will host its first webinar on the occasion of the launch of the 2019 Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. The webinar will take place in late May/early June 2020 (date tbc). More information will be available soon on the [EMN website](#) and the EMN [Twitter account](#).