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Main asylum and migration developments of 2025 explored in new EMN Asylum and Migration Overview

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Overview

The European Migration Network (EMN) has published the Asylum and Migration Overview (AMO) 2025, providing a comprehensive overview of the main legal, policy and operational developments in asylum and migration across EMN Member and Observer Countries, including relevant statistics, from January to December 2025.

Main asylum and migration trends

The share of third-country nationals in the total population varied across EMN Member Countries and Norway on 1 January 2025. In most countries, third-country nationals represented between 5% and 10% of the population, while Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia (including recognised non-citizens), Luxembourg and Spain recorded shares of 10% or more. Irregular arrivals to the EU and first-time applications for international protection continued to decrease in 2025, with 180 211 irregular border crossings detected at the EU's external borders, 25% fewer than in 2024. First-time asylum applications also fell from 2024, from 912 425 in 2024 to 669 710 in 2025, a decrease of 27%.

At the same time, the number of Schengen uniform short-stay visas issued in the EU and Norway increased to more than 9.5 million in 2025, compared to nearly 9.3 million in 2024.

While statistical data on legal migration for 2025 were not yet available at the time of publication, the report highlights continued policy efforts to open targeted legal migration pathways for highly qualified workers, students and other talent groups, while strengthening safeguards against misuse. It also outlines developments in visa policy, including the revision of the visa suspension mechanism, targeted visa restrictions and changes to visa facilitation arrangements.

Key policy and operational developments

Legal migration

Reflecting labour market needs and increasing global competition for talent, many countries introduced targeted measures to attract highly qualified workers, students, researchers and other talent groups. At the same time, countries strengthened safeguards against misuse of legal migration pathways and introduced tighter controls on admission, stay and citizenship in response to security concerns, irregular migration and secondary movements.

Asylum and migration management

Managing strain on asylum and reception systems also remained a key priority during 2025. Countries introduced measures to improve the efficiency of asylum procedures, strengthen the identification of unfounded applications and adapt reception systems to respond to fluctuating demand and capacity pressures.

2025 also marked the 40th anniversary of the Schengen Agreement and the full accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen Area. The launch of the Entry/Exit System (EES) in October 2025 represented a major milestone in the modernisation of external border management, while preparations continued for the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

Digitalisation remained a strong cross-cutting trend throughout 2025, supporting the modernisation of asylum and migration systems and improving efficiency, streamlining administrative processes and enhancing service delivery. National developments spanned multiple policy areas, including legal migration, integration, international protection, border management and return, including measures supporting the implementation of large-scale EU information technology systems.

Integration

Integration policies continued to focus on labour market participation, language acquisition, and skills recognition. The situation of people displaced from Ukraine also remained a priority, with countries increasingly introducing measures to support longer-term integration and transition beyond temporary protection, while adapting housing, healthcare and social support systems.

Vulnerable groups

The report also covers measures to protect vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors and victims of trafficking in human beings. Developments included improvements to identification and age assessment procedures, reforms to guardianship systems and adjustments to reception conditions, alongside the strengthening of legal and policy frameworks to address labour exploitation and ensure access to rights and protection.

International cooperation

International cooperation continued to be an important instrument for addressing a range of migration policy priorities, including labour shortages, the root causes of irregular migration, combating trafficking in human beings, and strengthening returns. This reflected a continued emphasis on targeted, function-specific partnerships with third countries through labour mobility partnerships, return and readmission agreements, anti-trafficking initiatives and capacity-building activities. These developments are in line with the external dimension of EU migration policy, which promotes comprehensive cooperation with partner countries across the migration spectrum.

Find out more about AMO 2025, [read the full report here](#).

Background

The European Migration Network (EMN) is a network of migration and asylum experts consisting of 36 National Contact Points (NCPs) in EMN Member and Observer Countries, the European Commission, and is supported by the EMN Service Provider. Its aim is to provide up-to-date, objective, and reliable information on migration and asylum issues to support policymaking and public debate.

The Asylum and Migration Overview (AMO) is based on contributions from 30 EMN NCPs, including statistical contributions from EMN Observer Countries and EU-level sources, including

Eurostat. It offers a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and the general public, seeking to understand the complex issues surrounding migration and asylum in Europe.

The AMO is produced in accordance with Article 2(1)(d) and Article 9(1) of Council Decision 2008/381/EC establishing a European Migration Network.