

Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU

July 2017 Highlights

1–30 June 2017

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Since November 2016, FRA's monthly reports have highlighted key developments in 14 Member States: Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. This month's highlights are published alongside full country reports.

New arrivals

External land and sea borders

Arrivals in Italy [remained high](#), reaching some 22,470 persons in June. In the first half of the year, over 83,750 persons disembarked in nearly 800 operations, marking an 18.7 % increase compared with the same period in 2016. This includes some 9,760 unaccompanied children who arrived between 1 January and 27 June. Relocations from Italy in May [reached over 1,000 persons](#), the highest number so far.

After a sharp increase in arrivals at the end of June, the Italian government [announced](#) that the country may consider closing its ports to ships engaged in search and rescue operations, as it cannot guarantee accommodation for new arrivals.

In June, some 2,010 persons arrived in Greece by sea, [according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), bringing the daily average to about 70 persons. About the same number have been relocated from Greece to other Member States during this period. The majority of relocations were conducted by Germany (about 510 people), Sweden (about 430 people) and France (about 380 people).

[Greek non-governmental organisations \(NGOs\)](#), [UNHCR](#) and the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#) expressed deep concerns over alleged pushbacks at the Greek–Turkish land border. In one such incident, a group of nine persons including four children was supposed to have been sent back to Turkey after having crossed the border river, without the opportunity to ask for asylum. In another case, a recognised Syrian refugee [reported](#) that his family including four small children was arrested after having entered Greece, and taken back to Turkey with a large group of other Syrians.

The Greek Ombudsman [ordered an investigation](#) of allegations that Greek authorities had forcibly returned Turkish citizens to Turkey, after they had reportedly asked for international protection.

Small boats with migrants continued [arriving](#) in Spain. In just one day, 24 June, 250 people travelling in seven boats were rescued.

In Bulgaria, some 160 persons were apprehended at the borders and within the territory of the country, significantly fewer than in the previous month. Nearly 130 persons, whose fingerprints had already been registered, were apprehended trying to leave Bulgaria, mostly at the border with Serbia.

Overall, the number of irregular migrants arriving in Slovakia in June was 200 persons, the majority being Ukrainian nationals.

The extended border control policy adopted in Hungary in March was applied to some 760 persons in June, compared to about 320 persons in May. Under this

policy, irregular migrants apprehended anywhere in Hungarian territory may not register an application for international protection, but are escorted to transit zones at the Serbian border to await further procedures. This can lead to the 'return' to Serbia of persons who originally arrived through Romania or Ukraine. In addition, Hungarian police and the army intercepted about 1,020 persons attempting to cross the border in an irregular manner, most frequently through the fence at the Hungarian–Serbian border. This is significantly more than the 280 persons intercepted in May.

Internal borders and airports

Some 2,040 new arrivals entered Austria in June, according to the Federal Ministry of the Interior. They were mainly from Nigeria (about 250), Afghanistan (about 210), Pakistan and Syria (about 160 each) and Iraq (about 110).

In June, some 470 persons [applied for asylum in Finland](#). Around 50 were children arriving with families, some 20 were unaccompanied children and 140 were women. The main countries of origin were Syria (120), Iraq (some 90), Eritrea (some 60) and Afghanistan (some 40).

The German Government prolonged its [border controls](#) at the border with Austria for another six months in May 2017.

In France, it was estimated that between 480 and 600 migrants arrived in June, mainly from Sudan, Chad, Eritrea and Afghanistan, and via the French–Italian border, according to the Roya Citoyenne organization, confirmed by Gisti.

The Human Rights League reported the case of Syrian refugees found in a van in Slovakia, two of whom were handed over by the Slovak police to the Hungarian police and subsequently returned by Hungary to the outer side of its border fence with Serbia.

An [estimated](#) 300 migrants entered Denmark between 29 May and 2 July 2017.

Initial registration and asylum processing

At the border

Based on research conducted in 2016, the Jesuit Service for Migrants [concluded](#) that immigration detention centres in Spain are overused, given that only 29 % of those detained are eventually returned.

Initial interviews by the Hungarian authorities with newly arrived asylum seekers in the transit zones last 4–6 hours, according to civil society organisations. The authorities provide no food or water during that time, and the interviews include humiliating and inappropriate questions on whether or not, for example, a person was willing to change their religion if necessary. Continuing previous practice, the transit zones admitted at most 50 people per week in June to seek international protection. The accommodation capacity of the transit zones has increased to 700 persons.

Asylum

The Greek Asylum Service registered some 4,200 new applications for international protection in June. Compared with the previous month, Syria (about 1,020 applications) has replaced Pakistan (about 700 applications) as the

most frequent country of origin. Some 880 of these applications were recorded in Lesbos and 680 in Chios.

Police in Milan required asylum applicants to state the reason for their presence in the country when registering their asylum claims, Italian NGOs [reported](#). Those indicating 'work' as the reason were prevented by the police from registering their application, although the police are not responsible for assessing the reasons for applying for international protection.

Asylum applications in Austria have remained constant at around 2,000 claims per month. The main third countries of origin during the first five months of 2017 were Syria, Afghanistan and Nigeria. Some [770](#) applied for asylum in the first five months of 2017, most of them from Afghanistan.

Germany [received](#) some 16,640 asylum applications in May, an increase of 12.1 % compared with the number in April. The most common nationalities were Afghan, Syrian and Iraqi.

An [internal investigation](#) of 2,000 asylum decisions in Germany revealed severe deficiencies in the asylum procedure. Therefore, several [human rights and welfare organisations](#) in Germany called for improvement in the non-governmental and independent support structures for applicants for asylum and refugees.

The Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsman [expressed concerns](#) that assessing asylum applications of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) applicants and other vulnerable groups might not comply with international and regional human rights obligations.

The quality of asylum decisions made by the Finnish Immigration Service during 2015–2016 received criticism in a [media report](#).

The French NGO [La Cimade](#) continued to report serious procedural flaws in returning to Italy migrants who had crossed the border in an irregular manner. Children, whom Italy allegedly did not readmit, were simply sent back without any written documentation, it indicated.

In Paris, where the majority of migrants in France try to apply for asylum, the organisation Gisti [reported](#) an increasing number of informal camps next to the official "humanitarian camp". When they provided their fingerprints, officials [sometimes allegedly threatened](#) migrants with immediate return to their country of origin or transit before assessing their asylum claims.

Around [2,810 people](#) applied for asylum in the Netherlands in May 2017, slightly fewer than the [some 2,860](#) applications in April. The main countries of origin were Syria (about 1,080) and Eritrea (360). Additionally, a considerable number of stateless people arrived in the Netherlands (178). Among those asylum applicants, 123 were unaccompanied children, an increase of 28 % compared with 96 in April.

In a [report mapping the asylum procedures conducted in 2016](#), the Spanish Refugee Commission (CEAR) emphasised that the lengthy procedures exceeded the legal time limits, a large number of cases were pending and a small proportion of decisions granted refugee status in comparison with other types of international protection. The NGO called upon all parliamentary forces to work together to guarantee the right to asylum.

In the first six months of 2017, the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees granted international protection to some 1,040 applicants. Of these, some 460 persons obtained refugee status and some 580 persons received another (humanitarian) status. In comparison, it rejected some 2,260 applications.

A [series of media reports](#) in Bulgaria revealed illegal schemes for 'selling' registered addresses to migrants who have applied for or received international protection. For asylum seekers, registering at an external address is an alternative to being accommodated in a reception centre, and is the preferred option for those who intend to move further into Europe.

In Slovakia, 17 new asylum seekers lodged applications, including five unaccompanied children from Vietnam.

NGOs in Hungary continued to report that it was difficult to obtain international protection as many applications of persons who had arrived via Serbia, including families, were rejected on the basis of the safe third country rule.

The number of asylum applications in Poland [remained low](#) compared with last year. Between 1 January and 22 June, some 1,670 persons submitted a first-time asylum application. Tajiks and Chechens in particular faced difficulties in registering asylum applications at the border, and were refused entry to Polish territory, NGOs continued to report. In six cases, the European Court of Human Rights [asked](#) Poland not to return Chechen nationals to Belarus, and to make sure that competent national authorities examined their applications for international protection.

Sweden received some 2,350 new asylum applications, in comparison with May (1,940) and April (1,575). The monthly figure exceeding 2,000 for the first time since November 2016. In June, the applicants' main countries of origin were Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Some 770 applicants were children (104 unaccompanied), an increase from May (97) and April (76). The Swedish government [announced](#) a decision to extend and strengthen border controls for a maximum of six months from 12 May 2017, increasing the use of vehicle X-ray inspections and camera surveillance.

The number of newly arrived asylum seekers in Denmark remained low. Some 160 persons applied for asylum between 1 June and 25 June 2017, with Syria being the commonest country of origin. Unaccompanied children formed a relatively large proportion, about 16 % of the applicants.

In May, the Danish Refugee Appeals Board decided on four cases concerning transfers to Hungary in accordance with the Dublin Regulation. It found that there were substantial grounds for believing that there were systematic deficiencies in the asylum procedure and in the reception conditions for asylum applicants in Hungary. Consequently, the Danish Immigration Service does not currently conduct transfers to Hungary in accordance with the Dublin Regulation.

Return

Close to 420 returns took place from Greece in June, under the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme. In comparison, the Hellenic Police conducted more than 700 forced returns over the same period.

The European Court of Human Rights has [asked Greece to suspend the return](#) of a rejected asylum seeker, a national of Pakistan and member of the Ahmadi minority, from the island of Lesbos to Turkey under the EU–Turkey deal.

An irregular migrant in Milan, Italy, received an expulsion order after visiting a police station to report being a victim of a violent attack. This practice may discourage migrants from reporting crime for fear of deportation, [NGOs warned](#).

The security situation in Afghanistan was allegedly unstable and deteriorating. Various stakeholders criticised returns to that country and demonstrated against them in Austria, [Finland, Germany, the Netherlands](#) and [Sweden](#). In Sweden, for example, two of the political parties in the country's parliament, the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*) and the Liberal Party (*Liberaterna*), demanded a temporary stop to all expulsions to Afghanistan. Several children's and human rights organisations [called](#) on the Dutch Government to stop deporting vulnerable migrants to Afghanistan, including families with young children, given the unsafe situation in the country. The Secretary of State for Security and Justice [responded](#) that there was no reason to stop the deportations. The Finnish Supreme Administrative Court also held in a [ruling](#) that the prevailing conditions in Kabul did not constitute a general obstacle to internal protection.

Bulgaria returned about 440 irregular migrants between April and June, some 200 of them forcibly.

The Danish Refugee Appeals Board [confirmed](#) a decision to withdraw subsidiary protection from a Somali applicant. This was the first time this happened to a person originating from an area controlled by the militant group Al-Shabaab. In two other cases, the board overturned decisions relating to Somali families as a result of the risk of female circumcision of their underage children.

The police in Finland, according to the [media](#), increasingly started to fine undocumented migrants for illegally staying in the country, following a backlog in the return system.

Reception conditions

Immigration detention

Some 3,100 persons were in immigration detention in mainland Greece in June, most of them Pakistani nationals.

The Italian Ministry of the Interior [announced](#) the creation of a national observatory, composed of the relevant authorities, for monitoring the national reception system. Monitoring visits to reception facilities started in May 2017.

The Italian Authority for the Protection of People who are Detained or Deprived of their Personal Freedom [reported](#) on its visits to immigration detention facilities in Rome, Turin, Caltanissetta and Brindisi, describing the overall level of conditions and services as poor and unsatisfactory.

Detention remained common in France, often under poor conditions, according to NGOs, including for women and children. For example, at the French–Italian border in Menton, the border police detained migrants who were refused entry to the country before sending them back to Italy. Several organisations launched legal action against the “provisional detention zone for non-admitted persons”.

In June, the [administrative Court of Nice](#) did not establish that there had been a violation of the rights to free movement and to asylum, but ordered that migrants who had been detained for a period exceeding four hours should be transferred to waiting areas at the airport and the train station in Nice. The same organisations lodged an appeal against this decision before the Council of State, which was [rejected](#) in July.

The average length of immigration detention in Poland (for asylum seekers and irregular migrants subject to return) in the first half of 2017 was 71 days.

Safety and material conditions

The Italian Minister of the Interior [stated](#) that large reception centres in the country should be closed, as they did not foster integration. In late June, several demonstrations took place in [Palermo](#), [Mineo](#) (Sicily) and [Bari](#), with asylum seekers protesting against poor reception conditions.

Italian NGOs [reported](#) poor living conditions for migrants at an informal encampment near Ventimiglia, and the drowning of one refugee in a nearby river. The camp hosted about 250 people, including unaccompanied children and was not supported by the local authorities which ordered its dismantling.

The Greek Ombudsman issued a [special report](#) on the management of migration flows and refugee protection in the country. Its findings included a lack of central planning and coordination, overlapping jurisdictions, failure to use European funds in a timely and effective manner, shortcomings in reception and accommodation, and delays in implementing the education framework for refugee children.

Asylum seekers [protested](#) over living conditions, lack of safety and access to medical services at the renovated hosting site of Agia Eleni in Ioannina, to which they had been recently moved. The Greek solidarity movement Lathra [warned](#) about the situation at the migrant encampment at Souda beach, on the island of Chios. It pointed out serious health risks and called for the immediate transfer of migrants, including pregnant women and small children, to a more appropriate site.

The hospitality company Airbnb and SolidarityNow announced the launch of a new [electronic 'open houses' platform](#) that helps people offer, on a non-profit basis, shelter to refugees and displaced persons in Greece.

On 10 June, a strong earthquake hit the island of Lesbos, which hosts one of the Greek hotspots. No injuries among the migrants have been reported.

Internal tensions and incidents of violence among asylum seekers remained a source of concern in Finland. Reportedly, asylum seekers who had converted to Christianity were a particular target of threats. Furthermore, self-harm among asylum seekers, especially those facing negative asylum decisions, as well as sexual harassment and abuse among asylum seekers at reception centres, including targeting children, were reported.

The Finnish Immigration Service [announced](#) further reduction of accommodation capacities. The [Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman](#) asserted that municipalities were under an obligation to ensure temporary emergency accommodation for undocumented migrants within Finland.

The number of migrants in the informal camps of Calais, France, increased slightly, to between around 350 (according to the Prefecture) and 650 (according to NGOs). Tensions in the camps between migrants and the police remained high, mainly because of improvised roadblocks set up by migrants to slow down lorries heading to the United Kingdom, which they would then climb on board. In June, one of these roadblocks caused the death of a van driver who had crashed into a lorry stopping at a roadblock. Four migrants, two adult Afghans and two Eritrean children, have been charged with manslaughter.

In Bulgaria, the municipality of Harmanli [objected](#) to a planned project to improve living conditions in the local reception facility. The project was [announced](#) by the State Agency for Refugees in April, with the aim of installing new temporary accommodation facilities, premises for schooling and leisure activities. According to the municipality, the project aims to expand the reception centre rather than improve conditions.

Healthcare and basic services

Critical living conditions in Calais in France led to the administrative Court of Lille ordering the local authorities to provide water points, sanitary facilities and meals. The Mayor of Calais, however, [refused](#) to implement the required measures, as he considered them to fall under the competence of the state and not the local authority. The Public Defender of Rights [confirmed](#) the “exceptionally serious nature of the situation” and that “the breaches of the most basic fundamental rights of the migrants that have been observed and reported indeed appear to be without precedent”. The conditions had a particular impact on children.

The National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) in Sweden considered that the psychological health of young asylum seekers and migrants, especially unaccompanied children, was the main fundamental rights concern.

Vulnerable persons

Persons with disabilities and other groups at risk remained unidentified on the Greek islands, Human Rights Watch [stated](#). This was allegedly the result of pressure from the EU upon Greek authorities and medical aid organisations to reduce the number of asylum seekers identified as ‘vulnerable’, and to process their cases on the islands rather than transferring them to the mainland.

In France, the closure of special reception facilities for women and new-born children led to an increased risk of rape and sexual exploitation, the [Public Defender of Rights](#) pointed out. Furthermore, no care was available for women who arrived in France pregnant as a result of rape on their journey.

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee and UNHCR Hungary [reported](#) that many people accommodated in the transit zones at the Hungarian–Serbian border complained about prison-like conditions, lack of shade and air conditioning, lack of variety in food, and handcuffing and escorts when visiting a doctor, including for pregnant women. The authorities denied handcuffing pregnant women. Families with children in the transit zones [complained](#) about lack of bottled water, and limits on nappies and baby formula that did not reflect children’s needs.

Several organisations in Poland highlighted that while there was a mechanism in place, victims of torture and violence and other vulnerable groups were not recognised early enough during the procedure and did not receive appropriate support. Persons in detention were often not released even if they were subsequently identified as vulnerable. This confirms the past [findings](#) of the Polish Ombudsman, who also [reported](#) a case of a child with a gunshot wound placed in a detention centre.

Child protection

Identification

Save the Children Italia Onlus released an '[Atlas of Unaccompanied Children in Italy](#)', mapping developments since 2011: a six-fold increase in annual arrivals, a gradual increase in the proportion of children under the age of 15, and the growing number of girls among unaccompanied children.

Caritas Vienna continued to report appeals against age assessments of asylum seekers in Austria. They involved triple checks, consisting of a body check, an X-ray check and a dental check. NGOs criticised them for legal as well as medical reasons.

The [waiting time](#) for asylum seekers who have applied for family reunification in the Netherlands increased from 146 days in 2015 to 331 days in the period January–May 2017.

In Germany, some 37,570 unaccompanied children were under the protection of youth welfare offices, as well as 22,130 young adults.

Unaccompanied children reported cases of rape experienced during their journey to Germany, according to the German Red Cross.

At a [round table](#) on the protection of asylum seeking children, the main international organisations supporting asylum seekers in Bulgaria (including the Bulgarian Red Cross, UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM) discussed the shortcomings of the system of representation for unaccompanied children. The participants proposed a new system of representation, whereby either the manager of the institution where the child lives or a community member selected on the basis of certain criteria would represent the child.

Unaccompanied children in Sweden were anxious that the increasingly rigorous use of age assessment methods might lead to them being considered adults and hence being expelled or losing the support of social services, according to the National Board of Health and Welfare. The assessment involves X-raying wisdom teeth in combination with a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan of the knee joints.

Placement and accommodation

The [estimated number](#) of unaccompanied children currently in Greece was 2,250 as of 20 June 2017. The total number of places available in shelters was 1,270. Overall, 52 long-term and transit shelters were in operation.

Following the recent introduction of the role of voluntary guardians in Italian law, protocols for the training and appointment of such guardians have been

introduced in [Milan](#) and [Palermo](#), thus covering regions with a high proportion of unaccompanied children.

In some areas of Austria, such as Styria, sufficient accommodation places and staff have become available because numbers of newcomers have fallen. Facilities for unaccompanied children were of high quality, according to Caritas Styria.

In Finland, the [Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman](#) voiced concerns regarding children's rights, in particular relating to their legal security and best interests, in hearings involving child applicants for family reunification, at Finland's diplomatic missions abroad. The report noted shortcomings and problems in this regard in relation to the procedures, the competence of interviewers and the guidance provided to the diplomatic missions. Also, children were often interviewed without a family member, legal guardian or other familiar adult present.

It was reportedly still difficult to find placements in Finnish municipalities for unaccompanied children after they had received a positive decision on international protection and obtained a residence permit.

Providing welfare services to children [remained a problem](#) in France. To improve the situation in Paris, Doctors without Borders [announced](#) a project to help unaccompanied children by opening an information and care centre, and a hotel, in September.

In 2016, 290 children had disappeared from reception centres in the Netherlands, compared with 160 in 2015, Dutch NGOs and UNICEF claimed in a [report](#) published in June 2017. Of these 290 children, 30 had disappeared from special shelters for children vulnerable to human trafficking, compared with 20 in the previous year. Furthermore, the report expressed concerns about the rising number of children who had to move from one reception centre to another. In 2016, 3,500 children had to move to another place within the Netherlands, an increase of 53 % compared with 2015. Such moves caused stress and hindered children's integration.

[Dutch NGOs](#) raised their concern about the implementation of a regulation on children's amnesty (*Kinderpardon*) entitling children and their parents to a residence permit if they have gone through the asylum procedure unsuccessfully and have resided in the Netherlands for a long time. However, almost all (96 %) of the requests had been rejected, the NGOs' report now revealed. This was allegedly because of a lack of cooperation among the parents, for example if they continued to appeal against their deportation. In June 2017, the Dutch Ombudsman for Children (*Kinderombudsman*) [launched a plan](#) to entitle more children and their families to permanent residence permits.

Overcrowding remained a problem in juvenile shelters in the Spanish autonomous city of Melilla. Many children [reportedly](#) experienced physical violence and many opted to live on the streets. The Moroccan Prime Minister approached the Spanish authorities with a view to addressing the problem of Moroccan children arriving in Ceuta and Melilla.

In Hungary, unaccompanied children above the age of 14 years continued to be hosted in the transit zones at the border with Serbia, rather than being placed in facilities with child-specific services. The guardianship authority is not notified of their presence.

The reception of children was overall working well in Sweden, as several NGOs considered. However, the decrease in the number of new arrivals compared with 2015/2016 led to the closing of schools and specially assigned accommodation centres for unaccompanied children, as well as the closing of regular asylum accommodation centres where some children with families were living.

Legal, social and policy responses

Legal changes

The Austrian national parliament passed new legislation in the area of asylum in June. The [Amendment Act on Alien Law](#) (*Fremdenrechtsänderungsgesetz 2017*) introduced a residence restriction as well as restrictions of basic care for persons who have received a negative asylum decision, the acceleration of asylum withdrawal procedures in case of conviction for criminal offences, and a provision allowing the exercise of coercive power by personnel in accommodation facilities. Finally, it introduced administrative fines of €5,000 to €15,000 for anyone who has received a final and executable return decision but does not promptly leave the country. The act also obliges rejected asylum seekers to take the necessary steps to obtain their return certificates. Where they fail to do so, coercive detention can be ordered.

Austria also published an [Integration Act](#) (*Integrationsgesetz*) and an [Anti-Face-Covering Act](#) (*Anti-Gesichtsverhüllungsgesetz*) in June. The second act prohibits full veiling.

The [Act on temporary restrictions](#) of the possibility to obtain a residence permit and family reunification continued to be a source of great frustration among asylum applicants, police in Sweden confirmed. This temporary legislation, introduced in July 2016 and valid at least until July 2019, made obtaining a permanent residence permit significantly more difficult. In June, the act [was amended](#) to enable unaccompanied children enrolled in upper secondary education to extend their temporary residence permits to finish school and establish themselves in the labour market.

A new [system of reimbursement to the municipalities](#) for the reception of unaccompanied children entered into force in Sweden in early July. It reduced the amount of financial support for municipalities, especially with regard to young persons between 18 and 21 years of age.

In Sweden, a [ruling by the Supreme Administrative Court](#) in June clarified that municipalities were not obliged to give financial support to children whose asylum claims had been rejected, if their parents, whose claims had been similarly rejected, were hiding from the authorities.

Denmark has adopted an [act](#) that regulates the use of force at child accommodation centres, and provides for the option to reduce pocket money given to unaccompanied children, e.g. if they do not follow the house rules. The Danish parliament also [amended the Repatriation Act](#), helping persons who have been granted asylum to repatriate to their country of origin, e.g. by increasing the financial sum provided for persons repatriating, and increasing economic support for healthcare insurance and for children's tuition. In May it adopted the [Act establishing an emergency mechanism](#) allowing the authorities to directly

turn back persons at the border to other 'Dublin countries', despite criticism by civil society organisations.

In Denmark, the Eastern High Court [ruled](#) that granting the right to family reunification only after three years, pursuant to the 2015 and 2016 legislation, does not violate the right to family life and prohibition against discrimination under the European Convention on Human Rights. The case has been appealed to the Supreme Court.

A Syrian couple received [a prison sentence](#) for migrant smuggling and was expelled from Denmark after having brought the husband's brother, who was seeking asylum in Germany, for a visit to Denmark. The brother had a valid return ticket and was enrolled in an education course in Germany. Organisations such as Amnesty International expressed great concern, highlighting a clear lack of intent to conduct migrant smuggling in this case.

The German legislature adopted a new law to speed up the deportation of rejected asylum seekers at the beginning of June 2017. It planned restrictions to several other asylum laws, including new powers to examine asylum seekers' mobile phones and subscriber identity module (SIM) cards to determine their identity. Furthermore, persons scheduled for deportation could be detained if they are considered a threat to public security. Finally, short-term detention immediately before deportation would be extended from a maximum of 4 days to a maximum of 10 days.

Despite opposition by NGOs and the Ombudsman, the Polish government intended to amend the [Law on legal protection for foreigners](#) and to introduce border procedures and lists of safe third countries and safe countries of origin, reduce the availability of remedies against negative asylum decisions and expand the use of detention.

An appeal court in Rhodes, Greece, cleared a young Syrian national sentenced for the deaths of migrants in the 2014 [Farmakonisi case](#). According to the court, the deaths were caused after the intervention of the Greek authorities, when a Greek Coastguard vessel was towing the boat carrying the refugees.

The Regional Court in Szeged, Hungary, overturned a first instance decision that had found a Syrian migrant guilty of terrorism for organising a riot against the closing of the southern border in 2015. [According to the appellate court](#), the court of first instance needed to properly examine whether the acts in question were deliberate attempts to coerce the state or acts of despair.

Policy responses

Finland adopted the third [government programme](#) for the prevention of irregular entry and stay, covering 2017–2020, in April. Key priorities identified in the programme include actions to combat irregular residence and to ensure internal security.

The Finnish [Minister of Interior](#) asked the parliament to raise the [annual quota of refugees to be resettled](#) to Finland from 750 to 1,050 for 2018. More than 40 organisations advocated for a raise in the quota as well.

Following the presidential elections in France, the Minister for the Interior visited Calais on 23 June 2017 [to announce](#) a plan to deal with the problem of asylum.

This plan aimed to improve the asylum procedure in Calais and to address problems related to the networks of smugglers in Africa.

A [new protocol](#) between responsible ministries in Italy aims to develop specific volunteer service projects to support the social integration and financial autonomy of persons who have obtained international protection status.

The handling of requests in Eritrean family reunification cases by the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (*Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst*) was not compatible with the EU Family Reunification Directive, a [study](#) by legal experts argued in May 2017. The alleged infringement related to the authority's strict approach to accepting unofficial documents as evidence of family ties. This practice has led to a considerable number of rejections of Eritrean family reunification cases since the beginning of 2016.

Following general elections in the Netherlands in March 2017, [the media](#) considered that opposing views on migration and asylum were a major obstacle to a coalition between the political parties GroenLinks, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, the Christian Democratic Appeal and the Democrats 66.

In June, the Spanish government [approved](#) a budget for migrant integration (€30 million), and for enhancing the protection of unaccompanied children arriving in Ceuta and Melilla (€6.45 million).

A comprehensive law on LGBTI rights, including for asylum seekers and recognised refugees, has been [proposed](#) in the Spanish parliament.

The National Legal Aid Bureau, UNHCR and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee signed an [agreement on mutual cooperation](#) in May. It aims to provide better legal assistance to persons seeking international protection asylum in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian Prosecutor's Office launched a [series of inspections](#) relating to the temporary fence on the Bulgarian–Turkish border, after a former Member of Parliament indicated possible links between contractors and inflated contract prices.

The Slovak Ministry of the Interior [announced](#) the launch of a digital platform facilitating access to the labour market for persons who have been granted international protection. Slovakia was the ninth EU Member State to launch this [project](#), administered by the IOM and co-funded by the EU.

Responses by civil society, local and political actors

Several pro-asylum protests and anti-immigration [counter-demonstrations](#) took place in Finland during the reporting period. Protests also opposed deportations of rejected asylum seekers, with dozens of persons gathering, according to [media sources](#), at Helsinki airport in late June.

In Finland, one of the governing parties, the populist True Finns, changed its leadership. It then promoted a more hard-line anti-immigration approach, which the [media](#) covered widely in early June.

The Finnish [Non-Discrimination Ombudsman](#) asked for anti-immigration or racist demonstrations not to be allowed in the vicinity of schools, reception centres or mosques. Also, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture planned a new [training model](#) for immigrants allowing increased flexibility in studies.

In the past three months there have been several demonstrations against migrants in Germany. The right-wing organisation [Die Identitären](#) demonstrated on 19 May 2017 against new draft laws to combat hate speech through social media. About 50 persons took part. In addition, 600 of this group and some representatives of the right-wing political party [Alternative für Deutschland](#) (AfD) demonstrated on 17 June 2017.

In the past three months there were also several demonstrations involving and/or in favour of migrants in Germany. For example, about 650 persons, predominantly migrants and refugees, [demonstrated](#) against the G20 summit in Hamburg.

[Several demonstrations](#) in support of migrants took place in France in June. These protested, for example, against the closure of establishments receiving migrants or against the return of asylum seekers in accordance with the Dublin Regulation. The [call of 15 June](#) was a form of criticism aimed at the new President of the Republic and organised by some 300 civil society organisations, protesting in particular against police repression and increasing obstacles by the prefectures to French people wishing to assist migrants.

Many [articles](#) in the general press in France dealt with the increasing number of migrants returning to Calais, contributing to renewed public debate about migration, which had slackened off after the informal camps in Calais closed at the end of 2016.

In a number of Member States, various events took place to mark World Refugee Day and express solidarity with refugees.

Several NGOs sent an [open letter](#) to Italian policy makers calling for a comprehensive reform of EU law and policies in the field of asylum and migration, based on developments since the adoption of the European Agenda on Migration.

The Association for Legal Studies on Immigration, an Italian NGO, presented a [proposal for the reform of the national immigration legislation](#). The proposal focused on simplifying entry procedures, improving children's rights and supporting family reunification, and promoting voluntary return over forced return, as well as combating racism and hate speech, providing adequate protection to victims of human trafficking and exploitation, and guaranteeing access to procedures.

The NVU, a far-right organisation, organised a demonstration against migrants near a reception centre in Ter Apel in the Netherlands in June. Some 25 people took part. At the same time, around 70 persons participated in a counter-demonstration.

In an [interview with the Dutch daily newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*](#), the Mayor of Rotterdam Ahmed Aboutaleb stated that the Geneva Convention on Refugees 1951 needed to be adapted to current times, as "You can only allow refugees to a certain extent".

A [demonstration](#) in Madrid called on the Spanish government to provide more openness towards refugees and to step up relocation efforts. Over 100 citizen platforms and NGOs organised it, and some political parties and trade unions

supported it. Similar events took place in other Spanish cities. [Amnesty International](#) and [UNHCR](#) have launched specific campaigns.

The Mayor of Madrid publicly [endorsed](#) initiatives welcoming refugees in a prime-time TV show.

The Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria noted in its [annual report for 2016](#) that criminal groups are increasingly involved in human smuggling. The authorities recently dismantled several smuggling operations, some involving police officers, including the closure of a [tunnel at the Bulgarian–Romanian border](#) and of an [organised group at Sofia airport](#).

A Bulgarian NGO (Caritas Sofia) organised a [job fair](#) to connect asylum seekers and refugees with companies offering employment opportunities.

The Hungarian Association for Migrants [launched a call](#) for employers willing to employ refugees, offering to assist them with additional administration and emphasising the beneficial effects of diversity at the workplace.

Hungarian NGO MigSzol organised a ['fence exhibition'](#) showing pictures of victims of alleged police brutality along the Hungarian–Serbian border.

Hate speech and violent crime

The Antidiscrimination Office of the Austrian province of Styria has created a smartphone app to facilitate reporting of online hate postings. It has been used around 800 times to report hate postings since it was established in mid-April. The hate postings mainly concerned discriminatory statements on the grounds of ethnic origins, gender or sexual orientation, as well as postings against refugees and calls for rape. In addition, people reported some 20 cases of hate crime in Styria, mainly targeted at women wearing headscarves and, in two cases, people with dark skin colour. A man set his dog on a teenage asylum seeker.

In the rest of the country, numerous racist and xenophobic incidents against migrants and people in need of international protection, including attacks on reception and accommodation centres, were reported to the Austrian Federal Agency for State Protection and Counter Terrorism (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung* – BVT). Most incidents involved anti-migration and racist campaigns and posters. For example, in Linz (Lower Austria), 'plane tickets' made by the 'Identitarian Movement Austria' (*Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* – IBÖ) were found in front of a mosque with text such as "return ticket" or "remigration airline". In Klagenfurt (Carinthia), a student who wanted to remove an IBÖ sticker with a refugee-hostile slogan at a bus stop discovered that the sticker had razor blades at its corners.

There were repeated incidents of disorder, violence and vandalism among anti-immigration groups in Finland and between such groups and outsiders. Online hate speech targeting both migrants and authorities also intensified.

A [project \(TURVA\)](#) sought to improve asylum seekers' conception of civil and human rights and their understanding of Finnish society. The joint organisers were the Oulu reception centre, the National Police Board and the Police University College.

In Germany, 46 violent [attacks](#) specifically against asylum seekers were recorded in May and June. There were [further attacks](#) against migrants, German Muslims, Jews, Sinti and other minorities.

The President of the Italian region of Liguria, a member of the right-wing party *Lega Nord*, [pledged online](#) to repatriate all migrants if the party formed a government. The same party strongly opposes a [draft law](#), debated in the parliament, which aims to facilitate access to Italian citizenship for children of migrants living legally in the country, fostering their integration.

The Hellenic League for Human Rights issued a [press release](#) denouncing the behaviour of some public bus drivers in the Skaramangas area in Greece, who refused to take on board asylum seekers and refugees. The Greek Ombudsman has launched an investigation into these allegations.

The Institute for Social Integration presented the results of its [media monitoring of hate speech in Bulgarian public life](#), and of media coverage related to the migration flow between October 2014 and January 2017. The results showed that hate speech and a negative portrayal of arrivals were used more intensively during the election campaigns, and dropped sharply after they had ended.

There was a [small increase](#) in the number of arson attacks against accommodation centres in Sweden, in comparison with the previous period. In Malmö, a 22-year-old man ran his car, decorated with a Nazi symbol, into a group of around 20 Iraqi nationals protesting against Sweden's new and stricter asylum rules. No injuries were reported.

Stakeholders interviewed in July 2017

| Country | Stakeholders interviewed |
|----------|---|
| Austria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austrian Red Cross (<i>Österreichisches Rotes Kreuz</i>); • Caritas Styria (<i>Caritas Steiermark</i>); • Caritas Vienna (<i>Caritas Wien</i>); • Federal Agency for State Protection and Counter Terrorism (<i>Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung, BVT</i>); • Antidiscrimination Office Styria (<i>Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steiermark</i>); • Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department III/9 (<i>Bundesministerium für Inneres, Abteilung III/9 Grundversorgung und Bundesbetreuung</i>); • Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department III/5 (<i>Bundesministerium für Inneres, Abteilung III/5 Asyl und Fremdenwesen</i>); • Federal Ministry of the Interior/Department II/2, Operational Affairs (<i>Bundesministerium für Inneres/Abteilung II/2 Einsatzangelegenheiten</i>). |
| Bulgaria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of the Interior, Directorate General Border Police (MoI – DGBP) (<i>Министерство на вътрешните работи, Главна дирекция „Гранична полиция“, МВР – ГДГП</i>); • Ministry of the Interior, Directorate General Criminal Police (MoI – DGCP) (<i>Министерство на вътрешните работи, Главна дирекция „Криминална полиция“, МВР – ГДКП</i>); • State Agency for Refugees (SAR) (<i>Държавна агенция за бежанците, ДАБ</i>); • State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) (<i>Държавна агенция за закрила на детето, ДАЗД</i>); • Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) (<i>Български червен кръст, БЧК</i>); • Refugee Support Group (RSG); • Caritas Bulgaria (<i>Каритас България</i>); • Bulgarian Lawyers for Human Rights (BLHR) (<i>Български адвокати за правата на човека, БАПЧ</i>); • Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria (CRWB) (<i>Съвет на жените бежанки в България, СЖББ</i>). |
| Denmark | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Danish Red Cross (<i>Røde Kors</i>); • The Danish Refugee Council (<i>Dansk Flygtningehjælp</i>); • The Danish Ministry of Justice (<i>Justitsministeriet</i>); • The Danish Immigration Service (<i>Udlændingestyrelsen</i>). |
| Finland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amnesty Finland; • National Police Board (<i>Poliisihallitus/Polisstyrelsen</i>); • Finnish Immigration Service (<i>Maahanmuuttovirasto/Migrationsverket</i>); • Finnish Ombudsman for Children (<i>Lapsiasiavaltuutettu/Barnombudsmannen</i>). |

| Country | Stakeholders interviewed |
|---------|--|
| France | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of the Interior (Ministère de l'Intérieur); • Public Defender of Rights (Le Défenseur des droits – DDD); • National Consultative Committee on Human Rights (Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme – CNCDH); • Service centre for migrants in Calais (Plateforme de service aux migrants à Calais); • La Cimade (Inter-Movement Committee for evacuees – Comité inter mouvements auprès des évacués); • The Immigrant Information and Support Group (Le Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrés); • National Association of Border Assistance for Foreigners (ANAFÉ) (Association nationale d'assistance aux frontières pour les étrangers); • Human Rights League (Ligue des Droits de l'Homme); • France Terre d'Asile; • The voice of the child (La voix de l'enfant); • Roya citizen (Roya Citoyenne); • Catholic Relief (Secours catholiques). |
| Germany | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend); • Jesuit Refugee Service (Jesuiten Flüchtlingsdienst, JRS); • Federal Police (Bundespolizei); • German Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz); • German Caritas Association (Deutscher Caritasverband). |
| Greece | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asylum Service Greece (Υπηρεσία Ασύλου); • Hellenic Police Headquarters (Αρχηγείο Ελληνικής Αστυνομίας); • United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Greece (Υπατη Αρμοστέια του ΟΗΕ για τους Πρόσφυγες, γραφείο Ελλάδα); • Hellenic League for Human Rights (Ελληνική Ένωση για τα Δικαιώματα του Ανθρώπου); • Racist Violence Recording Network (Δίκτυο Καταγραφής Περιστατικών Ρατσιστικής Βίας); • Medecins Du Monde-Doctors of the World (Γιατροί του Κόσμου); • International Organization for Migration (Διεθνής Οργανισμός Μετανάστευσης); • National Centre for Social Solidarity (Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικής Αλληλεγγύης). |
| Hungary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Interior (Belügyminisztérium); • Ministry of Human Capacities (Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma); • Immigration and Asylum Office (Bevándorlási és Menekültügyi Hivatal); • National Police Headquarters (Országos Rendőr-főkapitányság); • UNHCR Hungary; • MigSzol; • MigSzol Szeged; • Cordelia Foundation (Cordelia Alapítvány); • Hungarian Association for Migrants (Menedék Migránsokat Segítő Egyesület); • Catholic Charity (Katolikus Karitás). |

| Country | Stakeholders interviewed |
|-------------|--|
| Italy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of the Interior; • Authority for the Protection of People who are Detained or Deprived of their Personal Freedom (Garante nazionale per i diritti delle persone detenute o private della libertà personale); • Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (Associazione per gli studi giuridici sull'immigrazione, ASGI); • Italian Refugees Council (Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati, CIR); • Doctors Without Borders Italy (Medici Senza Frontiere Italia); • Save the Children Italia Onlus; • UNHCR; • Italian Red Cross (IRC); • Jesuit Refugee Service 'Centro Astalli'; • Community of Sant'Egidio (Comunità di Sant'Egidio); • 'Melting Pot Europa' project; • NGO 'Borderline Sicilia'; • NGO 'Naga'. |
| Netherlands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry for Security and Justice, providing information on behalf of Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Aliens Police and Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers; • Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek); • Defence for Children Netherlands; • Amnesty International Netherlands; • MiND-the Dutch Reporting Point for Discrimination. |
| Poland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association for Legal Intervention (<i>Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej, SIP</i>); • Helsinki Foundation For Human Rights (<i>Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka, HFPC</i>); • UNHCR. |
| Slovakia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic; • Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family; • Office of Border and Alien Police of the Police Presidium; • Marginal; • Human Rights League; • Milan Šimečka Foundation; • Islamic Foundation; • Slovak Humanitarian Council; • International Organization of Migration – branch in Bratislava. |
| Spain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asylum and Refugee Office of the Spanish Ministry of the Interior (Oficina de Asilo y Refugio del Ministerio del Interior, OAR); • Chair of Refugees and Forced Migrants of Comillas ICAI-ICADE, INDITEX (Cátedra de Refugiados y Migrantes Forzados de Comillas ICAI-ICADE, INDITEX); • Jesuit Migrant Service (Servicio Jesuita Migrantes, SJM); • Spanish Refugee Aid Commission (Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado, CEAR); • SOS-Racism (SOS Racismo); • Spanish Committee of UNICEF (UNICEF, Comité Español). |

| Country | Stakeholders interviewed |
|---------|--|
| Sweden | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swedish Migration Agency (<i>Migrationsverket</i>);• Swedish Police Authority (<i>Polismyndigheten</i>);• National Board of Health and Welfare (<i>Socialstyrelsen</i>);• The Swedish Red Cross (<i>Röda korset</i>);• Save the children Sweden (<i>Rädda barnen</i>). |