

# Eastern Borders

## Situation in 2022

The overall scale of irregular migration at the 6000-kilometre-long land border between Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the eastern EU Member States - Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Slovakia and Romania – has been much smaller than on other migratory routes. However, this path to Europe still presents significant challenges for border control and in 2021 experienced unprecedented migratory pressure.

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## Situation in 2021

At the Eastern land borders, a record of 8184 illegal border-crossings were detected in 2021, a more than tenfold increase in comparison to 2020.

This significant increase in detections can be traced to a migrant crisis artificially created by the Lukashenko regime: there was intense migratory pressure with continuously attempted border crossings in all three EU Member States neighbouring Belarus, prompting them to declare a state of emergency.

The number of migrants seeking to reach Europe through this route peaked in the second half of the year.

In the summer of 2021, Frontex deployed teams of European standing corps to Lithuania and Latvia to support the countries with responding to the increased migratory pressure.

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## Situation in 2020

In 2020, the number of reported cases of illegal border-crossings on this route decreased slightly to 677.

There were small absolute increases in arrivals from Belarus and Moldova, but at low levels. In either case the additional detections did not involve nationals of these two countries. Notably, the political instability in Belarus had no significant impact on the EU's external borders in 2020.

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## **Situation in 2019**

The year 2019 saw a one third drop in detections of illegal border crossings at the Eastern land borders, resulting in a total of 722 detections.

Nationals of Turkey, Vietnam and Ukraine were among the most detected nationalities. Vietnamese arrivals experienced a drop of 83% compared to the previous year.

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## **Situation in 2018**

The number of detections increased to 1084 in 2018, around a quarter more than in the previous year.

This increase was partly due to migrants abusing the FIFA Fan ID issue by Russian authorities, which allowed travellers visa-free entry to Russia, from where, coming also via Belarus and Ukraine, the migrants attempted to enter the EU illegally. Vietnamese nationals represented the largest portion of illegal border-crossings at the Eastern Land Border route, followed at a distance by Iraqis, Russians and Turks.

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## **Situation in 2017 and before**

In 2017, the Eastern land border reported 872 detected cases of illegal border crossings, significantly lower than in the previous years. In particular, at the land borders with Russia the numbers dropped, indicating that the Russian authorities continued successful cooperation with the respective Member States' local authorities in preventing border crossings. More than one-third of detected migrants were Vietnamese citizens this year.

In 2016, 1384 detections were reported, roughly in line with the average annual numbers recorded since 2008. About a quarter of these detections involved nationals from neighbouring countries, mostly Ukrainians, Russians and, to a lesser extent, from Belarus and Moldova. Most of them crossed the land border with Ukraine. Most of these cases were associated either with smuggling or other reasons not related to migration.

Irregular migration was the main reason for crossing the border illegally for both Vietnamese and Afghans.

In 2015, 1920 detections occurred on this route. This year a temporary route of illegal migration opened up between October and December: the so-called **Arctic route** through Russia where about 6 000 asylum applicants were counted between October and December. Most were originally from Afghanistan and Syria. By the end of December 2015, the Russian authorities begun refusing travellers the permission to transit their country without Schengen visas, thus stopping the flow.

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## More information

More information about the Eastern land borders route is available in Frontex's [annual risk analysis reports](#).

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### Illegal border crossings on the Eastern European Land borders in numbers.

