

# Risk Analysis for 2020





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Throughout the report, references to Kosovo\* are marked with an asterisk to indicate that this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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## List of acronyms used

<b>API</b>	advanced passenger information
<b>BCP</b>	border-crossing point
<b>BLV</b>	blacklisted flag vessels
<b>EASO</b>	European Asylum Support Office
<b>EBCG</b>	European Border and Coast Guard
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EDF</b>	European Union Document-Fraud
<b>EDF-RAN</b>	European Union Document-Fraud Risk Analysis Network
<b>EMN</b>	European Migration Network
<b>EMPACT</b>	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EU+</b>	28 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland
<b>Europol</b>	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
<b>Eurostat</b>	Statistical Office of the European Union
<b>EUROSUR</b>	European Border Surveillance System
<b>FRAN</b>	Frontex Risk Analysis Network
<b>Frontex</b>	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
<b>FTF</b>	foreign terrorist fighter
<b>IBC</b>	illegal border-crossing
<b>ICJ</b>	International Court of Justice
<b>ID</b>	identification document
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>INTCEN</b>	European Union Intelligence and Situation Centre
<b>JAD</b>	Joint Action Day
<b>JO</b>	Joint Operation
<b>MS</b>	EU Member State
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>OCC</b>	organised crime group
<b>PNR</b>	passenger name record
<b>SAC</b>	Schengen-Associated Country
<b>SAR</b>	search and rescue
<b>UK</b>	The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council resolution



EU Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas, Commissioner Ylva Johansson and Frontex Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri © Frontex, 2020

## 1. Foreword

Comprehensive situational awareness for the European Border and Coast Guard means that we must consider various developments, starting with those far beyond our external borders. Some measures, such as these under the common visa policy, have immediate and straightforward impact. Much else in terms of developments that impact EU border management is beyond our control – natural disasters, conflict and level of economic development.

Closer to our borders, in the direct EU neighbourhood, the impact of measures taken by the respective authorities makes the difference between uncontrolled large-scale migratory movements and manageable conditions. At the external borders is where we collectively secure the Schengen area. Finally, within the area of free movement, our collective response, such as the return of people who are residing within

the EU illegally, is also to be considered (the last tier of the ‘four-tier access control model’). The Frontex Risk Analysis should provide reliable information covering all of the aspects relevant to the European integrated border management. Only with this situational awareness we may safeguard the European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

With this in mind, I would like to present the Frontex *Risk Analysis for 2020*, which provides a comprehensive picture of the European Union’s migratory situation. This, as always, is anchored by a series of indicators from the previous year. These show that while the detection of illegal border-crossings between border-crossing points has gone down to the lowest level since 2013, other indicators, such as refusal of entry and detections of persons staying illegally, rose from the previous year.

While the first part of *Risk Analysis for 2020* focuses on migratory issues, the report also discusses other challenges for border management and Frontex – pandemics, terrorism and various types of cross-border crime. These include illegal firearms, drug trafficking and stolen vehicles.

*Risk Analysis for 2020* also features special analyses that touch upon other core functions of Frontex. They include the effect of Frontex’s new mandate in the area of returns or changes in the way criminal smuggling networks have been operating and tracking the movement of terrorists. Other interesting topics analysed by our experts are security risks of black-listed flag vessels and secondary movements by sea.

We also present an integrated asylum-migration picture Frontex prepared together with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Europol, which





highlights our cooperation with other EU agencies to support their stakeholders.

Finally, *Risk Analysis for 2020* reviews the possible evolution of the situation along the external borders of the EU in the coming years. Among the challenges foreseen by Frontex are the effects of pandemics and migrants organising themselves or being used to challenge border regimes. Other potential challenges include the possibility of a trend reversal in the number of irregular arrivals and a possible change of the upward trend of passenger flows.

In a timely study, our experts analyse and provide actionable information about the effect of pandemics on border control and the role of Frontex in supporting Member States. The health crisis has brought to the forefront the need for a common situational picture provided by the Agency. It also spotlights the essential role of an integrated approach to

effective border management to protect health while preserving the integrity of the EU/Schengen area.

The recent events at the Greek borders highlight the fact that we must remain vigilant and maintain comprehensive situational awareness. Frontex and Member States must continue to cooperate to uphold a clear picture of the trends in migration, cross-border crime and other phenomena at the external borders.

These combined risks make even more urgent the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps, with staff and equipment able to reinforce Member States and to strengthen EU responsiveness capacities.

This will be a game changer for European border management that will be a crucial part of future responses to destabilisation linked to challenges such as hybrid threats and pandemics.

The responsibility for the external borders of the European Union and Schengen Area is in the hands of Member States and Frontex. Together our aim is to ensure effective borders addressing the challenges of irregular migration, cross-border crime or terrorism. This way we want to contribute to a well-functioning European area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

## 2. Summary

The total number of reported detections of illegal border-crossing along the EU's external borders fell in 2019 to the lowest level since 2013. The observed irregular migration patterns did not deviate greatly from previous years, so grouping illegal border-crossings into chiefly the Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes continues to be instructive.

On the EU's eastern borders as well as on the circular route from Albania southwards into the EU, the lowest numbers were reported since the Frontex Risk Analysis Network started collecting data. However, the relative decrease in 2019 compared with previous years was mostly due to a drop in migrants intercepted and rescued in the Central and Western Mediterranean. In contrast, detections on the Eastern Mediterranean, Western Balkan and Western African routes recorded significantly higher numbers of detections compared with 2018.

The reversal in the long-term trend of growing migratory pressure on the Western Mediterranean route, which occurred in the spring of 2019, was perhaps the least expected and arguably most consequential factor as regards the EU's external border overall.

The spotlight once again returned to the Eastern Aegean in 2019, where migratory pressure rose in the spring and peaked in September, after which arrivals started falling chiefly due to weather conditions. In the second half of the year,

arrivals on the Eastern Mediterranean sea route were the highest since the signing of the EU-Turkey Statement. Migrant smugglers managed to provide for the increased demand, in particular from Afghan and Syrian migrants coordinating simultaneous departures. Push factors throughout many key countries of origin and long-term host countries intensified as the year progressed. The pressure on Turkey's land border with the EU subsided slightly in 2019. Cyprus experienced a significant increase of migrants crossing the green line and, in the latter half of the year, sporadically arriving by sea.

Irregular migration towards the EU along the two main migratory corridors through the Western Balkans – the Greek-Albanian corridor and the Serbian-centred corridor – continued throughout 2019. The western corridor into Albania reported mounting detections after the start of the Frontex joint operation in May. In the second half of the year the pressure from the region northwards focused on the EU borders with Serbia. Detections on this route grew by 158% compared to 2018.

After January 2019 departures from Morocco on the Western Mediterranean route decreased significantly (by 57% compared with 2018 as regards the sea route). Meanwhile departures from Morocco on the Western African route increased again slightly. Migration pressure

on the Algerian corridor to the EU seasonally ticked up in the autumn, as in previous years.

On the Central Mediterranean route, the Libyan corridor saw relatively little activity throughout 2019. Of the main nationalities departing from Libya, Eritreans saw the largest relative and absolute decrease. Detections on the other corridors that make up this migratory route also decreased compared with 2018.

On the Eastern Land Border in 2019, illegal border-crossings from each of the EU's eastern neighbours decreased. However, refusals of entry on the eastern green border on the other hand continued to rise. On the circular route from Albania southwards into the EU, detections decreased significantly. No significant migratory incidents took place in the Black Sea.

The overall demographics of migrants in 2019 show an increase in the share of vulnerable groups, including a slight growth in the share of women and children. Europol has received particularly worrying reports about the kidnapping of vulnerable irregular migrants, including unaccompanied minors, once they arrive in the EU.

Member States reported an increase in the detection of clandestine entries on both land and sea routes, the latter showing a stronger relative growth. As regards land borders, most clandestine entry attempts in 2019 were again in

the Western Balkans region. According to the demographics of the migrants involved, those who are detected attempting to enter clandestinely (a risky *modus operandi*) are 97% male. Organised crime groups continue to focus on specific nationalities, as evidenced by the fact that 65% of all detected cases of clandestine entry attempts concern a single nationality (Afghan).

Secondary movements remained sizable in 2019 judging by, for instance, the rising number of detections of illegal stay and by the fact that applications for international protection collected by EASO also increased. Further evidence of the rise in secondary movements in 2019 is that the number of discoveries of such movements inside the EU/Schengen area increased in 2019 for the third year in a row. The reported figures grew by almost 38% compared with 2018 and reached the highest level since Frontex started collecting data on this indicator. In addition, high numbers of people smugglers continue to be detected inland. Secondary movements by sea also grew in 2019.

Beyond migration, the results of Frontex joint operations and EU joint action days as well as Member States' data for 2019 shed some light on the sizable extent of cross-border crime. Smuggling of firearms, drugs, stolen vehicles and other illicit goods, as well as people smuggling and trafficking in human beings is happening every day on the EU's external border. The complex character of cross-border crime threats necessitates a comprehensive operational response at the borders.

As in previous years, the number of effective returns in 2019 fell short of the return decisions issued by Member States. Around 139 000 migrants who were not granted refugee status or subsidiary protection were returned to their countries of origin, less than half (approximately 47%) the total number of return decisions issued in the same period. While the number of return decisions increased by around 5%, effective returns dropped 6% (both compared to 2018) to the lowest level since data has been collected on this indicator. This finding of course does not take into account the fact that many Third Country nationals receive multiple return decisions, and in many cases voluntary returns are not properly documented or reported. Southern Asian and Western Balkan citizens saw significant decreases (both in relative and absolute terms) in the number of effective returns, whereas there were considerably more returns to South America.

## Latest situation

2019 (2018) Reported cases 2019

(2 258) 2 550 Detections of illegal border-crossing at BCPs

(6 546) 5 697 Detections of fraudulent document users

(10 642) 10 989 Detections of facilitators

(147 815) 138 860 Returns (effective)

(149 117) 141 846 Detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs

(190 658) 212 097 Refusals of entry

(283 880) 298 190 Returns (decisions)

(367 266) 402 913 Detections of persons staying illegally





### 3. Introduction

The Frontex Risk Analysis for 2020 reports on all aspects relevant for European Integrated Border Management. For this reason, developments and threats to the security of the EU's external border and the Schengen area are analyzed. The aim is to limit the challenges and threats for border management by risk analysis and to ensure the functioning of the Schengen area.

Frontex's operational activities aim at strengthening border security by supporting Member States in their implementation of EU measures for the management of external borders.

The coordination of operational activities contributes to a more efficient allocation of Member States' resources as well as the better protection of freedom, security and justice. In this context, this Risk Analysis concentrates on the scope of Frontex's operational activities and, in particular, on irregular migration at the external borders of the EU and Schengen Associated Countries.

Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 significantly enhanced Frontex's mandate to ensure the efficient implementation of European Integrated Border Management as a shared responsibility of the Union, the Agency and national authorities of the Member States. More recently, Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 further reinforced the Agency's mandate and increased its competences.

European Integrated Border Management consists of 12 strategic components defined in Article 3 of the Agency's Regulation:

- Border control, including measures to detect and prevent cross-border crime at the external borders;
- Search and rescue operations;
- Analysis of risks for internal security;
- Information exchange and cooperation with and between Member States;
- Inter-agency cooperation;
- Cooperation among relevant Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies;

- Cooperation with third countries;
- Border control measures within the Schengen area;
- Return of third-country nationals;
- Use of state-of-the-art technology;
- Quality control mechanisms;
- Solidarity mechanisms.

These components, together with the three horizontal components – fundamental rights, education and training, research and innovation – collectively form also the basis for of the technical and operational strategy for European Integrated Border Management. The strategic and horizontal components are consequently applied onto the four-tier-access control model, which comprises measures in third countries, such as under the common visa policy, measures with neighbouring third countries, border control measures at the external borders, risk analysis and measures within the Schengen area and return.

In order to cover all aspects of Integrated Border Management, this annual report has been structured as follows: (1) the situational picture for the European Border and Coast Guard as regards irregular migration in accordance with the concept of Integrated Border Management; followed by (2) a description of other border management challenges impacting the workload of border guards caused by passenger flows, pandemics, terrorism and various forms of cross-border crime, (3) featured analyses on key risks affecting the security of the external borders and/or internal security; and finally (4) outlook for the year.

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



## 4. Methodology

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

This *Risk Analysis for 2020* is based upon the monthly statistics exchanged among Member States within the framework of the FRAN. For this, the key indicators collected through the FRAN were:

- detections of illegal border-crossings at green and blue borders and at BCPs;
- refusals of entry;
- detections of illegal stay;
- detections of facilitators;

- detections of fraudulent documents;
- return decisions;
- effective returns and passenger flow data (when available).

Concerning applications for international protection, in order to avoid double reporting, Frontex stopped collecting asylum data from MSs in July 2019 and since then only works with data collected by EASO.

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

and to rapidly sharing data among Member State border-control authorities.

Member States' data processed by Frontex are not treated as official statistics and thus may occasionally vary from those officially published by national authorities. Throughout 2019, some FRAN members made backdated changes to their 2018 statistics. These changes have been incorporated into this document, hence some data presented here may differ from those presented a year ago in the *Risk Analysis for 2019*.

Member States were not requested to answer specific questions in support of this analysis. Rather, bimonthly analytical reports and incident reports from Member States routinely collected within the FRAN, as well as other Member States' contributions submitted in 2019, were



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used, especially as regards the analysis of routes and *modi operandi*. Intelligence derived from debriefing activities carried out within Joint Operations was also essential analytical material.

Open-source information was also exploited, especially in identifying the main ‘push and pull factors’ for irregular migration to the EU. These sources included reports issued by government agencies, international and non-governmental organisations, as well as mainstream news agencies and EU bodies.

External borders, a term often used in this report, refer to the borders between Member States and third countries. The borders between the Schengen Associated Countries (Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland) and third countries are also considered as external borders. By contrast, the

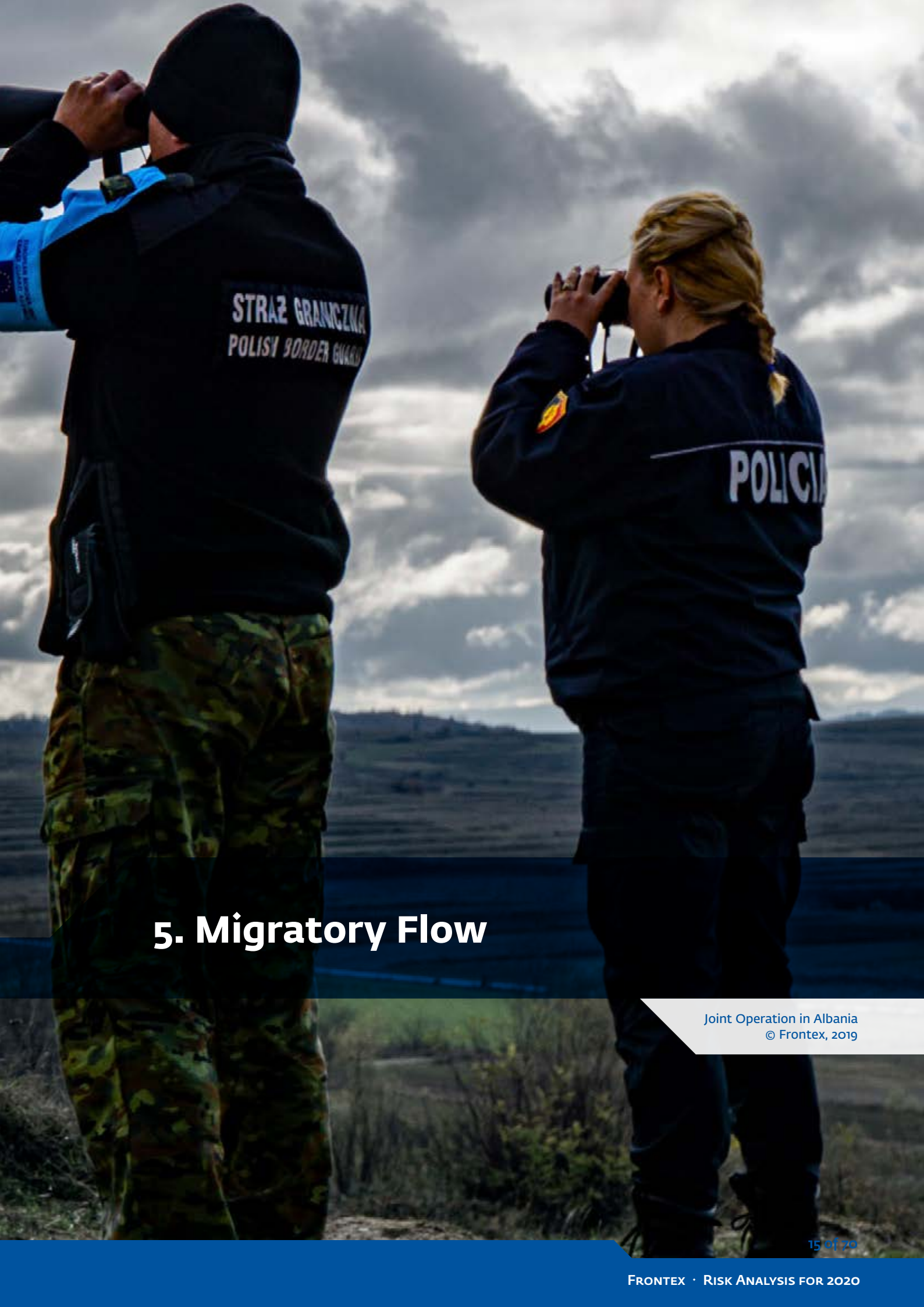
borders between the Schengen Associated Countries and Schengen Member States are considered as internal borders. Statistics on detections of facilitators and illegal stay and asylum are also reported at the land borders between Schengen Member States and Member States that have either not yet joined the Schengen area in full (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania) or have opted to stay out of it (the UK – a MS throughout 2019 – and Ireland). Thus, total figures for Member States and Schengen Associated Countries as a whole can be presented.

It was not possible to make the distinction for air and sea borders because Member States do not habitually differentiate between extra-EU and intra-EU air and sea connections, but tend to aggregate data for all arrivals per airport/

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

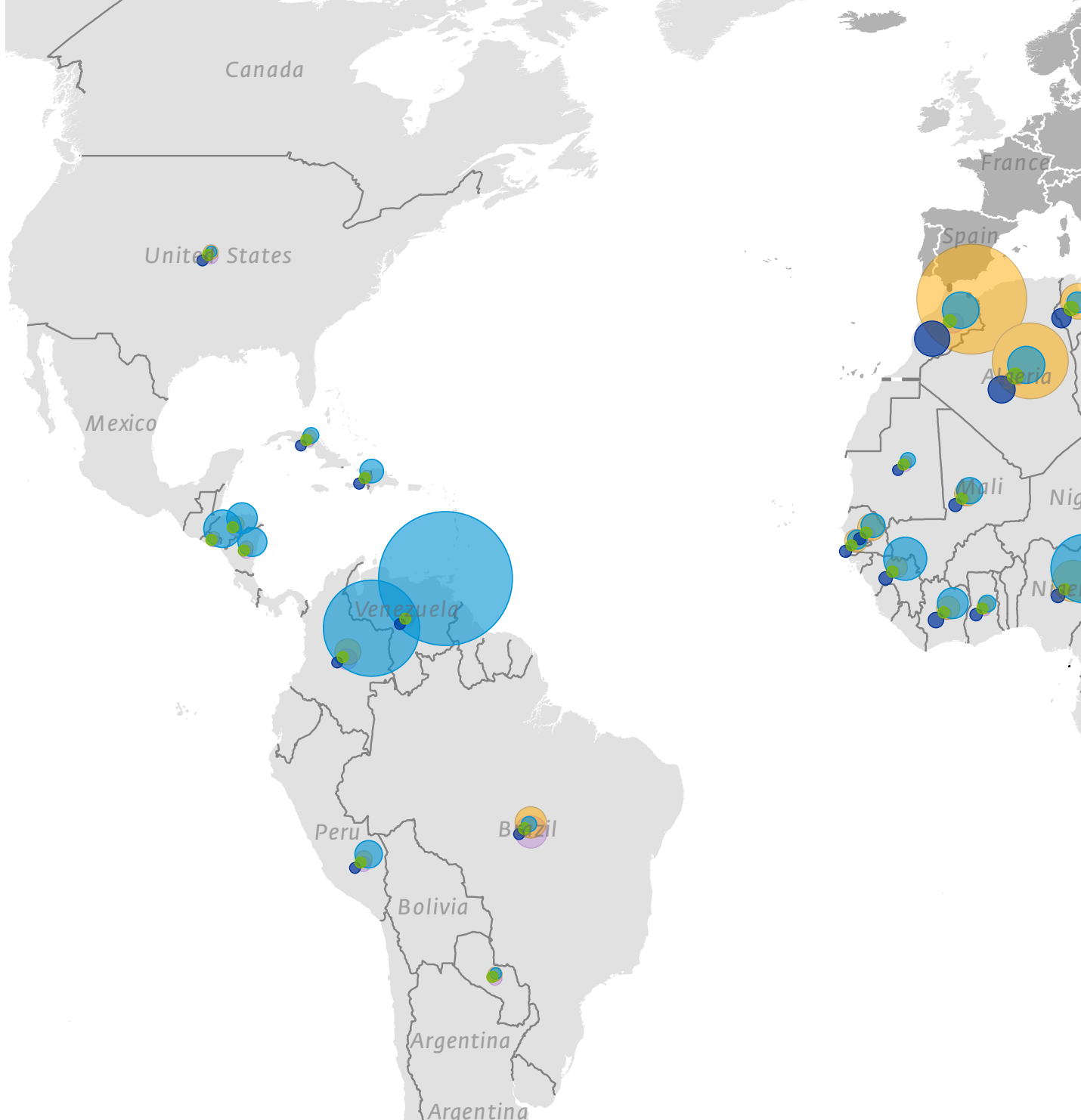






## 5. Migratory Flow

Joint Operation in Albania  
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### Destination EU – a globalised migration context

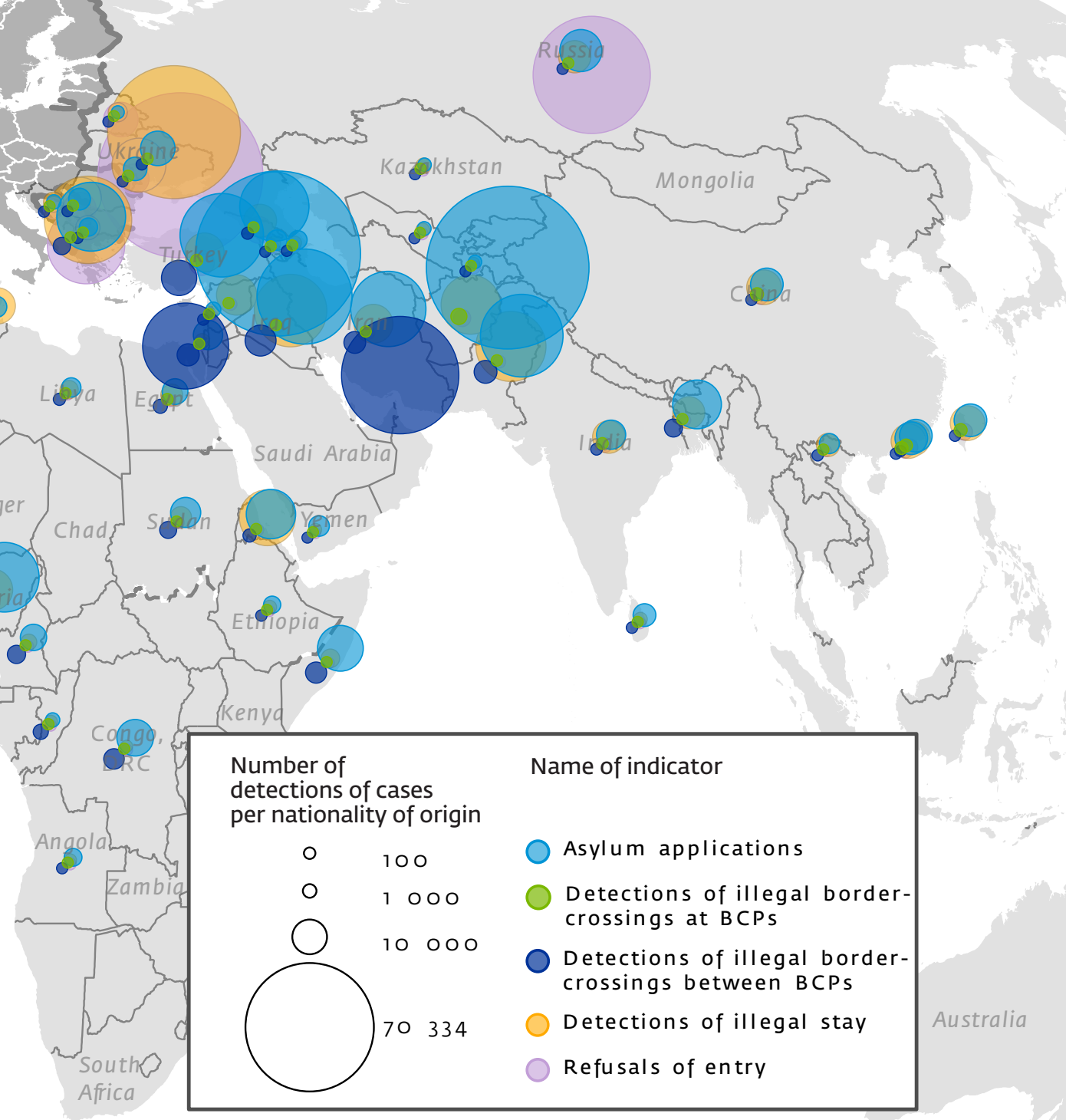
Beyond the EU’s external borders it is generally not state actors that organise migration, but individual migrants acting within parameters setting living conditions and a framework of security, stability and freedom. As the individuals’ decisions to migrate are often rational choices made with incomplete information (for those who do in fact have a choice), the perception of costs and benefits are weighed. How these perceptions are formed is an intricate process, and the information gained from, for example, personal networks and select media differs widely between individuals.

While there have been information campaigns to dissuade economic migrants, they are limited in scope. However, potential migrants are continuously exposed to media which show them how desirable a future in Europe may be. State actors also set the parameters of migration by influencing conditions in the countries of origin – among them economic opportunities, individual liberties and religious freedoms.

The legal framework for migration is another important factor migrants have to consider when intending to leave a country of origin and to enter an EU Member State or Schengen-Associated Country. Once the decision to migrate has been taken, however, border management

in both the country of origin and potentially in transit countries comes into play, shaping the concrete opportunities to migrate and crucially the costs with their efforts to control migration (inevitably leaving loopholes), counter irregular migratory movements or fight people smuggling networks. The capacity of border management is of importance for the migration process, impacting the means of irregular movements.

Judging from the number of migrants who made asylum applications, attempted illegal border-crossings, stayed in the EU illegally or were refused entry in 2019, the European Union continues to be a desirable destination for migrants. More than 180 nationalities



were recorded under the above indicators in 2019, clearly indicating the global extent of migratory pressure towards the EU (see the above map). On the other hand a glance at the map also highlights the importance of partnerships with key non-EU countries.

Migratory movements towards the EU regularly occur, far removed from the well-publicised rubber dinghies in the Mediterranean. Firstly, more than 700 million legal travellers enter and leave the EU every year. Demand for short-term visas remains very strong; for example, just over 16 million applications for short-stay visas were lodged at the consulates of Schengen States in 2018.

Secondly, migration based on family reunification continues to be important. According to an EMN Focused Study from 2016, family reunification was the reason behind more than 30% of new arrivals in 21 Member States, even exceeding 50% in some Member States (BEL, GRC, ESP, HRV, LUX and SVN).

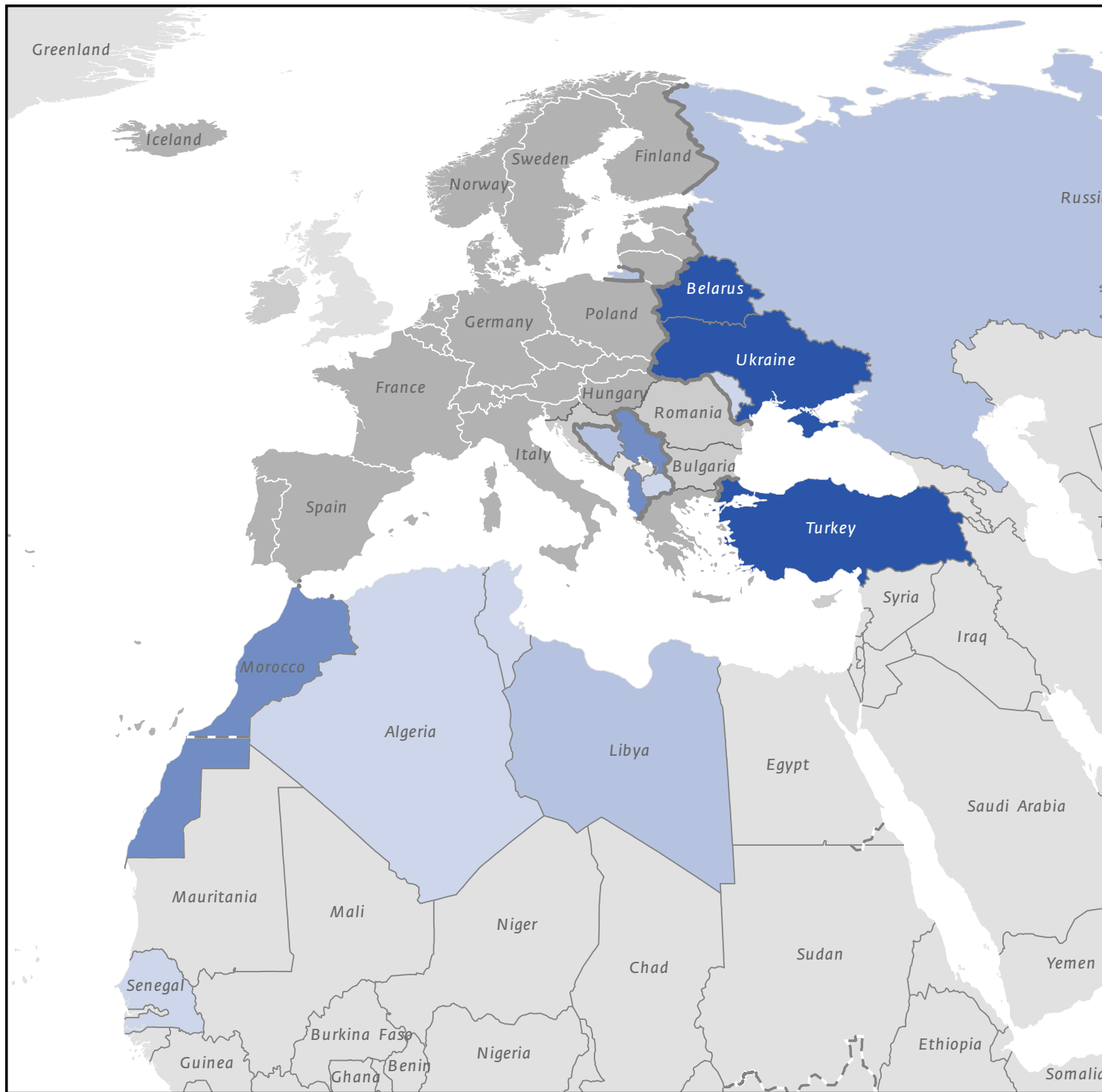
Moreover, several studies<sup>1</sup> and Frontex empirical data (based on debriefing interviews) clearly suggest that one of the biggest drivers of migration towards the EU is the presence of a diaspora in the

destination Member States. This is true for both regular and irregular immigration.

Thirdly, the existence of a smuggling infrastructure in key transit regions (e.g. transport, lodging, fraudulent documents etc.) and access to irregular legalisation options once in the EU (e.g. misuse of asylum provisions, identity fraud) contribute to the appeal of migration towards the EU.

Lastly, the EU is located relatively close to several crisis areas in the Middle East and North Africa, where large pools of potential/would-be migrants are located (e.g. Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan). Likewise, the lack of economic opportunities in the countries of origin (Africa, Asia and Latin America), and demographic pressures drive movements towards the EU.

<sup>1</sup> For example “International Migration Drivers. A quantitative assessment of the structural factors shaping migration” JRC, 2018



### Key neighbouring and transit regions

In the context of the external dimension of European integrated border management (EIBM), cooperating with the key transit countries is a very effective tool. In the past and currently, migration flows were addressed in multi- or bilateral agreements, including prominent

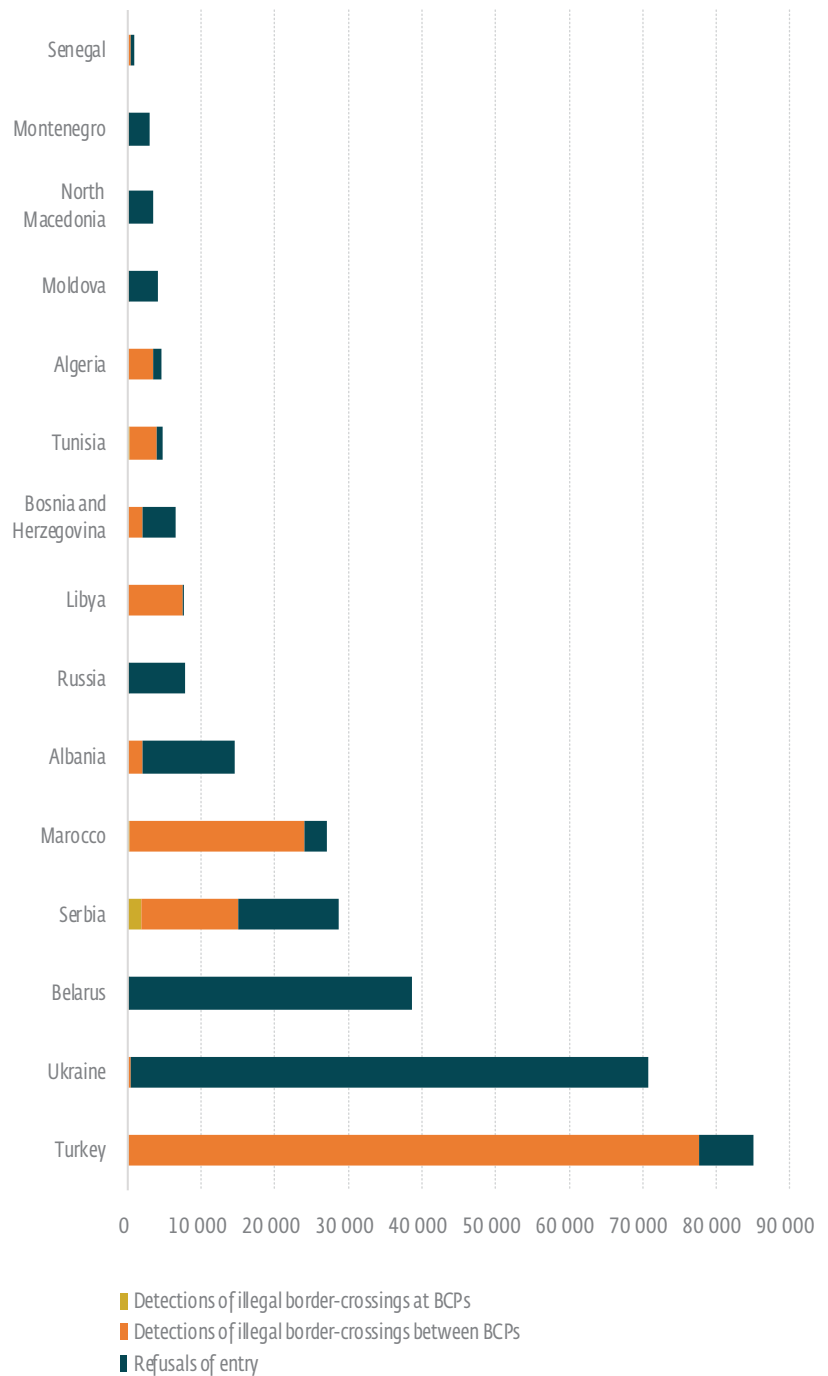
cooperation agreements such as the one between Spain and Morocco, the EU-Turkey Statement and – as happened during the 2015/16 migration crisis – agreements between several EU Member States and Western Balkan countries. While some agreements may be regarded as more sustainable than others, their results support the conclusion that multi- or bilateral agreements can alleviate migratory

pressure on select border sections with almost immediate effect.

Frontex data suggest that there are roughly a dozen non-EU countries through which the vast majority of irregular migrants pass before being detected at the external borders of the EU. Working closely with these countries is therefore a key element of the European integrated border management strategy.



### Key Neighboring Transit Countries



The Agency's assessment also suggests that any perceived or actual deficiency of border and migration management systems and their components in these transit regions can result in much higher pressure towards the EU.

On the other hand, effective collaboration that merely prevents migrants from entering the EU may well in the short term mean a rise in the numbers

of migrants in neighbouring third countries, as few migrants are initially dissuaded from their goal of reaching the EU. In the longer run, however, if these efforts are sustained, migrant numbers may dwindle as migrants make use of return schemes and fewer people leave their countries of origin as the word gets round of reduced chances of success. Truly sustainable collaboration, however, goes far

beyond just the symptoms, and involves also fighting the organised crime networks that enable migrant flows, building border management capacity and facilitating information exchange. Beyond the realm of border guarding, also cooperating in the development of countries of origin is necessary to tackle the root causes of migration.



## The Western Balkans and Turkey

Turkey will remain the key country along the **Eastern Mediterranean** route. As of 2019, Turkey's Ministry of Interior estimated around 4.9 million migrants to be present in Turkey. Over 3.6 million of them are Syrians. Between 1 January and 30 November 2019, Turkey reportedly prevented roughly 84 000 seaborne, and over 41 000 land-borne departures of migrants towards the EU. A rising trend was observed, especially from July onwards. Border surveillance in the Aegean from both the Greek and Turkish side is crucial to detect vessels in distress and to avoid non-intercepted arrivals on the Greek islands. The size, composition and location of migration flows across Turkey and on the Eastern Mediterranean are determined by multiple factors, including:

- border and migration enforcement measures taken by Turkish Security Services within Turkey;

- the situation in Syria;
- instability in Afghanistan;
- the economic situation in the Middle East and South Asia;
- changes in migrant workers' access to Saudi Arabia or changes in migrants' perceptions related to the accessibility of the Western Balkans.

Migration in the **Western Balkan** region will continue to be influenced, to a large extent, by the size of the flows along the Eastern Mediterranean route.<sup>1</sup> If readmissions under the EU-Turkey statement remain low, this will lead to a further overcrowding of the reception facilities on the Aegean islands<sup>2</sup>, prompting

- 1 Over 50 000 migrants reached Greece by sea, and 8 000 by land (cut-off date: 30 November), while Turkey prevented over 100 000 departures in the same period.
- 2 Over 39 000 migrants on the islands as of 3 December 2019, surpassing the reception capacity by a factor of three.

subsequent transfers to the mainland<sup>3</sup> with knock-on effects in the Western Balkans.

Migrants already in the region, together with those expected to arrive from the south, will continue to exert pressure on the borders of Croatia, Hungary and Romania. It is likely that they will apply the "mass movement" modus operandi to force their way across regional borders.

Finally, the availability of and conditions in reception centres, the promise of more favourable living conditions elsewhere, and access to smuggling services will determine most intra-regional movements as well as pressure on the region's northern borders.<sup>4</sup>

- 3 Over 32 000 up to 30 November 2019.
- 4 Migrants use reception facilities for shelter, they abscond, try to cross borders, and if they fail they return.



Frontex Situation Centre  
© Frontex, 2019

## North Africa, the Maghreb and West Africa

The stability of Libya and the Libyan Coast Guard's operations in its assigned SAR area will continue to be key determiners of flows across the Central Mediterranean. Likewise, the presence of naval assets, including NGO vessels, in the proximity of Libya's territorial waters and their access to EU ports will also play a vital role.

North Africa is also likely to generate a new stock of migrants that will be willing to travel to the EU using all available means. This will be largely driven by the poor economic prospects for the entire region. Several countries in the region need to re-examine their development model and speed up necessary structural reforms.

Morocco, Senegal and Mauritania will remain key partners for the EU and its

Member States in these regions. In fact, they all have already demonstrated their willingness to jointly tackle the issue of irregular migratory flows that mostly affect Spain (the Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla and the Strait of Gibraltar).

Morocco detected more than 27 000 irregular migrants and dismantled more than 60 smuggling networks in 2019. The General Directorate for National Security (DGSN) also reported the discovery of roughly 3 000 fraudulent travel or identity documents.

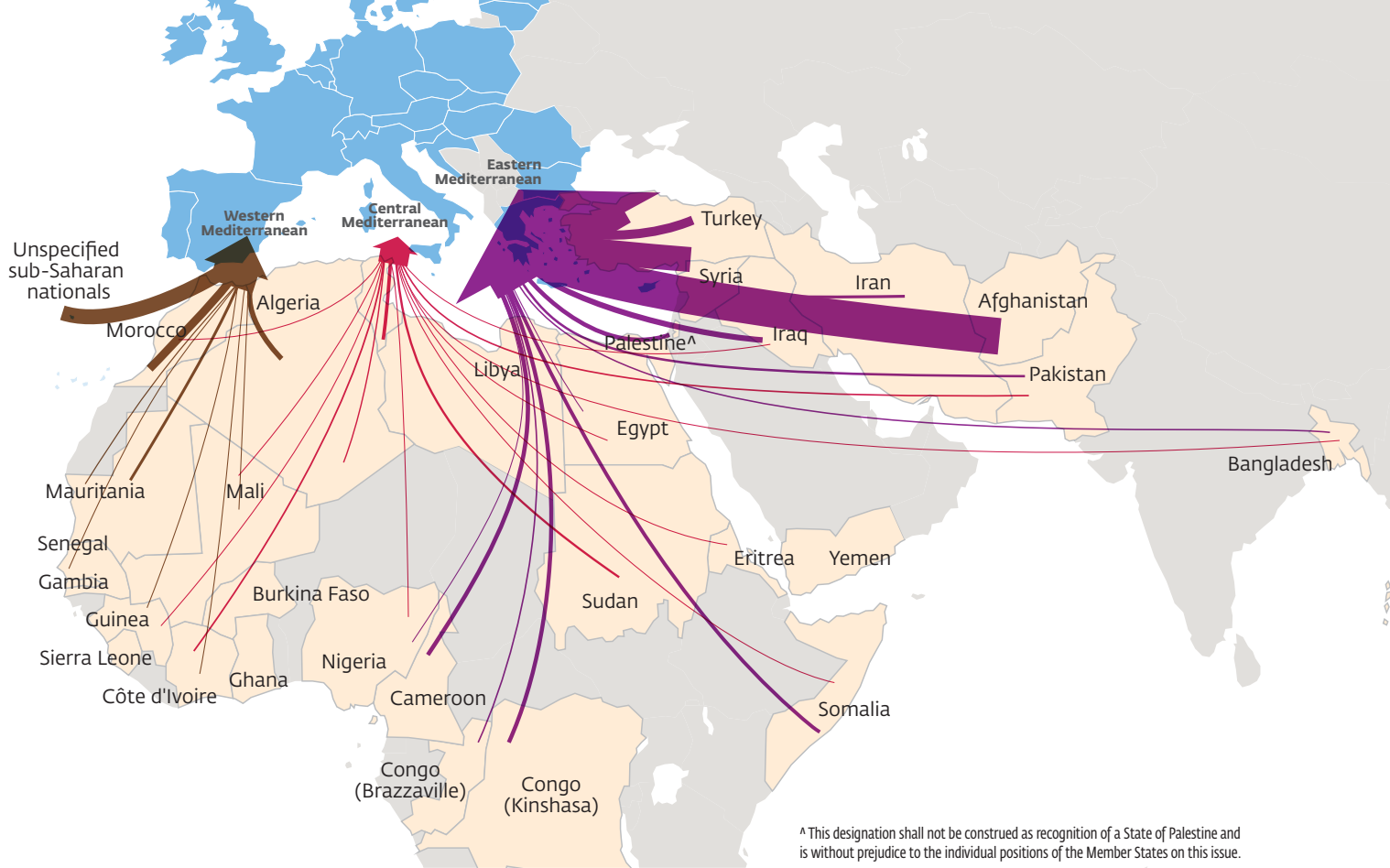
## The Eastern European neighbouring region

Smuggling of excise goods and illicit drugs as well as trafficking in leased/rental vehicles will remain the most significant threats to border security on the EU's eastern land borders.

The smuggling of illicit drugs (mainly hashish from the EU and heroin to the EU)<sup>5</sup> on the EU's eastern external borders is likely to continue increasing in the foreseeable future as smugglers develop more sophisticated *modi operandi*.

Ukraine is likely to be increasingly attractive as a transit country for nationalities that enjoy visa-free travel to Ukraine (e.g. Turkish nationals). Furthermore, the visa-free policy for Turkish citizens in Ukraine is likely to generate more demand for fraudulent Turkish documents from the various migrant communities in Turkey or its neighbourhood (e.g. Iranians).

5 Heroin going from Central Asia to Germany via Russia, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. The information was shared by Belarus during a meeting in December 2019.



## 5.1. Situational Overview

Data reported by Member States indicate a total of 141 846 detections of illegal border-crossing along the EU’s external borders in 2019, which represents a 4.9% decrease compared with the number of detections recorded in 2018 (and a 92% decrease compared with the 1.8 million detections at the height of the migration crisis in 2015). Looking a little further into historical data, the number of illegal border-crossings in 2019 fell to its lowest level since 2013. A decrease in migrant numbers of less than 5% compared with 2018 signifies that the rate of the decrease slowed down significantly in 2019.

Even though arrival figures decreased in 2019 for the fourth year in a row, it is instructive to go back further in the data collection: for instance, the number of detections in 2019 is roughly comparable to the figure for 2011, when strong migratory pressure was exerted on the EU’s south-eastern land borders and also in the Central Mediterranean.

The 2019 decrease occurred primarily due to fewer detections on the Western and Central Mediterranean routes, a result primarily of determined prevention efforts by Northern African countries. On the other hand 2019 saw continuously

mounting migratory pressure on the Eastern Mediterranean route and the corresponding pressure in the Western Balkans.

Irregular migration to Europe in 2019 did not deviate from well-known patterns along the established routes. More than two-thirds of all illegal border-crossing detections at the EU’s external borders in 2019 were again made at sea in the Mediterranean, along familiar migration corridors. The three main routes - crossing the Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean - are indicated above, along with the relative flows from the main countries of origin. According to the collective findings from EU and MS law enforcement authorities involved, migrants on the Mediterranean routes are primarily smuggled on rubber boats, toy boats, or small fishing boats, with very basic life-saving and rescue equipment.

It has become more common for boats to reach the EU without the presence of a smuggler. The vast majority of migrant smugglers run their illegal business from the last country of departure to the EU, with connections in source, transit and destination countries.

The number of detections of illegal border-crossing in 2019 indicates a slight

growth in the share of women and child migrants compared with 2018.

In 2019, in line with the intense migratory pressure on the Eastern Mediterranean route and related to the heightened pressure on the Western Balkan route, migrants from the Middle East and Southern Asia represented a larger share of all detected illegal border-crossings. In fact, these two regions accounted for over half (around 87 500 arrivals or 62%) of all registered irregular arrivals in the EU in 2019. Of this subset, the respective main countries of origin, Afghanistan and Syria, accounted for roughly 41% of the registered illegal border-crossings.

The largest decrease in absolute numbers of irregular arrivals (a decrease of almost 31 000 compared with 2018) was from Africa, specifically from western and northern Africa, although in the former case the exact magnitude is unclear due to the categorisation of many migrants from West Africa as ‘unspecified sub-Saharan nationals’. The total number of African migrants who used the Eastern Mediterranean route increased however, in contrast to the steep decreases on both the Western and Central Mediterranean routes.





Operation Poseidon  
© Frontex, 2019

The Eastern Mediterranean route saw the highest total in detected illegal border-crossings since 2016. Compared with 2018, almost 27 000 more migrants on this route were reported by Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria. Geographically, the migratory pressure in 2019 focused on the Eastern Aegean Sea and on Cyprus.

The pressure on the Greek and Bulgarian land borders with Turkey markedly eased in 2019. In fact, reported detections there fell by almost half compared with 2018. Turkish migrants in 2019 made up an even larger share of these arrivals than in 2018.

In the Eastern Aegean on the other hand, migratory pressure rose in the spring and peaked in September, when arrivals started falling chiefly due to weather conditions. In the second half of the year, arrivals were the highest since the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement despite the Turkish Coast Guard's continued resolve to prevent irregular migrant departures. Migrant smugglers satisfied the increased demand, in particular from Afghan and Syrian migrants, by adapting their *modi operandi* and using simultaneous departures. Push factors throughout many key

countries of origin and long-term host countries throughout Southern Asia and the Middle East intensified as the year progressed and materialised in migratory pressure on the Eastern Mediterranean route. Around half of all migrants on this route were rescued in search and rescue operations.

Cyprus in 2019 experienced a further increase in migrant arrivals, in fact since 2013 reported detections by Cyprus have been continuously increasing, although exponentially since 2016. Compared to 2017, the number almost tripled in 2019. More pertinently, EASO reports that Cyprus was by far the leading country in terms of asylum applications relative to population size (150 applications per 10 000 inhabitants). It ranked second in terms of applications relative to the country's geographic size.

On the Eastern Mediterranean route in 2019 the increase in Afghans stood out, with their numbers increasing by 167% (in absolute numbers an increase of roughly 18 000 migrants). Of this demographic, the share of women increased, with their numbers almost tripling: Over 11 000 Afghan women arrived, often with their families. Many of these

Afghan families arriving in Greece had departed from Afghanistan or Iran. But apart from Asia, some African countries also had significantly more migrants arrive on the Eastern Mediterranean route, in particular from Congo (Kinshasa), Somalia, Cameroon and Congo (Brazzaville). From all of these countries significantly more women arrived (from Cameroon only slightly). Over 2 600 unaccompanied minors were reported to Frontex on this route in 2019.

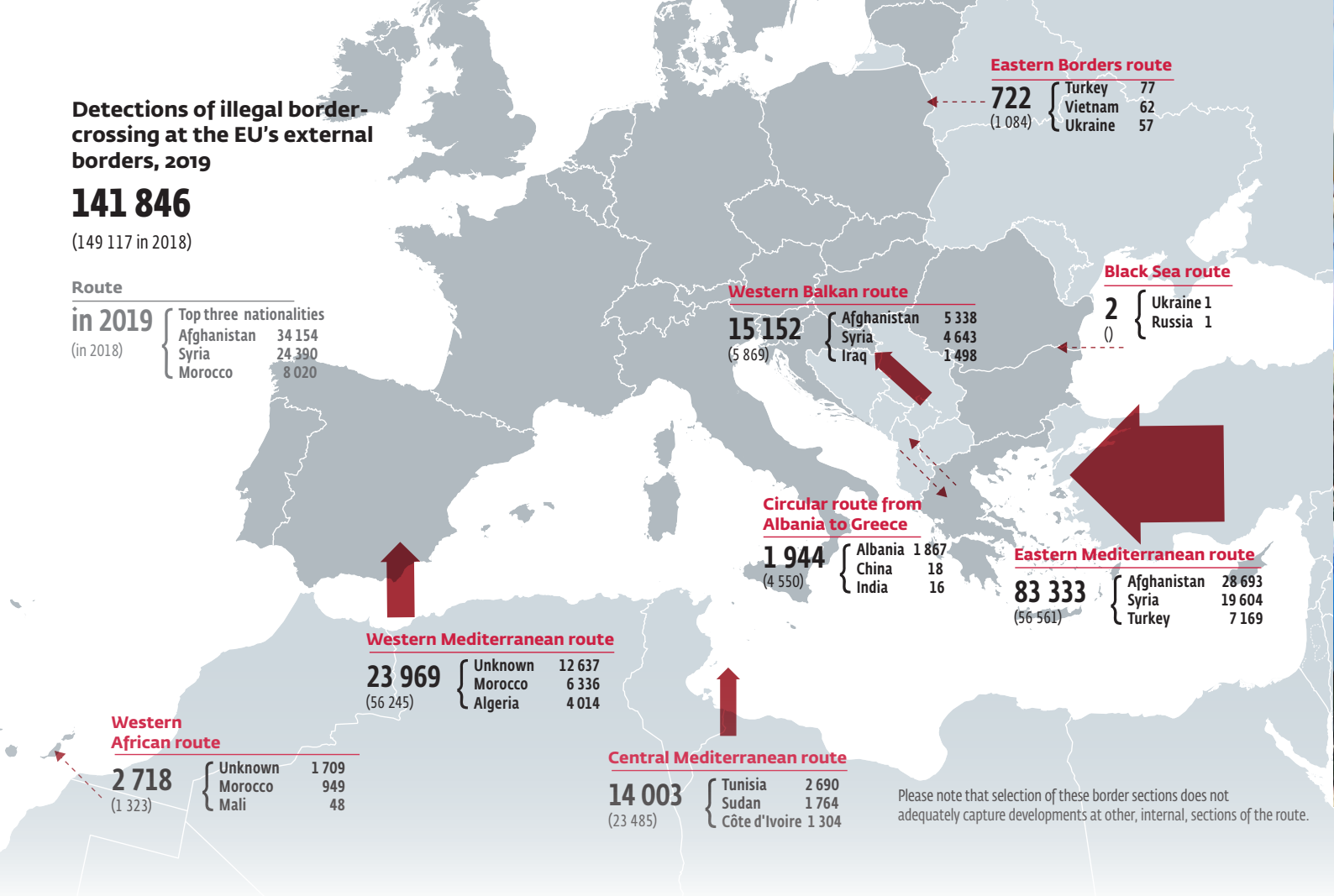
## Detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU's external borders, 2019

# 141 846

(149 117 in 2018)

### Route

in 2019		Top three nationalities	
(in 2018)			
		Afghanistan	34 154
		Syria	24 390
		Morocco	8 020



The Western Balkan migration route also saw increased migratory activity in 2019 compared with 2018, in particular due to the increased number of illegal border-crossings towards the end of the year, many of them purportedly repeated attempts by the same migrants. In fact, almost half of all detections on this route were recorded in the last quarter of the year. In the latter part of the year pressure focused on the EU's borders with Serbia. Throughout the year, the land borders to this region recorded slightly fewer refusals of entry.

The Western Balkan route continues to be mostly transited by irregular migrants trying to reach Western Europe from Turkey. This continues to be a testing route avoided by families, as the large share of young male migrants suggests. 94% of all migrants detected at the EU's borders on entry from the region in 2019 were male. Both corridors through the region saw activity throughout the year, the central route via Serbia and the route from the Greek-Albanian border. The western corridor into Albania reported mounting detections after the start of Frontex's joint operation in May. Migratory pressure was projected northward from each

of the corridors, along the Bosnian and Herzegovinian-Croatian-Slovenian corridor and on Serbia's border with Hungary, Croatia and Romania. Slovenia felt much of the pressure emanating from the region throughout 2019.

According to Europol, most migrant smuggling cases in 2019 concerned the Western Balkan region. The most common *modus operandi* here was clandestine entry using often life-threatening means of concealment in various types of vehicles. Migrant smugglers often used different kinds of vehicles to transport irregular migrants in the region, in particular cars, (mini-)vans, and trucks. Concealment methods ranged from simply hiding irregular migrants in the cargo space of a van or boot of a car to constructing furniture around irregular migrants and sophisticated custom-built compartments. Frontex data indeed show that the majority of reported clandestine entries at the EU's external borders took place in this region, almost exclusively by male migrants aged 18 to 34. The number of migrant smugglers detected at the borders to this region reported to Frontex fell, most likely suggesting the increased sophistication of people

smuggling networks rather than a decrease in smuggling activities. For those migrants who cannot afford the smugglers the sharing and use of offline maps with detailed information on the routes is a commonly used *modus operandi*. Those who reach their final destinations share maps of their journey with other migrants. These maps show the safest places to cross the border as well as good hiding places. In 2019 tunnels were found at the southern EU border to the region.

The top nationalities detected transiting the region were largely similar to those reported on the Eastern Mediterranean route. A third of all migrant detections concerned Afghan citizens, closely followed by Syrians. Iraqis, Iranians, Turkish nationals complete the list of the five most common nationalities using this route.

On the circular route from Albania southwards, detections decreased significantly, by 57% compared with 2018 to their lowest level since FRAN data collection commenced in 2009. It is believed that these cross-border movements continue to reflect seasonal labour migration. 96% of all cases are attributed to Albanians, supporting this assessment.



© Frontex, 2018

The Central Mediterranean in 2019 recorded its lowest yearly number of irregular migrants since before the Arab Spring. A 40% decrease in migrants compared with 2018 denotes the third year in a row of reduced arrivals in this region. Irregular migratory activity was very low at the beginning of 2019, but it then picked up in the summer and in particular in the autumn.

As regards departures from Libya, which in 2019 was the country of last departure for well over half of the migrants who reached the EU on this route, prevention activities by the Libyan Coast Guard kept departures down throughout the year, and thus also arrivals in the EU. The conflict in Libya, which intensified as the year progressed, did not appear to affect the coast guard's activities. Including arrivals and prevented departures as well as those rescued by the Libyan Coast Guard, an estimated 17 000 migrants attempted to reach the EU by sea in 2019. Of the main nationalities departing from Libya, Eritreans – in 2018 the most common nationality on this route – saw the largest relative and absolute decrease. Sudanese, Bangladeshi and Ivorian migrants were more

numerous than Eritreans on this corridor in 2019. Almost 1 500 unaccompanied minors were registered amongst those who had departed from Libya, almost four times as many as those who were accompanied by family members.

All other migratory corridors in the Central Mediterranean (i.e. departures from Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey) also reported decreased activities compared to 2018. Tunisia was the main country of departure for migrants detected on the Central Mediterranean route in February, April and September. Almost 600 unaccompanied minors were reported on this corridor, which represents the majority of all registered minors (around 750). As the year progressed, the share of non-Tunisian migrants departing from Tunisia increased. In 2018 a mere 9% were non-Tunisian, whereas in 2019 their share increased to 28%, led by Ivorians. In fact, Ivorians accounted for more than half of all the non-Tunisian nationals on this route. Departures from the east of Algeria on the other hand continued to be made up almost entirely of Algerian nationals.

A *modus operandi* that continued throughout 2019 was the use of sailing boats travelling from Turkey to Italy,

either directly or via Greece. The average number of migrants per vessel in 2019 was 55 from Turkey to Italy, while via Greece the average was 24 migrants per vessel. Frontex estimates that secondary movements by sea from Greece to Italy generate particularly high profits per smuggled migrant for people smuggling groups. Pakistani, Iraqi and Iranian migrants made up the vast majority of all migrants who used this relatively expensive option (there are instances where migrants have purportedly paid up to EUR 10 000 for the journey) to reach the EU from Turkey. In 2019, 300 unaccompanied minors were reported aboard leisure boats arriving in Italy from Turkey, which represents an increase compared to 2018.



© Frontex, 2018

On the Western Mediterranean route, a 57% decrease in arrivals compared to the peak year of 2018 was reported. While in 2018 an increase in migrants from different Asian countries, mostly from Bangladesh, was recorded, 2019 saw their share drop (from 1.3% in 2018 to 0.8% in 2019). While the number of Moroccans decreased in line with the overall flow in comparison with 2018, Algerian migrants increased their share as their number only fell slightly, a decrease solely due to slightly fewer departures from Morocco (the number that departed from their country of origin remained virtually unchanged).

After January 2019, departures from Morocco on the Western Mediterranean sea route decreased significantly (by 57% for the entire year compared with 2018). After very quiet months in the spring, in the summer and autumn the numbers recovered somewhat. According to Europol, in 2019 there was an increase in cases involving jet skis and speedboats, traditionally used for drug trafficking, for people smuggling on this corridor.

At the land borders significantly fewer (-71%) incidents were reported in 2019, almost exclusively involving sub-Saharan migrants. Clandestine entry attempts at border-crossing points also fell to less than half the number in 2018. Refusals of entry at the land borders fell as well.

Migration pressure on the Algerian corridor pertaining to the Western Mediterranean route rose in the autumn, as in previous years. Overall the number of detections remained similar to the previous two years.

According to Europol, in this region it has become more common for boats to reach the EU without the presence of a smuggler on board. In some cases, people smugglers escort the boat loaded with irregular migrants only for the first part of the sea crossing, leaving irregular migrants on their own to sail towards the EU. OCGs active on the Western Mediterranean route are particularly known for their poly-criminality, often being involved in other criminal activities, such as trafficking in human beings and drug trafficking. A newly discovered *modus operandi* in 2019 was the facilitation of

irregular migration in semitrailers, which are loaded onto ferries connecting Tangier (Morocco) with Barcelona (Spain) and Savona (Italy).

The Western African route in 2019 recorded roughly twice the number of detections compared with 2018 making it – with approximately 2 700 migrants – the busiest year for this route in a decade. While departures from Senegal only increased slightly, departures from Morocco more than doubled. This increase was made up of sub-Saharan migrants, while the number of Moroccan migrants en route to the Canary Islands only slightly increased.

## Refusals of entry per border type, 2019

(only values higher than 1 000 are stipulated)

**145 494** (131 641)

Number in parenthesis is for 2018

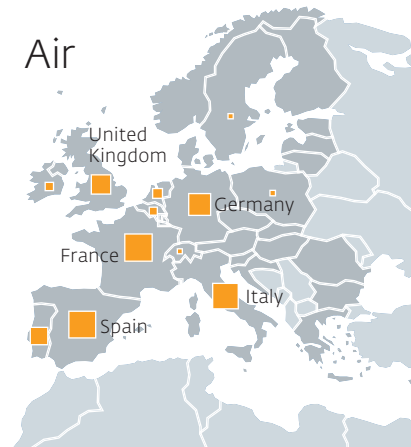
Land



**62 498** (54 952)

Number in parenthesis is for 2018

Air



**4 100** (4 037)

Number in parenthesis is for 2018

Sea



### Trend of the total



On the Eastern borders route, the number of illegal border-crossings decreased with figures falling to their lowest level since the inception of FRAN data collection. The 722 reported illegal border-crossings signify a drop by approximately one-third compared with 2018. Vietnamese migrants, the foremost migrant group detected over the past few years at the Eastern borders, dropped to a mere 62 migrant arrivals in 2019, a drop of 83% compared with 2018. Successes in dismantling organised crime groups – often specialising in smuggling select nationalities – are likely behind the drop in detections. Clandestine entry attempts at border-crossing points were once again not a major occurrence, with a mere 13 cases for the entire year.

Due to the decrease in Vietnamese arrivals at the Eastern borders, Turkish migrants became the most common nationality detected for illegal border-crossing. Two neighbouring countries have over the last two years adopted visa-free agreements with Turkey. Some Turkish nationals have used this new opportunity of visa-free traveling and abused it.

Most likely the resulting trend to transit via the two countries in question would have been more accentuated, but there was also a significant rise in the number of refusals of entry issued to Turkish nationals by these two countries. This shows that many more were barred from transiting there.

In general, refusals of entry at the Eastern borders increased even further in 2019: Almost 114 000 refusals were issued at the Eastern land borders, 21% (or in absolute terms almost 20 000) more than in 2018. Of the main reasons associated with the significant number of refusals issued, the only reason that saw a decrease was no sufficient means of subsistence in relation to the period and form of stay or the means to return to the country of origin or transit. More than half of these refusals (and 45% of all refusals at all land borders) were issued to Ukrainians, mostly because they were not able to provide justification for their stay. With over 11 000 additional cases, Ukrainians were behind much of the aforementioned increase. Russians received almost 9 000 additional refusals vis-à-vis 2018,

being responsible for an additional major share of the overall increase. With approximately 7 500 refusals, Belarusians were the third-most common refused nationality at the Eastern land borders. For Russians and Belarusians the most reported reason for refusal was that the concerned individual was not in possession of a valid visa.

Detections of illegal stay on exit also increased slightly at the Eastern borders to approximately 28 500 cases. Ukrainians, who stayed beyond the permitted period, were responsible for the vast majority of cases.



Joint Operation Flexible Operational Activities - Western Balkans 2019 in Albania  
© Frontex, 2019

## 5.2. Fraudulent Documents

### External borders

In 2019, over 7 000 fraudulent document users were detected at the EU's external borders (entry/exit/transit), 5% fewer than in 2018.

Of this total number, some 5 700 detections were made on entry to the EU/Schengen area from third countries, which is a 13% decrease in comparison with 2018. The most significant decrease was reported by Poland and Hungary and the 40% decrease reported by Spain at the external EU borders. The latter related to migrants from Morocco, while the former related mostly to Ukrainian nationals arriving on fraudulent travel documents from Ukraine.

The most significant increase involves Turks, Albanians, and nationals of Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. Of these nationalities, Kosovars re-

corded the most marked intensification compared with 2018. As in 2018, the political situation in Turkey continues to be the main 'push factor' for the increasing number of Turkish citizens successfully reaching EU countries.

At EU level, of the 133 nationalities detected using fraudulent documents to illegally enter the EU/SACs from a third country, the most commonly recognised were unchanged compared with 2018. Nonetheless, the number of detected Ukrainian, Iraqi and Russian fraudulent document users decreased dramatically in 2019.

As in previous years, most detections of fraudulent documents were reported on air routes. Indeed, seven out of ten detections affect this border type. The number of document fraud cases from Morocco's Casablanca airport increased by 114% in 2019 compared with 2018. Consequently, Casablanca airport became the top departure airport for detections of fraudulent documents from third countries.

The Italian airports were the most affected by this increase in detections inbound from Casablanca. A large majority of detected fraudulent document users identified in Italy arriving from Casablanca are from sub-Saharan countries, e.g. Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal and Guinea.

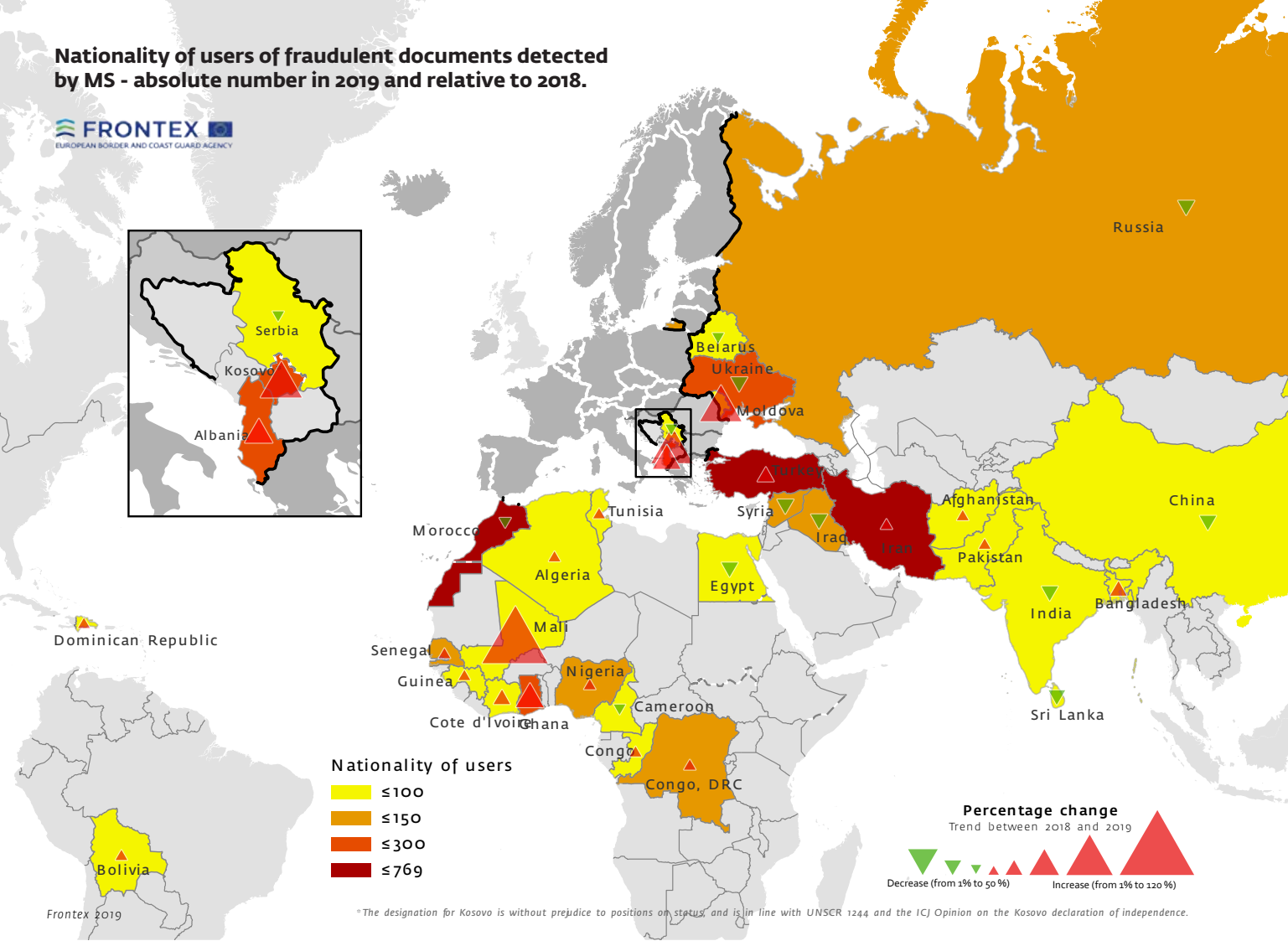
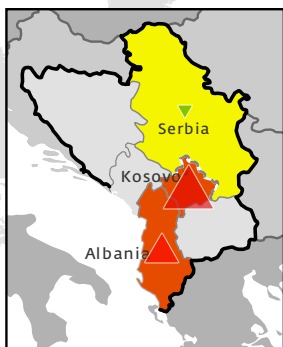
The second most reported last departure airport in 2019 was the new international "Yeni Havalimani" airport in Istanbul.

An increase in detection of fraudulent documents was also noticed on flights arriving from Brazil, Tunisia and the Emirates.

Many cases related to migrants transiting the EU from one third country to another were reported from European Union and Schengen Associated Countries airports, where especially African nationals in transit were pretending to travel to different destinations outside Europe. Instead they applied for asylum at the transit airport.

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

## Nationality of users of fraudulent documents detected by MS - absolute number in 2019 and relative to 2018.



Frontex 2019

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

As in 2018, in 2019 the border between Hungary and Serbia bore the brunt of document fraud cases, mainly involving nationals from the Western Balkan region. The number of Kosovar fraudulent document users doubled compared to the previous year.

At the land borders, the most evident increase was in the use of fraudulent Turkish, Serbian and Romanian documents.

There was a dramatic decrease in the number of reported detections at various Eastern land borders with Russia and Belarus.

At the external sea borders, no significant change was observed in comparison with previous years regarding entries from third countries.

### Intra EU/Schengen movements

In contrast with the fall in detections of fraudulent documents on entry from third countries, on secondary movements inside the EU/Schengen area, the number

of detections increased in 2019 for the third year in a row. The reported figures increased by almost 33% compared with 2018 and reached their highest level ever.

The unceasing increase in demand from within the EU for fraudulent documents has prompted established counterfeiters to find new supply channels. There is now the opportunity to buy counterfeit or stolen travel and other identification documents on the web and the dark web. The documents offered on the internet are frequently stolen by organised gangs.

A dramatic increase in the number of attempts to reach Ireland using fraudulent documents was registered in 2019.

The number of detections on journeys to Ireland has more than doubled, making it the most popular route for irregular migrants using fraudulent documents.

Several Greek airports saw a noticeable increase in the number of attempts to travel within the EU/Schengen area using fraudulent documents. Many Italian airports also described similar increases.

In the context of the general development, Italian documents continue to be the favourites used by fraudulent document users on secondary movements. Albanians, who registered another dramatic increase in the number of detections, prefer to use these documents when travelling illegally to Ireland or the United Kingdom.

At sea borders, the most noticeable increase in fraudulent document detection was on the main routes from Greece with a registered increase in the number of Turkish, Syrian and Afghan nationals detected.

## 5.3. An integrated asylum-migration picture by EASO, Europol and Frontex

The Schengen area is one of the most important achievements of the European Union. The abolition of internal borders allows EU citizens and many non-EU nationals, tourists and professionals to move freely among 26 countries without being subject to passport or border controls. Yet, while providing countless benefits to genuine travellers, freedom of movement also facilitates less legitimate movements and the activities of ill-intentioned people who are able to enter the Schengen Area. This means that strengthening the EU's external borders and the effective implementation of the Common European Asylum System are essential elements in delivering internal security to European citizens and ensuring that those within the free-movement area can fully enjoy its benefits.

2015 and 2016 were exceptional for the European Union and the Schengen Associated Countries (EU/SACs). During this period an unprecedented number of third-country nationals crossed the EU's external (land and sea) borders either in need of protection or searching for better opportunities within the EU/SAC area. The number of arrivals have since decreased, but the situation at the external borders and within the Schengen area remains dynamic.

While **illegal-border crossings (IBCs) of the external land and sea borders** have declined over the past years, gradually reaching pre-migration crisis levels - the approximately 142 000 IBCs registered in 2019 were the lowest in five years and 5% fewer than in 2018 - the number of those detected staying illegally on the territory of EU/SACs has remained high. For example, in 2019, there were more than 400 000 detections of **illegal stayers** (10% more than in 2018) largely due to increased detections of nationals of Morocco (by 49%), Moldova (47%), Eritrea (38%), Algeria (31%) and Afghanistan (11%). While detections were widely distributed across all countries, they largely took place in Central and Western European countries.

In contrast to fewer detections of IBCs, **applications for international protection** actually increased compared to a year ago. In 2019, some 715 000 applications for

international protection (13% more than in 2018) were lodged by third-country nationals in the EU/SAC area. This means that there were five times as many applications for asylum as there were detections at the external border, a complex discrepancy with many underpinning factors.

An important aspect is related to third-country nationals who **apply for asylum more than once** within the same EU/SAC after having received a negative decision on a previous application. Specifically, in 2019, 9% of all asylum applications at EU/SAC level were repeated. These proportions were the highest among nationals of Serbia (34% of all Serbian applications), Russia (22%), Moldova (20%), as well as from Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Senegal (more than 15% each). On the other hand, countries in Central and South America such as Venezuela, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru had the lowest share of repeated applications, which implies that they may have been new arrivals in the EU.

Equally relevant is the fact that many third-country nationals, who apply for asylum, previously crossed the external border in a regular fashion. Currently, 62 states and territories worldwide enjoy a visa-free regime to the EU/SAC area, many of which represent important places of origin for applicants of international protection. Last year, slightly more than a quarter of all asylum applications were submitted by nationals from **visa-exempt countries**. Applications lodged by Venezuelans and Salvadorans doubled from 2018, those by Colombians tripled, and the trend was similar for other Latin-American countries. Despite on a smaller scale, applications by Georgians also increased, continuing an upward trend for a fourth successive year. Although most visa-free nationals enter legally, some overstay their permission to stay and then become irregular, a phenomenon that appeared to be particularly common among nationals from Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Serbia and North Macedonia.

Asylum applications are also lodged by applicants who may have **crossed the external land and sea borders undetected** and then continue their journey inside

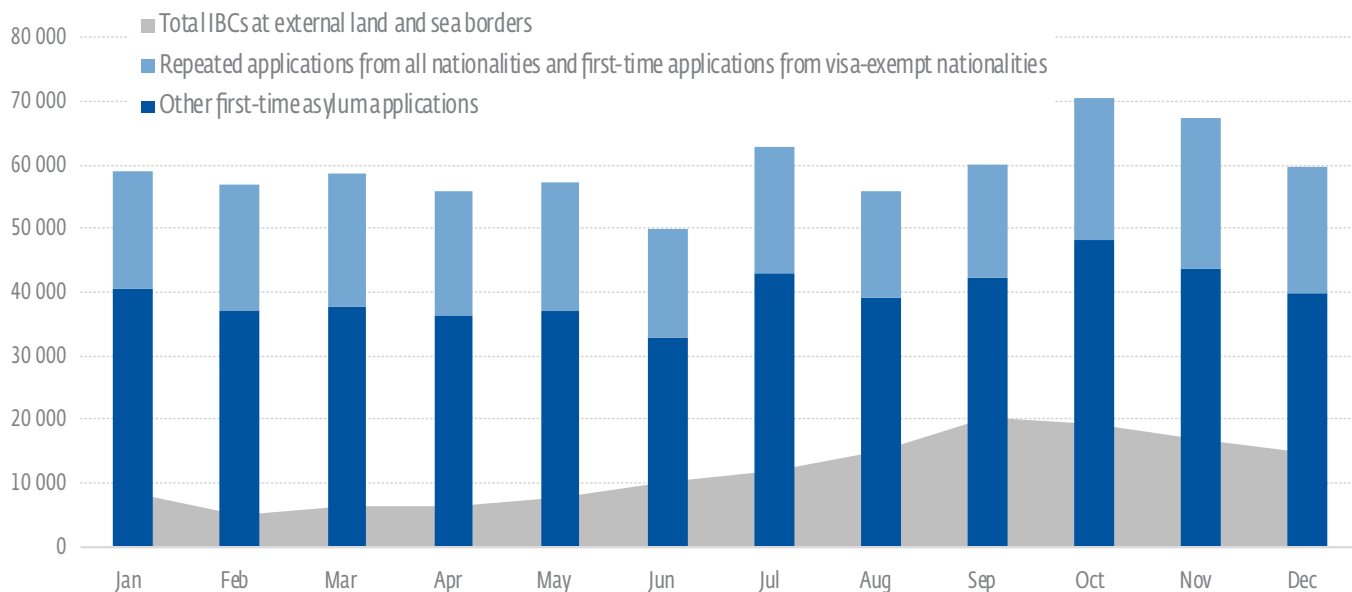
the EU/SAC area towards their country of destination. Migrants and asylum seekers travelling through irregular migration routes sometimes attempt to evade registration on arrival as the countries of entry represent transit points. This situation is well illustrated in cases of migrant smuggling reported to Europol. According to Europol, last year most of these cases concerned the Western Balkans region, where migrant smugglers and organised crime groups (OCGs) used various types of vehicles such as (mini-)vans and trucks to transport irregular migrants across the region. Concealment methods were a common *modus operandi* and ranged from hiding people in the cargo area of a van or the trunk of a car to more sophisticated custom-built compartments.

The activities of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency at the external borders have been very important in reducing opportunities for undetected crossings of the external borders. Officers deployed to the Agency's operations help to register, screen and fingerprint incoming migrants and asylum seekers, as well as identify and refer, in cooperation with EASO, those in need of international protection, while simultaneously supporting EU/SACs to detect and prevent migrant smuggling, human trafficking and other forms of cross-border crime, sharing relevant intelligence with national authorities and Europol. The management of mixed migration flows and the fight against cross-border crime have been further enhanced by the implementation of a Joint Operation in Albania (at the land border with Greece) - the first ever Frontex operation in a Third Country.

While illegal border-crossings include only arrivals by land and sea, some third-country nationals also **travel to the EU/SAC area by air**. In order to enhance the chances to reach their preferred destinations, some use **fraudulent documents** (e.g. counterfeit visas, passports, and residence permits, authentic but fraudulently obtained visas, authentic documents used as impostors). Last year, reported cases of arrivals by air with the use of fraudulent documents involved a number of nationals of Morocco, Turkey, Iran, Ukraine and



**Applications for international protection were much higher than illegal border-crossings throughout 2019, however a significant share concerned repeated applications and first-time applications from nationals of visa-exempt countries.**



Albania. Some of them might have applied for asylum sometime after arrival, but the number of applications lodged at air border-crossing points in EU/SACs has remained low, at about 2% of all applications in 2019. In line with intelligence available at Europol, last summer there was a re-emergence of smuggling of third-country nationals by plane from airports in the first countries of arrival towards airports in northern EU/SACs facilitated by the use of forged or look-alike documents.

Even though a large number of third-country nationals apply for asylum upon arrival, not all of them remain present for long enough to complete the procedure. Sometimes asylum **applications are withdrawn implicitly**, potentially because of absconding in order to reapply in a different EU/SAC at a later stage. In 2019 one application was implicitly withdrawn for every fifteen that were lodged. This phenomenon was particularly relevant for nationals of Morocco and Algeria, for whom the ratio of lodged to implicitly withdrawn applications was five to one. Among the citizens applying in high numbers in 2019, the ratios were also relatively high for nationals of Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

For those seeking international protection on the territory of the EU/SACs, the lodging of an asylum application is only the beginning. After submission, applications must be examined by national

asylum authorities (with varying timings across EU/SACs and countries of origin) who are responsible for issuing a decision at first instance. In 2019, only one third of first-instance decisions culminated with the **granting of refugee status and subsidiary protection**. Unsuccessful applicants – or those unhappy with the outcome (e.g. because they were only granted subsidiary protection) have the possibility to submit an appeal – a step that prolongs the asylum process to a final decision. Once a **negative decision** becomes final, the next step in the process is a **return** decision, following which the failed asylum seekers are returned to their country of origin. Last year, approximately 11 000 third-country nationals were returned by EU/SACs after receiving return decisions.

However, not all third-country nationals who arrive in the EU/SACs irregularly have the intention to apply for international protection or travel for the purposes of seeking asylum. Some decide to **remain illegally** (e.g. because they may not have legal grounds for protection). This is particularly true for nationals from North African countries such as Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. For example, last year Algerian and Moroccan nationals each submitted over 10 000 asylum applications, but the number of those detected staying illegally within the territory of EU/SACs – approximately

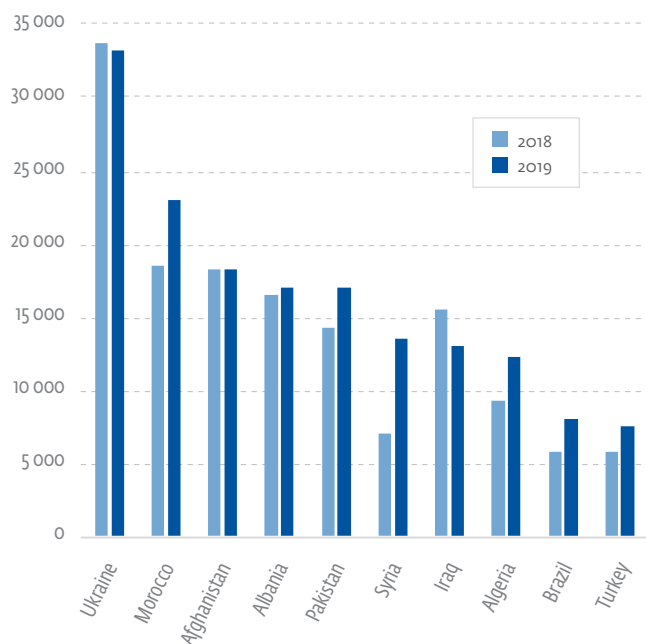
21 500 Algerians and 33 000 Moroccans – far outweighed requests for international protection. Some of them could be failed asylum applicants as the high ratio of implicitly withdrawn to lodged applications suggests. The situation was similar for Tunisians, whose more than 4 000 applications for international protection were far below the 8 259 illegal stay detections.

On the other hand, others are brought to EU/SACs and transported across the free movement area for **purposes other than irregular migration**. In 2019 Europol supported an operation targeting a poly-criminal network involved in migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and drug trafficking. The OCG targeted minors in protection centres in one EU/SAC and transported them to another EU/SAC by buses used to smuggle hashish, tobacco and hunting species.

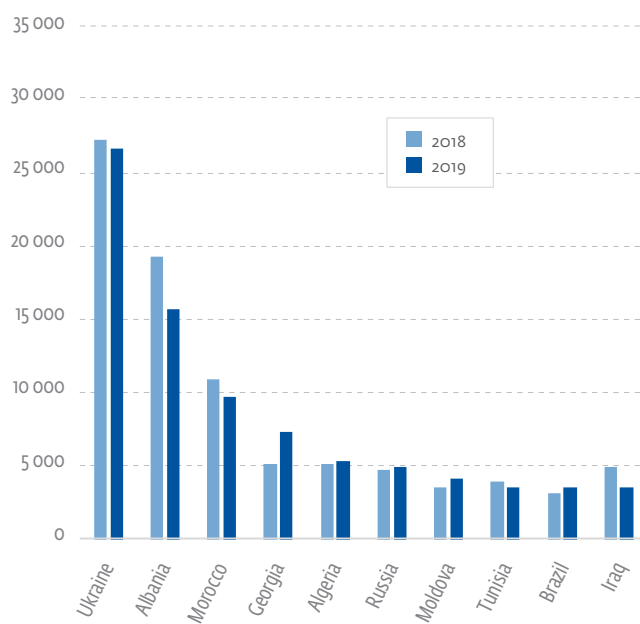
The past year remained challenging for national asylum, reception, border guard and law enforcement authorities in the EU/SACs. In this context, EASO, Europol and Frontex continued to invest efforts in supporting their stakeholders according to needs. Furthermore, despite differences in their mandates, EASO, Europol and Frontex remain committed to cooperation in different aspects of their work, including analysis that contributes to a better understanding of the asylum and migration picture in the EU/SACs.

**Disclaimer: The statistics presented in the text above are based on data collected by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the European Asylum Office (EASO) under different indicators; direct comparisons between these data are thus not possible. EASO data on EU/SACs covers EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland.**

Return decisions (2019 total: 298 190)



Effective returns (2019 total: 138 860)



## 5.4. Returns

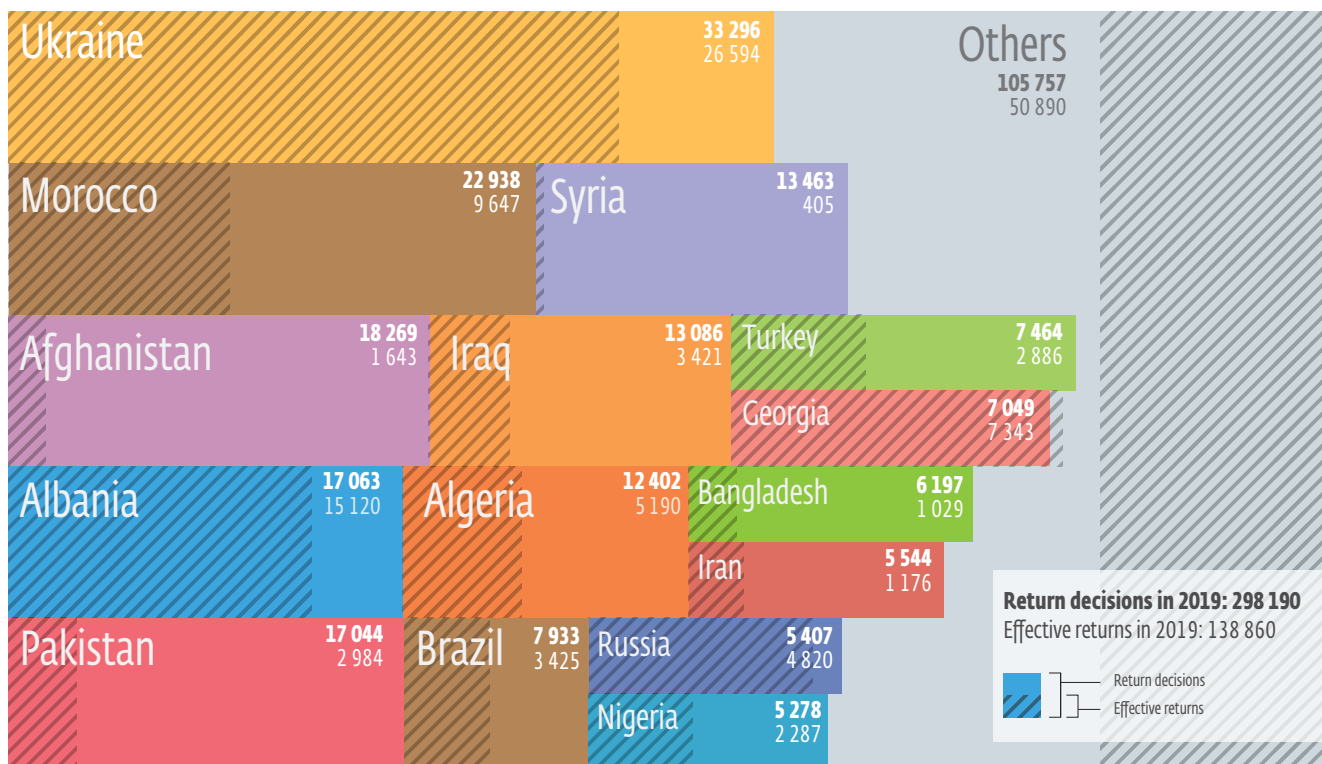
Member States reported just under 300 000 return decisions issued to third country nationals in 2019 (298 190). The figure was around 5% higher than what was reported in 2018 and was the second highest reported number for this indicator since 2011, when the FRAN data collection on this indicator began. However, the absolute number of return decisions actually issued might vary. For instance, data for this indicator in 2019 was unavailable for three Member States. Variations in numbers are also largely reliant on what data Member States exactly report, which mainly depends on the practices in place in each Member State when issuing return decisions. For example, in some federal EU countries, several different authorities are in charge of issuing return decisions, but not all of them might be reporting this data to FRAN. In addition, according to the national legislation in some Member States, an irregular migrant might also receive several return decisions that are reported, accumulating to a sizable share of this indicator. It can therefore be asserted that,

when taking into account the aforementioned caveats, no direct comparison or link between the indicators of return decisions and effective returns should be established.

In line with available data from previous years, the number of return decisions issued in 2019 was far larger than the number of effective returns reportedly carried out in the same year. Member States registered around 138 860 effective returns to third countries in 2019, a figure that is around 6% lower than in 2018. Also, it is the lowest reported total for this indicator since 2011. The decrease in the number of effective returns can be linked to many factors, stemming from lower irregular migratory pressure towards the EU in 2019, to the fact that many returnees leave the EU voluntarily without there being evidence that they have actually left the territory of the EU Member State/SAC, hence no reporting of these occur. Some of the obstacles that Member States may face during the return process include practical problems such as the identification of migrants and obtaining the necessary

documents from the authorities of third countries, as well as many migrants who abscond from the return process. Frontex has developed many tools to assist Member States in returns (see 7.1).

Bearing in mind the many challenges that arise from both the return process and its reporting, available data for 2019 show that the main recipients of return decisions were, in line with 2018, nationals of Ukraine, Morocco and Afghanistan. While the share of Ukrainians who were issued a return decision decreased slightly between 2018 and 2019, the number of return decisions to Moroccans increased by 23%. When looking at the ten most reported nationalities for return decisions in 2019, nationals of Albania, Pakistan, Syria, Algeria, Brazil and Turkey also witnessed an increase for this indicator, while the number of Iraqis showed a decrease in comparison with the previous year. The vast majority of return decisions were reportedly issued by EU countries of arrival. The three countries issuing the most return decisions were, respectively, Greece, Spain and Poland.



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

In line with previous years, Ukrainians, Albanians and Moroccans were the most reported nationalities for effective returns in 2019. All three showed a decrease when comparing data with the year before, despite actually presenting an upward trend for detections of illegal stay between 2018 and 2019. On the other hand, the share of Georgian returnees increased in 2019 in comparison with the previous year, while the number of Algerian and Russian returnees remained relatively stable. The number of Georgians being returned witnessed a stark increase of 46% when comparing 2019 with 2018, with an increasingly higher trend since 2017, when the visa obligation was waived. The data is also in line with a general increase in the migratory pressure of this nationality towards the EU, with more and more detections of illegal stay being reported by Member States.

Conversely, effective returns of Syrians and Afghans decreased by 38% and 36% respectively in 2019 compared with 2018, despite the number of detections of illegal border-crossings of these nationalities having risen last year. One possible reason for these varying trends is that

arrivals started to increase in the second half of the year, which means in the vast majority of cases the asylum procedure is still ongoing. Effective returns of Syrians and Afghans are expected to remain at low levels, because of high asylum recognition rates and the limited possibility to return. In fact, according to Eurostat data<sup>1</sup>, the asylum recognition rates calculated between 2016 and 2019 for nationals of Syria is 95%, while for Afghans it is 50%, thus the vast majority of returns of these nationalities do not materialise<sup>2</sup>, in line with inter alia the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Since 2016, Member States have started to report gradually increasing numbers of effective returns of South American citizens. Comparing data of 2019 with 2018, the increases are especially visible for Peruvian and Colombian returnees, 80% and 41% respectively. The upward trend is in line with the general increase in the migratory pressure

towards the EU as well as relatively low asylum recognition rates.

Overall in 2019, around 71 100 returns were reportedly carried out with the support of Member States and/or Frontex, and these mainly involved nationals of Albania, Morocco and Algeria. Voluntary departures<sup>3</sup> reported in 2019 amounted to around 67 600, 36% of which were Ukrainians, followed by around 3 800 Georgians and just over 3 000 Albanians opting for this method of return. Furthermore, increasingly higher numbers of returnees benefited from administrative and financial support. In fact, assisted voluntary returns provide tailored support, including reintegration, to those individuals who would like to travel back to their country of origin in a dignified manner. Lastly, the number of returns that happened in the framework of bilateral readmission agreements rose from around 4 800 in 2018 to more than 6 300 in 2019.

1 Data for 2019 is partial.

2 According to MS national legislations, return decisions can be issued before the asylum procedure starts.

3 With a return decision.

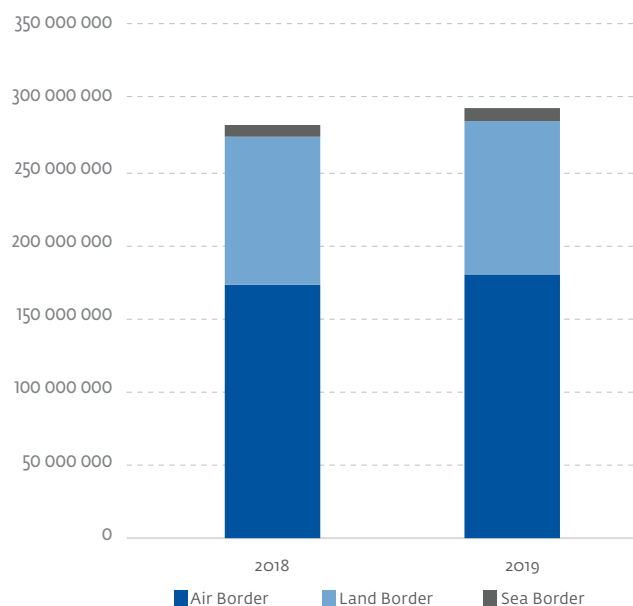




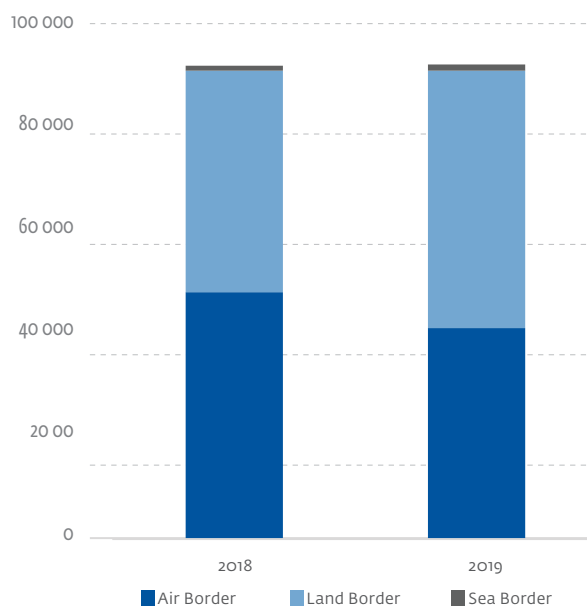
## 6. Other Border Management Challenges

Operation Minerva  
© Frontex, 2014

## Passenger Flow on Entry to Subset of EU/SAC



## Illegal Stay on Exit for EU/SAC



\* excludes France, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain

## 6.1. Passenger Flow and Border Guards' Workload

Passenger flow data is an important indicator of border guards' workload. 2019 was another demanding year for border guards in Member States. They were faced with a further rise in passenger flows and the corresponding increase in entry and exit checks at border-crossing points. In 2017 systematic checks were expanded to cover passengers enjoying the right of free movement under EU law. This has at times led to delays for passengers at certain border-crossing points and continues to put a greater burden on border guards.

As in previous years, in 2019 the recorded passenger flow peaked in August. While passenger flow data are difficult to compare from year to year, some Member State data suggest that passenger flow at air, land and sea borders slightly increased compared with 2018. In future years, the forthcoming Entry-Exit System (EES) and its automatically generated passenger flow data will provide

a comprehensive picture and offer further opportunities for risk analysis.

The second line at border-crossing points was also kept busy in Member States by, for instance, an increase in refusals of entry along external borders, as well as an increase in document fraud detections. Detections of illegal stay on exit at air, land and sea borders remained at a very high level, increasing slightly compared with 2018, albeit a decrease in detections at the air borders vis-à-vis 2018 was compensated by an increase at the land borders, in particular at the Eastern land borders.

### Air Borders

In 2019 across all main indicators there was an increase in irregular migration at the external EU air borders.

It is believed that many migrants who are currently in the EU irregularly arrived

by air having gained entry by deception or overstaying and not leaving as obliged.

At the EU/SAC air borders there was a year-on-year increase in passenger flows. It is estimated that the increase is about 5% per annum across Europe.

There were significant increases in the number of Brazilians, Albanians, Peruvians and Georgians refused entry in 2019.

The most affected airports were: Madrid (MAD) (5 172) with mainly nationals of Latin American countries, Paris (CDG) varied, and Lisbon (LIS) mainly Brazilians.

Following Schengen visa liberalisation for Georgia, there have been large increases in the refusal of entry of this nationality at air borders. Budget airlines particularly have responded to the new travel opportunities provided by visa liberalisation by increasing flights from/to Georgia, linking to larger and smaller regional EU/SAC airports.



Automated Border Control Systems as seen here at Warsaw Chopin Airport may alleviate the workload of border guards.  
© Frontex, 2019

There has also been both an increase in the level of asylum applications and refusals of entry of migrants from South and Latin American countries. In respect of Venezuelans, over 5 000 claimed asylum at air borders, however over 40 000 claimed asylum in-country after entry.

Frontex operations at third country airports located quite close to EU external borders indicated that migrants are also seeking to use local visa waivers and then to enter the EU by obtaining fraudulent travel documents and crossing land borders. In this respect there has been an increase in refusals of Indian and Chinese nationals arriving at Belgrade (BEG) who are visa free in Serbia<sup>1</sup>.

Iranian and Turkish nationals have been identified seeking to transit the EU/SAC via Tbilisi (TBS) and Baku (GYD) – mainly Iranians – and Kiev (KBP) – mainly Turkish – using fraudulent documentation often of high quality.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/consular-affairs/entry-serbia/visa-regime>

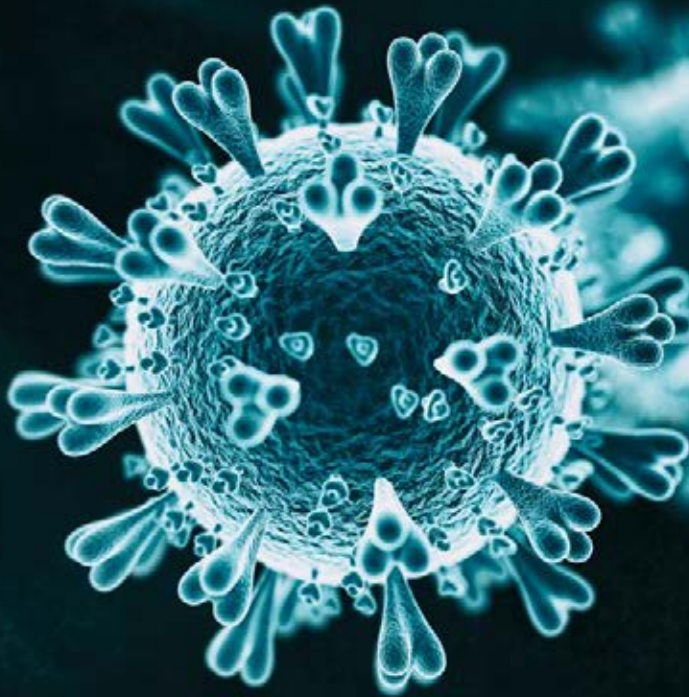
Nationals of some countries requiring a Schengen visa have been identified as abusing the transit visa waiver at larger airports associated with hubs operated by global airlines, e.g. Amsterdam, (AMS), Frankfurt (FRA), Paris (CDG) and Madrid (MAD). They arrived from a non-EU/SAC and whilst claiming to be in direct air-side transit to another non-EU country they claimed asylum.

This has shown to be an increasingly popular way to gain entry to the EU/SAC which invariably does not require the services of a human smuggler or the use of forged, counterfeit or inappositely obtained documentation.

In respect of document abuse, 70% of all document abuse detected at the air borders is on intra EU/Schengen flights as opposed to those arriving at the external borders.

The year 2019 also saw a large increase in migrants seeking to exit EU/SAC airports to travel to the UK and Ireland using fraudulent documentation. Indeed for most EU/SAC airports their biggest

migratory threat is dealing with passengers with such documents seeking to travel to the UK or Ireland. In 2019 some 3 000 such migrants arrived in the UK and an almost equal number were stopped seeking to board flights to the UK. A further 1 390 were detected seeking to travel to Ireland. Intelligence suggests that human smugglers were proposing to migrants that they should seek to enter the UK and Ireland prior to Brexit.



© iStock, 2019

## 6.2. Pandemics and border control

The reoccurrence of infectious diseases, epidemics or pandemics have always presented border guard authorities with many challenges. SARS, Ebola and bird flu (avian flu) have in the 2000s already been some of the health scares, but none has had more impact than the emergence of the ‘coronavirus disease’ (COVID-19), which by mid-March 2020 had reportedly surpassed 180 000 confirmed cases and 7 000 deaths globally<sup>1</sup>.

Border guard authorities, alongside other competent authorities, have, of course, already collected some experience from the aforementioned diseases, for instance from the response to the 2002-2004 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), also a coronavirus. There is however a crucial difference, which makes the current COVID-19 pandemic an unprecedented challenge: SARS patients were only infectious after the onset of symptoms. This appears to be different in the case of the novel coronavirus. Patients suffering from COVID-19 are infectious before the onset of symptoms. Asymptomatic travellers are therefore not easily identified at points of entry and may spread the disease<sup>2</sup>. This means that procedures such as checking temperature are only in part effective in stopping the spread. Consequently, following this logic, measures such as quarantining all travellers and/or altogether closing the borders have been introduced.

What has ensued within the European Union goes well beyond the reintroduction of border controls within the Schengen area. Rather it constitutes a closing down of the borders to whole groups of travellers, in some cases even Union citizens. Still, travel restrictions may delay the dissemination of the coronavirus but they cannot prevent it once it has already been introduced into the population. Yet such a delay is reasoned to be in line with the strategy of ‘flattening the epidemic curve’ (i.e. slowing down the spread of the disease to avoid a peak of the pandemic). The scientific consensus is that the suppression strategy is the best approach for saving lives – the uppermost goal – regardless of the great economic costs and social disruption. Otherwise, healthcare systems and intensive care units might collapse as infections soar and mortality rates rise significantly. Once strict control measures are relaxed, however, the transmission of coronavirus disease might once again rebound.<sup>3</sup> Particular care and a cautious approach is therefore of utmost importance.

Given the special characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic – in particular its comparatively long incubation period combined with the infectiousness of carriers before showing symptoms – the challenges to border guards across Europe are, of course, widely different from previous responses to diseases. While on the one hand global travel is plummeting and

reducing the burden of entry and exit checks, these checks may have to expand in scope (i.e. including health aspects). Also, the closing of internal borders is binding border guard personnel, which some border authorities have long stopped planning for. And finally, the spread of the infection to staff and quarantine measures may further stretch the capacity of border guard authorities to deploy personnel.

The role of Frontex in supporting Member States is manifold. First of all, the health crisis elevates the need for a common situational picture. On a daily basis, Frontex is providing up-to-date monitoring of the crisis to Member States and the Agency looks to contribute to an integrated approach to effective border management to protect health while preserving the integrity of the internal market. Amongst many other actions, the Agency also contributed to the guidelines on the handling of border control activities in the time of heightened health risks. And finally, committed to the duty of care for all its staff and deployed personnel, the Agency is taking all steps to outfit its joint operations and Headquarter staff with the necessary protective gear.

1 <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

2 <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2001899>

3 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/medicine/sph/ide/gida-fellowships/Imperial-College-COVID19-NPI-modelling-16-03-2020.pdf>



## 6.3. Cross-border crime: Firearms

It is estimated that 60 percent of the 640 million firearms currently in circulation worldwide are in civilian hands<sup>1</sup>. Flows of illicit firearms fuel armed conflicts and violent criminal organisations. Illegal firearms may be used for coercion and intimidation in other crime areas. The recent terrorist attacks in the EU and accompanying seizures of firearms during cross-border and inland operations demonstrate the multidimensional nature of illicit firearms trafficking. Once in circulation, illegal firearms can pose a risk for decades. Given all these issues, illicit trafficking of firearms is constantly considered a high threat.<sup>2</sup>

Around 80% of the illicit firearms transported within the EU are destined to stay in the EU<sup>3</sup>. A significant amount of the firearms used in the EU are imported. Also easily convertible weapons manufactured in the EU tend to be modified and used for lethal purposes. These are also very often transported outside the EU. The routes used depend on the current situation, legal requirements and firearms legislation in particular countries. Two main corridors have been identified, one from the Western Balkans to Northern Europe and the other from the Eastern land borders towards the United Kingdom.

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency is tasked with addressing serious crimes that adversely affect the security of the EU's external borders, for instance smuggling of drugs and firearms. In 2019 border authorities seized numerous weapons, mostly during border checks at the external border. Most of these were cold arms, prohibited pepper sprays and electric shockers, but firearms and ammunition were also found.

The majority of these seizures were not the result of large-scale weapons trafficking. Numerous actors were involved, from individuals smuggling for their own use to organised criminal groups distributing firearms in large quantities.

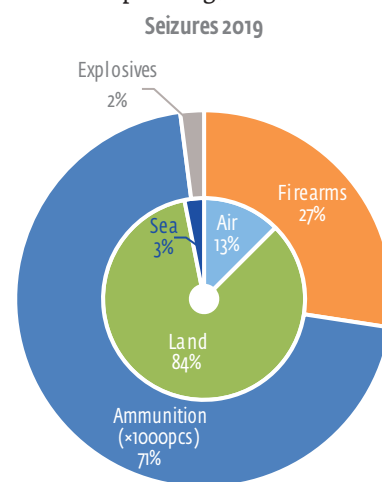
Various sources suggest that crisis regions and former crisis regions, like Ukraine or the former Yugoslavia, are a huge source of illegal weapons. However, this has not been confirmed by detections at the borders. Incidents of smuggling of ammunition and gas pistols or converted firearms towards these regions have also been reported, which might indicate that weapons with a lower penalty in case of detection are in demand.

Information exchange with countries neighbouring the EU in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe indicate that the border control authorities in those regions continue to detect weapons, ammunition and explosives, but with a decreasing long-term trend.

According to the findings from Joint Action Days (for instance Joint Action Day Mobile 2 across Europe), detections of firearms and ammunition are more likely when intense search measures are

employed. In general, targeted searches of vehicles increase incidental seizures (by-catch). This implies that the amount of firearms smuggling is significant.

Due to the growing presence of illicit firearms in the EU, it is important to underline the significance of cooperation with all EU and international bodies as well as with Border Guard and Customs authorities to achieve an appropriate, comprehensive and tailored response to detecting transportations at the borders through detailed checks of travellers based on profiling.

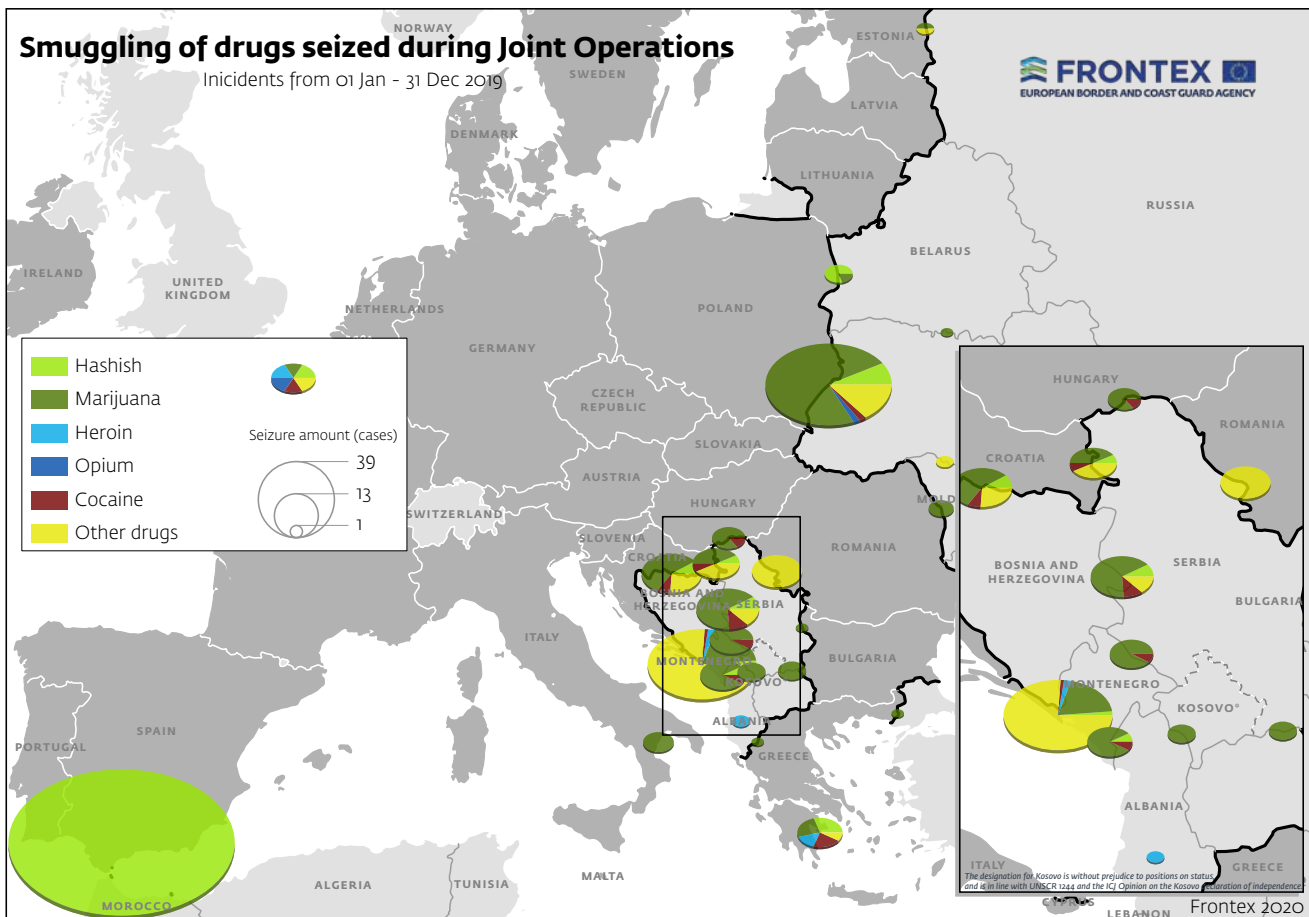


Blank firing weapon detected during intensified vehicle searches performed during Joint Action Day Mobile 2.



During Joint Action Day Mobile 2, sniffer dogs located hiding places in a controlled car. Nine packages containing firearm parts were found hidden in the left rear doorsill and the left part of the boot.

- 1 IANSA presentation to the UN Small Arms Review Conference 2006 <https://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/armso6063oiansa-denis.pdf>
- 2 SOCTA 2017 is a comprehensive study of serious and organised crime in the EU released by EUROPOL. It is the outcome of a detailed analysis of the threat of serious and organised crime facing the EU providing information for practitioners, decision-makers and the wider public.
- 3 Estimations made by the European Crime Prevention Network.



## 6.4. Cross-border crime: Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking is a highly lucrative criminal activity which generates large profits for organised criminal structures worldwide. With the great majority of drugs used in Europe passing through the EU's external borders, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency has a major role to play in tackling drug smuggling.

In 2019 there were 658 cases and **130.6 tonnes** of various drugs detected during Frontex-coordinated operational activities, an increase of 50% in the number of detections but a slight reduction in the quantity of seizures.<sup>4</sup> The majority of seizures occurred in the maritime domain with 52% of the cases and 98% of the quantities. Being equally important, detections in the Balkans and on the Eastern land borders were typically related to the trafficking of small quantities of various narcotic substances and pharmaceuticals through BCPs. These small quantities were usually found in passenger cars, buses and lorries.

Furthermore, cooperation with Member State authorities resulted in the seizure of an even larger quantity, **356 tonnes**, of drugs during surveillance activities at the

EU's external borders.<sup>5</sup> While large seizures were again related to maritime borders, a variety of drugs was also seized on land routes and at EU airports. The trafficking of drugs by air presents serious challenges to authorities with constantly increasing passenger flows at the international airports. Passengers arriving from South American countries, as well as from Africa, smuggling drugs by body-packing, in clothes or in hold baggage are the typical types of cases at airports. Similar smuggling methods have become popular on sea and land routes as well, usually on ferry connections between ports in the Western Mediterranean and Adriatic. Notably, postal packages for receiving or redistributing drugs in Europe have been increasingly used over the past few years.

Trafficking through interchanging routes and using various means of transport have become a common *modus operandi* for concealing the cargo's place of origin. Traffickers employ this *modus operandi* in an

effort to reduce and deflect the attention of law-enforcement authorities.

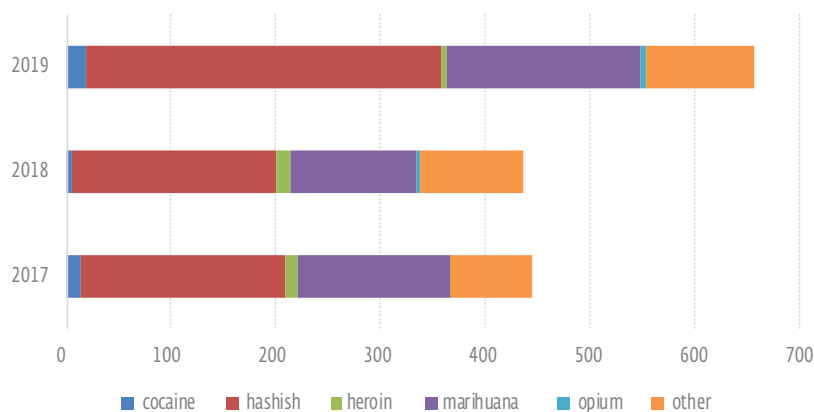
Generally, the top smuggled drug at the EU's external borders is **cannabis** both in number of cases (68%) and quantity (97%).<sup>6</sup> Easy production, high availability and accessibility, cultural and regional characteristics, as well as lower penalty risk in some countries contribute to the popularity of herbal cannabis and hashish. Cannabis is the most widely consumed illicit drug in Europe with a large proportion of the **herbal cannabis** grown closer to the place of consumption. Outdoor cultivation sites and numerous inland seizures reported in EUROSUR by Member States during border surveillance activities confirm the Western Balkans and Albania in particular as a source of herbal cannabis trafficked to neighbouring countries via land routes or exported to Western and Central Europe via the Adriatic Sea, using speedboats or ferries. The proximity of Morocco, which has been considered the leading producer of **cannabis resin** for years facilitates the trafficking of hashish mostly in the

4 JORA, Results of Frontex Joint Operations

5 EUROSUR, Detections reported during surveillance activities at EU external borders

6 EUROSUR and JORA, consolidated data

## Number of Drug Cases during Frontex Joint Operations



Western Mediterranean, but also on most sea routes in southern Europe, predominantly by speedboats. Hashish trafficking is accompanied by other criminal activities, including facilitated irregular migration and property crime, as criminals generally use existing criminal infrastructure for distribution of hashish to Western and Northern European markets and to countries in Asia and North Africa.

**Cocaine** accounts for almost one third of the EU retail drug market, which makes it the second most commonly consumed illicit drug in the EU after cannabis. This is reflected in the second highest rate of seizures in Europe after the Americas. The record number of seizures over the last two years at European ports in the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the West Mediterranean point to the Western European coast as the main entry gate of cocaine to Europe.<sup>7</sup>

The enormous supply from Latin America and the drop in wholesale prices worldwide in the last couple of years have made cocaine more affordable than ever before, and this has resulted in frequent bulk shipments on various maritime routes, but also in smaller quantities at land borders and airports. In 2019 seizures of almost **12 tonnes** of cocaine were reported, mostly by Portugal and Spain, the most affected locations being the Azores, Lisbon, Setubal, Valencia port, Barcelona port, Algeciras port, and the Canary Islands. Portuguese, Spanish and Italian airports also registered a large share of detections on incoming or transiting flights from Latin America and South and West Africa.<sup>8</sup> Maritime shipping containers as well as other types of maritime transportation will be increasingly

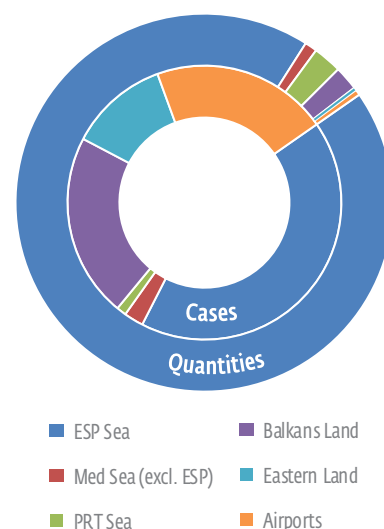
used for importing cocaine either via direct transatlantic routes from Latin America to Western Europe or via transshipment hubs in West Africa and the Caribbean.

In the recent years, North Africa has also emerged as a significant transit area for cocaine destined for Europe. Morocco and to a lesser extent Algeria and Libya are considered entry hubs recently reporting large cocaine hauls.<sup>9</sup> Seizures of smaller quantities of cocaine on the southern Spanish coast and at Spanish ports (e.g. Algeciras, Valencia, Barcelona, etc.) suggest an increase in the supply of cocaine in the region.

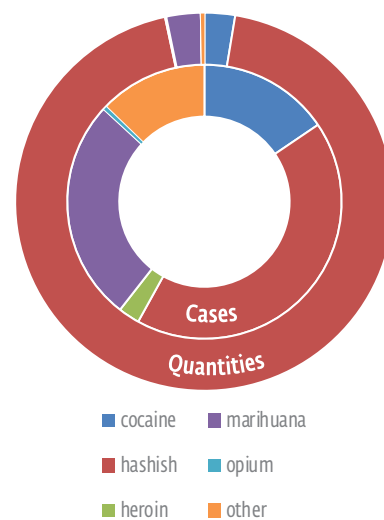
The smuggling of **heroin** into Europe is usually characterised by fewer detections on specific drug routes. This is due to the concentration of production in Afghanistan, which to a certain extent limits supply and distribution markets. In 2019 approximately **472 kg** of heroin were reported. The largest quantities were detected during numerous seizures at French, Italian and Spanish airports, but also during several big hauls at French and Italian seaports. These seizures tend to show that along with typical land routes, maritime and air transports are also used to smuggle heroin to destination countries in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Sporadic large hauls of heroin and to a lesser extent cocaine in some Member States and third countries suggest that typical routes are highly diversified following not only the most used Balkan route, but also passing through different regions in Central Asia. The Caucasus heroin route and partly the Northern route are also used, where third countries at the Eastern and South-eastern land borders

## Drug Cases and Quantities per Region 2019



## Drug Cases and Quantities 2019



could be convenient distribution hubs for both the EU and Russian markets.

**Synthetic drugs and precursors** continue to be a threat to the EU's external borders, appearing in small quantities on air routes, but recently more often in large consignments from China on sea routes. Notably, there has been an increase in the detection of **captagon** arriving in ports in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as seizures of **ecstasy** on yachts in the Aegean Sea. A large container seizure of ecstasy precursor in 2018 supports the findings for increased precursor trafficking in the Aegean and Mediterranean ports.

The precursor market is also influenced by shifting a part of the heroin production to drug laboratories in Europe, which leads to demand for illicit sourcing of acetic anhydride. Similar developments have been observed in the cocaine production process.<sup>11</sup>

7 EMCDDA, EU Drugs Market Report 2019; UNODC statistics of global seizures 2007-2017

8 EUROSUR, Detections reported during surveillance activities at EU external borders

9 UNODC, World Drug Report 2019; EMCDDA, EU Drugs Market Report 2019

10 EUROSUR, Detections reported during surveillance activities at the EU's external borders

11 EMCDDA, EU Drugs Market Report 2019



Vehicle Check - Operation Minerva  
© Frontex, 2017

## 6.5. Cross-border crime: Stolen Vehicles and Parts

Despite the decreasing trend in Europe over the last several years, car thefts continue to have a serious financial impact on society, with an average of 697 000 car thefts per year in the EU.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, around 3.5 million alerts for searched vehicles are registered in the SIS II database each year, and around 15 500 hits are generated.<sup>13</sup> Persons engaged in motor vehicle crime are motivated by the prospects of fast profit. These people perceive the risk of detection and prosecution as low.

In 2019 there were **384 vehicles searched and 578 vehicle parts** stopped at border-crossing points during Frontex-coordinated operational activities, which shows similar detection rates compared to previous years.<sup>14</sup> The majority of the targeted vehicles were common car makes and models, with criminals trading in large quantities on the

second-hand vehicle and parts market. Of those detections supported by Frontex, 78% involved passenger cars (in different price categories), followed by a significantly lower share of lorries and trailers (9%), and vans. Nevertheless, special attention should be given to incidents involving stolen lorries and heavy machinery, considering the difficulties in identifying and recovering those types of vehicles, as well as the higher financial impact of those crimes.

Furthermore, taking an active role in European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) operational activities, the Agency supported the efforts of the Member States in preventing the traffic of **475 stolen vehicles and 394 parts**.<sup>15</sup> The increased effectiveness of short-term tailored actions reveals the potential risk at the EU's external borders and the challenges in detecting and searching vehicles during regular border

control activities. Criminals use various methods in order to go unnoticed such as using the cover of the regular flow of travellers and goods via the commonly used border-crossing points.

The main reasons for detection were alerts in SIS or Interpol databases (57%), alterations of the vehicle's identification number (36%), false or exchanged licence plates (4%) or registration documents (3%). Some of the cases included insurance fraud or vehicles stolen from rental or leasing companies. It is worth mentioning the increasingly close relationship between vehicle theft and document fraud, identified as a result of the European joint action days (JADs). In addition, different characteristics of the car market in neighbouring third countries also influences the market for falsifying car registration documents and manipulating the vehicle identification number (VIN).

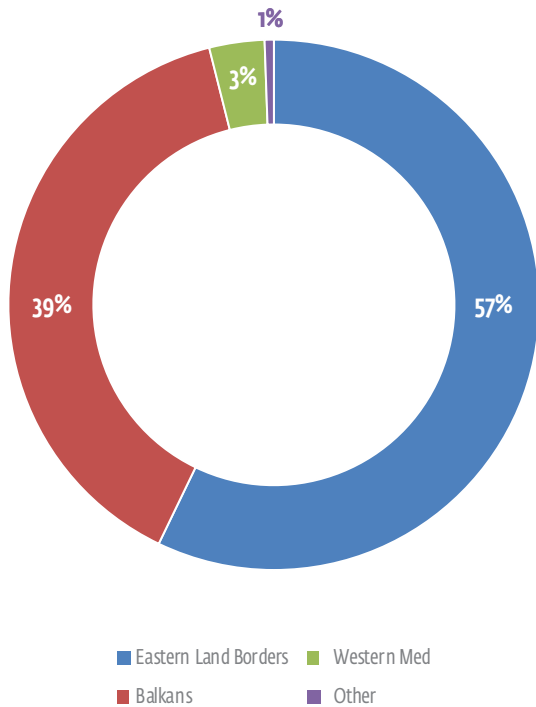
12 Eurostat, crime statistics 2015-2017

13 EU-LISA, SIS II 2018 Statistics

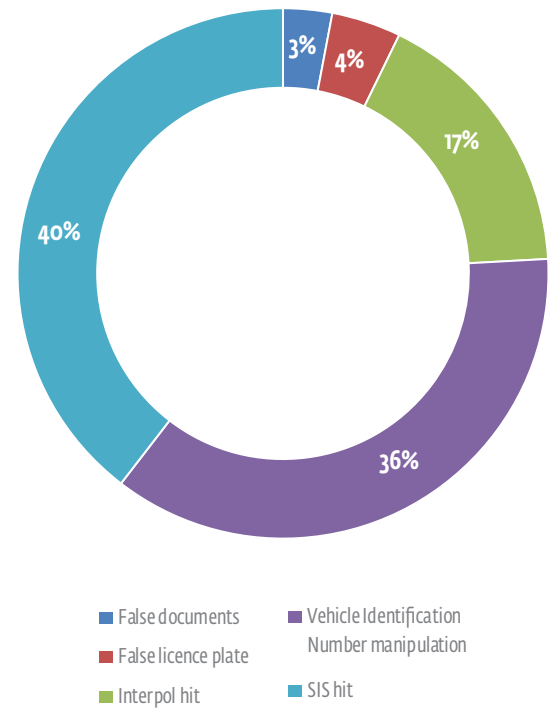
14 JORA, Results of Frontex Joint Operations

15 EMPACT, results of EU joint action days

## Cases of Stolen Vehicles Frontex Joint Operations 2019



## Reasons for Detection of Vehicles Frontex Joint Operations 2019



The vehicles were usually driven by one driver via land BCPs, being driven as a means of transport and not as a commodity. Drivers of various nationalities were involved in transporting stolen vehicles across the borders. Their nationality usually matched the country they were attempting to cross into. In some cases cars were transported inside trailers, or dismantled in parts inside cargo vans. The illicit market of stolen or substandard spare parts is a lucrative source of income for criminal organisations, which, besides the financial impact, puts drivers in general at serious risk.

The common *modus operandi* involved the immediate transportation of the stolen vehicle outside of the EU towards end-destinations in the Middle East and Asia or dismantling it into parts. Yet almost one-third of the vehicles were detected on entry, which is a strong indication that Europe is also a big market for stolen vehicles.

The Eastern land borders represented 57% of all detections, with vehicles crossing the borders with Ukraine having the highest share (36%). Serbia's borders in the Western Balkans scored second highest with 25% of cases. A number of cases at the borders with Belarus and the Russian Federation in the northeast, as well as with Turkey indicate the continuous use of routes for the export of stolen vehicles through Eastern Europe to Central Asia and through the Balkans to the Near and Middle East.

In addition, maritime transport is also considered by criminals for moving stolen vehicles to countries in other continents. Export routes identified by Member State law-enforcement authorities are via the ports of Rotterdam and Hamburg towards countries in Africa.<sup>16</sup> There were several reports in the last two

years in the framework of border surveillance activities, referring to similar *modus operandi* of exporting luxury SUVs to Mauritania via Dakar and Senegal. Ferries in Italy, Greece and Spain connecting land routes in Europe and between Europe and North Africa were also used for transporting stolen vehicles.<sup>17</sup>

It is expected that criminals will continue using BCPs on the main transport corridors for moving different types of vehicles, depending on demand. Preventing vehicle crime at the borders requires strong cooperation between border guards and other law enforcement authorities for better pre-warning and targeted intelligence-led actions.

<sup>16</sup> Interpol, Motor Vehicle Crime in Global Perspective 2014; Bundeskriminalamt, KFZ-Kriminalität, Bundeslagebild 2012

<sup>17</sup> EUROSUR, Detections reported during surveillance activities at EU external borders



© iStock, 2010

## 6.6. Managing and Interdicting Terrorist Mobility

### A global and omnipresent threat

Terrorism is not exclusive to Islamist extremists. This said, when it comes to counter-terrorism efforts within the border dimension, it is assessed that the main threat emanates from Islamist extremism.

Da'esh is still active, especially its ideology, which is still appealing despite its organisational setbacks and territorial losses. The threat is even more pronounced when taking into consideration other Islamist extremist groups ranging from core al-Qaeda and many other regional affiliates such as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, a group which supposedly has thousands of fighters operating in Syria.

The United States (US) troop withdrawal and the launch in October 2019 of the Turkish military operation in north-eastern Syria, meant that the Syrian Democratic Forces redeployed its forces and refocused their operations. Da'esh elements immediately tried to capitalise on the ensuing vacuum. The US-led operation Inherent Resolve had already reported a resurgence, starting in Q2 2019,

in Da'esh related incidents in Syria. This trend continued throughout the year, extending to Iraq as well.

According to a January 2020, United Nations (UN) report submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017), the reduction of US forces raised concerns regarding the ability of local security forces currently active in north-eastern Syria to maintain adequate control over a restive population of detained Da'esh fighters, as well as family members, numbering more than 100 000. Many dependants remain equally ideologically committed and their fate is a major concern for the international community. Some 2 000 foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) remain in detention in the area.

The same UN report adds, Da'esh is "mounting increasingly bold insurgent attacks, calling and planning for the breakout of [Da'esh] fighters in detention facilities and exploiting weaknesses in the security environment of both countries. The current assessment is that the strategic direction of [Da'esh] with regard to administration, propaganda and recruitment is unchanged, and that command and control between

the [Da'esh] core in the conflict zone and affiliates abroad will be maintained."

No other predominant conflict zone has emerged after the loss of territory in Syria and Iraq. Many fighters have melted back into the local population and have stayed there, while others are lying low in certain neighbouring countries. Others are in less intensive conflict zones like Libya and the Sahel.

Depending on developments, some may seek to move elsewhere or be directed to do so. Irrespective of whether such travelling is sanctioned by the relevant terrorist groups' structures, the use of regular or irregular movements – or both – is assessed to depend on a variety of chances and constraints.

### External borders and internal security

Pre-border checks and border checks remain one of the main safeguards of the Schengen area and significantly contribute to guaranteeing the long-term security of the Union and its citizens. Such checks are carried out in the interest of all Member States and the Schengen

area. One of the purposes of these checks is to prevent any threat to the internal security and public policy of the Member States, irrespective of the origin of such threat – including where such a threat derives from Union citizens.

Borders provide challenges but also opportunities in countering-terrorism as they offer a geographical spread where Member States can take executive actions and pursue prosecutorial or judicial actions. To this end Member States and Schengen Associated Countries, with the support of JHA Agencies, have to make the best use of the legislative frameworks that aim to deter, disrupt and detect terrorist-related movements and detain those involved in terrorist-related activities.

The amendments to the Schengen Borders Code (SBC) and the Schengen Information System (SIS) provision to allow Team Members’ access to SIS, plus the forthcoming introduction of the Entry-Exit System (EES), the Electronic Travel Information and Authorisation (ETIAS), the interoperability between EU information systems and the European Search Portal (ESP) are all aimed at improving such database checks.

### Enforcing existing legislation

The EBCG Regulation contextualises Frontex’s supporting role in countering terrorism. It states that due to its activities at the external borders, the Agency should contribute to the prevention and detection of serious crimes with a cross-border dimension, including terrorism, where it is appropriate for it to act and where it has obtained relevant information through its activities. This is further reinforced in Article 3, which lists the various European integrated border management components.

In regards to before border checks, Frontex supports Member States with knowledge and guidelines for them to make best use of advance information systems, such as API and PNR data.

At the borders, Frontex complements Member States’ counter-terrorism efforts through the Agency’s operations and coordinated activities. Screening, registration, document checks and debriefing activities are part of such efforts. All these activities converge on the main goal of supporting Member States to identify potential travelling terrorists or ‘subjects of interest’ through detailed security checks.

Importantly, the EBCG Regulation offers a tangible way to support Member States, especially in times of large and sudden or continuous migration flows. Article 82§10 (previously 40§8) states that “the host Member State shall authorise members of the teams to consult Union databases, the consultation of which is necessary for fulfilling operational aims specified in the operational plan on border checks...”.

The Council conclusions recommending security checks in the case of irregular migration (10152/17) list the databases that border authorities should systematically consult to identify known terrorists and ‘subjects of interest’. Implemented correctly, border activities can support Member States’ counter-terrorism efforts.

Counter-terrorism efforts require that the international community at large collectively makes the best use of all the systems, security databases and sharing platforms that are currently in place.









## 7. Featured analyses

Land Borders Officers Training 2018  
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## 7.1. The EBCG Regulation and Returns

The new European Border and Coast Guard Agency Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, which came into force in December 2019, introduced important changes to Frontex's mandate, aiming at more effectively implementing its Integrated Border Management strategy. The EBCG Regulation has, among others, a particular focus on the topic of returns, particularly in Articles 48 to 53.

The following analysis provides a general overview of what Frontex's new mandate entails for the field of returns and outlines some of the challenges and responsibilities that the Agency will face in the future.

### The first European uniformed service

In line with the EBCG Regulation, the Agency will strengthen its operational and technical capacities. The most challenging task is the creation of the first European uniformed service, set

to gradually reach 10 000 actively functioning and trained staff by 2027. This standing corps will include representatives of Frontex as well as Member States, who will be deployed either long term or for shorter secondments with the aim of providing assistance and support to Member States in matters related to migration management, cooperation with third countries, and returns. Deployed staff will be fully empowered and will have received specific and targeted training to perform border control as well as tasks associated with return.

Articles 52(1) and 53 (2)(3) of the new EBCG Regulation allow for the arrangement of return teams, which can be deployed at the Agency's own initiative or upon request or in agreement with host Member States. Frontex will provide technical and operational support for return interventions and rapid return interventions. Experts in the field of return will be in charge of specific tasks such as, for example, assisting Member States in

the acquisition of travel documents from third countries.

### Wider scope of support for return-related activities

More significantly, the Agency's remit was widened so that it can now offer Member States support also in post-arrival and post-return activities. Hence, all areas of return are now covered, including pre-return activities, assistance with voluntary returns and assistance for Member States to identify non-EU nationals as well as acquire travel documents by means of consular cooperation with third countries.

As set out in Article 48 (2), the support and assistance Frontex can now provide to Member States is multi-fold, ranging from interpreting services to providing equipment, resources and expertise for identifying potential returnees and implementing return decisions. Additional support is provided in the form of



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producing tailored analysis and recommendations on third countries of return.

### Enhanced focus on fundamental rights

Together with the expanded mandate comes increased accountability. The importance of monitoring return operations is further reinforced in Articles 51 and 110 (2a) by the introduction of fundamental rights monitors that can also act as return monitors. Fundamental rights monitors are now mandatory for all Frontex operations. They are to be selected by the fundamental rights officer and should constantly ensure that fundamental rights are fully respected in joint operations. Return monitors are experts who will have received training in fundamental rights as well as in other applicable areas in accordance with relevant research outcomes and best practices, as outlined in Article 62 (1). In particular cases, return experts will be provided with specific training on the protection

of children and vulnerable persons. Under the general provisions on respect for fundamental rights, as laid down in Article 80 of the new EBCG Regulation, the legislators once again specified that, in line with the principle of *non-refoulement*, no person shall be returned to a country where he or she will be subjected to any kind of inhumane or degrading treatment. While there is no new information in this regard, it is important to remember that Frontex must always remain in compliance with the requirements set out by basic international and European human rights law.

### Improved data collection

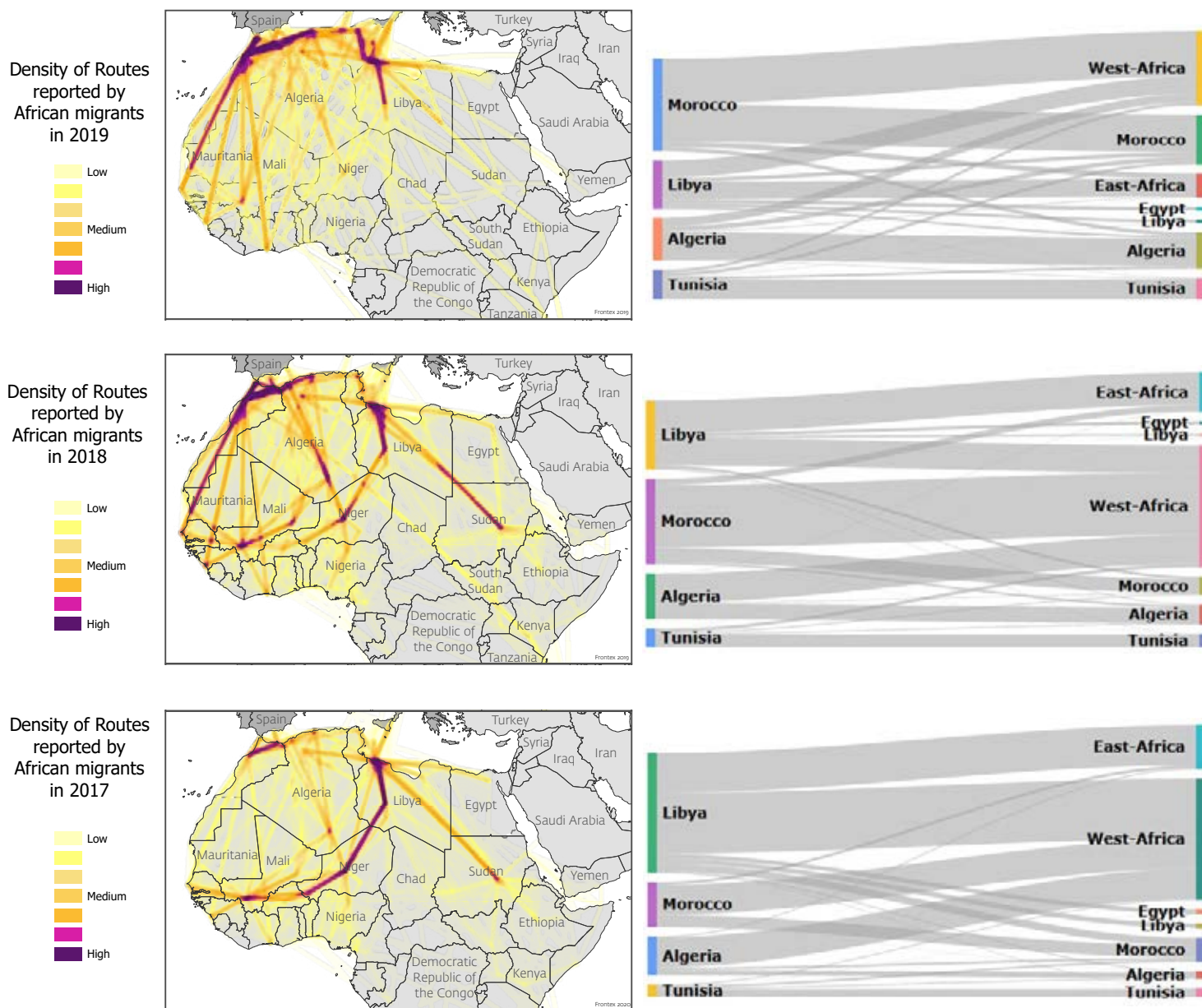
In accordance with Article 48 (1d), the Agency is finally tasked with the development of an integrated return management platform that will link the return management systems of the Member States for the purpose of exchanging data and information for analytical as well as operational purposes.

The ultimate goal of improved data collection on returns is to provide tailored support to Member States by delivering specific strategic and operational products. The quality of such products is a consequence of the quality of the data collection and how much this reflects reality in the Member States. For this reason, it is fundamental to maintain high standards as regards an integrated return management platform.

### Our efforts

A lot of work is still to be done and several challenges are waiting ahead, but in cooperation with Member States as well as with other EU agencies, Frontex will continue to make its best efforts to deliver tailored support and assistance based on the individual needs of the EU countries, with a view to ensuring the proper functioning of the European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

The development of routes over time and the flow from countries of origin (to the right) to departure countries to the EU (to the left of the Sankey)



## 7.2. Changes in Smuggling Services on the Central and Western Mediterranean Routes

From 2012 to 2017, Libya was the main nexus point where most sub-Saharan migrants gathered in order to be smuggled across the Mediterranean Sea to Italy and further to their countries of destination in Europe.

In addition, most West African migrants travelled by public transport from

their countries of origin to Agadez in Niger and, subsequently, were smuggled to Libya. The majority of East African migrants were smuggled first to Khartoum in Sudan and then to Libya across the Sahara desert, either directly or via Chad or Egypt. In Libya, migrants were transported to safe houses located mainly in

the areas of Tripoli, Sabratah or Sabha and subsequently smuggled by boat to Italy.

In mid-2018, after the Libyan Coast Guard had increased its patrolling activities in the Mediterranean Sea and the Italian authorities had changed its policy regarding SARs, the sea crossings from Libya to Italy became increasingly

difficult and expensive for migrants. Consequently, sub-Saharan migrants started searching for alternative routes to reach Europe. West African migrants started travelling to Algeria and Morocco, via Mali and Mauritania, and then to Spain by boat.

The reduction in the number of migrants smuggled across Libya has apparently reduced the revenue of the people smuggling networks that operate in Libya and along the routes leading to it.

Information collected during debriefing interviews indicates that in 2017, migrants paid Libyan networks on average USD 1 500 per person to be smuggled from Libya to Italy by boat. Based on this figure and the number of migrants who departed from Libya and were apprehended by the Italian authorities, it can be estimated that the criminal networks smuggling migrants to Italy by boat generated nearly USD 150 million in 2017. In mid-2018, the smuggling fees increased to EUR 1 800 per person, while the overall revenue of the smuggling networks decreased to just over EUR 24 million in 2018, and to over EUR 12 million in 2019.

The people smuggling networks operating on Libyan territory were led by Libyan nationals who were assisted by other smugglers who, in most cases, originated from the same country as the migrants. In many cases, the Sudanese and Malian associates of the Libyan smugglers took on the role of enforcer, whereas associates from other sub-Saharan countries took on the role of intermediary between the migrants and the criminal groups.

Information collected during debriefing interviews, corroborated with information from other sources, indicates that many of the armed groups fighting in Libya, especially those controlling the Zuwarah region, were deeply involved in the smuggling of migrants to Italy by boat. These groups either directly or indirectly charged part of the smuggling fees obtained by the criminal networks.

Apparently, the significant decrease in estimated revenue resulting from migrant smuggling (i.e. from USD 150 million in 2017 to less than USD 3 million

in 2019) had a limited effect on the military capabilities and power of the Libyan armed groups involved in these illegal activities. This may be an indicator that these armed groups have alternative sources of financing that can easily cover such a significant loss.

Conversely, the shift in the flow of West African migrants from Libya towards Morocco and Algeria, has significantly increased the revenue of the criminal groups involved in the smuggling of migrants from these two countries to Europe.

More specifically, during 2017 and the first half of 2018, migrants paid between EUR 500 and EUR 1 000 to be smuggled from Algeria to Spain and between EUR 1 000 and EUR 2 000 from Morocco to Spain. Since mid-2018, smuggling fees have grown on the Western Mediterranean route and by Q4 of 2019 the fee had reached EUR 3 000 per person. Based on these data and the number of migrants detected on the Western Mediterranean route it can be estimated<sup>1</sup> that in 2017 the people smuggling networks operating in Morocco gained nearly EUR 35 million, and their revenue grew to roughly EUR 105 million in 2018, and EUR 19 million in 2019.

Another effect of the growing demand for smuggling services in Morocco and Algeria was that these services have become increasingly diverse and sophisticated. Also, the number of smugglers involved in these activities has increased, especially those originating from the same countries as migrants.

Practically, the criminal networks operating in Morocco and Algeria have constantly scaled up their capabilities to smuggle an increasing number of migrants, thus increasing the migratory

threat on the Western Mediterranean route. In the future, these criminal networks might use their increased capabilities to expand their illegal activities to other crimes such as money laundering, corruption and smuggling of goods.

Nevertheless, as the smuggling fees continue to rise on the Western Mediterranean route, an increasing number of migrants might find this route unaffordable and search for alternative routes. Should any relevant factor be altered, the Central Mediterranean route could become attractive again for sub-Saharan migrants.

<sup>1</sup> It is more difficult to estimate the financial gains of the criminal groups operating in Morocco and Algeria because the smuggling fees paid by migrants can vary depending on many factors, such as: the services included in the agreement (e.g. safe house, food, flight ticket, life vest), the means of transport used and their seaworthiness (e.g. toy boat vs. jet ski vs. Zodiac), and the departure location.

### 7.3. Security risks of blacklisted flag vessels (BLVs) under the Paris MoU on port state control

The European Union has an extensive maritime area that stretches along 44 000 km of external sea borders. Its shipping lanes (some of the busiest in the world) and more than 300 seaports are vital for the bloc’s economic growth and prosperity – EU ports handle 400 million passengers per year, 74% of goods traded by the EU enter or exit via the sea and 40% of its internal trade takes place via maritime flows.

The EU’s maritime environment therefore offers valuable opportunities, but it also poses significant risks. Some of the major threats to the EU’s security (cross-border crime, terrorism and illegal migration) have an important maritime dimension, which consequently calls for a strong and effective maritime security strategy to properly address and manage such threats.

One risk to the EU’s security concerns the presence of so-called blacklisted flag vessels (BLVs) in EU ports. BLVs are ships registered in countries that have been blacklisted by the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MoU on PSC) on the basis of port state control inspections.

The Paris MoU on PSC was created in 1982 following a large-scale disaster at sea, namely, the sinking of the crude carrier Amoco Cadiz in 1978. Although, prior to the signing of the Paris MoU on PSC, rules were in place to regulate the working conditions for crews and to ensure compliance with the demands of the International Labour Organisation, the Amoco Cadiz catastrophe highlighted the need for more extensive regulations on safety and pollution. Today, the Paris MoU on PSC comprises the maritime administrations of 26 European countries and Canada with the aim of controlling the use of substandard ships (e.g. those that

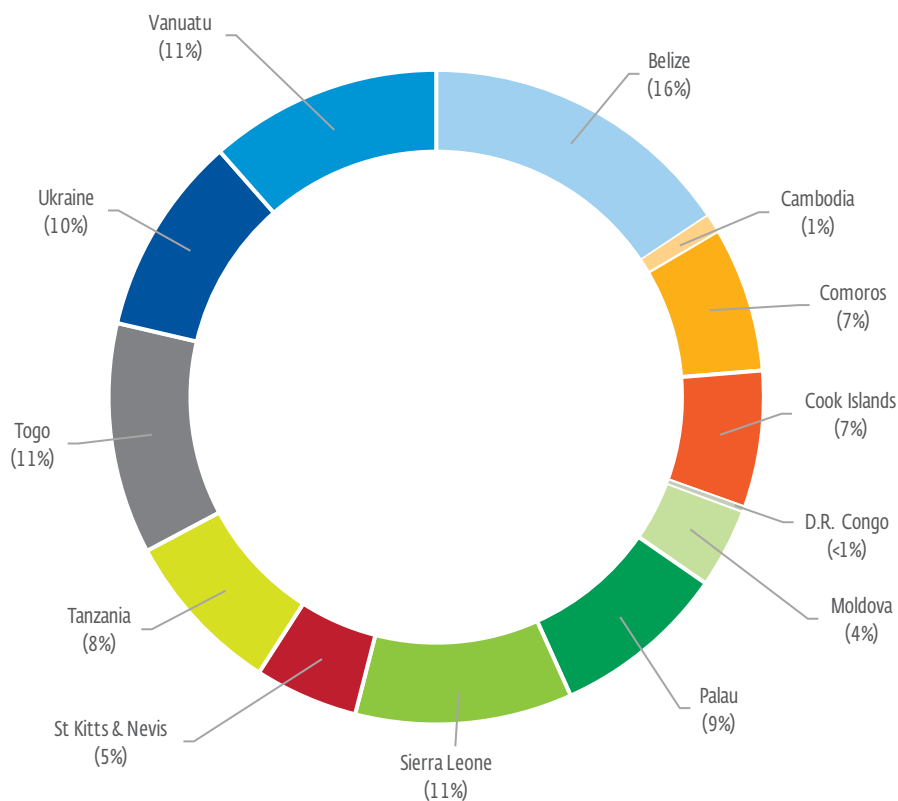
do not meet the required international safety and security standards) through a uniform approach to port state control.

In 2018, the following 13 states worldwide were blacklisted by the Paris MoU on PSC: Belize, Cambodia, Comoros, Cook Islands, Democratic Republic of Congo, Moldova, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Vanuatu and Ukraine. In 2019, two new states – Albania and Mongolia – were added to the black list, while Vanuatu was moved to the grey list.

Notably, for 95% of BLVs, the 13 blacklisted countries represented flags of convenience – a business practice whereby ship owners register their ships in the registries of other countries where

compliance with international laws may be less strictly observed. This is a legal – albeit controversial – practice, particularly as some countries’ registries are operated by private companies that provide a fast and easy process with few or no restrictions to registration. Unsurprisingly, the practice may also result in the registration of substandard vessels used for illicit activities at sea.

According to data on the BLV fleet available to Frontex for 2018, a total of 3 128 vessels (3% of the total global fleet) were registered in the 13 blacklisted flag states. The present analysis provides a closer look at this vessel population and considers the risks they pose to the EU’s security.



Breakdown of BLVs by country of registration, 2018

## Profile of blacklisted flag vessels

Vessels registered in the 13 blacklisted flag states displayed a uniform profile: smaller and older vessels compared with the world's fleet representing three main types (i.e. general cargo, service vessels and tankers). Specifically, cargo vessels made up the largest group of BLVs, accounting for half of the entire BLV population. This class included a high proportion of general cargo vessels, as well as an important share of bulk and livestock carriers. As the second main class, service vessels represented close to one-fifth of all BLVs, and comprised mostly tugs, supply vessels and anchor handling vessels. Tankers represented one in seven BLVs and included a large number of oil tankers (almost half). Together, the three classes – cargo ships, service vessels and tankers – made up 88% of the entire BLV population in 2018.

BLVs were generally small in size – more than three-fifths were below 7k tonnage and rarely exceeded 10k tonnage, whereas, in comparison, less than half of the global merchant fleet was this small. Similarly, while three-fifths of BLVs measured up to 100 metres in length, only two-fifths of the global vessel population were this size. Furthermore, more than 63% of BLVs were over 20 years old, and 76% were more than 10 years old. As regards the global fleet, 56% of vessels were less than 20 years old.

BLVs were thus usually smaller and older than most ships in the global fleet. This is an important finding because the age, size and type of BLVs are determining factors for their involvement in illicit activities. Since smaller ships are easier to operate and older ships have a lower market value and more difficulty in staying economically competitive at sea, they

tend to be more attractive to criminals. BLVs are therefore potentially more likely to be involved in illicit activities than regular ships (e.g. at the beginning of 2018, the Greek Coast Guard seized a Tanzania-registered general cargo off the island of Crete, carrying explosives destined to Libya<sup>1</sup>; towards the end of the year, Spanish Police officers apprehended 1 400 kilos of cocaine from a tugboat registered in Moldova, navigating in the Atlantic Ocean, off the southwestern coast of Spain<sup>2</sup>).

## Mitigating the risk of BLVs to the EU's maritime security

The involvement of BLVs in illicit activities has been well-documented, forcing certain countries to take measures to protect their registries. In 2016, for example, the government of Cambodia closed its flag of convenience scheme after foreign ships registered in the country were found to be involved in drug and arms smuggling and human trafficking. Earlier in 2013, the European Commission banned seafood imports into the EU from Cambodia and Belize in view of illegal fishing by ships registered in the two countries, further proving the misuse of the two countries' registries by foreign ships.

According to the Paris MoU's current list of banned ships, as of mid-February 2020, 110 ships are banned from the Paris MoU region due to their poor safety

record, out of which 77% are registered in a blacklisted flag-state. This finding also suggests the potential risk of BLVs for the security of the Paris MoU region.

In 2018, close to 1 000 vessels flying different blacklisted flags made more than 15 000 calls to EU ports. While their presence in EU waters *per se* does not indicate their involvement in an illegal activity (many BLVs are involved in legitimate business and present no security and safety risk), it is important that EU countries are able to detect and intercept those vessels whose voyages to the EU do not have a legitimate purpose.

As the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex will continue to deal with the security risks posed by BLVs in the framework of its Multipurpose Maritime Operations and the EUROSUR Fusion Services for Border Surveillance, supporting the competent authorities of the Member States accordingly.

1 <http://www.ekathimerini.com/224794/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-authorities-intercept-ship-stacked-with-arms-for-libya>

2 <https://www.efe.com/efe/english/world/spain-police-raid-boat-in-atlantic-seize-1-5-tons-of-cocaine-arrest-10/5000262-3789687#>

## 7.4. In Focus: Secondary Movements by Sea Throughout 2019

EU migration in recent years has become closely associated with arrivals of third-country nationals, often in overcrowded and unseaworthy boats. While crossings of external sea borders are an important part of EU migration, there are also other relevant aspects. For many migrants and asylum seekers, the initial sea voyage to Europe is just the beginning. After arrival, many try to continue their journey to their desired destination, travelling in an irregular manner between countries in the EU and Schengen area (secondary movements).

For irregular migrants and asylum seekers who do not wish to stay in the first country of arrival and for whom travelling by land or air may not be viable, travelling by sea may be the only way to get to their intended destination. Despite the inherent risks, many third-country nationals are eager to attempt sea crossings. In 2019 secondary movements by sea continued to be reported across the EU; they were mostly concentrated in the North Sea, Baltic and Mediterranean.

### North Sea/English Channel

In 2019 the North Sea and English Channel remained a key area for secondary movements by sea. The movements were largely towards the United Kingdom, which has long been an attractive destination for third-country nationals. While such movements to the UK are not a recent phenomenon, they gained prominence in the past few years and saw a diversification of *modi operandi* and nationalities. The increased volume of secondary movements across these seaways may have been in part attributed to the UK's departure from the EU, which stoked fears among migrants and asylum seekers that reaching the United Kingdom would become increasingly difficult after Brexit, and heightened the sense of urgency to reach the country.

Despite the various *modi operandi* employed for the sea crossings, in 2019 the

most common method remained hiding third-country nationals in the backs of lorries bound for the United Kingdom. While highly popular among migrants and facilitators, this *modus operandi* often comes at a great cost to human life due to the dangerous concealment methods used (i.e. refrigerated lorries and sealed containers). The tragic consequences that can ensue from clandestine entry attempts were illustrated by the death of 39 Vietnamese nationals whose bodies were found at an industrial park in Essex inside a refrigerated lorry that had departed from the port of Zeebrugge in Belgium.

Last year, the vast majority of those detected attempting to cross the North Sea and English Channel clandestinely were adult males from Eritrea, Albania and Sudan, followed by North African and Middle Eastern nationalities such as Algerians, Iraqis, Afghans and Libyans. Though in much fewer numbers, attempts by females were also reported, in particular from Eritrea, and to a lesser extent from Vietnam, India, Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly one in every five persons detected travelling clandestinely were children (mostly boys). Here again, Eritreans made up the largest group and were followed by children from Sudan, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Albania and Iraq. Three-fifths of reported children travelled unaccompanied, with the majority originating from Eritrea.

A further *modus operandi* that continued to be widely employed for sea crossings in the North Sea and English Channel concerned the use of fraudulent documents by third-country nationals travelling by ferry. However, given the cost of procuring fraudulent documents, not everyone could afford this method – one-third of all users were from Albania, followed by Iraqis and Iranians, and to a large extent they used false ID cards as well as false passports.

In 2019 the English Channel became especially notorious for migrants'

attempts to cross in small boats, a trend that began towards the end of 2018 and rose sharply in 2019, likely as a result of reinforced security measures and more stringent border checks which made attempts to stow away in lorries more difficult. Many of the third-country nationals that attempted the illegal boat crossings came from Iran and Afghanistan. This *modus operandi* poses substantial risks to migrants' and asylum seekers' lives – not only is the English Channel one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, but the boats used are small and unfit for purpose, lacking the necessary equipment to guarantee a safe crossing. For those who make it, the risk of exploitation and human trafficking remains a possibility if opportunities for legal work in the UK are not available.

### Mediterranean Sea

Although the Mediterranean is largely known as an entry route for migrants and asylum seekers wanting to reach Europe, it is also extensively used by a number of third-country nationals who aim to reach a country different from that of arrival. In particular, the sea route from Greece to Western European countries has gained increasing importance as an alternative for irregular migrants and asylum seekers looking to circumvent the overland Western Balkan route since its closure in 2016.

Last year, the Mediterranean continued to experience intense intra-Schengen movements from Greece. The *modi operandi* used were largely comparable to those observed in the North Sea and English Channel. Many third-country nationals attempted to travel clandestinely by hiding in trucks, cars, vans, buses and ferries. This method was most commonly used by males from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, and to a lesser extent from Albania and Turkey. Overall, few children were detected travelling clandestinely;





Border Guard checking lorry,  
© Frontex 2007

almost all cases reported concerned Iraqi and Afghan children.

As regards third-country nationals who boarded ferries in a bid to reach Western Europe, many were in possession of fraudulent documents, such as false passports, false ID cards and (less so) residence permits. These included to a large extent Syrians, Turks, Afghans and Iraqis. There were also cases of ferry passengers travelling without documents.

### Baltic Sea

Although the Baltic Sea was the least affected of the three regions by secondary movements by sea, last year it experienced a surge in movements from Central European countries and, to a lesser extent, Baltic States, towards Scandinavia. Secondary movements by sea across this region concerned mostly Ukrainians, but also some nationals of Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) and other European countries (Georgia, Belarus and Russia). While the main mode of travelling was ferry, detections suggest that many travelled without the necessary documentation, as well as with fraudulent documents or without

a valid visa or residence permit. The fact that the vast majority of irregular travellers in this region were male, coupled with increases over the summer, implies that such movements were associated with seasonal migrant labour.

Other relevant movements by sea from Central Europe to Scandinavia included those by Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, Eritreans and Somalis. Movements in the opposite direction were rarely reported.

### Facilitation of secondary movements

The high number of irregular migrants and asylum seekers present in EU territory and the strengthening of law enforcement and border management measures has led to the establishment of organised crime groups dedicated to the facilitation of secondary movements across all types of border. Their business model is largely founded on the exploitation of migrants' aspirations for a brighter future in a new country, and often conducted without any regard for the lives of those they are meant to be assisting. With the stepping up of measures to dissuade dangerous irregular

movements between EU and Schengen Associated Countries and reduced opportunities for clandestine attempts, there is an increased risk of facilitated secondary movements.

In order to more effectively tackle risky movements of irregular migrants and asylum seekers and ensure their safety, cooperation at national and EU level is pivotal. In this regard, Frontex will continue to actively support Member States, not only in ensuring well-functioning external borders, but also in providing operational support where it is most needed and collaborating with other Agencies and Bodies of the European Union to ensure that the EU's internal security and the area of freedom, security and justice are guaranteed. Last but not least, analysis will remain an important aspect of Frontex's work in the area of secondary movements in years to come. The use of EUROSUR as the main framework for information exchange and cooperation between the Agency and Member States (as envisaged under the new EBCG Regulation) will thus be crucial in fulfilling this role, helping Frontex to maintain an up-to-date and accurate European situational picture on the phenomenon.



Frontex Headquarters in Warsaw  
© Frontex 2018

## 8. Outlook and conclusions

Looking at the possible evolution of the situation at the EU external border, some developments are likely whereas others are possible. Past experience demonstrates that there are a large number of unforeseeable events and factors that can have a profound and unpredictable impact on the situation at the border.

### The likely

#### **2019 was the year irregular arrivals bottomed out**

2019 was characterised by destabilising trends in key countries of origin – in particular in countries bordering Turkey and thus in direct proximity to the Eastern Mediterranean route. While the migratory movement from most of these countries is gradual, the risk of sudden, large-scale outflows from Syria remains. The Idlib region of Syria has seen hundreds of thousands of refugees amassing on the Turkish border. According to the UN, from 1 December 2019 to mid-February an estimated 900 000 people

were displaced from Idlib, most of them women and children. Not all that far away, at the EU external border, a tense situation developed from the end of February 2020 onward. Other key regions of origin are currently experiencing major upheavals as well, for instance the locust plague in East Africa is threatening the livelihood of millions. Considering these factors, and in view of the slowing rate of decrease of migrant arrivals in recent years, 2019 may well stand out as the year when the number of illegal border-crossings bottomed out.

#### **Migrants organise to challenge border regimes**

2019 saw multiple instances of attempts by migrants to organise themselves to successfully cross the EU's external borders. These attempts were organised through social media messaging services and are often described as 'caravans' in reference to the Central American phenomenon in 2017/18 and in particular observed in the Western Balkans. 2020

has already witnessed several instances, which were closely monitored by Frontex. The ease with which these kinds of rallies can be organised on social media suggests that these occurrences may increase in the future, potentially with the goal of overwhelming border authorities or even forcing their way onto EU territory.

#### **Cross-border crime**

Cross-border crime remains by all estimates a profitable venture and as such will continue to occur at the EU's external borders. Heterogeneous weapon laws in the EU will continue to attract the smuggling of weapons and ammunition both within the EU and across its external borders. New aspects like the availability of illicit goods on the darknet and deliveries in small parcels will affect these crime fields. Closer cooperation between customs services, border guards, law enforcement authorities and (profile-based) targeted checks could address these developments going forward.

Generally speaking, given the complex nature of cross-border crime, comprehensive operational responses are required. Therefore, risk mitigation measures by Member States and Frontex at the EU's external borders need to be based on the findings of risk analysis and identified criminal threats. Besides risk analysis support, the Agency may provide technical and operational assistance to Member States to reinforce their capacity to fulfil their obligations with regard to the control of the external borders and to face challenges resulting from cross-border crime.

## The possible

### Reversal of upward trend of passenger flows

Rising legal passenger flows across the EU's external borders year-on-year seem to have been almost a given in recent years. With global mobility on the rise, the growing demand is being met by an expanding supply of cheap travel options. However, there are a number of factors that suggest a reversal of this trend (albeit probably temporary) is at hand, on both the demand and supply side.

Firstly, the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has already put a dent in global mobility. At the time of writing, countless people have been put under quarantine globally, with airlines suspending numerous connections. Major international events have been cancelled. Travellers are growing more careful in light of the pandemic as the WHO classified it. Others may be falling victim to what has been termed the 'infodemic'.

Secondly, there is a real possibility that climate change concerns may soon translate into hefty CO<sub>2</sub> emission prices which may considerably raise the prices of transportation. In addition, demand

could well suffer, too, if consumers start changing their behaviour.

### Brexit creates new challenges for EU border management

The UK has traditionally been and is likely to remain a prime destination country for migrants. Uncertainty about Brexit has in fact increased the resolve of migrants to get to the UK recently, resulting in an increase in migrant boats in the English Channel, clandestine entry attempts on lorries and even attempts to enter the UK aboard cruise ships. As the future relationship between the UK and the EU is negotiated during the transition period, the level of formalised cross-border cooperation will be a key determinant of the future challenges to EU integrated border management. Bilaterally good examples of cooperation already exist in the North Sea region. The UK is not only a destination country for migrants, it also plays a significant role as a market for drugs and illegal firearms. Hence Brexit – with different border and customs controls – will influence the development of cross-border crime, too.

## The unknown

### The coronavirus and border controls

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has had far-reaching consequences beyond the impact on passenger flows (as discussed above). Given the increasing prevalence of the disease, proper contingency planning and precautionary measures are essential in order to mitigate the worst effects of the disease. Beyond the multifaceted effects on the European Border and Coast Guard described in 6.2, the spread of COVID-19 has also set in motion dynamics that are, for the time being, still difficult to evaluate in terms

of their potential impact on European border management. As even the most developed countries with sophisticated healthcare systems are struggling to deal with the pandemic and are often passing unparalleled measures that rely to some extent on societal/public trust, the effects on whole regions of the globe without proper governance, adequate healthcare systems or an appropriate economic arsenal to deploy against the pandemic are entirely unclear.

Some regimes may be unable to maintain order and the outbreak of internal and inter-state conflict could occur, potentially creating new displaced populations or irregular migration, possibly also moving towards Europe.

Many other scenarios are conceivable. For instance, infected people from developing countries might seek medical care in Europe – regardless of the risk of infecting others in the chosen country of destination.

Finally, until such a time that a viable, scalable vaccine is available, the virus will continue to encircle the globe, making it necessary to thoroughly reorientate border management towards health screening.

### Migration within the geopolitical context

Increased geopolitical competition in the Mediterranean is clearly visible from the ferocity with which foreign powers have been moving into Libya to side with either faction in the ongoing conflict. Competition for natural resources like offshore gas is just one of many interests at stake. Given the actors involved, the geopolitics of the Central Mediterranean may well result in the use or threat of the use of migration as a bargaining chip.

## 9. Statistical annex

### LEGEND

**Symbols and abbreviations:** **n.a.** not applicable  
: data not available

**Source:** FRAN and EDF-RAN data as of 31 January 2020, unless otherwise indicated

**Note:** 'Member States' in the tables refer to FRAN Member States as of 2019, including both 28 EU Member States and three Schengen Associated Countries.

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

Detections at the external borders by Member State, border type, gender and age group

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Border Type</b>							
							<b>Nationality</b>
Sea	365 295	176 211	113 643	106 246	75	-6.5	Afghanistan (27%)
Land	145 851	28 539	35 474	35 600	25	0.4	Syria (21%)
<b>Sex</b>							
							<b>Nationality</b>
Female	:	:	28 547	32 987	23	16	Afghanistan (35%)
Male	:	:	113 770	106 690	75	-6.2	Afghanistan (21%)
Not available	511 146	204 750	6 800	2 169	1.5	-6.8	Tunisia (29%)
<b>Age Group<sup>o</sup></b>							
							<b>Nationality</b>
Adult	107 974	146 736	114 183	96 947	68	-15	Afghanistan (17%)
Minor	20 332	32 443	30 948	32 554	23	5.2	Afghanistan (40%)
Not available	:	:	765	23 542	17	n.a.	Afghanistan (49%)
Unaccompanied	20 332	32 443	26 430	4 009	2.8	-85	Morocco (34%)
Accompanied	:	:	3 753	5 003	3.5	33	Afghanistan (28%)
Not available	382 840	25 571	3 986	12 345	8.7	210	Afghanistan (40%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>511 146</b>	<b>204 750</b>	<b>149 117</b>	<b>141 846</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-4.9</b>	

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

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year
<b>All Borders</b>						
Afghanistan	54 366	7 576	12 666	34 154	24	170
Syria	88 551	19 452	14 378	24 339	17	69
Unspecified sub-Saharan nationals	3	0	69	14 346	10	n.a.
Morocco	6 836	11 279	13 498	8 020	5.7	-41
Turkey	1 060	2 957	8 412	7 880	5.6	-6.3
Iraq	32 068	10 177	10 114	6 433	4.5	-36
Algeria	5 140	7 443	6 101	5 314	3.7	-13
Pakistan	17 973	10 015	4 988	3 799	2.7	-24
Palestine <sup>A</sup>	2 549	1 199	2 095	3 620	2.6	73
Iran	6 605	1 662	2 127	3 478	2.5	64
All Other	295 995	132 990	74 669	30 463	21	-59
<b>Total all borders</b>	<b>511 146</b>	<b>204 750</b>	<b>149 117</b>	<b>141 846</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-4.9</b>
<b>Land Border</b>						
Syria	5 777	3 122	6 083	7 546	21	24
Turkey	921	2 648	7 954	7 322	21	-7.9
Afghanistan	12 171	3 684	2 863	5 812	16	103
Iraq	4 041	1 778	3 348	2 256	6.3	-33
Pakistan	6 519	5 281	2 883	2 109	5.9	-27
Albania	5 316	6 502	4 576	2 055	5.8	-55
Bangladesh	493	260	855	1 386	3.9	62
Iran	997	395	1 353	1 318	3.7	-2.6
Cameroon	364	494	503	1 127	3.2	124
Palestine <sup>A</sup>	268	104	480	379	1.1	-21
All Other	108 984	4 271	4 576	4 290	12	-6.3
<b>Total land borders</b>	<b>145 851</b>	<b>28 539</b>	<b>35 474</b>	<b>35 600</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>Sea Border</b>						
Afghanistan	42 195	3 892	9 803	28 342	27	189
Syria	82 774	16 330	8 295	16 793	16	102
Unspecified sub-Saharan nationals	3	0	69	14 191	13	n.a.
Morocco	6 012	11 190	13 386	7 823	7.4	-42
Algeria	4 575	7 194	5 943	5 089	4.8	-14
Iraq	28 027	8 399	6 766	4 177	3.9	-38
Palestine <sup>A</sup>	2 281	1 095	1 615	3 241	3.1	101
Somalia	7 718	3 106	1 194	3 049	2.9	155
Congo (Kinshasa)	456	312	1 812	3 029	2.9	67
Tunisia	1 306	6 489	5 204	2 699	2.5	-48
All Other	189 948	118 204	59 556	17 813	17	-70
<b>Total sea borders</b>	<b>365 295</b>	<b>176 211</b>	<b>113 643</b>	<b>106 246</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-6.5</b>

<sup>A</sup> This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

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

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

<b>Routes</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Share of total</b>	<b>% change on prev. year</b>
<b>Eastern Mediterranean Route</b>	<b>182 277</b>	<b>42 319</b>	<b>56 561</b>	<b>83 333</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Sea</b>	<b>174 605</b>	<b>34 732</b>	<b>34 014</b>	<b>65 963</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>94</b>
Afghanistan	41 775	3 713	9 597	28 273	43	195
Syria	81 570	13 957	8 173	16 707	25	104
Iraq	26 573	6 417	6 029	3 741	5.7	-38
All Other	24 687	10 645	10 215	17 242	26	69
<b>Land</b>	<b>7 672</b>	<b>7 587</b>	<b>22 547</b>	<b>17 370</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>-23</b>
Turkey	190	2 220	7 468	6 619	38	-11
Syria	3 015	2 438	5 733	2 897	17	-49
Pakistan	893	901	1 823	1 556	9	-15
All Other	3 574	2 028	7 523	6 298	36	-16
<b>Western Mediterranean Route</b>	<b>9 990</b>	<b>23 063</b>	<b>56 245</b>	<b>23 969</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>-57</b>
<b>Sea</b>	<b>8 641</b>	<b>21 552</b>	<b>54 820</b>	<b>23 557</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>-57</b>
Unspecified sub-Saharan nationals	0	0	69	12 482	53	n.a.
Morocco	722	4 704	11 881	6 336	27	-47
Algeria	1 693	4 287	4 339	4 007	17	-8
All Other	6 226	12 561	38 531	732	3.1	-98
<b>Land</b>	<b>1 349</b>	<b>1 511</b>	<b>1 425</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>-71</b>
Unspecified sub-Saharan nationals	0	0	0	155	38	n.a.
Mali	33	6	216	102	25	-53
Guinea	604	636	779	76	18	-90
All Other	712	869	430	79	19	-82
<b>Western Balkan Route</b>	<b>130 325</b>	<b>12 179</b>	<b>5 869</b>	<b>15 152</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>158</b>
Afghanistan	10 620	3 388	1 669	5 338	35	220
Syria	2 705	634	323	4 643	31	n.a.
Iraq	2 607	960	300	1 498	9.9	399
All Other	114 393	7 197	3 577	3 673	24	2.7
<b>Central Mediterranean Route</b>	<b>181 376</b>	<b>118 962</b>	<b>23 485</b>	<b>14 003</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>-40</b>
Tunisia	1 207	6 415	5 182	2 690	19	-48
Sudan	9 406	6 221	2 037	1 764	13	-13
Côte d'Ivoire	12 399	9 509	1 191	1 304	9.3	9.5
All Other	158 364	96 817	15 075	8 245	59	-45
<b>Western African Route</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>1 323</b>	<b>2 718</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>105</b>
Unspecified sub-Saharan nationals	0	0	0	1 709	63	n.a.
Morocco	94	106	902	949	35	5.2
Mali	0	1	11	48	1.8	336
All Other	577	314	410	12	0.4	-97
<b>Circular Route from Albania to Greece</b>	<b>5 121</b>	<b>6 396</b>	<b>4 550</b>	<b>1 944</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>-57</b>
Albania	4 996	6 220	4 319	1 867	96	-57
China	0	0	39	18	0.9	-54
India	0	0	4	16	0.8	300
All Other	125	176	188	43	2.2	-77
<b>Eastern Borders Route</b>	<b>1 384</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>1 084</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>-33</b>
Turkey	49	47	76	77	11	1
Vietnam	399	261	370	62	8.6	-83
Ukraine	138	105	75	57	7.9	-24
All Other	798	459	563	526	73	-6.6
<b>Black Sea Route</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>n.a.</b>
Ukraine	0	0	0	1	50	n.a.
Russia	0	0	0	1	50	n.a.
Iraq	0	495	0	0	0	n.a.
All Other	1	42	0	0	0	n.a.
<b>Other</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>n.a.</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>511 146</b>	<b>204 750</b>	<b>149 117</b>	<b>141 846</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-4.9</b>

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

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Border Type</b>							<b>Nationality</b>
Land	1 896	1 207	1 998	2 119	83	6.1	Afghanistan (78%)
Sea	323	415	260	431	17	66	Tunisia (60%)
<b>Age Group</b>							<b>Nationality</b>
Adult	467	604	1 709	2 436	96	43	Afghanistan (67%)
Minor	200	53	391	113	4.4	-71	Tunisia (58%)
Not available	1 552	965	158	1	0	-99	Pakistan (100%)
<b>Sex</b>							<b>Nationality</b>
Female	:	:	145	84	3.3	-42	Tunisia (31%)
Male	:	:	2 101	2 464	97	17	Afghanistan (67%)
Not available	2 219	1 622	12	2	0.1	-83	Ethiopia (50%)
<b>Top Ten Nationalities</b>							
Afghanistan	233	490	1 041	1 646	65	58	
Tunisia	63	47	59	263	10	346	
Algeria	127	90	121	90	3.5	-26	
Pakistan	55	47	245	69	2.7	-72	
Iraq	221	171	120	52	2	-57	
Syria	667	115	64	51	2	-20	
Turkey	35	49	65	49	1.9	-25	
Morocco	148	48	43	45	1.8	4.7	
Iran	22	32	118	42	1.6	-64	
Guinea	360	246	114	37	1.5	-68	
All Other	288	287	268	206	8.1	-23	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 219</b>	<b>1 622</b>	<b>2 258</b>	<b>2 550</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>13</b>	

Annex Table 5. **Facilitators**

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Place of Detection</b>							<b>Nationality</b>
Inland	5 199	4 397	4 958	4 912	45	-0.9	Italy (9%)
Not available	3 382	327	3 033	3 765	34	24	Morocco (23%)
Land	2 833	4 197	2 139	1 804	16	-16	Turkey (10%)
Sea	962	1 032	402	404	3.7	0.5	Turkey (14%)
Air	245	293	110	104	0.9	-5.5	Syria (16%)
<b>Top Ten Nationalities</b>							
Morocco	1 233	804	696	1 039	9.5	49	
Albania	687	650	609	758	6.9	24	
France	490	435	655	595	5.4	-9.2	
Spain	638	475	477	507	4.6	6.3	
Italy	504	477	439	494	4.5	13	
Unknown	1 948	781	614	488	4.4	-21	
Syria	318	369	522	460	4.2	-12	
Iran	213	149	284	431	3.9	52	
Pakistan	367	370	503	411	3.7	-18	
Iraq	210	259	295	409	3.7	39	
All Other	6 013	5 477	5 548	5 397	49	-2.7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 621</b>	<b>10 246</b>	<b>10 642</b>	<b>10 989</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.3</b>	



## Annex Table 6. Illegal stay

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Place of Detection</b>							
							<b>Nationality</b>
Inland	409 869	352 750	273 807	307 246	76	12	Morocco (10%)
onExit	82 029	82 329	91 929	92 248	23	0.3	Ukraine (27%)
Not available	20	5	1 530	3 419	0.8	123	Turkey (22%)
<b>Age Group</b>							
							<b>Nationality</b>
Adult	:	:	236 900	359 249	89	52	Ukraine (11%)
Minor	:	:	21 052	22 321	5.5	6	Afghanistan (14%)
Not available	491 918	435 084	109 314	21 343	5.3	-80	Brazil (17%)
<b>Sex</b>							
							<b>Nationality</b>
Female	:	:	38 957	61 833	15	59	Ukraine (19%)
Male	:	:	154 294	247 853	62	61	Ukraine (11%)
Not available	491 918	435 084	174 015	93 227	23	-46	Eritrea (12%)
<b>Top Ten Nationalities</b>							
Ukraine	28 996	32 608	36 299	39 612	9.8	9.1	
Morocco	30 042	29 859	21 891	32 653	8.1	49	
Albania	24 127	24 801	21 639	24 833	6.2	15	
Algeria	17 274	19 892	16 383	21 469	5.3	31	
Iraq	31 883	21 574	21 850	20 011	5	-8.4	
Pakistan	19 573	19 624	15 605	19 206	4.8	23	
Afghanistan	50 746	21 177	14 104	15 699	3.9	11	
Eritrea	24 655	12 995	10 626	14 641	3.6	38	
Moldova	6 524	8 340	9 536	13 987	3.5	47	
Nigeria	14 838	14 997	11 545	10 041	2.5	-13	
All Other	243 260	229 217	187 788	190 761	47	1.6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>491 918</b>	<b>435 084</b>	<b>367 266</b>	<b>402 913</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	

## Annex Table 7. Refusals of entry

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

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Border Type</b>							
Land	162 162	126 456	131 641	145 494	69	11	Ukraine (45%)
Air	45 565	48 924	54 952	62 498	29	14	Brazil (11%)
Sea	5 861	7 192	4 037	4 100	1.9	1.6	Albania (38%)
Not available	0	0	28	5	0	-82	United States (20%)
<b>Age Group</b>							
Adult	:	:	141 049	175 099	83	24	Ukraine (39%)
Minor	:	:	14 757	19 288	9.1	31	Russia (74%)
Not available	213 588	182 572	34 852	17 710	8.3	-49	Brazil (31%)
<b>Sex</b>							
Female	:	:	42 185	53 103	25	26	Ukraine (36%)
Male	:	:	105 198	132 772	63	26	Ukraine (38%)
Not available	213 588	182 572	43 275	26 222	12	-39	Brazil (22%)
<b>Top Ten nationalities</b>							
Ukraine	27 761	37 071	57 576	70 334	33	22	
Russia	80 190	36 335	25 951	34 529	16	33	
Albania	19 148	31 861	24 386	21 604	10	-11	
Belarus	5 970	7 660	7 955	7 696	3.6	-3.3	
Serbia	6 824	7 727	7 658	7 203	3.4	-5.9	
Brazil	3 490	3 079	4 973	7 082	3.3	42	
Moldova	3 790	5 930	6 378	6 176	2.9	-3.2	
Georgia	1 787	2 601	4 094	5 140	2.4	26	
Turkey	3 201	4 662	4 836	4 644	2.2	-4	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4 081	3 774	4 142	3 318	1.6	-20	
All Other	57 346	41 872	42 709	44 371	21	3.9	
<b>Total</b>	<b>213 588</b>	<b>182 572</b>	<b>190 658</b>	<b>212 097</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>11</b>	

## Annex Table 8. Reasons for refusals of entry

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

	Refusal persons Total	Reasons for refusals of entry (see description below)										Reasons Total
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	n.a.	
<b>Top Ten nationalities</b>												
Ukraine	70 334	152	72	4 509	51	37 048	7 100	14 740	6 037	279	1 514	71 502
Russia	34 529	108	43	30 732	56	1 322	294	731	189	1 350	126	34 951
Albania	21 604	130	89	284	22	8 302	1 991	4 582	6 379	183	525	22 487
Belarus	7 696	42	3	2 502	4	1 217	427	832	191	1 316	1 256	7 790
Brazil	7 082	22	31	2 619	2	2 531	147	383	242	32	1 549	7 558
Serbia	7 203	370	68	271	19	1 000	2 645	766	2 103	19	33	7 294
Moldova	6 176	48	12	366	9	2 341	726	1 136	1 599	19	97	6 353
Georgia	5 140	29	12	113	7	2 410	218	923	1 263	71	539	5 585
Colombia	3 247	18	11	267	0	2 216	82	580	172	78	1 350	4 774
Turkey	4 644	486	143	1 954	74	927	617	264	206	23	64	4 758
All Other	44 442	4 953	1 357	9 224	682	14 683	2 164	3 893	3 100	542	9 826	50 424
<b>Total</b>	<b>212 097</b>	<b>6 358</b>	<b>1 841</b>	<b>52 841</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>73 997</b>	<b>16 411</b>	<b>28 830</b>	<b>21 481</b>	<b>3 912</b>	<b>16 879</b>	<b>223 476</b>

Descriptions of the reasons for refusal of entry:

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

### Annex Table 9. Persons using fraudulent documents

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Border Type</b>							
Air	4 372	4 137	4 344	3 901	68	-10	Iran (10%)
Land	2 272	1 870	1 324	1 089	19	-18	Ukraine (19%)
Sea	417	705	878	707	12	-19	Morocco (91%)
<b>Top Ten Nationalities</b>							
Morocco	800	919	975	769	13	-21	Spain (89%)
Turkey	211	270	383	431	7.6	13	Croatia (18%)
Iran	383	419	443	428	7.5	-3.4	Germany (37%)
Unknown	714	534	611	324	5.7	-47	Portugal (33%)
Ukraine	1 201	790	395	251	4.4	-36	Poland (62%)
Albania	380	244	162	205	3.6	27	Ireland (26%)
Ghana	76	93	127	176	3.1	39	Italy (60%)
Kosovo <sup>^</sup>	43	103	99	153	2.7	55	Hungary (54%)
Syria	235	212	182	136	2.4	-25	Netherlands (26%)
Iraq	270	155	211	136	2.4	-36	Germany (28%)
All Other	2 748	2 973	2 958	2 688	47	-9.1	Italy (16%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 361</b>	<b>6 998</b>	<b>6 670</b>	<b>6 667</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>	

### Annex Table 10. Fraudulent documents used

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Country of issuance</b>							
Spain	862	989	1 107	895	12	-19	ID Cards (37%)
France	783	1 030	944	817	11	-13	Passports (34%)
Italy	875	860	711	649	8.6	-8.7	Visas (29%)
Germany	469	504	412	443	5.9	7.5	Residence Permits (37%)
Turkey	69	117	276	315	4.2	14	Passports (95%)
Poland	886	740	404	272	3.6	-33	Visas (79%)
Greece	272	296	283	251	3.3	-11	ID Cards (34%)
Belgium	293	253	239	203	2.7	-15	Residence Permits (32%)
Senegal	78	91	75	192	2.5	156	Passports (98%)
Ghana	43	57	88	181	2.4	106	Passports (97%)
All Other	3 659	3 289	3 439	3 318	44	-3.5	Passports (68%)
<b>Type of Document</b>							
Passports	2 764	2 885	3 130	3 582	48	14	AUTH-IMPOSTOR (27%)
Visa	2 124	1 856	1 454	1 179	16	-19	FALSE-COUNTERFEIT (47%)
ID Cards	1 166	1 309	1 461	1 163	15	-20	FALSE-COUNTERFEIT (45%)
Residence Permits	1 193	1 227	1 138	956	13	-16	FALSE-COUNTERFEIT (43%)
Stamps	832	710	602	496	6.6	-18	FALSE-COUNTERFEIT (85%)
Other	210	239	193	160	2.1	-17	FALSE-COUNTERFEIT (61%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 289</b>	<b>8 226</b>	<b>7 978</b>	<b>7 536</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-5.5</b>	

<sup>^</sup> This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

## Annex Table 11. Return decisions issued

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Age Group</b>							
Adult	:	:	149 334	151 176	51	1.2	Ukraine (20%)
Minor	:	:	9 287	9 627	3.2	3.7	Iraq (11%)
Not available	305 463	282 075	125 259	137 387	46	9.7	Albania (10%)
<b>Sex</b>							
Female	:	:	44 267	48 930	16	11	Ukraine (18%)
Male	:	:	187 080	201 811	68	8	Ukraine (11%)
Not available	305 463	282 075	52 533	47 449	16	-9.7	Brazil (13%)
<b>Top Ten Nationalities</b>							
Ukraine	24 651	29 303	33 651	33 296	11	-1.1	
Morocco	22 437	22 028	18 572	22 938	7.7	24	
Afghanistan	34 440	18 686	18 160	18 269	6.1	0.6	
Albania	18 195	18 015	16 495	17 063	5.7	3.4	
Pakistan	16 091	14 281	14 198	17 044	5.7	20	
Syria	9 830	8 963	6 979	13 463	4.5	93	
Iraq	28 454	19 316	15 489	13 086	4.4	-16	
Algeria	9 490	9 691	9 199	12 402	4.2	35	
Brazil	5 025	5 788	5 794	7 933	2.7	37	
Turkey	3 461	4 508	5 855	7 464	2.5	27	
All Other	133 389	131 496	139 488	135 232	45	-3.1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>305 463</b>	<b>282 075</b>	<b>283 880</b>	<b>298 190</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5</b>	

\* Data for Belgium are not available for May-December 2018 and November-December 2019.

## Annex Table 12. Effective returns

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Age Group</b>							
Adult	:	:	76 380	96 044	69	26	Ukraine (26%)
Minor	:	:	2 963	5 411	3.9	83	Albania (11%)
Not available	174 810	155 945	68 472	37 405	27	-45	Albania (10%)
<b>Sex</b>							
Female	:	:	16 259	21 374	15	31	Ukraine (34%)
Male	:	:	56 958	75 202	54	32	Ukraine (24%)
Not available	174 810	155 945	74 598	42 284	30	-43	Albania (14%)
<b>Top Ten Nationalities</b>							
Ukraine	20 990	24 614	27 264	26 594	19	-2.5	
Albania	27 221	25 790	19 243	15 120	11	-21	
Morocco	8 672	10 047	10 858	9 647	6.9	-11	
Georgia	2 500	3 446	5 021	7 343	5.3	46	
Algeria	3 414	4 888	5 052	5 190	3.7	2.7	
Russia	3 683	4 573	4 628	4 820	3.5	4.1	
Moldova	2 028	3 415	3 531	4 027	2.9	14	
Tunisia	2 982	3 653	3 854	3 563	2.6	-7.6	
Brazil	2 786	2 934	3 065	3 425	2.5	12	
Iraq	11 840	5 482	4 869	3 421	2.5	-30	
All Other	88 694	67 103	60 430	55 710	40	-7.8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>174 810</b>	<b>155 945</b>	<b>147 815</b>	<b>138 860</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-6</b>	

\* Data for Austria are not available since October 2015.

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

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Type of Return</b>							<b>Nationality</b>
<b>Forced return</b>	<b>78 574</b>	<b>79 606</b>	<b>75 030</b>	<b>71 163</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>-5.2</b>	<b>Albania (17%)</b>
Enforced by Member State	57 985	59 684	54 015	50 105	70	-7.2	Albania (21%)
Not available	15 297	16 565	18 741	17 218	24	-8.1	Morocco (35%)
Enforced by Joint Operation	5 292	3 357	2 274	3 840	5.4	69	Albania (20%)
<b>Voluntary return</b>	<b>91 703</b>	<b>76 013</b>	<b>72 773</b>	<b>67 656</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>Ukraine (36%)</b>
Without assistance	:	:	33 335	34 342	51	3	Ukraine (64%)
Not available	9 365	3 996	27 556	22 223	33	-19	Albania (11%)
Others**	61 178	53 980	8 442	4 758	7	-44	India (19%)
AVRR	:	:	237	4 179	6.2	n.a.	Iraq (30%)
AVR	:	:	1 665	2 132	3.2	28	Ukraine (14%)
IOM Assisted**	21 160	18 037	1 538	22	0	-99	Pakistan (36%)
<b>Not available</b>	<b>4 533</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>Albania (71%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>174 810</b>	<b>155 945</b>	<b>147 815</b>	<b>138 860</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-6.1</b>	
<b>TOP TEN NATIONALITIES</b>							
<b>Forced</b>							
Albania	19 508	21 738	16 341	11 996	17	-27	
Morocco	6 901	8 936	9 977	9 074	13	-9.1	
Algeria	2 428	3 410	4 044	4 579	6.4	13	
Georgia	1 173	1 524	2 290	3 514	4.9	53	
Tunisia	2 719	3 403	3 545	3 347	4.7	-5.6	
Ukraine	2 069	2 249	2 635	2 542	3.6	-3.5	
Brazil	1 539	1 612	1 912	2 307	3.2	21	
Serbia	4 311	3 155	2 594	2 126	3	-18	
Moldova	725	1 280	1 092	1 848	2.6	69	
Russia	961	1 512	1 681	1 780	2.5	5.9	
All Other	36 240	30 787	28 919	28 050	39	-3	
<b>Total Forced Returns</b>	<b>78 574</b>	<b>79 606</b>	<b>75 030</b>	<b>71 163</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-5.2</b>	
<b>Voluntary</b>							
Ukraine	18 899	22 362	24 629	24 052	36	-2.3	
Georgia	1 187	1 904	2 731	3 824	5.7	40	
Albania	5 520	3 984	2 901	3 095	4.6	6.7	
Russia	2 717	3 057	2 946	3 040	4.5	3.2	
Iraq	10 586	4 635	3 945	2 667	3.9	-32	
Belarus	1 114	1 422	2 388	2 275	3.4	-4.7	
Moldova	1 299	2 135	2 439	2 179	3.2	-11	
Pakistan	4 262	4 543	2 871	1 816	2.7	-37	
India	6 888	3 339	2 478	1 622	2.4	-35	
Turkey	880	854	972	1 544	2.3	59	
All Other	38 351	27 778	24 473	21 542	32	-12	
<b>Total Voluntary Returns</b>	<b>91 703</b>	<b>76 013</b>	<b>72 773</b>	<b>67 656</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-7</b>	

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

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

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

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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Share of total	% change on prev. year	Highest share
<b>Border Type</b>							
Air	164 867 817	167 638 054	172 286 781	179 526 259	61	4.2	Unknown (75%)
Land	107 709 052	111 447 809	101 249 852	104 491 073	36	3.2	Ukraine (13%)
Sea	9 533 816	8 247 005	8 283 407	8 902 698	3.0	7.5	Unknown (66%)
<b>Groups of nationalities</b>							
EU MS/SAC	56 370 512	61 050 240	81 093 247	86 170 620	29	6.3	
Third-country	41 727 234	55 239 577	58 696 490	61 681 536	21	5.1	
Not specified	184 012 939	171 043 051	142 030 303	145 067 874	50	2.1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>282 110 685</b>	<b>287 332 868</b>	<b>281 820 040</b>	<b>292 920 030</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.9</b>	

As the data reported by France, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain for the 2016-2019 are not fully compliant with the definitions, the respective figures have been excluded from this table. Member States and Frontex are working closely to resolve these issues and the figures will be reported as soon as possible in the next publications.

## Notes on FRAN data sources and methods

The term 'Member States' refers to FRAN Member States, which includes the 28 Member States and three Schengen Associated Countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) as of 2019. For the data concerning detections at the external borders of the EU, some of the border types are not applicable to all FRAN Member States. This pertains to data on all FRAN indicators since the data are provided disaggregated by border type. The definitions of detections at land borders are therefore not applicable (excluding borders with non-Schengen principalities) for Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. For Cyprus, the land border refers to the Green Line demarcation with the area where the Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control. For sea borders, the definitions are not applicable for

land-locked Member States including Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Switzerland.

In addition, data on detections of illegal border-crossing at land, air and sea BCPs (1B) are not available for Iceland and Ireland.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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