



Highlights of International Protection in Europe

Vol. 3, July-September 2026

Dear readers,

This edition of HIPE contains highlights of international protection recorded between July-September 2026, as reported in the [Recent Developments](#) page of the Database on International Protection in Europe ([DIP](#)).

In the third quarter of 2026, EU+ countries continued to include **Pact provisions** into national legislation and practice, alongside measures addressing temporary protection, reception, detention, border management and returns. Against this backdrop, the **mass arrival of irregular migrants in Ceuta** highlighted the challenges posed by a sudden increase in arrivals and prompted renewed attention to preparedness and coordinated responses at the EU's external borders.

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Operationalisation of the EU Pact

As the Pact entered into application in June 2026, countries continued to make progress towards establishing the legal and institutional framework, with legislative amendments adopted in [Latvia](#), [Denmark](#), [Portugal](#), [Italy](#), [Malta](#) and [Sweden](#). The legislative process advanced towards adoption in [Bulgaria](#). In [Slovakia](#), where the law had already been adopted, the government approved the action plan for the National Strategy on Asylum and Migration Management.

In July 2026, pursuant to its obligation under Article 4 of Commission Implementing Decision 2025/2323, the **European Commission** published an [assessment](#) of whether practices which constituted systematic shortcomings under the Dublin III Regulation have been remedied to ensure the effective operation of the new responsibility rules and the functioning of the solidarity mechanism under the AMMR. The assessment focuses on countries which were identified as being under migratory pressure under the first Annual Migration Management Cycle. The assessment identified no particular concerns regarding Cyprus and Spain and noted positive developments in Greece. It noted Italy's significant efforts to prepare for the implementation of the new rules, although it reported that transfers had not resumed and that previous practices preventing them appeared to persist.

As regards the border procedure, [Decree of 21 July 2026](#) was issued in **Italy** designating border and transit areas, including centres where screening and the border procedure may be carried out. [Prefectures](#) also developed standard operating procedures for screening. In **France**, a [decree](#) was published which sets out the detailed rules governing proceedings before the National Court of Asylum in the context of the asylum procedure at the border. In **Bulgaria**, an AMIF-funded [project](#) was launched to modernise technology for biometric screening and secure registration systems for the new asylum border procedure.

Improving reception

In the third quarter of 2026, reception-related developments across EU+ countries focused on capacity, service provision, quality and the protection of vulnerable applicants. **Greece**, **Italy** and **Switzerland** took steps to strengthen or expand reception capacity and services, including new [framework agreements](#) for temporary reception facilities in Greece, AMIF funding for over 3,000 new [second-line places](#) in Italy's SAI reception network, and [new contracts](#) for healthcare and basic services in Swiss federal asylum centres and the opening of a [new centre](#) in Altstätten.

Norway, in turn, announced the [closure](#) of 14 reception centres, reducing capacity by over 2,000 places due to lower-than-expected arrivals, while **the Netherlands** secured [long-term stable funding](#) to reduce reliance on temporary emergency accommodation.

Other developments aimed to improve reception standards and services: **Lithuania** established a mechanism to [systematically assess](#) reception quality, while its Ombudsperson identified [shortcomings](#) in information provision and material conditions. Regarding conditions for irregular arrivals and returns, **Greece's** Ombudsman [called](#) for permanent, dignified facilities for irregular arrivals in Crete, while **Italy's** Council of State required an assessment of [health conditions](#) in repatriation detention centres before new tenders are issued.

Several countries strengthened specialised support for vulnerable groups, with **France** seeking providers for 50 accommodation places for victims of [trafficking and violence](#), **Ireland** publishing a [handbook](#) on safeguarding asylum-seeking adults at risk of harm in accommodation centres, and the **Bulgarian** authorities and the IOM continuing work on safe zones for [unaccompanied minors](#), alongside a UNICEF-supported [foster-care campaign](#).

Other measures included [clarifications](#) on support for unaccompanied minors in **Estonia**, the launch of a public tender to provide community [interpreting services](#) in reception centres in **Switzerland**, a competition for the provision of [mediation services](#) in reception centres across **Norway**, a [new agreement](#) to ensure the continuity of healthcare for youth in **the Netherlands**, the implementation of a Red Cross [project](#) on social, psychosocial and healthcare in **Croatian** reception centres, the provision by Caritas **Cyprus** of practical [information](#) on material reception conditions through Community Compass, targeting asylum seekers.

Extending temporary protection with new restrictions

The **Council of the EU** adopted [Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2026/1912](#), which extended temporary protection until 4 March 2028 for persons displaced from Ukraine and introduced additional eligibility requirements for new applicants, including ensuring a lawful departure from Ukraine and compliance with Ukrainian military obligations. Under Recital 16 of that decision, evidence to support this may include a passport exit stamp and an official document confirming their exemption from or compliance with military obligations. To this end, the European Commission published [operational guidelines](#) which provide clarification on the new eligibility criteria. According to the decision, the extension formally applies from 5 March 2027, although the majority of EU countries have already extended temporary protection until March 2028 and updated the eligibility criteria.

[Denmark](#), [Iceland](#) and [Switzerland](#), which are not bound by the Temporary Protection Directive, adopted similar requirements under their national frameworks.

Other developments included **Norway's** [proposed residence permit](#) for employed Ukrainians, **Latvia's** [clarification](#) of residence rights and pathway to permanent residence, and a **Swiss consultation** on greater discretion over social assistance of beneficiaries of protection status S (equivalent to temporary protection) who have resided in Switzerland for more than 5 years. Housing arrangements evolved, with **Denmark** [converting](#) the Hviding centre for displaced persons from Ukraine, the **Bulgarian** Supreme Administrative Court [restored access](#) to housing for all minor beneficiaries of temporary protection and the **Polish** Ombudsperson for Children [raised concerns](#) about the restrictions on access to collective accommodation for most Ukrainian nationals.

Border management and return procedures

The mass arrival of irregular migrants in Ceuta brought border management and returns into focus during the third quarter. At the EU level, the **European Commission** responded to these developments with a [five-point plan](#) to prevent, anticipate and respond to sudden mass irregular arrivals at the EU's external borders. At the same time, several measures were implemented in Spain, including a [plan](#) to open up five temporary humanitarian facilities in Ceuta to support migrants who recently arrived in the city.

In **Bulgaria**, the Council of Ministers adopted the [National Plan on Border Management and Return](#), which sets out measures to ensure effective border control, including an effective screening process to facilitate the rapid identification of asylum applicants and vulnerable groups. In **Finland**, EUR 29 million from the EU Home Affairs Funds was [allocated](#) to projects on border management, internal security and migration management. Additionally, the **Norwegian government** [proposed](#) new permanent emergency provisions for high and

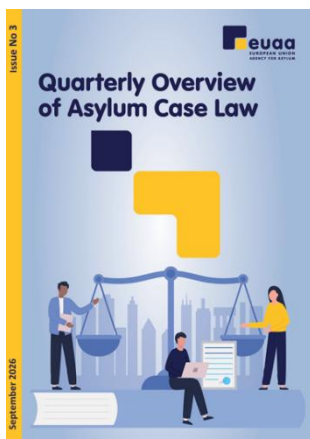
unexpected arrivals of asylum seekers, while [new regulations](#) on support for returns and reintegration entered into force.

In response to pressure at the border with Belarus, **Poland** [extended](#) its temporary restriction on the right to apply for asylum at the border until November 2026, with exceptions for vulnerable groups, while **Latvia** launched [Operation VILKATIS](#) in August 2026 to strengthen surveillance and prevent irregular crossings, with support from **Estonia** through the [ESTPOL border guard mission](#). A [project](#) led by the Lithuanian organisation Siena Group is being implemented to monitor and influence the implementation of the Pact at the EU's eastern external borders. **Latvia's** government endorsed a [Comprehensive Immigration Restriction Plan](#) to strengthen state control for both regular and irregular migration.

The notion of return hubs gained momentum, with the Council of the EU adopting [new rules on returns](#), including a legal basis for Member States to establish return hubs in third countries, subject to agreements with countries that respect international human rights standards and the principle of *non-refoulement*. In September 2026, a [core group](#) of countries (**Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece** and **the Netherlands**) met in Copenhagen and agreed on the next steps to establish return hubs outside of the EU. The meeting resulted in agreement on guiding principles for the proposed return hub model, and the countries are now moving towards active engagement with potential partner countries.

Austria launched a new [return programme](#) to support the voluntary and sustainable return of Syrians. Financial assistance and reintegration support is offered to applicants with pending asylum proceedings or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection who receive basic welfare support.

Latest publications analysing developments in asylum



Quarterly Overview of Asylum Case Law

The latest edition is now out which covers a [summary of cases](#) which were pronounced from June to August 2026.

Analysing Case Law

This [fact sheet](#) provides an overview of recent case law related to the assessment of international protection claims based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).



Jurisprudence related to LGBTIQ Applicants in International Protection

The jurisprudence presented in this fact sheet is extracted from the [EUAA Case Law Database](#) and complements the fact sheets published in [September 2024](#) and [September 2023](#). For more information on legislative, policy and practice developments related to asylum in 2025, please consult the [Asylum Report 2025](#) and the [National Asylum Development Database](#).

Across the world, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons continue to face criminalisation, discrimination and persecution on account of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). This is particularly prevalent in parts of North and sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, where aspects of LGBTIQ persons' identities remain criminalised, either explicitly by law or de facto, which may force members of these communities to flee their country of origin and seek international protection.

The [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), adopted in June 2024 and applicable since June 2026, introduced or reinforced provisions relevant to the protection of applicants with SOGIESC claims across its legislative instruments. Common standards for asylum applicants with diverse SOGIESC are defined in the Qualification Regulation (QR), the Asylum Procedures Regulation (APR), the 2024 Reception Conditions Directive (RCD), the Screening Regulation (SR) and the Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation. In October 2025, the European Commission also adopted the [Joint EU-LAT Equality Strategy 2026-2030](#), recognising that LGBTIQ applicants for international protection may face intersectional and additional risks both en route and upon arrival in the EU, and may require protection and reception that differ from other applicants.

This factsheet highlights current trends and evolving jurisprudence identified between January 2025–August 2026. It covers case law from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and national courts from EU+ countries.



Data analysis of decisions on asylum applications and recognition rates at second or higher instances in 2025

The information presented in this fact sheet complements the information on first instance decisions in protection in the [Asylum Report 2025](#).

The EU legislative framework for appeal procedures in 2025 was outlined in the recent [Asylum Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU](#), Chapter II, Article 46, obliging Member States to ensure that applicants have the right to an effective remedy before a court or tribunal with regard to a decision issued on a first instance application for international protection.¹

The right to an effective remedy includes a full examination of both facts and points of law, including an examination of the need for international protection as defined by the recent [Qualification Directive 2004/83/EC](#).² For an appeal of a decision, the examination should be done before a court or tribunal to guarantee adequate substantive and procedural safeguards.



Data Analysis of Asylum Applications by Unaccompanied Minors in 2025

The information presented in this fact sheet complements the information on asylum applications in the [Asylum Report 2025](#).

Data from Eurostat (published on 10 July 2026) are used to present data on asylum applications, which are included in the Asylum Report 2025, based on 13,634 first instance and second instance asylum (FIS) data exchange. FIS data show that the EUAA are processing and analysing and it includes any other form of asylum data submitted to Eurostat in the same year, including the Regulation (EC) 2003/2003 entering Regulation (EC) 2003/2003.

In 2025, unaccompanied minors lodged 22,000 applications for international protection in EU+ countries. Applications lodged by unaccompanied minors compared to the previous year and to the lowest level since 2020, remaining still significantly above the years immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic. This data was largely due to significantly fewer applications lodged by unaccompanied minors from Syria.

Germany (4,900), the Netherlands (3,500) and Greece (2,900) were the top countries of destination, accounting for over one-half of applications by unaccompanied minors. In all three countries, significantly fewer applications were lodged, with Germany reporting the deepest decrease (53%). Conversely, steep increases from the previous year were recorded for Switzerland (2,700, +182%), Spain (1,600, +71%) and Latvia (70, +103%) (see Figure 1).

Data on Asylum Applications

Two new fact sheets were published on data on [unaccompanied minor](#) asylum applicants in EU+ countries and data on [decisions and recognition rates](#) for appealed cases in 2025.

Overview of the Implementation of Safe Country Concepts

The report presents the state of play of EU+ countries implementing [safe country concepts](#) in the processing of asylum applications. The biannual overview is published in January and July. This report covers January-June 2026.



Situational Update

This fact sheet presents developments at the EU and national levels related to protecting asylum applicants who are [victims of human trafficking](#) covering the period July 2025-June 2026.



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