



Mass illegal border crossings, terrorist threat, humanitarian and health crisis, increasing organised crime, hybrid threats, temporarily closed internal borders. These are challenges that have had a significant impact on the Schengen external borders and the internal life of the region over the last decade, mainly as a result of climate change, regional security crises, the intensification of migration processes, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Among the responses to these challenges, the fight against irregular migration has permeated the renewal of the Union's rules, policy strategies, external action and partnership policies on immigration, asylum and border management.

As a reaction to the changing security environment, the Schengen Borders Code, which contains the tasks of external border surveillance, has been amended several times [(EU) 2016/399], most recently in June 2024 to enhance resilience of borders [(EU) 2024/1717].

The management and protection of the EU's external borders is primarily a national competence, but the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has a key role to play in this area within the framework of the European integrated border management (EIBM) [(EU) 2019/1896]. In addition, since 2016, Europol has also been increasingly involved in the fight against cross-border migrant smuggling, with a framework applicable until 2025 set out in the Action Plan against migrant smuggling, renewed in 2021 [COM(2021) 591 final].

An architecture of EU information systems for border management and law enforcement has also been developed to support the effectiveness of external border controls and to fight irregular forms of migration – illegal border crossings, overstaying, secondary movement. The interconnected operation of the systems is expected by 2026, according to the programming document of the coordinating agency (eu-LISA 2024-2026).

As part of its comprehensive approach to migration, the European Commission has also developed

guidance for the implementation of the EIBM until 2027 [COM(2023) 146 final], which, in addition to border surveillance and management tasks, also focuses on improving the effectiveness of return policy.

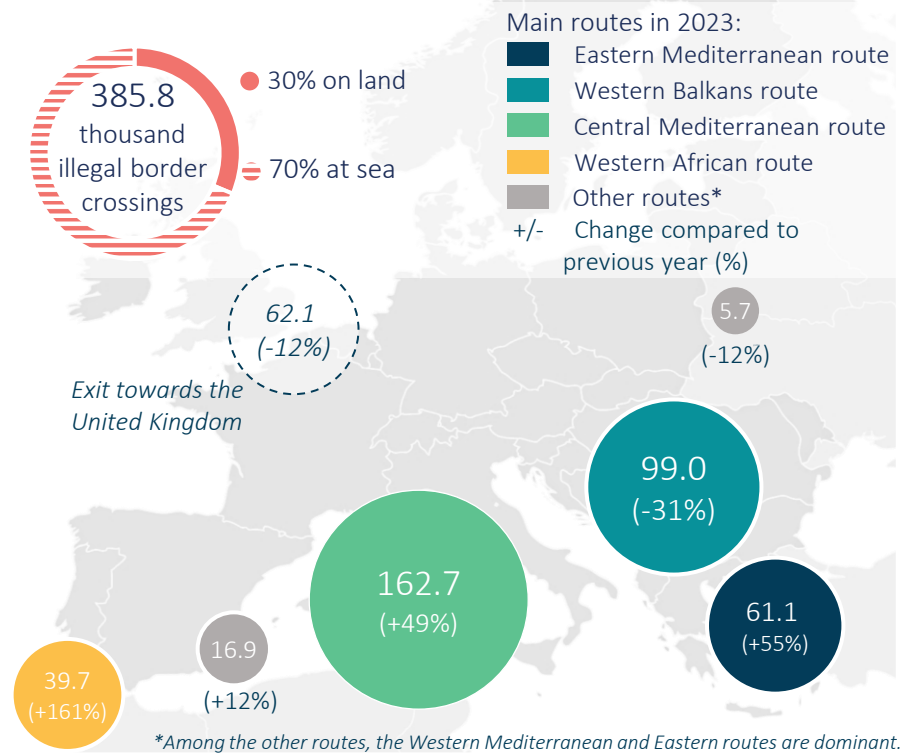
In 2023 and 2024, the European Council endorsed a comprehensive approach to managing migration, which combines effective protection of the EU's external borders, the fight against migrant smuggling and the use of migration as a tool, as well as increased external action and enhanced return (EUCO 1/23; 20/23; 7/24; 15/24). In this external dimension, the EU seeks to fight illegal entry and smuggling of migrants through cooperation with third countries; as well as to strengthen its partners' law enforcement capacities, return and readmission efficiency, legal migration opportunities and addressing the root causes of migration. The financing of the EU's external development and cooperation instruments, the common security and defence policy missions, Frontex operations and the Commission's action plans for the main migration routes play an important role in this complex set of objectives.

The comprehensive approach to migration is also reflected in the new Pact on Migration and Asylum adopted in Spring 2024. The European Commission published the implementation plan for the set of ten legislative acts on 12 June 2024 [COM(2024) 251 final]. ♦

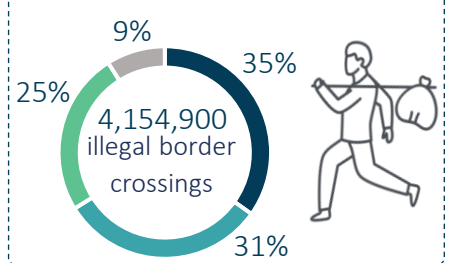
*"The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration, and the prevention and combating of crime."
(TEU, Article 3)*

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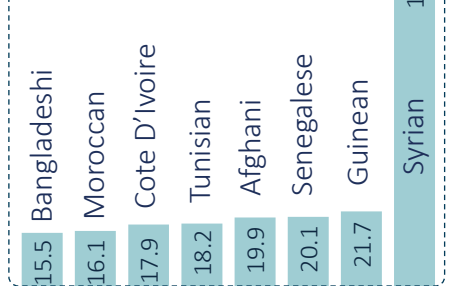
NUMBER OF ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSINGS AT THE EU'S EXTERNAL BORDERS, 2023 (in thousands)



Number of illegal border crossings by main routes, 2014–23

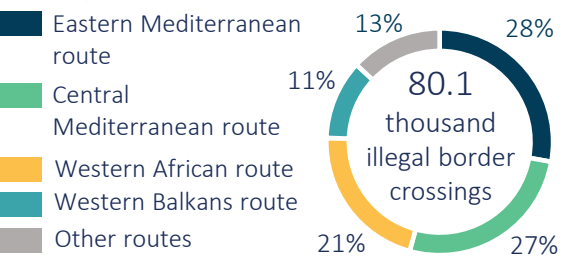


Illegal border crossings by nationality, 2023 (in thousands; over 15 thousand)



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ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSINGS, EXTERNAL BORDERS, JAN-MAY 2024 (distribution by main routes)



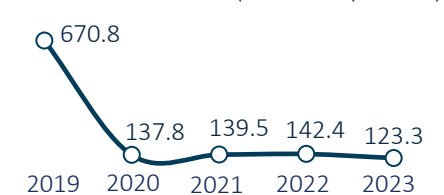
3

ILLEGAL STAY AND RETURN IN THE EU, 2019–23 (in thousands)



4

REFUSAL OF ENTRY INTO THE EU, EXTERNAL BORDERS, 2019–23 From third countries (thousand persons)

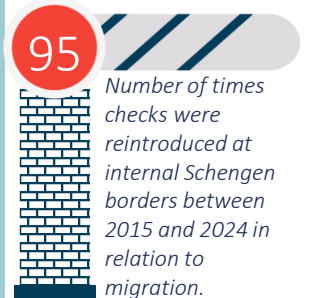


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FENCES AT EXTERNAL BORDERS, 2014-23



6



SOURCES

1 | 2 Frontex: [Detections of illegal border-crossings statistics](#) | 3 Eurostat: [\[migr_eipre\]](#); [\[migr_eiord\]](#); [\[migr_eirtn\]](#) | 4 Eurostat: [\[migr_eirfs\]](#) | 5 Costica Dumbrava: [EU migration and borders](#). EPRS, March 2024. | 6 [home-affairs.ec.europa.eu](#)