

CHANGING INFLUX OF ASYLUM SEEKERS 2014-2016

EMN INFORM

All (Member) States have historically experienced changes in the influx of applicants for international protection and other migrants, typically coinciding with conflicts worldwide and changes to migratory routes into the EU. However, in 2014-2016 (Member) States experienced an unprecedented influx of incoming applicants for international protection: the number of applications lodged rose to 1 320 000 million in 2015 and 1 260 000 million in 2016, though the scale and peak moments differed greatly between (Member) States. The mass influx led to backlogs of registrations of international protection applications, pressures on reception centres, and other operational and organisational challenges. (Member) States took numerous measures across different areas to deal with this unprecedented influx.

KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- The **2014-2016 influx of applicants for international protection and other migrants had a profound impact on the EU** as a whole, but **affected (Member) States in different ways**, including: in the scale of the phenomenon, peak moments and characteristics of the influx.
- **(Member) States' authorities have responded in different ways by taking different measures** across key areas that can be grouped into the following main categories: border control and law enforcement, (wider) reception services, registration and asylum procedures, and integration measures.
- **Some measures taken were similar** across different (Member) States, in particular those enhancing law enforcement and border control and those increasing reception places, immigration service staff and financial resources, while **other measures specifically responded to the individual challenges faced by a (Member) State** based on its type of influx (and the phenomenon of secondary movements),¹ geographical location and policy preferences.

- Certain measures had **collateral or knock-on effects on neighbouring countries** as they (partially) diverted the influxes to and through the EU;
- Following the general decrease in the influx of arrivals due to national and EU-wide measures taken, (Member) States responded by **dismantling or scaling down some of the measures taken** (such as closing reception centres or reducing reception places), reassigning staff elsewhere and re-allocating other resources. This required a degree of **flexibility**;
- (Member) States also considered themselves **better prepared for future peaks and troughs in influxes** because of the experience gained during 2014-2016 and the emergency and contingency plans put in place as a result;
- **Coordination at different levels of government improved the relevance and effectiveness of measures:**
 - between national, regional and local authorities;
 - between government and relevant third parties; and
 - between (Member) States bilaterally and multilaterally (EU-level).
- Defining **clear mandates and responsibilities for all stakeholders** involved also improved the effectiveness of measures;
- Timely sharing of strategic documentation and communication of decisions on measures taken by (Member) States, with the public and media, improved transparency and understanding of the choices made.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

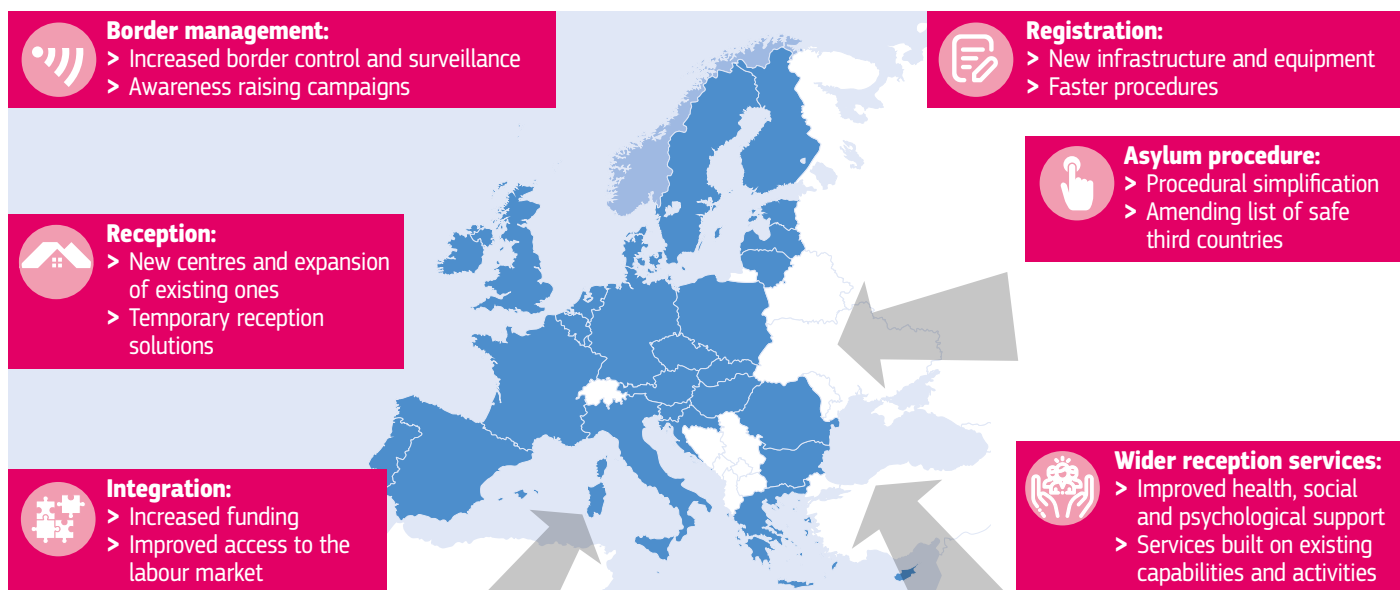
The increased migratory flows over the period 2014-2016 gave rise to significant legislative and policy amendments in a majority of the (Member) States.² This included enacting or amending legislation to better control the migratory flows at the

¹ The phenomenon of migrants, including refugees and applicants for international protection, who for different reasons move from the country in which they first arrived to seek protection or permanent resettlement elsewhere. (EMN Glossary: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/secondary-movement-migrants_en).

² AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, NO.

Dealing with the changing influx of asylum seekers

Key measures taken by Member States



borders,³ changes to migration and asylum laws,⁴ institutional changes⁵ and enhanced cooperation⁶ amongst relevant stakeholders.

Cooperation at national and international levels

All (Member) States, including those that did not experience an increased influx of applicants for international protection or other migrants, reported to have strengthened cooperation among relevant stakeholders at national level. More specifically, in the vast majority of the (Member) States, lead ministries (e.g. Interior) developed new synergies with other relevant ministries (e.g. Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and relevant departments, as well as international organisations (e.g. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The majority of (Member) States enhanced cooperation with other (Member) States at bilateral, multilateral, regional and European levels. Not only did the (Member) States make increased use of the existing platforms of cooperation (such as Council configurations / working bodies and Agencies' Management Boards) to exchange views and good practices, but they also developed new forms of cooperation in border management, law enforcement, the fight against smuggling, reception capacity and asylum procedures. At bilateral level, the majority of (Member) States developed stronger relations with law enforcement authorities in neighbouring countries and assisted each other in the management of the migratory flows.⁷



NATIONAL MEASURES

In response to the major fluctuations in the number of persons crossing the EU internal and external borders to seek asylum or another form of protection,⁸ (Member) States launched measures in six main areas. These main areas are outlined below:

Border control and law enforcement

Border control and law enforcement measures included organisational and operational interventions to manage inflows of persons at internal or external (land or sea) border crossings. Actions undertaken by the (Member) States⁹ in this area mostly focussed on scaling up control and surveillance, including: the (temporary) reintroduction of internal border controls, limiting the number of border crossings at official checkpoints, increasing capacity by deploying army and additional police forces, and intensifying control and surveillance operations at airports, ports, rail stations and motorways. These measures were often accompanied by changes and/or an expansion of the role of certain authorities in managing the inflow of third-country nationals at the internal or external border crossings and by changes to the functions of law enforcement authorities in patrolling and surveillance operations.

Reception services

In the area of reception services, measures mostly focussed on increasing (Member) States' reception capacities, with new centres being opened or existing ones being enlarged,¹⁰ which in

³ BE, FI, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, SE, SI, NO.

⁴ BE, DE, FI, FR, SE, SI, UK.

⁵ DE, AT, BE, EL, FI, SI.

⁶ BE, CZ, DE, FI, LV, SI.

⁷ AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, NL, SI, SK, NO.

⁸ On the basis of indications from the National Reports, whereas the increasing fluctuation for the majority of the (Member) States was related to the situation in Middle East and North Africa, for Slovak Republic and Poland it was also linked to the political situation in Ukraine. Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia received applicants for international protection as consequence of both the situation in Ukraine and the Middle East. Finland and Norway received migrants through Russia, but in relation to the situation in other geographical areas (e.g. Middle East, among other areas).

⁹ AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, NL, PL, SE, SI, NO.

¹⁰ AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, PL, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, NO.

some cases came along with legal amendments to construction regulations in order to facilitate the new construction of reception facilities, to open up new places in cities and to rededicate existing buildings for the purpose of easier accommodation. Most of these measures were temporary in nature, generally taken to deal with the sudden peaks in the number of arrivals. For example, a few (Member) States¹¹ introduced pre-registration centres to accommodate those who were waiting to be registered. Other (Member) States created centres to accommodate specific categories of migrants, including transit migrants,¹² families,¹³ vulnerable people and minors.¹⁴

Wider reception services

Wider reception services refer to basic and immediate short-term needs of applicants for international protection and irrespective of the outcome of their application. Measures mostly focussed on facilitating access to health care, social services and cultural and linguistic orientation services. In the majority of cases, the measures taken by (Member) States were not new, but rather built on existing capabilities and activities, in particular in relation to health, social and psychological support.¹⁵ Other (Member) States sought to better define and clarify available reception services by, for example, adopting guidelines.¹⁶

Registration procedures

In a context of mass arrivals and a fast-growing backlog, the most common objective of the measures taken by (Member) States with regard to registration procedures was to speed up the identification and registration of third-country nationals, by introducing new procedures and tools, as well as building new infrastructures. (Member) States took a set of different practical measures to better manage registration and reception, ranging from introducing a pre-registration procedure¹⁷ to developing new management and information systems or tools.¹⁸

Asylum procedures

Asylum procedures cover the moment from which an application is lodged to the final decision on the application (granting an international protection status or a final rejection). In most (Member) States, national procedures and related processing capacity came under pressure as a result of the high influx during 2014-2016. Therefore, measures taken primarily focussed on making procedures more efficient, reduce waiting times and bring down costs. This was done by introducing procedural simplification and efficiencies, such as pooling similar

applications,¹⁹ using new technologies,²⁰ limiting procedural requirements for specific nationalities²¹ or developing stricter key performance indicators for officers.²²

Integration measures

Several (Member) States introduced changes to integration programmes and activities offered to applicants for international protection, as these were often also impacted by the higher influx, as well as by the fluctuations in the number of newcomers.²³ Four main sub-areas within the integration efforts were identified:

- Increased capacity and funding to existing integration measures;²⁴
- Measures to improve access to the labour market;²⁵
- Measures to improve language skills and cultural orientation of adults;²⁶
- Measures to facilitate access to education of children/adolescents.²⁷

The events of the period 2014-2016 also impacted on national policies on other types of migration in all (Member) States that participated in the study with the exception of eight Member States - does not include Norway.²⁸ The changes introduced frequently related to a restriction of **family reunification** policies. Measures taken by (Member) States included most often amendments to national legislation which tightened the rules and time limits within which the applicant could apply for family reunification.²⁹



DOWNSCALING AND PREPAREDNESS

As a result of national and EU-wide measures and wider international developments, all (Member) States which faced high increase in applications for international protection, experienced at different points in time, a decrease in the influx. Consequently countries had to dismantle, scale down or adjust the measures taken during the period of high inflows. Seven (Member) States confronted with a lower number of applications for international protection reduced reception capacities from mid-2016 onwards.³⁰ Next to reducing reception capacities, four (Member) States decreased the number of staff in national asylum authorities.³¹ The decrease in numbers also gave rise to political and / or organisational re-prioritisation of measures

11 BE, DE, FI (registration centre), SE.

12 HR, LT, LU, SI.

13 MT.

14 DE, FR, LU, NL, SI.

15 AT, BE, DE, FI, LV, LU, NL, SE, SI, NO.

16 FI, IE, MT, SI, NO.

17 BE, NO.

18 AT, DE, EL, ES, FI, SI.

19 BE, DE, FR.

20 BE, DE, FR. Finland developed automatization, intended as automated functions within the data processing system.

21 DE.

22 DE.

23 Due to the comprehensive and often indirect nature of such measures the study focused on new and directly impacted measures.

24 AT, BE, DE, FI, IE, LU, NL, SE.

25 AT, BE, DE, FI, LV, SE (e.g., with internships and "fast tracks" to shortage occupations), NO (although only at proposal stage).

26 AT, BE, DE, FI, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE.

27 BE, ES, NL, SE, LU.

28 EE, EL, FR, HR, LT, LU, MT, PL.

29 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, IE, NL, SE, NO.

30 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, NL, SE, NO.

31 BE, FI, NL, SE.

taken in (Member) States,³² placing more emphasis on return³³ and integration.³⁴

Together with the downscaling of measures, (Member) States also focussed on **ensuring better future preparedness** for similar mass influxes. In the area of reception, for example, several (Member) States reported to have maintained parts of their reception facilities in order to be prepared for possible high inflows of applicants for international protection in the future.³⁵ According to all (Member) States, the increased number of applicants for international protection over 2014-2016 served in many respects as a useful experience. Lessons learnt showed, for example, the **need for continuous and constructive cooperation** in different areas (see National measures mentioned previously) and at different levels of governance.

The events of 2014-2016 also inevitably revealed existing gaps in reception and asylum systems and led to improve, adjust or refresh existing policies. In terms of long-term preparedness for handling similar situations in the future, the vast majority of (Member) States have either already planned or are considering the adoption of additional measures. While also focusing on increasing the reception capacity, accommodation facilities and integration, some (Member) States³⁶ are also developing long-term strategies and plans, as well as legislative amendments.



FULL STUDY PUBLICATION

European Migration Network (2018). Changing Influx of Asylum Seekers 2014-2016 – Synthesis Report. Brussels: European Migration Network.

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/studies_en

³² AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, LU, NL, SI, NO.

³³ AT, BE, DE, FI, NL, SE, SI.

³⁴ AT, DE, FI, LU, NL, SE, SI, NO.

³⁵ AT, BE, DE, HU, SI.

³⁶ CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, IE, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, NO.



Keeping in touch with the EMN

EMN website www.ec.europa.eu/emn

EMN LinkedIn page <https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-migration-network/>
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EMN National Contact Points

Austria www.emn.at

Belgium www.emnbelgium.be

Bulgaria www.mvr.bg

Croatia www.emn.hr

Cyprus www.moi.gov.cy

Czech Republic www.emncz.eu

Denmark https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/authorities/denmark_en

Estonia www.emn.ee

Finland www.emn.fi

France www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2

Germany www.emn-germany.de

Greece www.ypes.gr

Hungary www.emnhungary.hu

Ireland www.emn.ie

Italy www.emnitalyncp.it

Latvia www.emn.lv

Lithuania www.emn.lt

Luxembourg www.emnluxembourg.lu

Malta <https://homeaffairs.gov.mt/en/mhas-information/emn/pages/european-migration-network.aspx>

Netherlands www.emnnetherlands.nl

Poland www.emn.gov.pl

Portugal https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/authorities/portugal_en

Romania www.mai.gov.ro

Slovakia www.emn.sk

Slovenia www.emm.si

Spain <http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/en/redeuropeamigracion>

Sweden www.emnsweden.se

United Kingdom https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/authorities/united-kingdom_en

Norway www.emnnorway.no