Europe’s migration crisis

In recent years, Europe has had to respond to the most serious migratory challenge since the end of World War II. Read on to learn more.

The record migratory flows to the EU witnessed in 2015 and 2016 have subsided: 116,647 people reached Europe by sea in 2018, compared to more than one million in 2015. The Mediterranean crossing remained deadly however, with 2,277 dead or missing in 2018, compared to 3,139 a year earlier. The influx of migrants and asylum seekers to Europe has shown the need for fairer and more effective European asylum and migration policies.
Migration in numbers

In recent years, people have been fleeing to Europe in large numbers from conflict, terror and persecution in their own countries. Of the 333,355 asylum seekers granted protection status in the EU in 2018, over a quarter came from war-torn Syria, with Afghanistan and Iraq in second and third place respectively. In all of these countries civilians face threats due to armed conflict, human rights violations, or persecution.

In 2017, 258 million people (or one in 30) worldwide were living outside their country of birth. Within the EU, there are 57 million people (11% of the EU population) who were born in another country to the one they live in. Of these, roughly 20 million came from another EU country, while about 37 million were born outside the EU.

Read our facts and figures page for precise data on who the asylum seekers and migrants who come to Europe are, how many applied for asylum and received it, how many people were denied entry to the EU and what financial steps the EU is taking to deal with migration.

EU response to the migrant crisis

Europe’s migration challenge has exposed shortcomings in the Union’s asylum system. In November 2017, MEPs confirmed a mandate for inter-institutional negotiations with EU governments on an overhaul of the Dublin rules, which determine the EU country responsible for processing applications for international protection.

However, EU governments have been unable to reach a position on the proposals so talks have yet to begin between Parliament and the Council.

Parliament also took part in preparing new measures to manage illegal immigration, tighten border controls as well as implement a more effective system of collecting and storing information about people entering the EU.

Read our guide on the EU response to the migration challenge.