In the last few decades, more and more people have been forced to flee violence, poverty and climate change, with many of them seeking a safe haven in Europe. The war in Ukraine and the Gaza conflict are the latest in a series of crises, joining conflicts in other parts of the Middle East and in Africa. While the number of irregular migrant arrivals in the EU had dropped dramatically following the 2015 migration crisis, detections of irregular border crossings have now risen to the highest numbers recorded since 2016, and pressure on national asylum systems, especially in certain Member States, remains high. In an attempt to move away from ad hoc solutions and put in place a predictable and reliable migration management system, in September 2020 the European Commission proposed a new pact on migration and asylum that covers all elements needed for a comprehensive European approach to migration. This topical digest offers a sample of recent EPRS publications on the migratory challenge.

Understanding EU action against migrant smuggling
Briefing by Katrien Luyten, EPRS, December 2023

More than 90% of those who cross external EU borders illegally do so with the assistance of migrant smugglers. Criminal organisations involved in smuggling migrants are increasingly sophisticated, professional and violent. Too many people lose their lives, or are at risk of serious harm or exploitation in their attempt to reach the EU. Preventing and combatting migrant smuggling is therefore one of the key priorities of the Union’s action against irregular migration and organised crime.

State of the Schengen area
Briefing by Costica Dumbrava, EPRS, December 2023

This briefing presents recent key figures and developments in the Schengen area, focusing on the Schengen states’ measures to reintroduce checks at internal borders, and on the current situation regarding the completion of the Schengen area.

European Parliament scrutiny of Frontex
Briefing by Katrien Luyten, EPRS, November 2023

Under Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, Frontex is accountable to the European Parliament. This briefing gives an overview of all instruments Parliament has at its disposal to fulfil its oversight role over Frontex activities and to ensure that migrants’ fundamental rights are respected and upheld at the EU’s external borders. In the past few years, Frontex has faced allegations of pushbacks and violations of fundamental rights. Parliament has consistently taken a strong stance in favour of protecting the principle of non-refoulement, the right to asylum and the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment.
EU-wide information systems for border management and security
Briefing by Costica Dumbrava, EPRS, November 2023
This briefing provides an overview of the EU-wide information systems for border management and security. It presents key figures on the operation of the existing systems and discusses recent policy and technical developments, including on the information systems and interoperability framework currently under development.

Reception of asylum-seekers – Recast directive
Briefing by Anja Radjenovic, EPRS, November 2023
The Commission tabled a proposal on a new reception conditions directive in 2016. Its aim is to ensure greater harmonisation of reception standards and more equal treatment of asylum seekers across all Member States, as well as to reduce ‘asylum shopping’, whereby asylum-seekers choose to apply for international protection in the Member State with the highest protection standards. The Parliament and the Council reached a partial provisional agreement in December 2022. However, the agreed text has not been formally adopted pending progress on related proposals in the asylum and migration field.

Integration of migrant children
Briefing by Anita Orav, EPRS, November 2023
In the EU, one in four children are either foreign-born or have foreign-born parents. As children with a migratory background make up a large part of the EU population, their successful integration has an impact on the EU’s social cohesion. The EU action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027 provides a common policy framework to help Member States develop their national migrant integration policies in line with the freedoms and values laid out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

Recognition of the qualifications of third-country nationals
Briefing by Katharina Eisele and Vasilis Margaras, EPRS, November 2023
This briefing provides a pre-legislative synthesis of the positions of national, regional and local governmental organisations on the Commission’s forthcoming recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country (non-EU) nationals. It outlines the current state of affairs, examines how existing policy is working on the ground, and highlights best practices and future plans from governmental organisations at all levels of the EU’s system of multi-level governance.

Reforming asylum and migration management
Briefing by Anja Radjenovic, EPRS, November 2023
In September 2020, the Commission submitted a proposal on asylum and migration management intended to replace the 2013 Dublin Regulation, which determines the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application. While the proposal ‘essentially preserves’ the current criteria for determining this responsibility, it would also make changes and additions to the regulation, especially on solidarity and responsibility-sharing for asylum seekers among Member States. Interinstitutional negotiations on the proposal began in June 2023 and are ongoing.
The concept of 'climate refugee': Towards a possible definition
Briefing by Joanna Apap, EPRS, October 2023
Since 2008, over 318 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced by floods, windstorms, earthquakes and droughts. The number of 'climate refugees' looks set to rise. So far, the national and international response to this challenge has been limited, and protection for the people affected remains inadequate. The lack of a legal definition to describe people who are forced to move for environmental reasons is of particular concern, as it leaves them in legal limbo.

The hotspot approach in Greece and Italy
Briefing by Anja Radjenovic, EPRS, October 2023
'Hotspot' reception facilities in Italy and Greece have been designed to improve coordination between EU agencies and national authorities in their efforts to receive, identify, register and fingerprint migrants at the EU's external borders. Since their inception, the majority of hotspots have suffered from overcrowding, and stakeholders have raised concerns regarding camp facilities and living conditions. Parliament has called repeatedly for action to ensure that the hotspot approach does not endanger migrants' fundamental rights.

Proposal for a regulation addressing situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum
Study by Sergio Carrera, Davide Colombi et al, EPRS, October 2023
This substitute impact assessment of the Commission's proposal for a regulation addressing situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum studies the proposal's relationship with the existing EU legal framework and the relevant proposals under the Commission's Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Detention of migrants: A measure of last resort
Briefing by Maria-Margarita Mentzelopoulou, EPRS, September 2023
Decisions for detention of applicants for international protection by a Member State need to be grounded in the principles of necessity and proportionality. Mechanisms to protect migrants from arbitrary detention and to monitor respect of adequate standards and principles should always be in place. Examining detention conditions, as well as alternatives to detention, is necessary to prevent human rights violations and the deterioration of migrants' health.

Data on returns of irregular migrants
Briefing by Katrien Luyten, EPRS, June 2023
The Return Directive is the main piece of EU legislation governing return procedures. Under this directive, Member States must issue a return decision (an administrative or judicial decision imposing an obligation to leave the territory) for every third-country national found to be irregularly present on their territory. A proposal to recast the EU Return Directive is under discussion in the European Parliament and Council. This infographic sets out the key data relating to EU return policy.

EU pact on migration and asylum: State of play
Briefing by Costica Dumbrava, Katrien Luyten and Anita Orav, EPRS, June 2023
In September 2020, the Commission sought to revive the stalled reform to the common European asylum system by putting forward a new pact on migration and asylum. The pact builds on and amends the previous reform proposals. Following an agreement in the Council in June 2023 on two key proposals, the negotiations between
co-legislators could resume on most of the files, with the aim of finalising the reform before the European elections in June 2024.

**Asylum in the EU: Facts and figures**  
*Briefing by Giulio Sabbati and Stephanie Pradier, EPRS, June 2023*

Asylum is a form of international protection given by a state on its territory to someone who is threatened by persecution in their country of origin or residence on grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular group. This infographic provides an overview of the number of third-country nationals seeking asylum in EU Member States, success rates in asylum decisions, and numbers of requests for transfers between Member States as a consequence of the Dublin Regulation.

**Advance passenger information (API) to enhance border checks**  
*Briefing by Costica Dumbrava, EPRS, June 2023*

In December 2022, the Commission presented two proposals to revise the rules on the collection and transfer of advance passenger information (API) data – data collected by air carriers at check-in and sent to border control authorities in the country of destination prior to a flight's take-off. The proposal on the collection and transfer of API data for border management seeks to enhance and facilitate the effectiveness and efficiency of border checks at external borders and to combat irregular immigration. In Parliament, the rapporteur has started preparing a draft report.

**Migrant women and the EU labour market: Overcoming double discrimination**  
*Briefing by Anita Orav, EPRS, May 2023*

Around half of migrants in the world today are women. Yet female migrants’ integration in host societies is often problematic. This is partly due to obstacles resulting from the institutional framework of receiving countries. Those who migrate for work are expected to ‘fill the gaps’ in the labour market. Yet many migrant women, especially those with young children, face barriers to access to the labour market. The European Institute for Gender Equality confirms that migrant women are more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive than any other group in the EU labour market.

**The EU’s external borders: Key trends and developments**  
*Briefing by Costica Dumbrava, March 2023*

The effective management of the EU’s external borders is a prerequisite for creating an EU area of freedom, security and justice. Several major challenges have affected the EU’s external borders in recent years. This briefing discusses key trends and figures relevant to the management of EU external borders and provides an overview of EU policy developments in this area.

**Revision of Directive 2011/98/EU on the single permit to reside and work**  
*Briefing by Anita Orav, EPRS, January 2023*

In an overhaul of the EU’s acquis on legal migration, in 2022 the European Commission proposed a recast of the Single Permit Directive, with the objective of simplifying the application process for living and working in the EU and improving rights for residents and their family members. This is the first edition of an ‘EU legislation in progress’ briefing, which will be updated at key stages throughout the legislative procedure.
Solidarity in EU asylum policy
Briefing by Micaela Del Monte and Anita Orav, EPRS, January 2023

Conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, and the war in Ukraine, are forcing more and more people to flee violence and seek a safe haven in Europe. At times, Member States have responded to such crises with solidarity, as with regard to Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war. At other times, their reactions have been more ambivalent. Continued failure to reform the EU asylum system and the implementation of temporary solidarity measures based on ad hoc solutions have exposed a crisis of solidarity that has yet to be resolved.

EPRS graphics
Internal land borders with temporary checks in November 2023 (in red)

Source: State of the Schengen area, EPRS, November 2023.