

# The Venezuelan migrant crisis

## A growing emergency for the region

### SUMMARY

Although the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has traditionally been a country of destination for migrants, around 2010 its migratory profile started to change to that of a country of origin. In fact, in the past few years migration away from Venezuela has reached massive levels, creating an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the region.

According to the United Nations' International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of Venezuelans abroad has risen from under 700 000 in 2015 to 3 million in November 2018. About 70 % of this human wave has been directed to South American countries such as Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina and Brazil, but also to North and Central America and the Caribbean, and even Europe. The main factors contributing to this exodus are Venezuela's deteriorating political situation, a severe economic crisis and increasing violence.

This mass migration could have a destabilising effect on the main recipient and transit countries. Besides individual responses developed by host countries to provide migrants with emergency assistance and protection and to facilitate their integration, Latin American countries are trying to give a coordinated regional response to the crisis. Furthermore, migration authorities, ombudsmen and NGOs have also promoted regional initiatives to defend the rights of Venezuelan migrants abroad and their access to basic services.

The UN and regional organisations are also working to help deal with the crisis, and the EU is contributing €35.1 million in emergency aid and medium-term development assistance for the Venezuelan people and the affected neighbouring countries. The European Parliament sent an ad hoc mission to Brazil and Colombia in June 2018 to assess the situation, and has adopted resolutions on the subject.



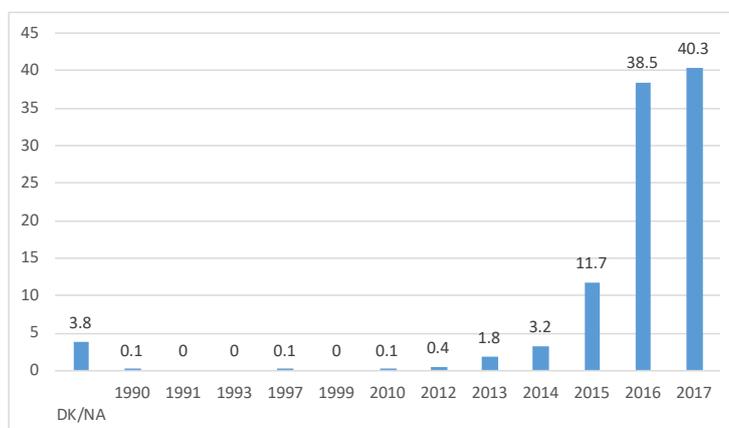
### In this Briefing

- An unprecedented exodus
- Contributing factors
- Main transit and destination countries
- Reaction in international fora
- What is the EU doing?
- Outlook

## An unprecedented exodus

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has traditionally been a [migrant receptor country](#), in particular after the emergence of the oil industry in the 1920s. Between 1948 and 1958, as a result of General Pérez Jiménez's open doors policy, over 800 000 immigrants – mainly from Spain, Italy and Portugal – entered the country, and in the 1960s the immigrant population in Venezuela reached 15 %. In the following decades, Venezuela also hosted numerous migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean fleeing harsh economic conditions, dictatorships or guerrillas, and immigration was further stimulated with the rise of oil prices in 1973.

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of emigration from Venezuela, by date



Source: Survey on Life Conditions in Venezuela, 2017 ([ENCOVI](#)).

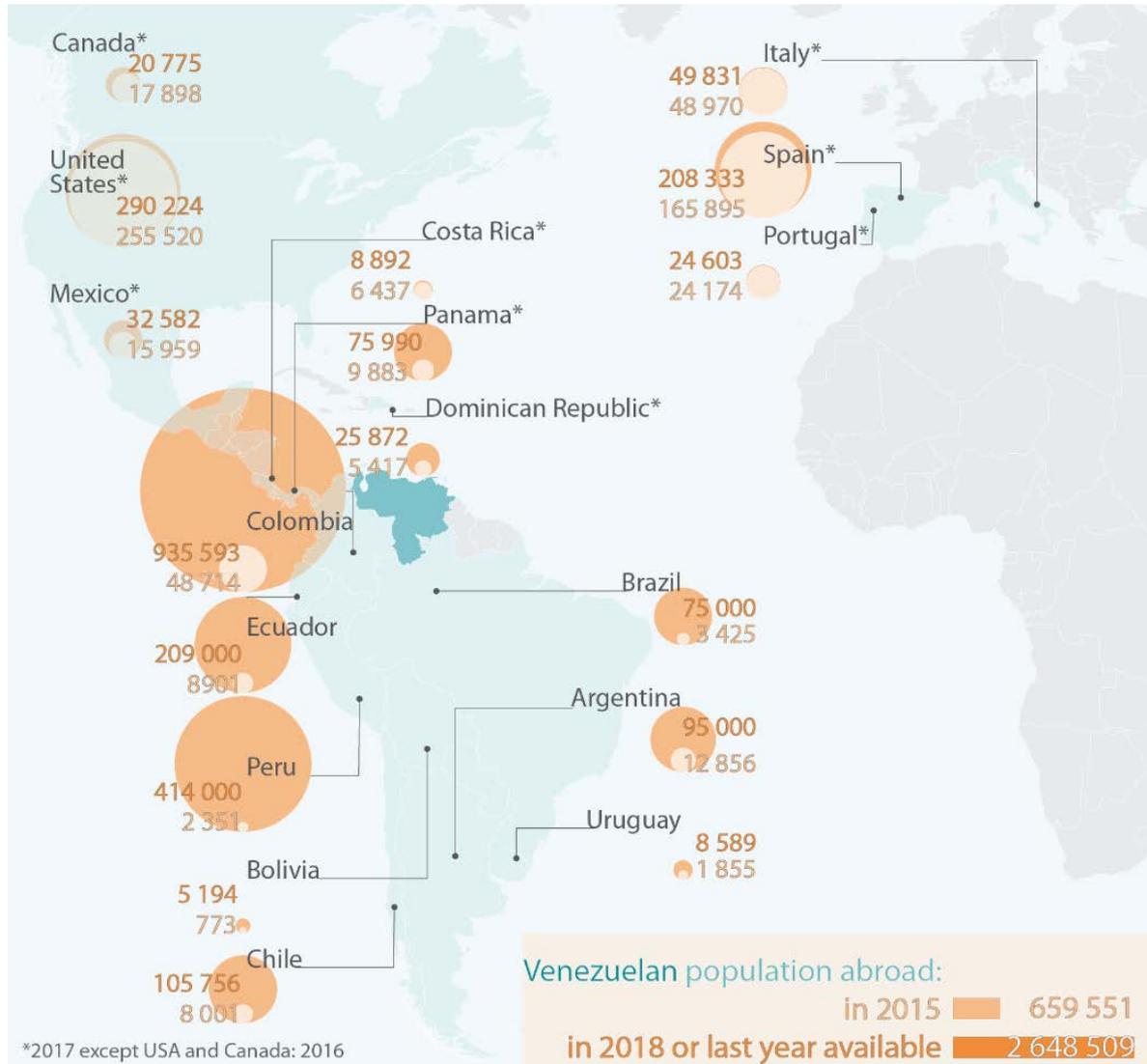
This trend started to reverse around 1983, following a number of events: the 1983 'black Friday' devaluation of the national currency, the bolivar; the 1989 '[Caracazo](#)' – the brutal [repression](#) of popular protests that resulted in over 250 deaths; and the [banking crisis](#) of 1994. Emigration further increased soon after [Hugo Chávez](#) assumed the presidency, and the 2002 failed [coup](#) against him, and again with the [nationalisation](#) and expropriation of [various industries](#) in 2007 – paradoxically coinciding with the period of the highest oil revenues in the history of Venezuela. It is estimated that around 2010 the country's [migratory profile](#) started changing from that of a destination country to a country of origin.

However, it is only since [2014](#) that Venezuelan emigration started reaching worrying levels with the fall of [oil prices](#) and a new [devaluation](#) of the bolivar. Around 1.2 million people are estimated to have left the country since 2015, mainly over the borders with neighbouring countries such as Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil, and even to the nearby Caribbean islands, creating an unprecedented migratory crisis in the region. So much so, that some [commentators](#) have started comparing it to the crises in Syria and Myanmar. According to [September 2018 estimates](#) of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of Venezuelans abroad has risen from under 700 000 in 2015 to [3 million](#) in November 2018, while in the previous ten years (2005-2015) it had only grown by over 258 000.

Most of this exodus has been to South American countries (about 70 % of the total, over 1 750 000 since 2015), such as Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina and Brazil; the USA and Canada; Central America (mainly Panama and Costa Rica) and Mexico; Caribbean countries (the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago); and even Europe (mainly Spain, but also Italy and Portugal). Other sources even raise the number of Venezuelans abroad to over [4 million](#) (13 % of the total population). Meanwhile, the Venezuelan [government](#) has insisted that migration levels are normal, though it has recently adopted a [repatriation plan](#) for those who want to return. Some 364 500 [asylum claims](#) have been lodged by Venezuelans worldwide between 2014 and 2018, with over 186 800 in 2018 alone. From 2015 to 2018, Venezuelans filed more than 966 000 applications for temporary or permanent visas, or for other arrangements to regularise their stay abroad.

This mass migration is considered the [largest](#) external population displacement in modern Latin American history. Furthermore, it is placing a lot of pressure on public services and informal job markets in the main host countries, while also contributing to an increase in social tensions there.

Figure 2: Venezuelan population abroad (recent evolution)



Source: UN International Organization for Migration (IOM, [September 2018](#)), based on official available data and estimates.

## Contributing factors

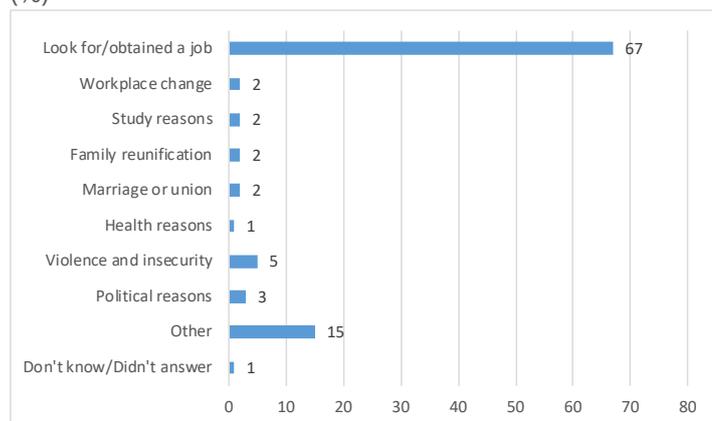
Among the main factors contributing to the massive emigration from Venezuela are the dire economic crisis, the deteriorating political situation and the increase of violence in the country.

### Deteriorating political situation

President Maduro's [controversial victory](#) in Venezuela's [May 2018 presidential elections](#), in which the main opposition coalition (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática, [MUD](#)) did not participate and abstention reached nearly 54 % – compared with under 21 % in the previous three presidential contests – seems to have failed to meet expectations for a short-term resolution of the country's political crisis and to have accelerated the [exodus](#). The most popular [opposition leaders](#), such as [Henrique Capriles](#), Leopoldo López and Antonio Ledezma, could not participate in the elections, as the Supreme Court had either jailed, exiled or disqualified them. At the same time, Nicolas Maduro had been consolidating his [power](#) since the [brief dissolution](#) of the National Assembly by the judiciary in March 2017. Although this decision was soon reversed, the opposition-led National Assembly was further neutralised by the establishment of a Constituent Assembly in August 2017, which soon took over the former's [legislative powers](#). Maduro's supporters hold all [545 seats](#) in the Constituent Assembly, whose election results and procedures have been highly criticised.

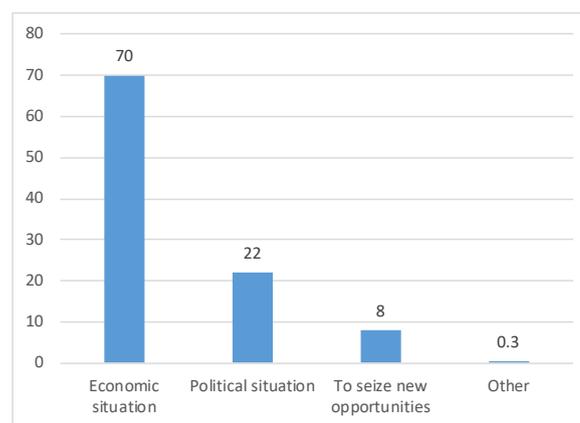
According to NGO Foro Penal, since April 2017 there have been around [135 deaths](#), mainly in the context of demonstrations and protests against the government. The NGO further reports that as of 4 November 2018, there were [232 political prisoners](#), and that a total of 12 406 persons were arrested on political grounds from 2014 to 31 July 2018. [Protests](#) were officially banned in July 2017, before the elections to the Constituent Assembly. A crackdown followed the alleged [assassination attempt](#) against President Maduro in August 2018, with over 24 people jailed on suspicion of involvement in the plot. Furthermore, the unexpected death of Councillor [Fernando Albán](#), while in custody at secret service headquarters, has raised numerous protests and requests for an investigation at international level. The recent [Anti-Hate Law](#) is also seen as a new tool to intimidate the media. Some researchers see a [link](#) between citizens' frustration with being barred from voicing their discontent by protesting or voting and their decision to leave the country.

Figure 3: Venezuelan emigrants by reason for emigration (%)



Source: Survey on Life Conditions in Venezuela 2017 ([ENCOVI](#)).

Figure 4: Main reason for leaving country (%)



Source: [PERFIL 21](#) Servicio de análisis de entorno (Migration annex) No 151 Urban-Rural Survey, 4th quarter 2017.

## A huge economic and social crisis

In a recent [report on human mobility](#) in Venezuela, when asked what was their main reason for leaving the country, 82 % of emigrants surveyed<sup>1</sup> mentioned the search for new and better work opportunities, 58 % mentioned the fact that they did not see a prosperous future in Venezuela, and 63.1 % mentioned hunger. Despite the lack of official government data on the subject, the [World Bank](#) revealed an annual hyperinflation rate of around 500 000 % in September 2018, which had generated a considerable decrease in real salaries and inflicted poverty on around 90 % of the population. Furthermore, the International Monetary Fund has forecast a whopping [1 000 000 % inflation](#) rate by the end of 2018. The opposition-controlled [National Assembly](#) estimates that the Venezuelan economy has contracted by 50 % since Maduro came to power in 2013, and that the country's potential to generate wealth has fallen by 25 % compared with 2017. Moreover, [oil production](#) is at its lowest level in three decades. In a recent report, NGO [Transparencia Venezuela](#) maintains that the current economic crisis is closely linked with mismanagement and [corruption](#) in companies owned by the State. In an attempt to mitigate the crisis, Maduro has recently devaluated the [bolivar](#) by 96 % and raised the [minimum wage](#) by 3 000 %. Nevertheless, a Venezuelan family still needs [11 minimum salaries](#)<sup>2</sup> in sovereign bolivars to satisfy all its basic needs.

The deterioration of the economy has led to severe shortages of food, medicines and medical supplies. According to the [2018 report](#) on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the number of undernourished Venezuelans rose from 2.8 million in 2004-2006 to [3.7 million](#) (11.7 % of the population) in 2015- 2017. Over [26 000 doctors](#) are estimated to have left the country; malaria cases have soared by 900 % between 1999 and 2017, and the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) now considers [Venezuela](#) one of four countries in the world in an [emergency situation](#), together with Nigeria, South

Sudan and Yemen. According to a UNHCR Colombia [survey](#), 90 % of Venezuelan migrants say that they left the country because of a lack of food, 82 % because of a lack of work, 54 % because of a lack of medicines and 49 % because of violence.

## Violence

Among their reasons for leaving the country, almost 84 % of Venezuelan migrants surveyed in the above-mentioned [report](#) on human mobility highlighted the need to look for a safer environment, and over 72 % insecurity. Although there are no reliable official data for the past 15 years, the Venezuelan Observatory for Violence (OVV) reports that in 2016, the estimated number of violent deaths in the country exceeded 28 400 – 98 per 100 000 inhabitants, which is 3.6 times higher than in Brazil or Colombia – ranking Venezuela as the country with the second-highest violent death rate after El Salvador. It kept this place throughout 2017, with a slight decrease from the previous year. However, the number of persons who had lost their lives as a result of 'resisting public authority' continued to rise: 124-163 died in popular protests between April and July 2017, and [10](#) in the first quarter of 2018. There was also an increase in killings on request and a considerable increase in suicide rates in several regions. Besides, impoverishment, hyperinflation and the scarcity of food and medicines have boosted other forms of crime and violence. To make matters worse, all this is in a context of a serious deterioration of the police, the judiciary and the prison services.

## Main transit and destination countries

As mentioned above, the main transit and destination countries for Venezuelan are mainly situated in South America, but also in Central and North America and the Caribbean. In Europe, Spain is by far the main receptor of Venezuelan migrants, many of Spanish origin.

### Colombia

As the main transit and destination country, Colombia is the most strongly affected by the crisis. The Colombian government estimates the number of Venezuelans living in the country by the end of October 2018 at [over 1 million](#), from less than 39 000 in 2015. Of these, more than 573 000 are regular migrants and 218 000 are irregular ones. Around 550 000 Venezuelans have crossed into Colombia and gone on to Ecuador, while over 250 000 Colombians have returned from Venezuela in 2018. Apart from border areas, refugees and migrants have also settled in cities across the country, including the capital, Bogota (over 23.5 %). Even transnational indigenous people who lived on Venezuelan territory are now flowing into Colombia. At the start of the crisis, [Venezuelan migrants](#) in Colombia were mainly wealthy professionals, whereas currently they are predominantly people from the lower classes with, on average, a good level of education and training. Nevertheless, there are fears that migratory pressure could affect the [peace process or increase xenophobia](#).

The Colombian government has adopted the following [measures](#) to handle the crisis:

- It has established a specific [response plan](#) for migratory flows from Venezuela, identifying the main humanitarian needs and strategic objectives, as well as a response strategy including sectorial plans. Additionally, the government has suggested the creation of an [emergency humanitarian fund](#) to deal with the exodus.
- It has issued border mobility cards (TFM) to facilitate the movement of residents (pendular migration) in the border area between Colombia and Venezuela. Around 7.3 million entries and 6.6 million exits were reported in the first six months of 2018 using this document, which allows a maximum stay of seven days in the border area. The issuance of new TFMs was [suspended](#) by the Colombian authorities in February 2018.
- It has implemented a special permit of permanence (PEP), which allowed the regularisation of around 260 000 Venezuelas by 7 June 2018. It has been issued mainly in cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Barranquilla, Cali and Cartagena, and allows irregular Venezuelan migrants to stay in Colombia for up to two years while enjoying basic rights. Between April and June 2018, over 442 000 irregular migrants were registered in 30 departments; around 233 000 of these migrants

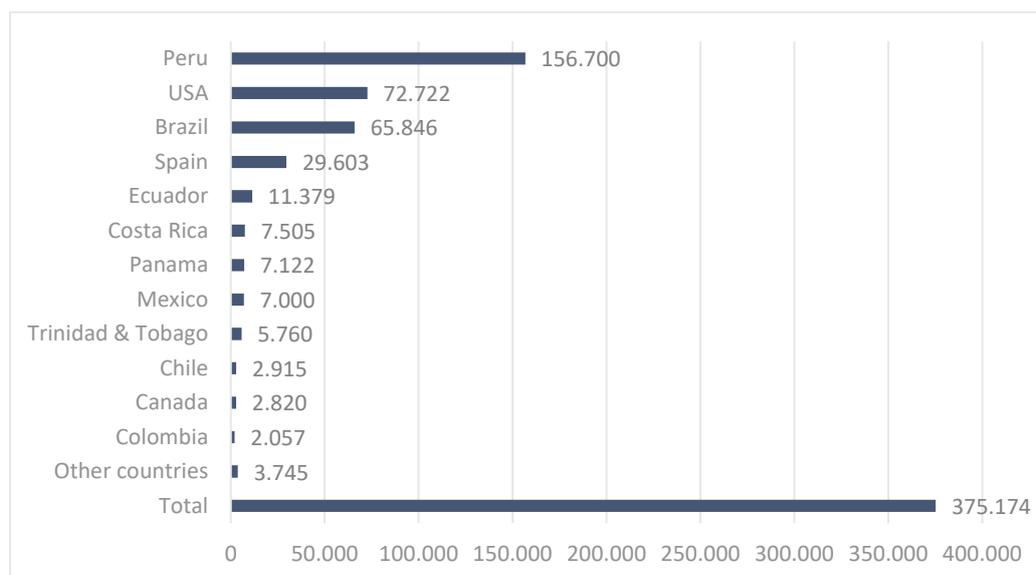
were given a PEP.

- It has provided irregular migrants holding a PEP with access to health care through the Colombian health system. During the first half of 2018, nearly 50 000 Venezuelans had emergency healthcare, and 152 000 vaccines were administered.
- It has set up an administrative registry of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia ([RAMV](#)) with the aim to broaden the information held about them. This project was implemented from 6 April to 8 June 2018 in 30 departments and 413 municipalities, with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UNHCR. A total of [442 462 people](#) were registered, . A further breakdown shows that there were 312 318 adults and 118 709 children and adolescents, as well as 33 994 members of ethnic minorities. Over 395 000 intended to stay in Colombia for more than one year.

## Peru

Peru has become the [second destination](#) country for Venezuelan migrants in the past two years, as well as a transit territory for third countries such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay or Brazil. The number of Venezuelans in Peru has increased from just over 2 300 in 2015, to 414 000 in 2018. Most of them enter across the border with Ecuador (over 185 000 between January and May 2018), and their main point of exit is the Chilean border (41 600 in the same period). Many of them also use Lima International Airport to get in and out of the country. And Peru is the [main country of asylum](#) for Venezuelans, with over 133 000 asylum claims between 2014 and 2018. According to Peru's Immigration Office, half of the recent migrants have advanced [university degrees](#).

Figure 5: Venezuelan asylum-seekers 2014-2018



Source: [UNHCR website](#); Data for individual countries up to various dates between 31 March and 31 October 2018.

- In 2017, the Peruvian government issued specific rules to grant '[temporary residency permits](#)' (PTP) to Venezuelan migrants who had entered the country before 2 February 2017; this possibility has been progressively extended to those who entered before [31 October 2018](#) and apply before the end of the year. The PTP regularises their migratory status for one year, enabling them to work and access services such as education, health and justice in Peru. Between the beginning of PTP implementation and 19 August 2018, 70 000 permits had been granted and 100 000 were being processed. Once the PTP expires, migrants can apply for permanent residence. Since 25 August 2018, Peru requires Venezuelan citizens entering the country to present a [passport](#).

## Ecuador

The number of Venezuelan migrants in Ecuador increased from slightly under 9 000 in 2015 to 209 000 in 2018; between January and August 2018, over 640 000 had entered the country and around 525 000 had departed from it; this leaves a migratory balance of 116 419. Most of them entered from Colombia and left for Peru. Ecuador has insisted on a regional solution for obtaining [financial aid](#) to meet the costs. The country also faces a deterioration of the [labour market](#) that started even before the arrival of Venezuelans.

The main instruments used to facilitate the regularisation of Venezuelans are the following:

- The 2011 [Migration Statute](#) between Ecuador and Venezuela, which grants temporary residence to Venezuelan citizens upon proof of economic solvency.
- The [UNASUR temporary visa](#) (2017), which gives nationals of this regional bloc the right to legally reside in the country for a two-year period.

## Brazil

Although Brazil is not a traditional destination for Venezuelan migrants, in the past three years it has gained in importance as a destination and transit country, mainly through its [Roraima](#) State land border with Venezuela. The number of [Venezuelans](#) living in the country rose from just under 3 500 in 2015 to 75 000 in 2018, and by April 2018 around 50 000 Venezuelans had applied for asylum (32 859) and residence. A presence of indigenous people (Warao and, to a lesser extent, Panare) has also been registered. As Roraima is a poor state with less than 500 000 inhabitants, the [exodus](#) there is strongly felt by the locals. Some [violent incidents](#) have taken place, and the federal government has dispatched [the military](#) to guarantee security in the area. A [study](#) carried out in 2017 by Brazil's National Immigration Council shows that most Venezuelans in Roraima are young, with a good education level and a paid activity.

The Brazilian government is using the following measures to deal with the situation:

- The federal government is implementing a programme to support Venezuelan migrants, and has created a [Federal Emergency Assistance Committee](#); this body, in which 12 ministries cooperate, has a budget of US\$56 million.
- A new [Immigration Law](#) adopted in May 2017, which no longer considers [immigrants](#) as a threat to the country, guarantees their right to participate in political meetings and unions, and improves their access to documents allowing them to stay legally in the country (such as a temporary [humanitarian visa](#)). It also reinforces humanitarian protection for immigrants who risk their lives or personal integrity if deported or forced to return. This law is considered a [model for the Americas](#) by the OAS.
- A [joint measure](#) backed by the ministries of justice, labour, foreign affairs and public security granting a two-year temporary residence and the possibility to obtain permanent residence afterwards for nationals of bordering countries where the [Mercosur Residence Agreement](#) is not currently in force.
- A [provisional measure](#) and a [decree](#) approved in February 2018, aimed to assist displaced vulnerable people in the Roraima State; and the establishment of a Federal Committee for Emergency Assistance to execute and monitor actions in this context, with the participation of the Armed Forces, various ministries and local governments, and UN agencies such as the IOM, UNHCR and UNFPA.
- Concrete actions include reinforcement of border security, building of temporary shelters, vaccination and immunisation, and voluntary relocation in Brazilian cities. Measures have also been taken to [avoid conflict](#) with the local population.
- Voluntary [relocation](#) to other [Brazilian cities](#) – with the help of [UN agencies](#), local authorities and civil society organisations – is part of the government's strategy to manage the sizeable migrant flows affecting the Roraiman cities of Boa Vista and

Pacaraima and to ease the migratory pressure on them. By the end of August 2018, over 1 500 Venezuelan migrants had been relocated to cities<sup>3</sup> in other states.

Brazil's new president-elect, [Jair Bolsonaro](#), has promised that he would not send migrants back to Venezuela, but would instead establish 'a control regime' for those entering the country.

## Chile

According to the [Chilean Investigation Police](#), in the first seven months of 2018 alone, [over 147 000 Venezuelans](#) entered Chile, while in 2015 there were fewer than 9 000 of them in the country. Between 2016 and 2017, the Chilean authorities received over 108 000 applications for residence permits from Venezuelan nationals, more than from any other nationality group. Between 2015 and 2017, they issued over 120 000 residence permits, including temporary visas, to Venezuelans. Chile has already become the fourth destination country for Venezuelan migrants, after Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. According to the IOM, [63 %](#) of these migrants have a professional qualification, and over 51 % work in services.

- In April 2018, Chile introduced the [democratic responsibility visa](#), which can only be issued by the Chilean authorities in Venezuela and grants a one-year residence permit to Venezuelan migrants. It can be extended for a second year and gives the possibility to later apply for permanent residence.

## Argentina

The number of Venezuelan residents in Argentina is estimated to have risen from under 13 000 in 2015 to 95 000 in 2018. Between January and May 2018, the Argentinian authorities granted 19 281 resident permits to migrants from Venezuela, 2 642 of which were permanent. According to the Interior Ministry, most of them are [professionals](#), technicians or university graduates who integrate easily in the labour market. As there are many doctors and engineers, the government is trying to redirect them to the interior of the country where such professionals are most needed.

- Besides the usual criteria for issuing such permits, Argentina is also applying the [Agreement on residence](#) for nationals of the states parties and associated states of Mercosur (the Mercosur Residence Agreement) to the Venezuelan migrants, even though this agreement has not yet been approved by the Venezuelan government.
- It has also issued a [new disposition](#) to help Venezuelans who have trouble obtaining necessary documents, by extending the deadlines for producing them.
- The Argentinian Education Ministry has also [simplified the procedure](#) for validating Venezuelan university diplomas.

## Other significant destination countries

### The Americas

- The **United States** is one of the [main historic destinations](#) for Venezuelans, with over 290 000 residents in 2016, and continues to be so, despite the tightening of migration rules. [Venezuelans](#) top the list of asylum-seekers there. The US has allocated over [US\\$96 million](#) in 2017-2018 for the regional response to the crisis.
- The number of Venezuelans in **Mexico** has doubled over the past two years, with over 32 500 in 2017 alone. In the first quarter of 2018, Mexico issued 2 635 residence cards, of which 1 134 are permanent, as well as 1 626 visit cards for humanitarian reasons to Venezuelans; in the first quarter of 2018, it issued 909 humanitarian visit cards.
- **Panama** is the main destination for Venezuelan migrants in Central America, with a rise of Venezuelan residents from under 10 000 in 2015 to nearly 76 000 in 2017. The number of residence permits granted to Venezuelans reached 6 882 in 2017 and 2 642 in the first four months of 2018. Panama has shortened the time allowed to stay as a

tourist for Venezuelans to 90 days, and has included Venezuela in the list of countries that need a stamped visa to enter the country.

- **Costa Rica** is the second Central American destination for Venezuelans, with nearly 9 000 legal residents in 2017, a year when it issued 1 200 residence permits; and a migratory balance of 1 273 Venezuelans in the first quarter of 2018.
- The **Dominican Republic** is the main destination country for Venezuelans in the Caribbean, where their number has increased from 3 434 in 2012 to nearly 26 000 in 2017, when it granted over 1 500 residence permits.
- Other destination countries in the Americas are **Canada, Paraguay, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago** and **Aruba**.

## Europe

The [2017 Annual Report](#) on the Situation of Asylum in the EU by the European Asylum Support Office shows that only 325 Venezuelans sought asylum in EU Member States in 2014, one year after Nicolas Maduro became president. By 2016, this number had grown to 4 705 and then to 12 020 in 2017, an increase of over [3 500 %](#) in just three years. Venezuela has become the tenth most common nationality of asylum-seekers in the EU, and the only country of origin among the top 10 in the EU to have registered an increase in asylum applications in the first two months of 2018. Venezuelans enjoy visa-free travel to the Schengen area.

- [Spain](#) is the main historic [destination](#) for Venezuelans outside the Americas, due to linguistic, cultural and family-related reasons. According to IOM data, the number of Venezuelans in Spain rose from nearly 166 000 in 2015 to over 208 000 in 2017. National Statistical Institute data show that in 2017, Venezuelans were the migrant nationality group in Spain that experienced the highest growth ([44.2 %](#)); and also in the first half of 2018 ([60 %](#)). Many of them are returned [Spanish](#) migrants and their descendants. Venezuelan [asylum-seekers](#) have also registered a huge increase (from 4 200 in 2016 to over 12 700 from January to August 2018).
- Other European destination countries for Venezuelans are [Italy](#) and [Portugal](#).

## Reaction in international fora

### United Nations

At its 39th session of September 2018, the United Nations [Humans Rights Council](#) adopted a [resolution](#) on the promotion and protection of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, expressing its 'deepest concern at the serious human rights violations', calling upon the Venezuelan government to accept humanitarian assistance, and requesting the High Commissioner to prepare a report on the human rights situation in the country. On 26 September 2018, Argentina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru filed a [joint claim](#) with the International Criminal Court ([ICC](#)) in The Hague, requesting an investigation against Venezuela for suspected crimes against humanity.

In 2017, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a [report](#) on human rights violations and abuses in the context of that year's protests in Venezuela; in June 2018 it provided an update of the situation with a new [report](#) on the subject. In this latter document, the OHCHR includes chapters on '[violations](#) of the right to the highest attainable standard of health' and '[violations](#) of the right to adequate food' in the country, signalling that the deterioration of public hospital facilities and the shortage of medicines and medical supplies point to a collapse of the health system. The updated report also states that the economic recession, hyperinflation, loss of purchasing power, as well as the dismantlement of the domestic food production system and dependency of food imports, 'have created a vicious circle that has affected the right to food for most Venezuelans'.

On 19 September 2018, the UNHCR and the IOM [appointed](#) former Vice-President of Guatemala, [Eduardo Stein](#), as Joint Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region,

in order to promote a 'coherent and harmonised regional approach' to the crisis, 'in coordination with national governments, international organisations and other relevant stakeholders'. In August 2018, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, and IOM Director-General, António Vitorino, called for greater support from the international community to the main transit and destination countries in the region. In March 2018, the UNCHR issued new [protection guidance](#) for Venezuelan migrants and refugees. The UNHCR also developed a [regional response plan](#) and estimated the initial [financial requirements](#) to implement the regional response at US\$46 million for 2018. The UN has recently released US\$9.2 million for Venezuela through an emergency relief fund.

## Regional response

Latin American countries are trying to give a [coordinated response](#) to the problem at the regional level, and have held high-level meetings in Bogota, Quito, Geneva, Washington DC and New York. The countries that participated in the [Quito meeting](#)<sup>4</sup> agreed to cooperate on issues such as documentation, data collection, access to regular status and asylum, humanitarian assistance, human trafficking, child protection, xenophobia and on the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Migration authorities, ombudspersons and NGOs have also launched regional other initiatives to promote the rights of Venezuelan migrants abroad and their access to basic services.

### Organization of American States (OAS)

On 5 September 2018, the [OAS Permanent Council](#) analysed the Venezuelan migration crisis and its Secretary General, Luis Almagro, announced the creation of a [working group](#) that would visit the recipient countries and prepare a report describing the crisis and proposing solutions. The Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) signed a [joint statement](#) with the UN bodies dealing with the crisis, calling for a regional coordinated response to the mass displacement of migrants and refugees from Venezuela, based on human rights concerns and the principle of shared responsibility. On 2 March 2018, the IACHR adopted a [resolution](#) on forced migration of Venezuelans, urging OAS Member States to 'guarantee the recognition of refugee status to Venezuelan people with a well-founded fear of persecution in case of return' or to those 'who consider that their life, integrity or personal freedom would be threatened', under the terms of the [Cartagena Declaration on Refugees](#); to 'implement a coordinated regional and international strategy based on shared responsibility and a human rights approach' to addressing the situation, and not to criminalise Venezuelan migrants or people who provide them with aid and assistance. The IACHR had published a [report](#) on the human rights situation in Venezuela in 2017, stressing the gradual weakening of the democratic institutions and human rights situation in the country.

### Andean Community (CAN)

On 29 August 2018, the Andean Committee of [Migration Authorities](#) (CAAM) held an [emergency meeting](#) to discuss the 'mass migration flow of Venezuelans' in the region and coordinate responses among member states,<sup>5</sup> ratifying their commitment to respect human rights of migrants.

### Mercosur

In a June 2018 [statement](#) on the humanitarian and migratory situation in Venezuela, the [states parties](#)<sup>6</sup> of [Mercosur](#) called on Venezuela to coordinate with the international community the establishment of aid channels to alleviate the crisis, and reiterated their will and commitment to support and accompany the Venezuelan people in the efforts required to mitigate the crisis.

### The Community of Latin American States (CELAC)

In its [2017 summit](#) held in the Dominican Republic, CELAC nations backed [dialogue](#) in Venezuela and condemned the criminalisation of irregular migration.

### Lima Group

The Lima Group<sup>7</sup> met on [25 September](#) 2018 in New York, on the margins of the UN General Assembly, to discuss Venezuelan migration in the region and the situation in Venezuela. In a

statement issued on [17 July 2018](#), the group made an urgent call on the Venezuelan government to allow a humanitarian channel to help assist Venezuelan migrants.

## What is the EU doing?

On 7 June 2018, the EU announced a package of [€35.1 million](#) in emergency aid and medium-term development assistance for the Venezuelan people and neighbouring countries affected by the crisis. Of this amount, €5 million has been earmarked for humanitarian aid/assistance for health care, food and nutrition, water and protection for the most vulnerable, mainly inside Venezuela; €5 million has been dedicated to support measures to reduce social tensions and violence, and to protect displaced people; €18.1 million has been set aside for development assistance to address food and nutrition security, water, sanitation and hygiene within Venezuela, to help the socio-economic inclusion of migrants and provide support for host communities in neighbouring countries; and another €7 million has been allocated to meeting other evolving needs.

On 6 November 2018, the Council of the EU decided to renew its [targeted sanctions](#) against Venezuela for an additional year. On 25 October 2018, HR/VP Federica Mogherini issued a [declaration](#) on the situation in Venezuela stressing the EU's commitment to step up support for national, regional and multilateral efforts aimed at mitigating the effects of the migrant crisis and 'addressing the most urgent needs of the population inside the country'. Furthermore, the declaration called on the Venezuelan government to take concrete action to alleviate the impact of the crisis, including facilitating external cooperation. On 9 October 2018, Federica Mogherini had issued a statement asking for a 'thorough and independent investigation' into the death of municipal councillor Fernando Albán, also reiterating the EU's call for the release of all political prisoners. The EU [Foreign Affairs Council](#) discussed the situation in Venezuela, including the migration crisis and its impact in the region, on 15 October 2018. It agreed 'to explore the possibility of establishing a contact group' to facilitate a political process to solve the crisis. In its [conclusions](#) of 28 May 2018, the Council expressed its concern regarding the humanitarian needs of the population and called on the Venezuelan government to take immediate action 'to alleviate the impact of the crisis' that is causing mass migration.

## The European Parliament

The Parliament is also concerned about the Venezuelan migration crisis and the humanitarian situation in Venezuela and its neighbouring countries. A Parliamentary [ad hoc delegation](#) visited Brazil and Colombia from 25 to 30 June 2018, to [assess the problem](#) on the ground. On 5 July 2018 the Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the migration crisis and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and its borders, expressing its solidarity with all Venezuelans forced to flee their country; urging the Venezuelan authorities to acknowledge the crisis, prevent its deterioration, promote solutions and allow unimpeded humanitarian aid into the country; praising Colombia, Brazil, Peru and other countries, as well as regional and international organisations, private and public entities, the Catholic Church and ordinary citizens for their active help and solidarity; and calling for a coordinated, comprehensive and regional response to the crisis by the international community, including the EU. On 3 May 2018, the Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the presidential elections in Venezuela, recalling that the Parliament 'cannot recognise the elections resulting from this illegitimate process'. On 8 February 2018, Parliament adopted yet another resolution on the [situation in Venezuela](#), expressing its solidarity and support to Venezuelans suffering the effects of the humanitarian crisis, asking the government to allow the unimpeded provision of humanitarian aid, and the EU to help neighbouring countries to address the situation of Venezuelan refugees.

## Outlook

Although the fact of sharing a common culture and, in most cases, a common language with the host countries facilitates their successful integration, the Venezuelan migration crisis has shown that the Latin American region can set an example of solidarity and cooperation for the rest of the world.

However, the problem seems hard to resolve without addressing its root causes. To fix the economy, some experts suggest that the [only effective solution](#) to stop hyperinflation would be [dollarisation](#); others defend generating confidence, promoting fiscal discipline and respecting private initiative; or gradually reducing dependence on oil. Solving the political issue will also prove difficult, given that so far dialogue initiatives between the government and the opposition have failed, that the democratically elected National Assembly continues to be stripped of power and many opposition members are either in prison, or are exiled or disqualified from political participation. Nevertheless, the [Venezuelan government](#) has recently welcomed the EU initiative to act as a facilitator to promote a new democratic dialogue, though opposition leaders remain sceptical.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The survey was carried out between 9 April and 6 May 2018 among Venezuelan migrants who crossed on foot the border with Colombia from the Tachira state to the migration office in Villa del Rosario, Norte de Santander. It only covers Venezuelans who migrate regularly and declare their intention not to return to their country for the time being.

<sup>2</sup> As of 1 September, 2018, the new minimum salary in Venezuela is Bs.S.1 800 (approximately [€5.24](#) on 13.12.2018)

<sup>3</sup> Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, Paraná, Manaus, João Pessoa, Sao Paulo and Cuiabá.

<sup>4</sup> Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

<sup>5</sup> Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

<sup>6</sup> Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay ([Venezuela](#) has been suspended from Mercosur for rupture of the democratic order, since August 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Established by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Saint Lucia, the Lima Group sets itself the aim to solve the Venezuelan crisis.

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