EU border controls and managing migration

The influx of migrants and the security of external borders is a challenge for Europe. Learn more about how Parliament is addressing the situation.

There were 1.83 million illegal crossings at the EU's external borders in 2015. This number dropped to 150,114 in 2018. The EU response to the migrant challenge includes measures to strengthen EU border controls and deal more efficiently with asylum applications.

Strengthening border controls

The lack of internal border controls in the Schengen area must go hand in hand with compensatory measures to strengthen the external borders. MEPs underlined the severity of
the situation in a resolution adopted in April 2016.

Systematic checks at the EU's external borders on everyone entering the Union - including EU citizens - were introduced in April 2017. In October 2017, Parliament backed a common electronic system to speed up checks at the Schengen area’s external borders and to register all non-EU travellers.

Following a vote in Parliament in July 2018, non-EU nationals exempt from visa requirements will have to get authorisation before travelling to the EU.

**Two new agencies: the EU Agency for Asylum and the European Border and Coast Guard**

Members have backed a proposal to strengthen the current European Asylum Support office (EASO), which will become the **EU Agency for Asylum**. The agency would facilitate the functioning of the Common European Asylum System and help ensure convergence in the assessment of asylum applications across the EU. Learn more about the proposals and Parliament’s position.

In December 2015, the European Commission put forward a proposal on establishing a **European Border and Coast Guard** with the aim of reinforcing the management and security of the EU's external borders and supporting national border guards.

The new agency, which was launched in October 2016, united Frontex and the national authorities responsible for border management. There are plans to give the agency a standing corps of 10,000 border guards by 2027.

**EU-Turkey agreement**

The EU and Turkey came to an agreement in March 2016 on a **plan to end irregular migration flows from Turkey to the EU**. Both parties agreed to ensure improved reception conditions for refugees in Turkey and open up safe and legal channels to Europe for Syrian refugees.

Three years later, irregular arrivals are 97% lower than in the period before the agreement. In July 2018, Parliament approved €500 million for the schooling of refugee children in Turkey.

**Returning migrants more efficiently**

In September 2016, Parliament approved a Commission proposal for a **standard EU travel document** to speed up the return of non-EU nationals staying irregularly in the EU without valid passports or identity cards.

The **Schengen Information System** is also being reinforced to help EU countries with the return of illegally staying non-EU nationals to their country of origin.

**Tackling the root causes of migration**

Conflict, persecution, ethnic cleansing, extreme poverty and natural disasters can all be root causes of migration. In July 2015, MEPs urged the EU to adopt a **long-term strategy** to help counteract these factors.

In order to tackle the root causes of migration, an **EU scheme** aiming to mobilise €44 billion in private investment in neighbouring countries and in Africa was backed by MEPs on 6 July 2017.
Read more on the EU response to the migrant challenge
Management of EU external borders
Briefing: the issue of migration
Infographic: migration and asylum