

**Report of Vice-President Kristian Vigenin
Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration
to the 29th Annual Session of the OSCE PA**

(Birmingham, 2-6 July 2022)

Copenhagen, 4 July 2022

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The following report aims to present a snapshot of current migration trends in the areas of the OSCE which the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration has been monitoring, as well as the recent activities of the Committee since I last reported to the OSCE PA Standing Committee at the 2022 Winter Meeting in February.

I. Snapshot of Current Migration Trends in the OSCE Region

1. Humanitarian and displacement crisis in Afghanistan

Last summer when I took over the important task of chairing this ad hoc committee, all eyes were turned towards **Afghanistan** where the Taliban takeover had prompted fears of a mass exodus to neighbouring countries and a new migration crisis in Europe. However, since the start of the war in Ukraine, Afghanistan almost seems to have disappeared off our political radar.

While Afghanistan is indeed facing a terrible humanitarian and displacement crisis, the actual numbers of Afghan citizens fleeing towards Central Asia and the rest of the OSCE region is far below what had been expected last August when the Taliban took over.

KEY DISPLACEMENT FIGURES

 **3.5M**

Estimated internally displaced persons (IDPs) by conflict within Afghanistan as of 1 December 2021¹

 **822,546**

Estimated total conflict induced IDPs within Afghanistan since 1 January 2021²



 **67,200**

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Afghanistan as of 23 May 2022

 **2.3M**

Refugees and asylum-seekers from Afghanistan in neighbouring countries as of 31 December 2021

 **178,240**

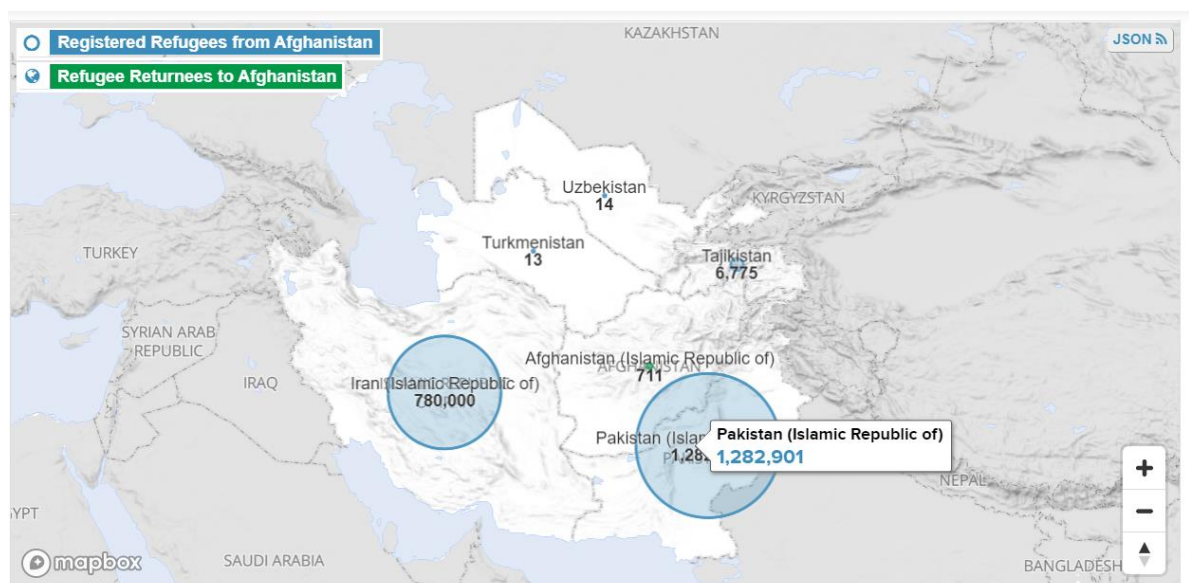
Reported newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection to neighbouring countries since 1 January 2021³

 **791,000**

IDP returnees recorded in 2021

Source: UNHCR, External Update Afghanistan Situation #17, as of 1 June 2022, at: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/2575>

With the borders to the neighbouring Central Asian OSCE participating States largely closed, the majority of refugees have been heading towards Iran and Pakistan. Together, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have reported under 7,000 registered Afghan refugees, with the majority (6,775) in Tajikistan. Iran and Pakistan have a total of 2 million registered Afghan refugees, the majority of whom fled much earlier.



Registered Refugees from Afghanistan (in Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan)

2,069,703

Source - UNHCR, Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (GIRI)

Last updated 31 May 2022

Afghan Registered Refugees by country

Location name	Source	Data date	Population
Pakistan (Islamic Republic of)	UNHCR	31 May 2022	62.0% 1,282,901
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (GIRI)	1 Oct 2020	37.7% 780,000
Tajikistan	UNHCR	31 Aug 2021	0.3% 6,775
Uzbekistan	UNHCR	30 Jun 2021	0.0% 14
Turkmenistan	UNHCR	30 Jun 2021	0.0% 13

Source: UNHCR, Operation Data Portal - Afghanistan situation, at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/afghanistan>.

As of December 2021, Afghans were the largest group of applicants in the EU+ countries. Following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February, the OSCE region is facing a humanitarian and refugee crisis not seen since World War II. Already in March 2022, Ukrainians lodged far more applications (some 14,000) than Afghans (9,000) and Syrians (7,700), the first time in seven years that neither Syrians nor Afghans were the largest applicant group.¹

While it is impossible ascertain how many Afghans continue to leave as it is difficult to estimate how many are resorting to smugglers or travelling without documentation, estimates point to thousands of Afghan citizens fleeing each month.

Despite the volatile situation in their country where more than 90 per cent of the population suffers from food insecurity, ongoing persecution especially of women and

¹ European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Latest asylum trends (March 2022), <https://euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-asylum>.

minorities, and the non-return advisory issued by UNHCR last August,² Afghans face considerable challenges along the migration route.

Afghan citizens have claimed to have been victims of **illegal pushbacks** along the Balkan route,³ being sent back from Greece to Turkey by auxiliaries – sometimes Afghans themselves – after having reached land and without being given the opportunity to claim asylum. Violent pushbacks continue to be reported at the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, where Afghans already constituted the majority of asylum seekers before the Taliban takeover.

Iran and Pakistan have stepped up border controls as well as **deportations**. Türkiye, which is a key transit country for those heading towards Europe and already hosts the largest refugee population in the world (3.8 million, mostly from Syria), has implemented new security measures along its border with Iran since late 2021 to prevent irregular entries and is implementing returns to Afghanistan. In the past six months, 79 Turkish chartered deportation flights have landed at Kabul international airport, carrying more than 18,000 Afghans.

Since 2008, European countries have forcibly repatriated over 70,000 people back to Afghanistan. The United Kingdom is the largest contributor to this number, making up a fifth (22 per cent) of European forced deportations to Afghanistan since 2008.

Last August, half a dozen European countries⁴ underlined that they would continue deportations of rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan despite the Taliban takeover, arguing that any suspension of deportations would act as a pull-factor.

In the United Kingdom, where Afghans are currently the largest national group of asylum seekers arriving on small boats in the channel, with more than 1,000 coming to the UK between January and March 2022,⁵ updated guidance issued by the Home Office claims that deporting asylum seekers back to Afghanistan presents “no real risk of harm”. On 14 June, a flight that was originally due to take 37 asylum seekers, including a number of Afghan citizens, to Rwanda was blocked due to a number of legal challenges in the national courts as well as the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

In January the United Kingdom launched the Afghan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)⁶ which aims to resettle up to 20,000 people over the next few years. Currently

² UNHCR issued a non-return advisory on 16 August 2021 which remains in force (<https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/8/611b62584/unhcr-issues-non-return-advisory-afghanistan.html>). IOM has also repeatedly

³ Human Rights Watch, “Their faces were covered” Greece’s use of migrants as police auxiliaries in pushbacks, 7 April 2022, at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/04/07/their-faces-were-covered/greeces-use-migrants-police-auxiliaries-pushbacks>.

⁴ On 5 August 2021, Interior Ministers from Germany, Austria, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Greece sent a joint letter to the European Commission, highlighting the urgent need to perform both voluntary and non-voluntary returns, as “stopping returns sends the wrong signal”. However, less than a week later, Germany and The Netherlands announced that they were suspending returns.

⁵ Between January and March 2022, 1,094 Afghan citizens arrived in the UK by small boats (24%) followed by citizens of Iran (722), Iraq (681), Syria (601), Eritrea (376), Albania (271), Sudan (137), Kuwait (107) and Egypt (106). <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-march-2022/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-march-2022>.

⁶ The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which was launched on 6 January 2022, prioritizes (a) those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women’s

focused on giving status to people already evacuated to the UK, the scheme is now being extended to refugees who fled Afghanistan through referral by UNHCR as well as certain limited at risk categories from Afghanistan and the region.

Elsewhere, many Afghan evacuees are still awaiting transfer to their final destination. In Albania, for example, an estimated 1,800 are still hoping to be transferred to the US or other countries, and are facing an uncertain future as NGO funding for their stay in coastal resorts is running out and visas have not come through.

I would like to conclude this section with an appeal to all of you not to forget about the women, men and children of Afghanistan, and to continue to support the efforts of international and humanitarian organizations to assist the 24 million people in need in Afghanistan, to support the integration of those whom you have already welcomed in your countries, and to expand legal pathways for those in need of protection.⁷

2. Ukraine refugee crisis

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022 has forced millions of civilians, mostly women and children, to leave their homes and seek shelter elsewhere.



The original estimate by UNHCR of 4 million refugees has been largely surpassed.

Now in its fifth month, the war has displaced nearly one-third of Ukrainians from their homes.

Within Ukraine, over 7.1 million people remain displaced.⁸

UNHCR estimates there are over 5.2 million refugees across Europe. More than 8 million refugee movements out of Ukraine have been recorded since 24 February 2022. It should also be noted that over 2.8 million movements back into Ukraine have been recorded since 28 February, although it is unclear whether these represent sustainable returns.

rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law; and (b) vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+). It aims to resettle more than 5,000 people in the first year, and up to 20,000 over the coming years. It is based not on applications but on referrals. For more, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>.

⁷ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has developed a *Comprehensive Action Plan for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries* to strengthen the resilience and recovery of over 3.6 million crisis-affected persons (IDPs, migrants, returnees, refugees, host communities, and other persons in vulnerable situations) and government counterparts in both in Afghanistan and in six neighbouring countries (Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

⁸ UNHCR, Ukraine Situation Flash Update #17 (17 June 2022), at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-situation-flash-update-17-17-june-2022>.

One month after the start of the war, nearly 3.7 million had already fled Ukraine, with the overwhelming majority arriving in Poland followed by Romania, Moldova and Slovakia.⁹

Currently, Ukraine's neighbours still host the largest number of refugees, although numbers have been decreasing (Annex III). As of 21 June, Poland was hosting 1.18 million against 2.3 at the end of March; Moldova is currently hosting 85,797, down from 385,000; Romania 82,733 against 610,000; and Slovakia is not far behind with 78,972.

Countries neighbouring Ukraine

Country	Data Date	Individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe	Refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes	Border crossings from Ukraine*	Border crossings to Ukraine**
Russian Federation***	21 June, 2022	1,305,018	Not applicable	1,305,018	Data not available
Poland	21 June, 2022	1,180,677	1,180,677	4,146,144	2,073,052
Republic of Moldova	21 June, 2022	85,797	Not applicable	507,552	138,488
Romania	21 June, 2022	82,733	40,202	691,413	370,707
Slovakia	21 June, 2022	78,972	78,782	525,620	254,316
Hungary	21 June, 2022	25,042	25,042	814,607	Data not available
Belarus	20 June, 2022	9,006	Not applicable	16,660	Data not available
Total		2,767,245	1,324,703	8,007,014	2,836,563

***The figure for individual refugees recorded in the country is an estimate as potential further movements or returns cannot be factored for the time being.

Source: UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>, as at 26 June 2022.

Looking beyond Ukraine's immediate neighbourhood, the largest numbers of refugees are being hosted in Germany (780,000), the Czech Republic (379,669), Türkiye (145,000), Italy (137,385), and Spain (124,052) (Annex III).

The Russian Federation has reported over 1.3 million border crossings from Ukraine. This figure should be interpreted in the context of reports of forced displacement of civilians from Ukraine to the Russian Federation and Belarus. As part of the international investigations into potential war crimes and genocide committed by Russian forces in Ukraine, I hope that more light will be shed also on this aspect of this terrible war, in particular allegations of the forced deportation of children to the Russian Federation.

Countries across the OSCE region have responded swiftly and generously to this sudden mass influx of refugees, with ordinary citizens opening their homes and scrambling to respond to the immediate needs of the displaced.

In a historic first, the **EU's Temporary Protection Directive (TPD)** was activated on 4 March with the aim to avoid the overburdening of national asylum systems and to offer Ukrainian refugees harmonized rights across Europe.¹⁰ These rights include residence, integration into the labour market, social and health services, and access to education for children. Beneficiaries¹¹ enjoy temporary protection for an initial period of one year which can be extended by the European Council for an additional two years.

⁹ UNHCR, Ukraine Situation Flash Update #5 (24 March 2022), at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-situation-flash-update-5-24-march-2022>.

¹⁰ Council implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32022D0382>.

¹¹ Beneficiaries of temporary protection are: Ukrainian nationals, as well as third country nationals (TCNs) or stateless persons benefiting from international protection in Ukraine and their family members if they

As of 21 June, 3,514,974 refugees from Ukraine had registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe.¹² While not bound by the EU's temporary protection framework, a number of countries such as Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland have introduced similar provisions.

Some 'lessons learned' thus far from measures to welcome wave of refugees from Ukraine will be touched upon further below in this report.

3. The Channel route

One particularly dangerous route is the **Channel** between France and the United Kingdom, the busiest waterway in the world, the risks of crossing being compounded by the use of small, inflatable boats, a phenomenon which was declared a "major incident" by the UK in 2018 and which has increased sharply since.

A total of 28,526 people were detected arriving on small boats in 2021. This compares with 8,466 in 2020, 1,843 in 2019 and 299 in 2018.¹³ Overall, males represented approximately 90 per cent of small boat arrivals in 2021; minors represented around 12 per cent. Nationals of Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan and Vietnam dominate cumulative arrivals since 2018.

The small-boat route has emerged as the most common irregular route to the UK, perhaps due to COVID restrictions on lorry and train routes as well as enhanced security at French ports and the channel tunnel. It could also be due to variations in the rates of detection.

Last September, the UK government caused controversy following an announcement that it had authorized the UK Border Force to stop migrant vessels in UK waters and turn them back across the Channel to France. France claimed that such a policy would violate international maritime law. Human Rights organizations, too, qualified this plan as a 'pushback' policy which violates the legal duty of rescue at sea, and urged the UK to enter into talks with French counterparts over properly sharing refugee responsibility.¹⁴ These plans, which were never implemented, were abandoned in April 2022.

The **nationality and borders bill**¹⁵ adopted by the UK Parliament in April 2022 seeks to address irregular migration by deterring small-boat arrivals through tougher criminal sanctions on irregular entry, and giving refugees fewer rights if they enter the UK

resided in Ukraine before or on 24 February 2022. For TCNs residing in Ukraine before or on 24 February with a permanent residence permit and who cannot safely return to their country member states shall apply either temporary protection or adequate protection under their national law. Member states may also apply this decision to other persons, including any TCNs residing legally in Ukraine and who are unable to safely return to their country of origin, as well as Ukrainians who fled not long before 24 February or who found themselves in EU territory just before that date, for example for holiday or work purposes.

¹² UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation, at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>, as at 22 June 2022.

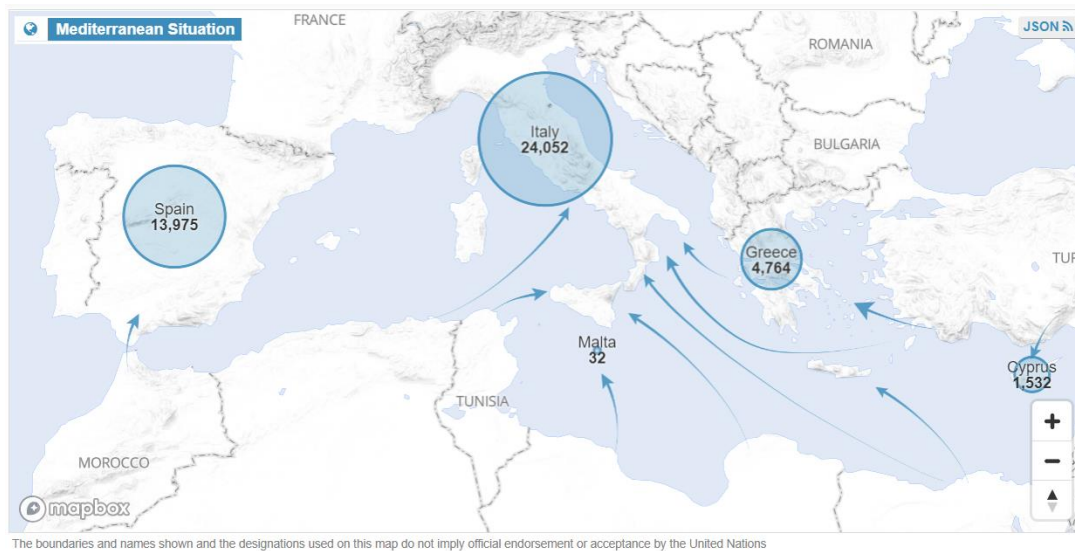
¹³ UK Home Office, Official Statistics. Irregular Migration to the UK, year ending December 2021, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-december-2021/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-december-2021>.

¹⁴ Amnesty International, "UK: Government's plan to push back refugees is 'senseless'" (9 September 2021), at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-governments-plan-push-back-refugees-france-senseless>.

¹⁵ Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (28 April 2022), at: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>.

irregularly. Critics of the bill argue that restrictive policies have little effect on the number of asylum claims, with conflict and poverty in countries of origin representing stronger ‘drivers’ of migration. The UN has also expressed concerns¹⁶ that the two-tiered approach to asylum, differentiating between those entering by legal routes, like resettlement, and those arriving spontaneously or having passed through countries deemed safe, violates the 1951 Refugee Convention. Under the Convention, states must grant asylum-seekers access to their territory and fair procedures. They may be returned to where they have, or could have, sought asylum and could still access a fair procedure and receive humane treatment but doing so requires important safeguards. As emphasized by UNHCR, if all refugees were obliged to remain in the first safe country they entered, the whole system would probably collapse.

4. *The Central Mediterranean route*



According to statistics of the EU border and coast guard agency Frontex, the Central Mediterranean continued to be the most frequently used path to Europe for the second year in row in 2021 as nearly 68,000 migrants were detected on this route, representing a 90 per cent increase from the previous year.¹⁷ More than 67,000 migrants disembarked in Italy in 2021 (including 35,000 in Lampedusa alone), a significant increase from the 34,154 in 2020 but well below the record set in 2016 of 181,436.

In 2022, arrivals via the Central Mediterranean constituted 54 per cent of the total of 44,355 arrivals recorded as of 19 June.

¹⁶ UNHCR, “UNHCR deeply concerned at discriminatory two-tier UK asylum plans, urges rethink” (10 May 2021), at: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2021/5/6097bce14/unhcr-deeply-concerned-at-discriminatory-two-tier-uk-asylum-plans-urges.html>.

¹⁷ <https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-routes/central-mediterranean-route/>.

Total arrivals in 2022	JSON
44,355	
<small>Last updated 19 Jun 2022</small>	
Sea arrivals in 2022	JSON
<small>Includes refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Malta</small>	
40,706	
<small>Last updated 19 Jun 2022</small>	
Land arrivals in 2022	JSON
<small>Includes refugees and migrants arriving by land to Greece and Spain.</small>	
3,649	
<small>Last updated 19 Jun 2022</small>	
Dead and missing in 2022 (estimate)	JSON
773	
<small>Last updated 19 Jun 2022</small>	

2021 marked the highest number of deaths along irregular migration routes since 2017 with 3,029 confirmed fatalities. The vast majority of deaths occurred on the Atlantic route as well as the Western and Central Mediterranean routes.

The year 2021 closed with a death toll of more than 1,500. So far in 2022, an estimated 773 persons died or are missing.

Source: UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

More than 32,000 people were intercepted and returned to Libya in 2021 even as the situation deteriorates further.¹⁸ Interceptions and returns to Libya tripled in 2021 compared to 2020. The NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) warned that they were “brought back to systematic extortions, violence and abuse in Libya with the complicity of EU and EU member states”.

5. The Eastern Mediterranean route

Looking towards the Eastern Mediterranean route from Türkiye to Greece, the number of arrivals to the EU via this route in 2021 (around 20,000) at roughly the same level with the figures of the previous year.¹⁹

While detections of illegal border crossings continue to drop in Greece, Cyprus experienced significantly stronger migratory pressure compared to previous years as arrivals to its shores doubled to around 12,000.

IOM has drawn attention to mounting migrant deaths at the land border between Turkey and Greece in 2022 where at least 21 migrants had died as of February 2022 compared to 10 during the same period last year.²⁰ IOM has also joined a number of other international governmental as well as non-governmental organizations in highlighting persistent reports of pushbacks, collective expulsions, and use of excessive force against people on the move along this route, based on testimonies collected by IOM teams in both countries, emphasizing that such actions are not in line with states’ commitments and obligations under international and regional law, such as the violation of the principle of non-refoulement.²¹

¹⁸ European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), “Med: Tragedy Continues as Routes Change and Situation in Libya Deteriorates Even Further” (14 January 2022), at: <https://ecre.org/med-tragedy-continues-as-routes-changes-and-situation-in-libya-deteriorates-even-further/>.

¹⁹ <https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route/>.

²⁰ IOM, “IOM Concerned about Increasing Deaths on Greece-Turkey Border” (18 February 2022), at: <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-concerned-about-increasing-deaths-greece-turkey-border>.

²¹ IOM, “IOM Concerned about Increasing Deaths on Greece-Turkey Border” (18 February 2022), at: <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-concerned-about-increasing-deaths-greece-turkey-border>.

A number of new reception centres have opened in the Greek Aegean islands of Samos (September 2021), Kos and Leros (January 2022) in recent months with EU funding. A new Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) is also due to open on Lesbos to replace the current Mavrovouni camp as well as on Chios.

These new facilities aim to ensure adequate and dignified living conditions for asylum seekers. They are an integral part of the Greek government's new migration policy which the Greek Migration Minister has qualified as "strict but fair". They also provide necessary infrastructure and facilities to allow fair and efficient management of asylum applications. The European Commission has also set up a dedicated Task Force to help the Greek government improve the situation on the islands.

While these new centres represent a significant improvement, a number of concerns remain. As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in a recent visit, "the [Greek] Government's current approach to the issue is defined by its framing of migration as a matter of security and prevention ... What this has fostered for refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and the human rights defenders acting in solidarity with them, is an atmosphere of fear – particularly a fear of criminalisation."²² The Special Rapporteur Mary Lawlor has highlighted in particular "prosecutions, where acts of solidarity are reinterpreted as criminal activity, specifically the crime of people smuggling." The Special Rapporteur has further stated that the climate of fear and insecurity created by this policy was reinforced by elements of the legal framework, in particular the discriminatory NGO Registry for organizations working on migration, and statements from high-ranking Government representatives attacking and undermining the work of human rights NGOs.

I will touch upon some of these points again further below when summarizing the observations following the Committee's field visit to Greece. I also wish to underline that 'pushbacks' as well as the "criminalization of solidarity" are by no means limited to Greece but can unfortunately be observed in other areas in the OSCE region.

6. The Western Mediterranean route

Irregular arrivals in Spain along the **Western Mediterranean route** – both via the Mediterranean sea from Algeria and Morocco to mainland Spain and by land to the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla in Northern Africa, increased slightly in 2021 with 18,466 cases reported. This is still considerably below the levels experienced in 2018 where over 56,000 irregular arrivals were registered, thanks to increased efforts by Morocco to fight irregular migration, increased cooperation between Spain, Morocco and

²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Greece: Migration policy having "suffocating effect" on human rights defenders says UN expert" (22 June 2022), at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/greece-migration-policy-having-suffocating-effect-human-rights-defenders>.

the EU in this area, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Algeria was the main country of departure as well as the leading nationality followed by Moroccans.

2022 saw repeated mass attempts by predominantly sub-Saharan migrants to cross the land border between Morocco and the autonomous city of Melilla – one of the few entry points into the EU which does not involve a perilous sea crossing. On 8 March 2022, a thousand migrants tried to climb the fence in a coordinated manner, but were stopped by Moroccan police. This came only a week after the largest such attempt on record when about 2,500 tried to scale the fence, followed by two more attempts. A total of 871 migrants succeeded in entering Melilla that week, compared to 1,092 for the whole of 2021.



7. The Western African route

The **Western African route** from the west African coast to Spain's Canary Islands experienced a resurgence in 2020. Arrivals from Morocco in particular are on the increase in 2022.²³

The increase along this route can be attributed to COVID-19 measures adopted by many African countries, which have hindered movement along the traditional migration routes, as well as aggravated social and economic living conditions in many countries of origin.²⁴ The effects of the war in Ukraine and its impact on food security are also being felt.

The improvement of relations between Spain and Morocco in Spring 2022, including an agreement to cooperate in reducing irregular border crossings and a resumption of joint patrols off the coast of both countries, is expected to have a positive impact on the fight against irregular migration. Already, in April 2022, irregular arrivals on the Canary Islands were 70 per cent lower than in February. Tragically, however, another mass attempt at crossing the border at Melilla on 24 June resulted in 23 migrant deaths at the time of writing.

8. Top nationalities

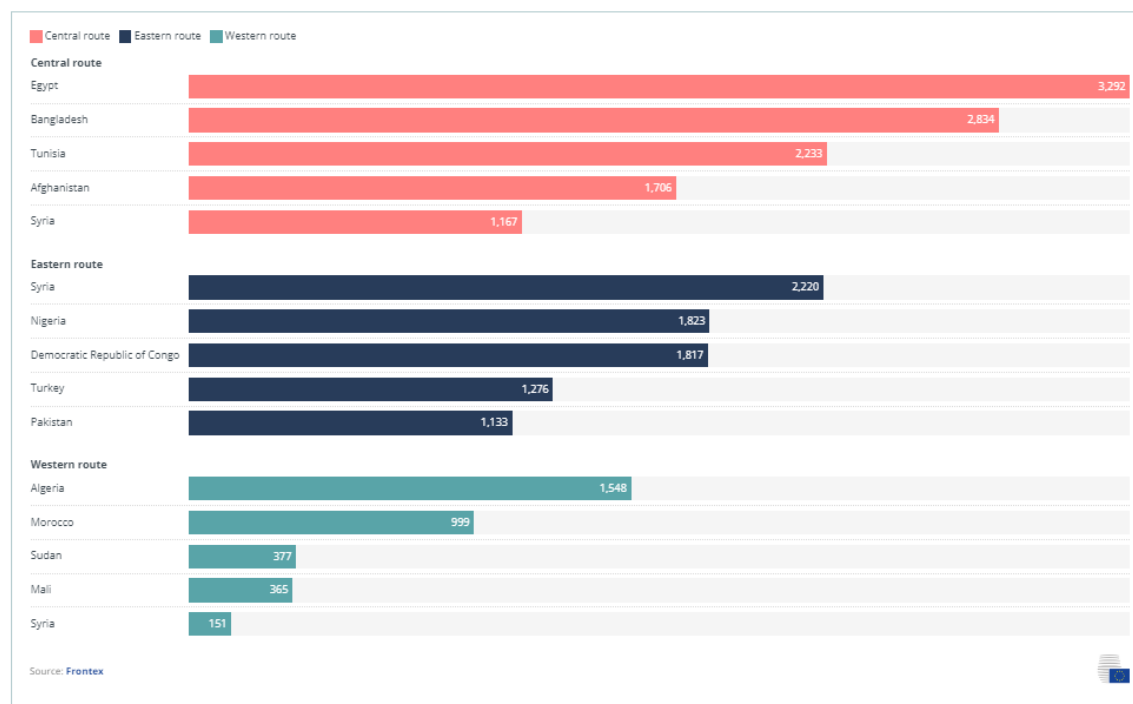
It is also worth noting that the nationalities of migrants crossing the Mediterranean include Syrian, Afghan and Eritrean nationals – countries which have a relatively high asylum recognition rate. For example, Syrians were the top nationality amongst irregular arrivals on the Eastern Mediterranean route, while Afghans and Syrians represented the fourth and fifth most common nationality of arrivals on the central route.

²³ According to the Spanish Ministry of Interior, the number of migrants from Morocco to the Canary Islands has increased by 50 per cent this year, with 8,268 arrivals in 181 boats by May 2022.

²⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/western-routes/>.

Top nationalities per route (2022)

Data up to May 2022. Western route arrivals exclude arrivals to Canary Islands.



9. Western Balkan route

The Balkan route made headlines at the height of the refugee crisis in 2015, when it was the primary path to Germany and other countries in Western Europe for about one million refugees. In 2016, however, two factors caused numbers along the route to plummet: the EU-Turkey Statement, which stopped most of the migration from Turkey to Greece, and the closing of their borders to migrants by several countries along the route.

In the last three years, the number of migrants on the route – although not close to the levels of 2015 – has begun to rise again, in part due to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. According to Frontex, the number of irregular crossings fell from 764,033 in 2015 to 5,869 in 2018 and then rebounded to 60,541 in 2021.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has emerged in recent years as a main transit country following the reinforcement of Hungary's border with Serbia in late 2015. The northwestern Krajina border region in particular has seen growing numbers of migrants playing 'the game', repeatedly seeking to cross into Croatia.

In November 2021, authorities finally opened a modern camp built with EU funds and capable of registering up to 1,500 people, with separate sections for families with children as well as unaccompanied minors. This new camp replaced the makeshift camp at Lipa where migrants remained even after the previous, overcrowded camp was burned down in December 2020.

Current numbers of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina are down to about 3,000 persons compared to 10,000 in 2020.

In Serbia, there are an estimated 3,679 migrants and refugees are currently in state-run camps, with many more in squats, hostels, private homes. Hundreds are believed to be camping in forests near the Hungarian border.

The Border Violence Monitoring Network, a group of NGOs that operate in the Balkans, continues to report pushbacks and accompanying violence throughout the region.²⁵

In April 2022, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović stated that “the scale and normalisation of pushbacks at Europe’s borders requires urgent and concerted action by governments and parliamentarians.”²⁶ In her recommendation, the Commissioner describes how pushing back refugees, asylum seekers and migrants is becoming an official policy in several states, even formalised in domestic legislation in some instances. Referring to the immediate response of states to the Ukraine refugee crisis, she noted that it was possible to put the protection of human dignity and the observance of international obligations at the centre of state action, and called upon this principle to also be applied to the protection of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants coming from other parts of the world.

Mijatović identified four key areas of action to halt the phenomenon of pushbacks:

- Firstly, states must ensure good faith implementation of their human rights obligations, including under the European Convention on Human Rights, and stop avoiding responsibility. “States’ disregard for their obligations is undermining the rule of law and hard-won human rights protections. This endangers everyone, not just refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.”
- Secondly, states should enhance transparency and accountability, including by strengthening independent border monitoring mechanisms, which are crucial to preventing pushbacks, bringing violations to light and fighting impunity.
- Thirdly, all Council of Europe member states must recognise pushbacks as a serious, pan-European problem, requiring all of them to act, including by speaking out against such violations of human rights and holding their peers to account. “In the face of overwhelming evidence of pushbacks across Europe, all member states, including those not directly carrying out pushbacks, must step up and speak out. Not doing so will amount to silently condoning human rights violations”, warned the Commissioner.
- Fourthly, parliamentarians must mobilise and take their responsibility to prevent legislative proposals that allow for pushbacks from passing and to repeal any such legislation that is already in place, call governments to account, and use their mandates to raise human rights violations when they occur.

²⁵ <https://www.borderviolence.eu/>.

²⁶ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, “Pushed beyond the limits. Urgent action needed to stop pushbacks at Europe’s borders” (7 April 2022), at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/pushed-beyond-the-limits-urgent-action-needed-to-stop-push-back-at-europe-s-borders>.

10. US-Mexico Border

Since 20 March 2020, migrants arriving at the southern border of the U.S. have been sent back to Mexico or to their home countries under a provision of U.S. health law – section 265 of Title 42. Title 42 has led to the mass expulsion of thousands of asylum seekers.²⁷ Many individuals have been sent back to persecution in their home countries or forced to wait in Mexico until the border reopens to asylum seekers. Human rights NGOs allege that, during the Biden administration alone, nearly 10,000 people have been kidnapped, assaulted, raped or tortured since being expelled to Mexico under Title 42.²⁸

Not all migrants seeking asylum are expelled. Rising numbers of people from countries other than Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador have been permitted to seek asylum in the U.S. because Mexico will not allow the Biden administration to expel them back to Mexico. Many are sent to ICE detention centers where they may seek asylum through the credible fear process (CFI).

Unaccompanied minors are exempt from the policy. Roughly 1 in 10 people encountered after crossing the border are unaccompanied children who are sent to federal shelters.²⁹

In early March 2022, US border officials were directed to consider exempting Ukrainians from Title 42. As a result, close to 3,000 Ukrainians were allowed in even as other potential asylum seekers were turned back. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas denied the existence of a double standard, noting that exemptions could be granted on a case-by-case basis for all, not just Ukrainian nationals.

The Biden administration kept Title 42 in place until April 2022, when the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) announced that it no longer believed it was necessary for public health purposes. The termination of Title 42 was set to go into effect on 23 May, but was blocked by a federal court in Louisiana. Thus, Title 42 remains in effect for now. The Department of Justice has appealed the decision in Louisiana. Washington has also offered to support Mexico's efforts to contain the influx of migrants at its southern border.

The NGO Human Rights Watch recently noted that “those who cross Mexico's southern border fleeing violence and persecution struggle to obtain protection, face serious abuses and delays, and are often forced to wait for months in inhumane conditions near Mexico's southern border while struggling to find work or housing”. HRW has condemned “outsourcing US immigration enforcement to Mexico” as this has led to “serious abuses and forced hundreds of thousands to wait in appalling conditions to seek protection”.³⁰

²⁷ Over 1.8 million expulsions under Title 42 have been carried out since the pandemic began; however, nearly half of those expulsions were of the same people being apprehended and expelled back to Mexico multiple times. American Immigration Council, “Fact Sheet - A Guide to Title 42 Expulsions at the Border” (15 October 2021, last modified 25 May 2022), at: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/guide-title-42-expulsions-border>.

²⁸ Deutsche Welle, “Title 42: Controversial Trump-era immigration policy remains in place” (24 May 2022), at: <https://www.dw.com/en/title-42-controversial-trump-era-immigration-policy-remains-in-place/a-61917371>.

²⁹ American Immigration Council, “Fact Sheet - A Guide to Title 42 Expulsions at the Border” (15 October 2021, last modified 25 May 2022), at: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/guide-title-42-expulsions-border>.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Mexico: Asylum seekers face abuse at southern border” (6 June 2022), at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/06/mexico-asylum-seekers-face-abuses-southern-border>.

11. Impact of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine on Central Asia

Nowhere in the OSCE region has the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic been so marked than in Central Asia. Mobility restrictions introduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic prevented seasonal agricultural workers from Central Asia from travelling and earning incomes abroad, with the Russian Federation being the main destination for over five million annual labour migrants from Central Asia, with consequences ranging from declines in remittances, affected livelihoods and food insecurity.

The Central Asian republics, in particular Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, have become accustomed to exporting excess labor capacity, generating much-needed revenue for households, and relieving pressure on their governments to create jobs and provide public goods and services. Remittances from migrant workers contribute 26.7 and 31.3 per cent to the GDPs of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan respectively. Remittances account for 11 per cent of the GDP of Uzbekistan.

But the Covid-19 pandemic laid bare the vulnerabilities of the region's over-dependence on migration. As a result of the pandemic, economic growth in Central Asia plummeted.³¹ Millions of migrants who usually leave in the spring were stranded at home. Coupled with lockdown measures, this led to a significant rise in domestic violence, protests, and unemployment.

The decline in remittances also had a knock-on effect on local economies and, most importantly, on the livelihoods of the families of migrant workers. Many households dependent on remittances were compelled to reduce their expenditures, with negative implications for food and nutrition security. Reduced mobility due to COVID-19 restrictions prevented migrant workers from leaving their areas of origin, resulting in the creation of an abundance of labour supply and the rise of unemployment.

As the economies of Central Asia were starting to recover from the impact of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine dealt an additional blow, especially to the poorest countries of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Sanctions on Russia have prevented European goods from reaching Central Asian republics via Russia and the resource-rich republics have lost access to their export markets in the West arresting their progress towards post-pandemic recovery. Migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan who are working in Russia are facing considerable difficulties in transferring funds back to their homeland. A return of significant numbers of migrants could also lead to further increases in unemployment and threaten the stability of their home countries.

It seems that, despite the sanctions, the Russian Federation continued to attract migrants from Central Asia due to limited alternatives. This is yet another area to be further monitored as the war in Ukraine drags on.

³¹ See, e.g., <https://oxussociety.org/covid-19-and-central-asian-over-dependence-on-labor-migration-an-update-on-the-central-asia-migration-tracker/>.

12. The externalization of migration management

Across the OSCE region, we have seen examples of “**externalization**” of border and migration controls and, in some cases, externalisation of protection. The March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement is one such example. The U.S. too, has been outsourcing immigration enforcement of its southern border to Mexico as touched upon earlier. The agreement concluded between the UK and Rwanda to transfer asylum seekers for processing of their claims, with financial support from the UK, also falls within this category. The UK is determined to press ahead with this policy despite recent setbacks.³²

Denmark has been pursuing similar plans to outsource the processing of asylum applications to Rwanda which contain an element not only of outsourcing the processing of applications but also foresee granting protection there. The Danish parliament started out establishing a legal framework before any diplomatic agreement had been reached with a potential host country. The Danish plans involve an initial screening of asylum seekers for vulnerability, before they are transferred to a third country for their asylum cases to be processed. If they are recognized as refugees, they will be settled there. If not, their possible deportation will be the responsibility of that third country.

While such policies are met with strong criticism from human rights advocates who question their compliance with international human rights commitments, proponents of ‘externalization’ policies invoke a range of arguments such as the humanitarian one according to which these plans will help protect potential refugees from human traffickers and smugglers and prevent deaths. There is also an economic argument that the costs of processing and accommodation of asylum seekers is lower in third countries.

Regardless of where one stands on the topic of ‘externalization’ of migration management, it should be possible to agree that such policies should be implemented in accordance with international law and with full respect for individual human rights, including the right to seek asylum. Not only do the practices and policies of stopping asylum-seekers and migrants in need of protection at or before they reach the EU's external borders erode EU values as enshrined in the EU Treaties, they may also violate international and European humanitarian and human rights laws.

The European Parliament, amongst others, has repeatedly called for EU Member States and EU agencies to comply with fundamental rights in their activities to protect the EU's external borders, and several international organizations and other stakeholders have condemned or filed legal actions against the practice of ‘pushbacks’ carried out at the EU's external borders.³³

³² Following the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the UK has announced that it would introduce a new bill asserting that the Supreme Court in London is the ultimate arbiter on human rights issues, enabling it to ignore certain decisions of the ECtHR.

³³ In April 2022, the Director of Frontex, Fabrice Leggeri, resigned, following investigations by the European anti-fraud office OLAF, into his management of the agency. Frontex has been repeatedly accused by aid organizations of illegally returning migrants across EU borders or of turning a blind eye to ‘pushbacks’ by national authorities and other actors. On 10 March 2022, a Syrian migrant who claimed to have been illegally pushed back to Turkey by Greek authorities, sued Frontex for alleged complicity. The plaintiff, who filed his application with the European Court of Justice, claims that, after he arrived on the Greek island of Samos with around 20 other persons, he was loaded onto an inflatable dinghy by Greek authorities and abandoned at sea. A Frontex airplane allegedly surveyed the situation at the time.

13. Enhancing migration management at the European and global levels

Externalization is in fact one of the cornerstones of the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum**, proposed in September 2020 and which has yet to be finalized.³⁴ Critics of these proposals emphasize that, rather than seeking to reform migration management, most European countries have focused instead on reducing irregular migration and on making returns more effective. While these areas are key to ensuring effective and comprehensive migration management, they should not come at the expense of providing protection to those in need. At the same time, regular migration should be encouraged in such a way that the interests of all three parties (country of origin, host country and migrant) are balanced so that everybody wins.

Also noteworthy is the first **International Migration Review Forum** (IMRF) held in New York from 17-20 May 2022, as foreseen by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018). Due to take place every four years, this event aims to offer an intergovernmental global platform to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact, including as it relates to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

In the resulting IMRF Progress Declaration, the heads of state reaffirm their determination to fulfil the objectives and commitments outlined in the Global Compact, in line with its 360-degree vision, guiding principles and comprehensive approach, by facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, promoting the contributions of migrants at all skills levels to sustainable development at the local, national, regional and global levels, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, and reducing the incidence and negative impact of irregular migration.

They acknowledge their shared responsibilities to one another as UN Member States to respect each other's needs and concerns over migration, and recognize that all migrants, regardless of their migration status, are human rights holders, and reaffirm the need to protect their safety and dignity, and the overarching obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, without any kind of discrimination, while promoting the security, well-being and prosperity of all their communities.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/eu-affairs/syrian-migrant-sues-frontex-over-pushback-from-greece-to-turkey>.

³⁴ One major achievement so far has been the transformation in June 2021 of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) into the European Union Agency of Asylum with the aim to make asylum procedures in EU Member States of higher quality, more uniform and faster. With a new reserve of 500 experts, it also aims to provide greater support to national asylum systems with a higher caseload. See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3241.

II. Implemented Activities (March-June 2022)

1. Field visit to Greece

From 20-23 March 2022, I led a delegation of the Committee consisting of Vice-Chairs Luigi Augussori, Kyriakos Hadjiyianni, Farah Karimi and Gudrun Kugler on a visit to Lesbos and Samos, as a follow up to a previous mission to Greece in May 2017. Our aim was to bring renewed attention to the situation on the Aegean islands and to assess progress made in the past five years. We were joined by Head of the Hellenic Delegation to the OSCE PA Theodoros Karaoglou and Committee Member Dimitrios Markopoulos.

In preparation for this visit, we held an online briefing with the Secretary General for the Reception of Asylum Seekers Emmanouil Logothetis, who provided an overview of facilities to be visited and measures taken by the government to improve conditions therein. We also heard from a number of non-governmental actors engaged in migration matters.

On the ground, participants were invited to tour the Reception and Identification Center Mytilene, in Mavrovouni, Lesbos. This temporary camp was erected in the wake of a fire that destroyed the Moria camp in September 2020, at the time the largest of its kind within Europe and which was significantly over capacity with over 8,000 persons living in facility designed for 3,000. Mavrovouni has undergone structural changes since then and is due to be replaced by a permanent facility next year.

The program also featured the new Closed Controlled Access Centre at Zervou on Samos. Participants had the opportunity to inspect this new EU-funded facility meant to address the deficiencies of previous camps and to ensure the proper implementation of reception and asylum procedures. Zervou CCAC is one of five such centres planned for the Aegean islands of Greece, including Lesbos.

As part of our visit, we met with a broad range of interlocutors, ranging from local authorities, the Greek coast guard and police and Frontex to UNHCR and a number of non-governmental actors. In a press release at the conclusion of the visit, I shared my impression that “it is important to prevent asylum seekers from spending prolonged periods in a legal limbo, while their cases either undergo successive, lengthy reviews or eventually end with no possibility of deportation.” I also observed “the gap in terms of lack of sufficient support to recognized refugees”, encouraging “programs to foster contacts with the local community and facilitate a smooth transition from the camps into society if refugee status is awarded.”

The online Committee meeting on 28 March 2022 provided an opportunity for participants in the visit to share their impressions with other Committee members. On 6 April, they were also able to ask follow up questions from the Greek Minister for Migration and Asylum Panagiotis Mitarakis.

2. Activities related to the Ukraine refugee crisis

The Committee has been closely monitoring developments since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Upon an invitation of the Polish delegation, I took part in a high-level PA visit to the Polish-Ukrainian border on 13-14 March 2022. Led by OSCE PA President Cederfelt, the delegation also included Second Committee Rapporteur and Migration Committee Vice-Chair Gudrun Kugler and Third Committee Rapporteur and Migration

Committee Member Johan Büser. We visited a number of points of arrivals and reception centers along the border with Ukraine, and witnessed first-hand the misery caused by the Russian aggression, but also the generosity and solidarity of Polish authorities and citizens. Given the predominance of women and child refugees, we were grateful for the expertise of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) Mr. Valiant Richey.

In a joint press release, we commended the response of the Polish authorities and citizens, encouraged European countries to increase their level of preparedness and stressed the need for special protection measures for unaccompanied minors.

Mr. Richey shared his recommendations to enhance anti-trafficking prevention amid mass arrivals³⁵ at the Committee's online meeting on 28 March 2022, where we also discussed how the OSCE PA and we, as parliamentarians, could enhance the protection of refugees from Ukraine. I draw your attention in particular to the section on legislative and policy measures to prevent and mitigate vulnerabilities in these recommendations. Of particular interest for parliamentarians is the recommendation to "establish clear procedures for rapid exchange of information on people seeking refuge registered in the transit and destination countries and their place of residence in order to prevent people, especially children, from going missing and reduce their vulnerability to trafficking in human beings."

I also encourage you to also consult the second set of recommendations developed by the OSR/CTHB on enhancing efforts to identify and mitigate risks of trafficking in human beings online as a result of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.³⁶

3. Questionnaire on special measures to welcome Ukrainian refugees in the OSCE region

At the end of March, together with the OSCE PA International Secretariat, we developed and circulated a short questionnaire to all OSCE PA delegations on special measures to welcome Ukrainian refugees with the aim to obtain an overview and to contribute to the sharing of 'good practices'.

We received responses from 25 delegations, including the top host countries, which we compiled and shared with all delegations. I am very grateful for the dedication with which you took part in this initiative.

Here are some general observations, based on the replies received as part of this initiative as well as on a preliminary assessment carried out by UNHCR on the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).³⁷ UNHCR highlights a number of effective practices, such as

³⁵ OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Recommendations on the need to enhance anti-trafficking prevention amid mass migration flows (SEC.GAL/39/22, 9 March 2022), at: <https://www.osce.org/cthb/513784>.

³⁶ OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Recommendations on enhancing efforts to identify and mitigate risks of trafficking in human beings online as a result of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine (SEC.GAL/48/22, 22 April 2022), at: <https://www.osce.org/cthb/516423>.

³⁷ UNHCR, The EU Temporary Protection Directive in Practice 2022 (16 June 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/eu-temporary-protection-directive-practice-2022>.

enhanced registration, access to information on procedures, expedited issuance of documentation, systemic approaches with multiple services operating in a sequential manner (“under one roof”), increased use of technology and digitalization of systems, including to lodge applications, as well as ensuring stronger linkages between status and rights. Many of these elements were also mentioned in the replies to the PA Questionnaire.

- **Scope of application of temporary protection**

One main observation, looking at the scope of application of the TPD and similar national protection schemes, is the **inclusive approach** in the scope of application chosen by many states, and as encouraged by the European Commission. This is particularly reassuring in light of reports of differentiated treatment of Ukrainians and Third Country Nationals also fleeing Ukraine at border crossings in the initial days of the crisis.

Some states also expanded the temporal scope of application of the TPD, including Ukrainian and TCNs who had arrived shortly prior to 24 February 2022.

Bulgaria, for example, extended the scope of temporary protection to all Third Country Nationals (TCNs) and stateless persons who entered Bulgaria from Ukraine if they explicitly stated their desire for temporary protection status before 31 March 2022. Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Spain adopted a similar inclusive approach, to name a few, extending temporary protection to TCNs who were residing legally in Ukraine, even if only on a short-term basis, if they were unable to return to their countries of origin.

Finland has decided to extend TP to the following categories of persons:

- Ukrainian citizens and their family members who fled Ukraine shortly before 24 February and cannot return as a result of the conflict.
- Other Ukrainian citizens and their family members already residing in Finland or arrived in Finland.
- Non-EU citizens who legally resided in Ukraine (not only on a permanent basis) who cannot return to their country of origin.

- **Registration processes**

UNHCR points out how it is possible, when the necessary human and technical resources are allocated, to establish effective registration processes to register and issue documentation to large numbers of persons in record time. Key to this achievement is the establishment of procedures for **frontloading data collection and data management. Digitalization** has also contributed to efficiency. Several countries rapidly developed online systems to facilitate registration, preventing backlogs and enabling two-way communication with temporary protection beneficiaries on the status of their application.

In **Estonia**, the process of applying and granting temporary protection reportedly takes less than an hour.

States have also demonstrated flexibility in the absence of official identity documents such as biometric passports. This has prevented unnecessary referrals to full asylum procedures and delays in access to services.

- **‘One stop shop’ approach**

What seems to have worked particularly well is the “under one roof” or “one stop shop” approach whereby multiple service providers operate in a sequential manner at the moment of registration/reception.³⁸ **Latvia** has established a single coordination point in Riga for the provision of support by the State and local government, also involving NGOs. In the **Czech Republic**, a network of regional assistance centres (KACPU) was set up across the country to facilitate the registration and assistance process for those arriving from Ukraine. **Finland** has set up two shared service points to receive refugees from Ukraine: one at the Port of Helsinki, the other at Helsinki Airport. The service points include representatives of the Finnish Immigration Service, the Border Guard, the police, the Finnish Food Authority, the City of Helsinki or the City of Vantaa, as well as the Finnish Red Cross and the NGO Save the Children. The aim is to allow those coming to the service point to register their applications and receive other necessary assistance before moving on. Those who have not yet sorted out their accommodation are directed to the reception centres by the Finnish Immigration Service.

- **Accommodation**

Given the large numbers of refugees arriving within a short period, neighbouring countries in particular who had insufficient reception capacity had to rely on the generosity of local inhabitants who opened their homes without hesitation. In many cases, refugees have also been accommodated in hotels and empty flats.

Moldova highlights the massive involvement of the local population and of international and non-governmental organizations in the reception of refugees from Ukraine as one of the greatest achievements. **Finland**, too, has emphasized positive general climate concerning the reception of refugees from Ukraine: municipalities, local associations, churches and other actors have been actively providing facilities for refugees from Ukraine. Finland is examining the possibility of introducing a new municipal model, in which municipalities would be compensated for the costs incurred in providing accommodation and reception services.

Latvia notes that pets are the main issue when it comes to accommodation as usually pets are not allowed at accommodation places provided by municipalities and not all proprietors allow pets in rented apartments.

- **Refugees with special needs and vulnerabilities**

Lack of specialised accommodation for refugees with special needs, such as families with special needs children or persons with disabilities has also been mentioned by many countries. **Moldova** has a dedicated 24 hour phone assistance service for persons with disabilities which is also accessible to refugees from Ukraine. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Moldova is working with the Territorial Social Assistance Units to maintain a

³⁸ UNHCR, The EU Temporary Protection Directive in Practice 2022 (16 June 2022), p.5, at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/eu-temporary-protection-directive-practice-2022>.

record of refugees with disabilities/special needs in order to identify their specific needs and ensure the necessary support.

Romania notes that the lack of specialized staff and services for persons with disabilities is a problem not only for Ukrainian refugees but generally in Romania

Romania has set up a working group for unaccompanied minors at the level of each county and each district of Bucharest, in order to rapidly identify the best measures for the protection of unaccompanied minors from Ukraine. The working group is made up of representatives of the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection, School Inspectorates, Public Health Directorates and NGOs or, as the case may be, international organizations.

- **Access to education**

The educational infrastructure in some countries faced with a large number of refugee children has come under pressure, for example in Slovakia. A main issue relates to language, with special classes being one of the solutions applied. Learning of the official language(s) will be key to successful integration in the educational system.

- **Access to employment**

Access to employment has also been greatly facilitated through simplified procedures. Ukrainian citizens wishing to work in **Romania** do not need a work permit for a period of 12 months, with the possibility of extension. They have to register with the territorial agencies for employment and have the right to be employed under the same conditions as Romanian citizens. Furthermore, the National Agency for Employment (NAE) offers a number of free services to Ukrainian citizens including vocational counselling and training, job-matching as well as assessment and recognition of professional competences obtained in non-formal and informal contexts.

In **Finland**, beneficiaries of TP have an unrestricted right to work. They can register as jobseekers at the office of the public employment and business services and, as unemployed jobseekers, they are entitled to a range of services including an initial survey organized and, if necessary, an integration plan; integration training; as well as services provided under the Finnish Act on Public Employment and Business Service, such as employment exchange, information and counselling services, competence and skills surveys, work capacity assessment, assessment of entrepreneurial skills, vocational and career guidance, work trial and pay subsidy.

Slovakia notes the specific challenge of ensuring the childcare for children of working mothers, noting some shortages in kindergarten capacities in preferred areas. This could become a significant issue if numbers of refugees increase significantly.

- **Measures to enhance the prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings**

While the number of cases of potential trafficking in human beings (THB) identified appears to be low, the majority of countries seem well attuned to the risks associated with the mass refugee flows from Ukraine, especially given that a majority of them are women and children.

Moldova notes that one of the most important challenges it is facing relates to the identification of a mechanism for the checking of minors who enter the territory of the country accompanied by relatives of the second and third degrees without papers confirming the relationship, so that they may identify potential cases of trafficking.

The risks are also greater due to the fact that, in many countries, a substantial number of refugees are being accommodated on a temporary basis by private individuals with little or no vetting procedures in place, as noted for example by **Lithuania**. The challenges in distributing information on risks of THB to refugees hosted by private individuals is also highlighted by **Norway**.

While states have largely relied on their existing framework for preventing and combating THB, there have been additional efforts to raise awareness about the potential risks. Some new measures too have been introduced.

Bulgaria has set up a working group within the crisis headquarters to focus exclusively on this issue. Online and offline information materials on the risks of human trafficking, hotlines and other important telephone numbers aimed at refugees from Ukraine are disseminated in Russian, Ukrainian and English. Since 24 February, **Estonia** has been carrying out training sessions for state and other stakeholders (hotels, unemployment fund, etc.) to inform all counterparts about the possible THB risks for refugees from Ukraine. Since 12 April, the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board has had a separate hotline to report suspected cases of human trafficking. The Border Guard in **Finland** pays special attention to the identification of potential victims of THB, especially minors, when encountering Ukrainian citizens. While **Latvia** is relying on existing mechanisms for identifying potential victims; the State Border Guard and the State Police are drafting updated mechanisms tailored to Ukrainian refugees.

Moldova has implemented a number of additional measures to prevent THB in the current context. It is also implementing rapid assessments. Under the coordination of UNFPA, a gender-based violence prevention safety assessment and audit is being carried out in accommodation centres and border crossing points to identify related risks and vulnerable groups and to support the adoption of risk mitigation measures in all sectors. The target groups are both refugees and the host community and include women, teenage girls, women and girls with disabilities, elderly persons and other vulnerable groups.

A Working Group for Gender Equality (Gender TF) was also created in Moldova under the supervision of UNHCR and UN Women, as well as a subsector Working Group on prevention of gender-based violence led by UNHCR and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), with a view to integrating and coordinating gender equality and empowering women and girls within the refugee crisis response.

Norway underlines that the provision of temporary protection in itself is a strong safeguard against THB. **Germany** emphasizes that broad and easily accessible information is a key element of prevention of any kind of exploitation in the labour market, including human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.

Poland has identified the need to adopt new anti-trafficking legislation.

Authorities in **Romania** are paying special attention to protecting the most vulnerable categories of persons, especially children, from all forms of exploitation, including THB. A screening procedure is carried out at Ukrainian border crossing points to identify the risk of THB. Furthermore, *Blue Dots Centres* have been set up with the support of UNICEF at some of the border crossing points to provide legal and psychological support and counselling to families and unaccompanied minors arriving in Romania; they also assist in reunification of families. All those wishing to provide transport services to refugees must pre-register on the digital platform “*Together, we help more*” and are additionally checked at the border in case of suspicion of possible links to trafficking networks.

Slovakia provided Airbnb with the telephone number of a THB specialist in case of suspected cases of THB.

Lithuania has developed a special plan of police preventive measures to manage the risk of THB among Ukrainian refugees. Police have recruited thirteen Ukrainians to help police establish psychological contact more quickly during preventive visits.

- **Ongoing monitoring and evaluation**

France is actively monitoring reception policies for displaced Ukrainians. On 14 March, a monitoring committee was set up by the Minister for Citizenship bringing together all associations of local elected officials who wish to engage on this subject alongside the State. It is due to meet after each strategic meeting of the inter-ministerial crisis unit dedicated to the reception of displaced persons from Ukraine. This enables it to communicate to local authorities useful information in real time on the arrivals of displaced persons; to organize with the local authorities the policy of reception of refugees; to identify the needs of local elected officials mobilized on the subject; and to anticipate the management of flows of displaced persons in the territories.

- **Onward travel**

Allowing onward travel of refugees during the first 90 days, has contributed to reducing pressure on frontline countries and also enabled refugees to draw upon the support of family and friends further abroad. Furthermore, countries across Europe granted free rail travel and free access to public transportation to Ukrainian nationals, facilitating this process. **Romania** has established green corridors for the direct pick-up, by road and rail, of Ukrainian refugees from the Republic of Moldova and their transportation to Romania, where they are given the necessary and appropriate assistance.

- **Moving from short-term emergency responses to sustainable policies in the long term**

As the war drags on, there is a need to move from short-term measures to more sustainable, long-term measures. This is a difficult balancing act as undoubtedly many refugees hope that they will soon be able to return and many have already done so.

As highlighted by **Finland** in its response to the questionnaire, “in light of the uncertainty as to the duration of the war and numbers of refugees in the future, the OSCE PA should encourage and monitor that participating States respect existing international norms and commitments as regards refugees with the view to prevent and combat the exploitation and discrimination of refugees for instance on the labor market.”

Switzerland underlines the need to maintain strong public solidarity with Ukrainian refugees. It also notes that “the special status of Ukrainian refugees may also increasingly raise concerns about what some interpret as ‘two-tier solidarity’, noting that the commitment of parliamentarians will be decisive in ensuring popular acceptance of the situation in the long term.

UNHCR’s main message in this context, with which I fully concur, is that a number of effective practices deployed in the context of Temporary Protection for refugees from Ukraine can contribute to more effective processing of asylum applications more generally. The measures implemented by countries across the OSCE region in the face of the Ukrainian refugee crisis demonstrate that, when there is political will, we are able to meet such challenges with efficiency and with respect for the human rights and dignity of the individual.

4. Statement on the occasion of World Refugee Day 2022

To mark World Refugee Day on 20 June, I issued a [statement](#) (Annex IV) focusing on the Ukraine refugee crisis, highlighting the swift and generous response by countries not only in Ukraine’s immediate neighborhood but throughout the OSCE region to the unprecedented wave of refugees displaced by the war.

I noted some of the areas of concern highlighted by delegations in their replies as part of the questionnaire initiative such as the high risk of trafficking in human beings as well as the lack of specialized accommodation and services for persons with disabilities in particular.

At the same time, I encouraged all OSCE participating States to apply the ‘lessons learned’ and successful practices developed in this context to asylum procedures more generally in order to enhance refugee and migration management in the region as a whole.

III. Next Steps

When the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration meets in person for the first time in over two years on the margins of the Annual Session in Birmingham on 3 July, the Ukraine refugee situation will be at the top of our agenda. I have invited the Heads of Delegation from the neighbouring countries of Poland, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia and Hungary, who do not happen to have members in our Committee, to share their experience. The delegation of Ukraine to the OSCE PA also intends to participate.

We will furthermore continue to focus on the issue of prevention and mitigation of trafficking in human beings in the context of mass refugee flows from Ukraine. The OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings Mr. Valiant Richey, who has been especially active in this area, will share his observations from recent visits to the region and present his latest recommendations with a focus on what we, as parliamentarians can further do.

I look forward to reporting on the our discussions and proposals for activities for the upcoming year in my report to the Plenary Session of the OSCE PA on 5 July.

I intend to recommend that the Committee continue to advocate for a coordinated and dignified reception of refugees from Ukraine. We will continue to share 'lessons learned' and examples of 'good practice' developed while dealing with this tragic situation in the hope that this will contribute to more effective refugee and migration management.

The successful implementation of the field visit to Greece has proven once again that such missions are an invaluable part of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration. The Committee hopes to carry out two or maybe three more field visits in the coming year, as this type of activity has proved to be particularly useful for members to learn about practical challenges in implementing migration management policies. Field visits also present a valuable opportunity to identify 'good practice'. When the Committee decides to carry out a field visit to a particular country, this should therefore not be seen as an indicator that something is terribly wrong, although without doubt, given that we can only carry out a very limited number of field visits, it is areas where there are significant migration-related challenges which tend to be prioritised.

The visit to Greece also enabled us to better understand the new reception and asylum procedures to be carried out at the EU's external borders as part of the Migration and Asylum Pact. The Committee will continue to follow efforts to develop more robust European migration and asylum policies and to maintain regular contacts with EU agencies in Brussels.

In conclusion, allow me to emphasize that there is no country in the OSCE region, or indeed anywhere, that has found the perfect solution to migration management. We can all learn from one another's successes and failures. Our Committee will continue to implement its mandate to facilitate dialogue within the OSCE PA on migration issues and to promote the parliamentary exchange of best practice with dedication and with passion.

ANNEX I

Mandate and Membership of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

Mandate

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration was established following the unanimous decision of the OSCE PA Standing Committee on 25 February 2016 in Vienna. Its mandate is as follows:

- Serve as a focal point for the OSCE PA's work in the field of migration in all three dimensions of the OSCE: political and security questions; economic issues; and human rights and humanitarian questions; and report back to the President and the Standing Committee;
- Develop policy recommendations aimed at enhancing OSCE work in the field of migration and at improving the treatment of, and prospects for, migrants in OSCE countries;
- Promote discussion within the Assembly on issues related to migration, and promote parliamentary exchanges of best practice in these fields;
- Work closely with the OSCE Secretariat and Institutions as well as with relevant outside actors on issues related to migration to promote the understanding among the members of the Assembly of the importance of the work done in this field.

Membership

1. Vice-President Kristian Vigenin (Bulgaria), **Chair**
2. Luigi Augussori (Italy), **Vice-Chair**
3. Lord Alfred Dubs (United Kingdom), **Vice-Chair**
4. Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus), **Vice-Chair**
5. Farah Karimi (The Netherlands), **Vice-Chair**
6. Gudrun Kugler (Austria), **Vice-Chair**
7. Jan Bauer (Czech Republic)
8. Valerie Boyer (France)
9. Johan Büser (Sweden)
10. Hedy Fry (Canada)
11. Sheila Jackson Lee (USA)
12. Laurynas Kasciunas (Lithuania)
13. Mehmet Sait Kirazoglu (Türkiye)
14. Massimo Mallegni (Italy)
15. Dimitrios Markopoulos (Greece)
16. Vesna Markovic (Serbia)
17. Gwen Moore (United States)
18. Georgios Varemenos (Greece)

ANNEX II

Implemented Activities (September 2021-June 2022)

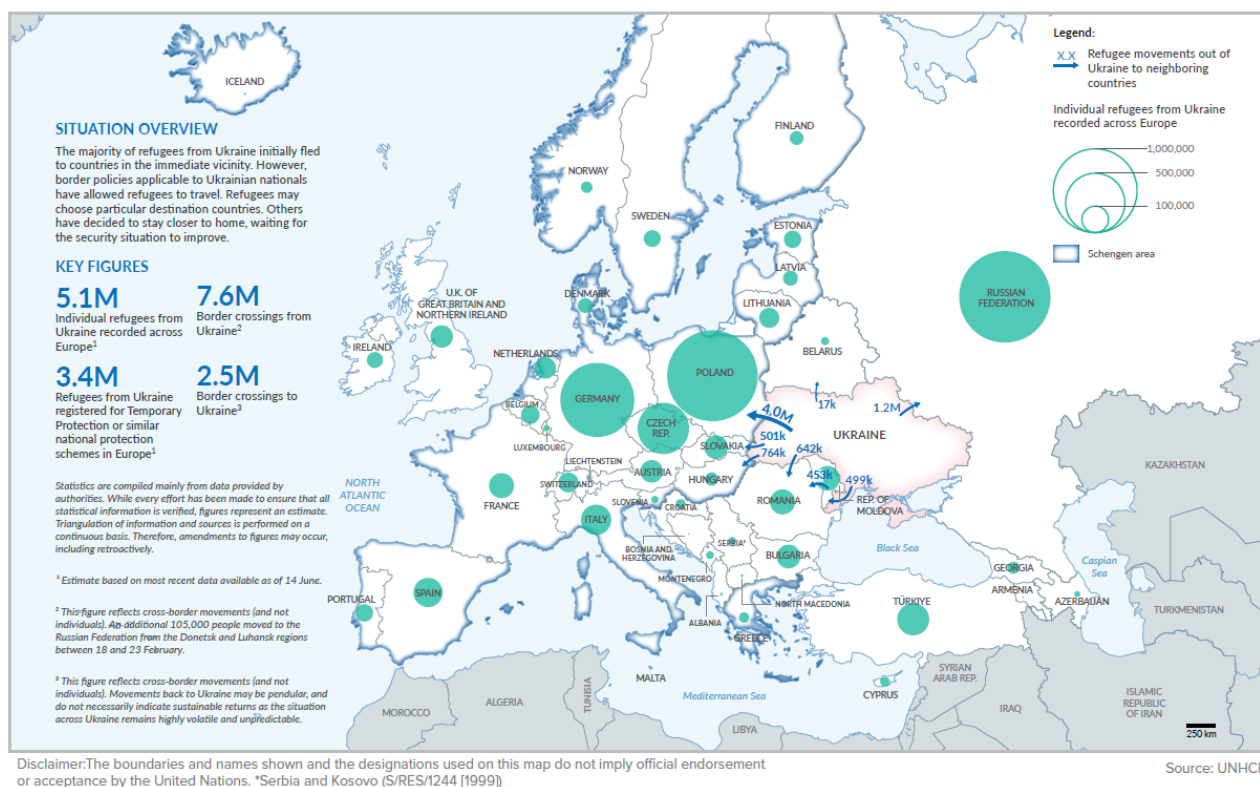
24 September	Online	Meeting of the Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on Afghanistan, with the participation of Ms. Astrid SLETTEN, Country Director, Norwegian Refugee Council – Afghanistan, and Ms. Elizabeth COLLETT, Special Advisor to IOM Director General. Report by Vice-Chair Gudrun Kugler on the joint visit with OSCE SR/CTHB to Bosnia and Herzegovina (11-14 July 2021).
13 October	Tirana (ALBANIA)	Visit by Vice-Chair Farah Karimi focusing on Afghans sheltered in Albanian under Temporary Protected Status. Meetings with representatives from the NED, IRI, CIPE as well as the Directorate for Asylum, Ministry of Interior of Albania.
13 December	Online	Meeting of the Committee with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The situation at the EU-Belarus border, incl. contributions by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Laurynas Kasciunas (MP, Lithuania), Member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration; Mr. Patrice Quesada, Senior Regional Emergency and Post Crisis Specialist, IOM Regional Office for the European Economic Area, EU and NATO, Brussels; Ms. Frauke Ossig, Emergency Coordinator, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Holland, and Ms. Inma Vazquez, MSF Representative to the EU, Brussels; Ms. Goda Jurevičiūtė, Project Manager, Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Vilnius. Overview of OSCE efforts to develop a response to the implications of the situation in Afghanistan, incl. contribution by Mr. Luca Pianese, Senior Migration Security Expert, OSCE External Cooperation Section.
17 December	Online	Statement on the occasion of International Migrants Day.
24-25 February	Vienna/online	OSCE PA Winter Meeting Report of the Chair, Vice-President Kristian Vigenin to the Standing Committee (25 February)

13-14 March	Poland	High-level visit to the Polish-Ukrainian border organized by the Head of the Delegation of Poland to the OSCE PA Ms. Barbara Bartuś. The PA delegation was led by President Cederfelt and included Migration Committee Chair Kristian Vigenin, Vice-Chair Gudrun Kugler and Member Johan Büser as well as the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Valiant Richey. The delegation visited the reception point at the Railway Station in Przemyśl, the Polish-Ukrainian border crossings in Korczowa and Medyka, the reception centre for young people in Stalowa Wola, and the Caritas reception center in Bojanów. Meetings were held with representatives of the local government, border guard and social organizations.
18 March	Online	Briefing with the Secretary General for the Reception of Asylum Seekers Emmanouil Logothetis, as well as representatives of the NGOs Médecins Sans Frontières, the Greek Refugee Council and Lesvos Solidarity, in preparation for the field visit to Greece.
20-23 March	Lesbos, Samos, Athens	Field visit to Greece, including site visits to RIC Mytilene, Mavrovouni (Lesbos), and Closed Controlled Access Centre of Samos; and a debrief in Athens.
28 March	Online	Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief on the visit to Greece; • The Ukrainian Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis and European preparedness in situations of crisis, with the participation of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Mr. Valiant Richey.
6 April	Online	Debrief with the Greek Minister for Migration and Asylum Notis Mitarachi on the Field Visit to Greece.
28 March – end May	Online	Questionnaire on “Special measures to welcome Ukrainian refugees in the OSCE region” shared with all OSCE PA delegations.
20 June	Online	<u>Statement</u> on the occasion of World Refugee Day
3 July	Birmingham	29 th OSCE PA Annual Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of the Committee (3 July, 14:30-16:30) - Report of the Chair (Plenary, 5 July).

ANNEX III

Ukraine Refugee Crisis

Refugees from Ukraine across Europe (as of 14 June 2022)



Source: UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>, as at 22 June 2022.

Countries neighbouring Ukraine



Country	Data Date	Individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe	Refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes	Border crossings from Ukraine*	Border crossings to Ukraine**
Russian Federation***	21 June, 2022	1,305,018	Not applicable	1,305,018	Data not available
Poland	21 June, 2022	1,180,677	1,180,677	4,146,144	2,073,052
Republic of Moldova	21 June, 2022	85,797	Not applicable	507,552	138,488
Romania	21 June, 2022	82,733	40,202	691,413	370,707
Slovakia	21 June, 2022	78,972	78,782	525,620	254,316
Hungary	21 June, 2022	25,042	25,042	814,607	Data not available
Belarus	20 June, 2022	9,006	Not applicable	16,660	Data not available
Total		2,767,245	1,324,703	8,007,014	2,836,563

***The figure for individual refugees recorded in the country is an estimate as potential further movements or returns cannot be factored for the time being.

Other European countries

Country	Data Date	Individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe	Refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes
Germany	16 June, 2022	780,000	662,274
Czech Republic	21 June, 2022	379,669	379,524
Türkiye	19 May, 2022	145,000	Not applicable
Italy	21 June, 2022	137,385	127,362
Spain	20 June, 2022	124,052	123,973
France	13 June, 2022	87,972	87,972
Bulgaria	21 June, 2022	82,071	116,581
United Kingdom	13 June, 2022	77,200	77,200
Austria	20 June, 2022	72,715	72,715
Netherlands	20 June, 2022	65,550	65,550
Lithuania	21 June, 2022	57,175	47,504
Switzerland	21 June, 2022	54,796	54,710
Belgium	21 June, 2022	48,118	47,493
Portugal	21 June, 2022	44,033	43,938
Estonia	21 June, 2022	43,048	28,046
Sweden	20 June, 2022	40,340	38,572
Ireland	20 June, 2022	36,759	38,742
Latvia	21 June, 2022	32,810	32,921
Denmark	19 June, 2022	30,608	28,612
Finland	20 June, 2022	26,629	28,735
Georgia	17 June, 2022	21,145	Not applicable
Norway	21 June, 2022	18,994	18,994
Greece	5 June, 2022	14,887	14,887
Croatia	20 June, 2022	14,642	14,641
Cyprus	19 June, 2022	12,478	13,451
Montenegro	21 June, 2022	8,893	4,355
Serbia and Kosovo: S/RES/1244 (1999)	21 June, 2022	8,004	761
Slovenia	21 June, 2022	7,834	7,834
Luxembourg	14 June, 2022	5,775	5,775
Azerbaijan	21 June, 2022	4,836	Not applicable
Albania	17 June, 2022	1,772	Not applicable
Malta	19 June, 2022	1,216	1,139
Iceland	21 June, 2022	997	877
North Macedonia	21 June, 2022	684	Not applicable
Armenia	21 June, 2022	489	Not applicable
Bosnia and Herzegovina	19 June, 2022	328	Not applicable
Liechtenstein	15 June, 2022	229	229
Total		2,489,133	2,185,367

Source: UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>, as at 22 June 2022.

ANNEX IV

OSCE countries must learn lessons from care and treatment of Ukraine's refugees, says parliamentary migration committee head

COPENHAGEN, 20 June 2022 – On World Refugee Day, the Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, Vice-President Kristian Vigenin (MP, Bulgaria), commended countries across the OSCE region for their swift and generous responses to the unprecedented displacement crisis stemming from the war in Ukraine. At the same time, he urged OSCE participating States to propose more sustainable solutions and to pay particular attention to mitigating the risk of trafficking in human beings as well as meeting the special needs of refugees with disabilities and other vulnerabilities.

“The OSCE region reacted swiftly and with open arms to the mass displacement triggered by the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine on 24 February,” Vigenin said. “For the first time, the EU’s Temporary Protection Directive was activated, enabling refugees fleeing from Ukraine to EU Member States to promptly access safety, accommodation, employment, social and health services. One area which warrants special focus is the needs of refugees with disabilities, as there is a lack not only of specialized accommodation but also of specialized staff and services; this is often due to a weakness in this area for nationals of the country itself.”

Vigenin highlighted the positive benefits of a flexible approach, such as that applied by many OSCE countries when addressing the lack of valid official identity documents due to the circumstances in which people had fled. He welcomed the inclusiveness in the scope of application of the EU’s Temporary Protection Directive or similar national protection schemes by some countries who have extended measures also to non-EU citizens with legal residence in Ukraine who are also stranded. Allowing onwards movement of refugees and relocations has contributed to reducing pressure on frontline countries and enabled refugees to draw upon the support of family and friends, he noted.

With the war entering its fifth month, Vigenin emphasized the need to move beyond short-term ad hoc solutions and called for concentrating efforts into devising longer-term solutions, notably in terms of providing sustainable accommodation and employment options as well as access to education, while continuing to meet the immediate needs of new arrivals.

In April, the OSCE PA’s Migration Committee carried out a short survey of measures implemented by OSCE participating States to welcome refugees from Ukraine. It plans to continue its work in this area with the aim to share lessons learned. Vigenin encouraged OSCE participating States to apply the successful practices developed in this context to asylum procedures more generally in order to enhance refugee and migration management in the region as a whole.

“In response to this terrible crisis, States across the OSCE region have put into place effective, and at times novel, ways of dealing with mass refugee arrivals,” he said. “One promising area is that of the digitalization of refugee management, but we must step up efforts to mitigate the risks of trafficking in human beings and other forms of sexual exploitation in mass refugee flows.”

The OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration was established in 2016 with the mandate to serve as a focal point for the OSCE PA’s work in the field of migration in all three dimensions of the OSCE. For more on its activities, [please click here](#).

For an overview of the OSCE PA’s action on Ukraine, [please click here](#).