

**Report of Vice-President Dr. Daniela De Ridder,
Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration,
(2025 OSCE PA Winter Meeting, Vienna, 21 February 2025)**

Field Visits to Frontline Countries

Last year the Committee carried out three field visits, to **Italy** (Rome and Lampedusa, March 2024), **Türkiye** (Ankara, Adana, Gaziantep, May 2024) and **Morocco** (Rabat, Tangier, September 2024), providing the Committee with the opportunity to learn about how these countries are dealing with the challenges of irregular migration, and how they are fighting trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling, and how vulnerable migrants are treated. The effectiveness of agreements with Third Countries such as Libya, Tunisia and Egypt was also a main topic of discussion.

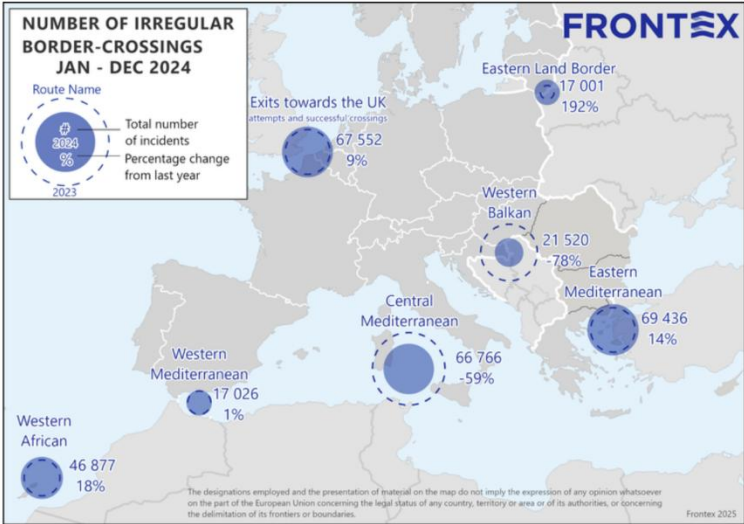
The visit to Morocco marked the first time that the Committee travelled to a OSCE Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation and was motivated by Morocco having taken the lead on African migration. Traditionally a country of origin, it has increasingly become a country of transit and destination for migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and Syria. Moroccan authorities shared with us a number of examples of best practice in capitalizing on the benefits of labour mobility such as the promotion of circular migration.

The Committee's upcoming visit to **Spain** (Madrid, & Las Palmas, 19-22 March 2025) will focus on irregular migration along the North Atlantic route from the coast of West Africa – including Morocco, to the Canary Islands. The year 2024 saw a record number of arrivals in the Canary Islands: nearly 47,000. This is partially due to tighter surveillance of Morocco's land borders with Spain at Ceuta and Melilla.



Shockingly, nearly 10,500 migrants died or disappeared while trying to reach Spain by sea in 2024, an increase of 50% compared to 2023.

The West African/ Atlantic route was thus the **third most important** one after the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes, but the deadliest.¹



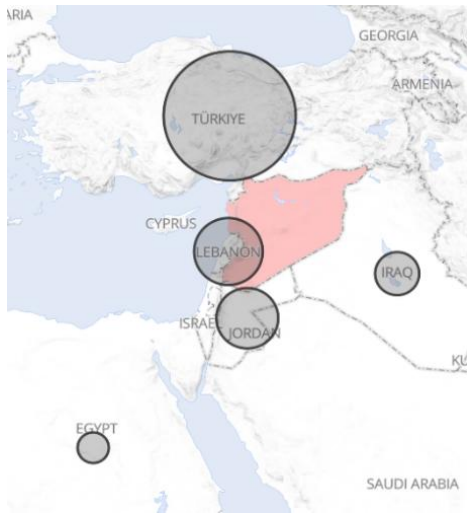
ROUTE	DECEMBER 2024	JAN-DEC 2024	JAN-DEC 2023/ JAN-DEC 2024	TOP NATIONALITIES (JAN-DEC 2024)
Western African	4 961	46 877	+18%	Mali, Senegal, Morocco
Eastern Mediterranean	4 411	69 436	+14%	Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt
Central Mediterranean	3 074	66 766	-59%	Bangladesh, Syria, Tunisia
Western Mediterranean	1 459	17 026	+1%	Algeria, Morocco, Mali
Western Balkan	813	21 520	-78%	Syria, Türkiye, Afghanistan
Eastern Land Border	385	17 001	+192%	Ukraine, Ethiopia, Somalia
Exits towards the UK	5 376	67 552	+9%	Afghanistan, Syria, Vietnam

It should also be noted that, overall, according to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex, there was a significant 38% drop in irregular border crossings into the EU in 2024, reaching the lowest level since 2021, when migration was still affected by the COVID pandemic. According to Frontex, despite persistent migration pressure, intensified EU and partner co-operation against smuggling networks has significantly reduced crossings at Europe’s external borders, with just over 239,000 detections recorded last year.

¹ According to Frontex, the number of crossings into the EU was highest along the Eastern Mediterranean route from Greece to Türkiye where detections rose by 14% to 69 400, driven by new corridors from eastern Libya, with migrants predominantly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Egypt. Crossings along the Central Mediterranean dropped by 59% due to fewer departures from Tunisia and Libya. Despite the significant decrease, this route still accounted for about 67,000 crossings, the second highest among all routes. The Canary Islands saw an 18% increase in arrivals from West Africa, to almost 47 000, the highest figure since Frontex began collecting data in 2009. This was fuelled by departures from Mauritania, even as flows from other departure points declined. See: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/irregular-border-crossings-into-eu-drop-sharply-in-2024-oqpwex>, accessed on 14 February 2025.

The Situation of Syrian Refugees in the OSCE Region – Recent Developments

The upcoming meeting of the Committee here in Vienna on 20 February will focus on recent developments in Syria and their impact on Syrian refugees as well as policy implications for OSCE participating States. Since the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration was established in 2016 in the aftermath of the refugee crisis in Europe sparked by the Syrian civil war, it is only befitting that the Committee closely monitor developments.



Since the Syrian conflict began in 2011, nearly 6 million people have fled the country to escape violence and instability. Türkiye hosts the largest number of Syrians by far (3 million), while other countries in the region also host significant populations (760,000 in Lebanon, 612, 000 in Jordan, 303,000 in Iraq, 148,00 in Egypt). Over 2.1 million Syrian refugees live in Europe.

Germany is hosting about 850,000 Syrians, with 165,000 naturalized citizens of Syrian origin.

The fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024 fuelled optimism among the millions of Syrian refugees and sparked spontaneous returns. A number of countries have suspended asylum applications and are offering financial incentives to encourage returns. However, there are concerns about the continued instability and whether it is safe for refugees to return.

By 5 February 2025, nearly 270,000 Syrian refugees had returned home since 8 December 2024.² UNHCR expects up to 1 million returns by June 2025. While UNHCR³ stands ready to support those who wish to return, it has spoken against promoting **large-scale** returns based on the many challenges facing Syria's population including a large-scale humanitarian crisis, continued high levels of internal displacement, and widespread damage and destruction of homes and critical infrastructure. Thus, UNHCR has called on States not to *forcibly* return Syrian nationals and former habitual residents of Syria including Palestinians, to any part of Syria. UNHCR also continues to call on all States to allow civilians fleeing Syria access to their territories, to guarantee the right to seek asylum and to ensure respect of the principle of non-refoulement.

² UNHCR, Syria Situation Crisis, Regional Flash Update #13 (7 February 2025), at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-regional-flash-update-13-syria-situation-crisis-7-february-2025>.

³ UNHCR, Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic (December 2024), at: <https://www.refworld.org/policy/countrypos/unhcr/2024/en/149254>, accessed 14 February 2025.

Ukraine Refugee Situation

As we mark the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Committee continues to monitor the situation of Ukrainian refugees throughout the OSCE region. There are now over 6.8 million Ukrainian refugees globally, 6.3 million of whom in Europe.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration will continue to promote the sharing of best practice when it comes to protecting and promoting durable solutions with respect to Ukrainian refugees.

As a Member of the OSCE PA Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine, I will also continue to advocate for support for displaced Ukrainians within and beyond the borders of Ukraine.

Refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe ¹

6,303,200

Last updated 16 January 2025 - Source: UNHCR collation of statistics made available by the authorities

Refugees from Ukraine recorded beyond Europe ²

560,200

Last updated 16 January 2025 - Source: UNHCR collation of statistics made available by the authorities

Refugees from Ukraine recorded globally

6,863,400

Last updated 16 January 2025 - Source: UNHCR collation of statistics made available by the authorities

Policy Discussions and Exchange of 'Best Practice'

❖ **Addressing Gender-Based Violence along Migration Routes (5 March, online)**

The Committee also wishes to underline the importance of promoting 'best practice' in the area of gender-sensitive migration policies. One area which needs further attention is the identification and protection of victims of gender based violence (GBV) in the migration context. GBV is not only a 'driver' of migration but it is also a risk which people on the move face, especially where safe routes and the necessary safeguards are lacking. This is an area where more research is needed and where we, as parliamentarians, can make a significant impact in reducing the risks of GBV.

The Committee will hold an online discussion on 5 March focussing on this topic with the participation of Committee Member and Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry, Ms. Melissa M. Verpile, Director, Democracy, Gender, and Inclusion Program, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), and Mr. Boris Dittrich, from the delegation of The Netherlands.

❖ **Implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact**

We also hope to be able to organize a discussion on implementation of the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** and to arrange meetings with relevant representatives of the new Commission, in particular the newly appointed Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner.

❖ **Addressing the root causes of migration, including climate change**

I look forward to the special debate during the meeting of the OSCE PA's General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment on climate-changed induced migration at the 2025 Winter Meeting in Vienna and thank the Committee for the invitation to share some remarks.

Colleagues, climate-induced migration is a growing reality that demands immediate and decisive action. The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration has consistently called upon OSCE participating States not to fight against refugees and migrants but rather to focus on the **root causes and drivers of migration** including climate change.

In the resolution adopted at the 2024 Annual Session in Bucharest, "Strengthening Safe and Regular Pathways for Migration", we emphasized the importance of recognizing the diversity of causes of forced migration, including natural disasters and climate change.

Cooperation with the OSCE and Institutions, relevant International Organisations, and other parliamentary assemblies

The Committee also continues its close cooperation with the OSCE and Institutions. At the meeting of the Committee on the sidelines of the 2024 Annual Session in Bucharest, Dr. Guido Tintori, Economic Affairs Officer at the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), spoke about the strategic role of evidence and data in developing migration policies.

We also continue to explore synergies with the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Dr. Kari Johnstone who will again participate in our meeting here in Vienna.

The Committee also continues to regularly engage with representatives of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as well as national and local NGOs where relevant.

Next Steps

Our Committee will meet here in Vienna on 20 February to discuss upcoming field visits, policy discussions and on how we will present the findings and recommendations to the Assembly as a whole.

I look forward to presenting the report and recommendations of the Committee to you when we next meet in Porto.

ANNEX I

OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

A. 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 defined 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.

B. Membership *(as of 10 February 2025)*

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration consists of 21 members from 15 OSCE participating States (10 men, 11 women):

1. Chair: Dr. Daniela DE RIDDER (Germany), OSCE PA Vice-President
2. Mr. Kemal ÇELİK (Türkiye), Vice-Chair
3. Mr. Kyriakos HADJIYIANNI (Cyprus), Vice-Chair, OSCE PA Vice-President
4. Ms. Farah KARIMI (The Netherlands), Vice-Chair
5. Ms. Gudrun KUGLER (Austria), Vice-Chair, OSCE PA Vice-President
6. Mr. Alessandro ALFIERI (Italy)
7. Mr. Jan BAUER (Czechia)
8. Ms. Canan BAYRAM (Germany)
9. Ms. Valérie BOYER (France)
10. Mr. Johan BÜSER (Sweden)
11. Mr. Fabrizio COMBA (Italy)
12. Mr. Halis DALKILIÇ (Türkiye)
13. Ms. Hedy FRY (Canada)
14. Mr. Kristian KLINCK (Germany)
15. Ms. Gwen MOORE (United States of America)
16. Ms. Lucie POTŮČKOVÁ (Czechia)
17. Mr. Artemi Vicent RALLO (Spain)
18. Ms. Liliana REIS (Portugal)
19. Ms. Özgül SAKI (Türkiye)
20. Mr. Angelos SYRIGOS (Greece)
21. Baroness Rosie WINTERTON (United Kingdom)

ANNEX II
Work Plan 2023/2025

A. Implemented Activities

2023		
23-24 February	Vienna	22nd OSCE PA Winter Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of the Committee (23 February, 13:15-15:15) - Report of the Chair to the Standing Committee (24 February)
9-10 March	Chişinău	Field Visit to Moldova focusing on the country's response to the influx of refugees from Ukraine
24 April	Copenhagen	Report of the Chair to the Meeting of the Bureau
30 June-4 July	Vancouver	OSCE PA Annual Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Panel discussion and off-site visit to the NGO S.U.C.C.E.S.S. on "Best practices and challenges regarding the sponsorship of refugees and the integration and settlement of newcomers to Canada" (30 June) - Meeting of the Committee (1 July) - Report of the Chair to the Plenary (3 July)
12 October	Warsaw	Participation of the new Chair, Dr. Daniela De Ridder, OSCE PA Vice-President, in the 2023 Human Dimension Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remarks in Plenary Session VIII on Humanitarian Issues - Coordination meeting with ODIHR (Ms. Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director; Ms. Julia Gebhard, Deputy Head, Democratization Department; and Ms. Alice Szczepanikova, Migration and Freedom of Movement Advisor, Democratization Department)
3 November, 16:00-17:15 CET	<i>online</i>	Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration to discuss priorities and upcoming activities, incl. a presentation by UNHCR Representative in Armenia Kavita Belani on the situation of refugees in Armenia.
9 November, 17:00-18:30 CET	<i>online</i>	Panel discussion on "Best practices and challenges regarding the sponsorship of refugees and the integration and settlement of newcomers to Canada"
10 November, 12:00-13:00 CET	<i>online</i>	Co-ordination call with ODIHR to discuss synergies and cooperation (Ms. Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director; Ms. Alice Szczepanikova and Ms. Lola Girard, Migration and Freedom of Movement Advisors, Democratization Department); and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) , Dr. Guido Tintori, Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Governance Unit.
18-20 November	Yerevan	21st OSCE PA Autumn Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report of the Chair to the Standing Committee (18 November) - Meeting of the Committee (19 November, 12:15-13:15), including a short report by President Pia Kauma and

		Special Representative on South Caucasus Kari Henriksen on their visit to the South Caucasus - Statement of the Chair to the OSCE PA Mediterranean Forum (20 November)
18 December	<i>online</i>	Statement on the occasion of International Migrants Day
18 December	<i>online</i>	Co-ordination call with Mr. Guido Tintori, Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Governance Unit, OCEEA
2024		
22-23 February	Vienna	23rd OSCE PA Winter Meeting - Meeting of the Committee (22 February), incl. remarks by the OSCE Special Representative/Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Dr. Kari Johnstone - Report of the Chair to the Joint Session of the Three General Committees (23 February)
5-8 March	Rome, Lampedusa	Field Visit to Italy (Rome, Lampedusa) , with the participation of OSCE PA Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime Eugenio Zoffili and OSCE PA President Pia Kauma
15 March	<i>online</i>	Meeting of the Committee with a focus on combatting trafficking in human beings in mixed migration flows in the Central Mediterranean, with the participation of: - Dr. Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative/Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings - Dr. Kari Johnstone - Mr. Dejan Kladarin, Head of the UNHCR Vienna Liaison Office - Ms. Giulia Paglione, UNHCR Italy - Debrief on the visit to Lampedusa
3 April	<i>online</i>	Policy discussion: “Addressing mixed migration movements across the Central Mediterranean” with the participation of: - Mr. Vincent Cochetel, UNHCR Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean Situation - Mr. Stefan MAIER, Head of Policy and Legal Support Unit, UNHCR Representation for EU Affairs
13 May	<i>online</i>	Preparatory briefing in advance of the Field Visit to Türkiye with the participation of UNHCR and IOM.
20-23 May	Ankara, Adana, Gaziantep	Field Visit to Türkiye to follow up on irregular migration flows across the Eastern Mediterranean, and the impact of the February 2023 earthquakes, including visits to Sarıçam Temporary Accommodation Centre in Adana and İslahiye 3 Living Space in Gaziantep Province.
14 June	<i>online</i>	Co-ordination call with Dr. Guido Tintori, Economic Affairs Officer, OCEEA, to prepare for upcoming meeting of the Committee at the 2024 Bucharest Annual Session.
20 June	<i>online</i>	Statement on the occasion of World Refugee Day
29 June – 3 July	Bucharest	31st Annual Session - Report of the Chair (Plenary, 2 July) - Meeting of the Committee (30 June)

		- Supplementary Item “Strengthening Safe and Regular Pathways for Migration”
13 September	<i>online</i>	Briefing in advance of the field visit to Morocco with the participation of representatives of UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM.
18-21 September	Rabat, Tangier	Field Visit to Morocco (Rabat, Tangier) to gain first-hand insight into Morocco's approach to managing migration flows, refugee support and the integration of migrants and refugees.
2-4 October	Dublin	22nd OSCE PA Autumn Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration incl. remarks by Mr. Amr TAHA, IOM Senior Regional Liaison and Policy Advisor, Regional Office for Europe, on “Partnerships with countries of origin and sustainable returns and reintegration” (2 October) - Report of the Chair to the Standing Committee (2 October) - Chairing by Dr. Daniela De Ridder of Session III on “Enhancing migration governance in the OSCE region to foster sustainable development” (3 October)
18 December	<i>online</i>	Statement on the occasion of International Migrants Day

B. Upcoming Activities

2025		
20-21 February	Vienna	24th OSCE PA Winter Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of the Committee, incl. discussion on the situation of Syrian refugees (Dr. Muriel Asseburg, Senior Fellow, SWP, and UNHCR representatives) (20 February) - Report of the Chair to the Joint Session (21 February) - Remarks of the Chair to the 2nd Committee, special debate on climate-induced migration (20 February)
Wednesday, 5 March	<i>online</i>	Discussion on Gender Based Violence in the context of migration , in connection with International Women’s Day. with the participation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Hedy Fry, OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues - Ms. Melissa M. Verpile, Director, Democracy, Gender, and Inclusion Program, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) - Mr. Boris Dittrich, OSCE PA Delegation of The Netherlands
19-22 March	Madrid, Las Palmas	Field Visit to Spain (Madrid, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) focussing on the Western African/Atlantic route
20 June	<i>online</i>	Statement on the occasion of World Refugee Day (tbc)
June/July	Porto	32 nd OSCE PA Annual Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting of the Committee ● Report of the Chair ● Supplementary Item (tbc)