**FRONTEX**

# Risk Analysis for 2016

# Risk Analysis for 2016

Frontex official publications fall into four main categories: risk analysis, training, operations and research, each marked with a distinct graphic identifier. Risk analysis publications bear a triangular symbol formed by an arrow drawing a triangle, with a dot at the centre. Metaphorically, the arrow represents the cyclical nature of risk analysis processes and its orientation towards an appropriate operational response. The triangle is a symbol of ideal proportions and knowledge, reflecting the pursuit of factual exactness, truth and exhaustive analysis. The dot at the centre represents the intelligence factor and the focal point where information from diverse sources converges to be processed, systematised and shared as analytical products. Thus, Frontex risk analysis is meant to be at the centre and to form a reliable basis for its operational activities.

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The contents of open-source boxes are unverified and presented only to give context and media representation of irregular-migration phenomena.
Throughout the report, references to Kosovo* are marked with an asterisk to indicate that this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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# 1. Preface

The year 2015 was unprecedented for the EU and its external borders, with 1.8 million detections of illegal entries associated with an estimated one million individuals. Unlike almost any other year since World War II, the scenes of chaos and the tragic images of those who have lost their lives have sharpened the focus on migration issues.

Given the proximity of conflict areas and the persistent economic disparity between the EU and many countries of origin, many would-be migrants will remain motivated to depart towards the EU.

It can be a challenge to provide for the continuous functioning of border-control activities in a situation where thousands of migrants of mixed backgrounds, circumstances and nationalities arrive at the border in a very short space of time. Ensuring the rescue, safety, registration and identification of thousands of vulnerable individuals is an extremely onerous task and one that implies a certain level of inherent risk and vulnerability at the external borders.

In response to the varying locations and the scale of the threats witnessed, the authorities at the borders must have a capability for risk mitigation at the time of emergency. Often the response calls for intensified interagency cooperation. This is an important tool for responding when a particular border is under an extensive strain.

The already difficult problem of irregular migration was rendered even more complex by the tragic attacks in Paris in November 2015 and the growing threat from foreign terrorist fighters. This was a dreadful reminder that border management also has an important security component. It demonstrates that all Member States, be they of entry, transit or destination, are bound by the links of shared responsibility. This responsibility calls for initiatives that unite.

The European Commission is proposing to establish a European Border and Coast Guard – designed to meet the new challenges and political realities faced by the EU, with regard to both migration and internal security. According to the proposal, the European Border and Coast Guard should be composed of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the national authorities and coastguards responsible for border management.

I encourage all Member States to support the core elements of this proposal and swiftly conduct the work ahead for its implementation. This ambitious proposal relates not only to the management of the external borders, but furthermore – and let's make no mistake about it – to the preservation of free movement within the Schengen area.

At the onset of 2016, the Agency has received additional funding and staff. Risk analysis, like the one presented in this report, is an essential tool for deciding how these new resources should be allocated. One of the most pressing challenges for border guards is clear: how to distinguish legitimate asylum seekers who arrive at the external border with no papers from individuals posing a security threat and economic migrants attempting to abuse the system by claiming a false nationality? This difficulty is exacerbated in situations of intense migratory pressure. It is clear that in response to these challenges, greater emphasis must be placed on increased screening, registration and debriefing activities. Moreover, let me reiterate that Frontex urgently needs to be given access to SIS, VIS, Eurodac, Europol and Interpol databases which are relevant for border checks.

This report also shows that efforts should be pursued urgently in the area of returns. Indeed, one of the incentives for irregular migrants is the knowledge that the EU's return system – meant to return irregular migrants or those whose asylum applications have been refused – works imperfectly.

Operations against criminals involved in migrant smuggling can be sharpened by actionable intelligence. We need to invest in knowledge, information sharing and cooperation. We are advancing in that direction with the proposal to set up in Frontex a risk analysis centre with the capacity to carry out risk analysis covering all aspects of integrated border management. Moreover, facilitating the exchange of information with Member States, the European Asylum Support Office, Europol or Eurojust will be at the heart of Frontex processing of personal data.

Finally, irregular migration is a very dynamic and complex phenomenon, drivers of which can change rapidly and unexpectedly. Basing future analyses merely on trend analysis or environmental scans will no longer be effective or adequate. The *Risk Analysis for 2016* describes a series of alternative future scenarios developed in collaboration with experts from relevant organisations. I encourage all stakeholders to make use of them as a foresight instrument at a strategic level.

**Fabrice Leggeri**
Executive Director

# 2. Summary

In 2015, Member States reported more than **1 820 000 detections** of illegal border-crossing along the external borders. This never-before-seen figure was more than six times the number of detections reported in 2014, which was itself an unprecedented year, with record monthly averages observed since April 2014.

The year 2015 began with extremely high levels for the month of January (over 20 000 detections, against the 2009–2014 January average of 4 700 detections), and each subsequent month set a new monthly record. In July, a turning point was reached with more than 100 000 detections, coinciding with a change in the law in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia allowing migrants to legalise their stay for a 72-hour period after they express a wish to apply for international protection. It resulted in a further increase of the flow and throughout the summer months scenes of chaos from the border areas spoke of a situation that appeared out of control. In September, public bus and train services were requisitioned in Western Balkan countries and in some Member States to transport migrants, but the flow continued to grow until October. As of November, the situation eased a little, but the EU's total for December, at over 220 000 detections, was still way above the figure for the entire 2013.

There is no EU system capable of tracing people's movements following an illegal border-crossing. Therefore it is not possible to establish the precise number of persons who have illegally crossed two sections of the external borders of the EU. Only an estimate of about **1 000 000 persons** can be provided, based on the assumption that all migrants first detected irregularly crossing in Greece were then detected for a second time re-entering the EU from the Western Balkans.

The largest number of detections was reported on the **Eastern Mediterranean route** (885 386), mostly between Turkey and the Greek islands in the Eastern Aegean Sea. However, few applied for asylum in Greece and instead crossed the border to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and continued through the Western Balkans, initially towards the Hungarian border with Serbia, where they applied for asylum, and then to their final destinations in the EU. As of mid-September, the flow shifted towards the Croatian border with Serbia, following the construction of a temporary technical obstacle in Hungary and the establishment of transit areas for immediate processing of asylum applicants with the possibility of return to Serbia.

In contrast, on the **Central Mediterranean route**, the number of detections of illegal border-crossing was about 154 000, a slight decrease compared to the previous year, but this figure was still higher than total detections recorded for the entire EU in 2011, i.e. the year of the Arab Spring (141 051). The decrease was due to a lower number of Syrians (about 40 000 in 2014, and 7 448 in 2015), who seemed to have shifted to the Eastern Mediterranean route.

On the **Western Mediterranean route**, the cooperation between Spain and Morocco is key in maintaining detections on the land route between the two countries at a relatively low level. As a result, sub-Saharan migrants, who tended to make a sea crossing to Spain, now increasingly opt for departing from Libya.

On the **Western African route**, which connects Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco with the Spanish Canary Islands after a treacherous journey on the Atlantic Ocean, the numbers remain negligible despite an increasing trend of departures from Morocco. This low number is attributed to the joint surveillance activities and effective return of those detected crossing the border illegally.

On the **Eastern land border**, a new route emerged in 2015 at the land borders of Norway and Finland with the Russian Federation (the so-called **Arctic route**). The main targeted border crossing point (BCP) was the Norwegian BCP of Storskog, which registered an unusually high number of applications for asylum in 2015 (over 5 200). The situation in Norway eased in December, when the Russian Federation resumed its practice of preventing the exit of travellers with-

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out a travel document that would allow them to enter the EU. However, at the onset of 2016, the situation remains a concern in Finland, though with fewer cases than in Norway so far.

Those declaring to hail from **Syria** (594 059) and **Afghanistan** (267 485) represented the highest share of detections of illegal border-crossing on entry to the EU in 2015. While Syrians undeniably constitute the largest proportion, their exact number is difficult to establish due to the fact that many other migrants also claim to be from Syria in order to accelerate their travel. Establishing the identity of a large number of poorly documented migrants is one of the main challenges border-control authorities are confronted with.

Since 2014, the number of detected West Africans has been steadily increasing, to reach over 64 000 detections in 2015, of whom nearly 85% on the Central Mediterranean route. In contrast to East

Africans, who tend to apply for asylum in other Member States, West Africans apply for asylum in Italy and in fact account for the largest share of asylum applicants in this country.

While Greece and Italy have been under particularly intense pressure as the two main entry points reporting several thousand arrivals per day, the large-scale inflows of migrants have been a new experience for several other Member States. The main challenges include the widening of the surveillance areas, the growing need for and the extension of search and rescue operations, the lack of facilities to receive and accommodate thousands of persons over a short time, the lack of expertise to detect non-typical travel documents, difficulties in addressing fraudulent declarations of nationality or age, and non-systematic entry of fingerprints to the Eurodac. Last but not least, the process of registration at the borders should more thoroughly

take into account the risks to internal security.

The Paris attacks in November 2015 clearly demonstrated that irregular migratory flows could be used by terrorists to enter the EU. Two of the terrorists involved in the attacks had previously irregularly entered through Leros and had been registered by the Greek authorities. They presented fraudulent Syrian documents to speed up their registration process.

As the vast majority of migrants arrive undocumented, screening activities are essential to properly verify their declaration of nationality. False declarations of nationality are rife among nationals who are unlikely to obtain asylum in the EU, are liable to be returned to their country of origin or transit, or just want to speed up their journey. With a large number of persons arriving with false or no identification documents or raising concerns over the validity of their

claimed nationality – with no thorough check or penalties in place for those making such false declarations, there is a risk that some persons representing a security threat to the EU may be taking advantage of this situation.

The unprecedented number of detections of illegal border-crossing has also led to a surge in violent incidents along the EU's external borders. People smugglers, motivated by profit, increasingly put migrants' lives at risk and even threaten border guards to recover boats or escape apprehension. Also, situations when a large number of people are crossing the border *en masse* have led to violence requiring public order policing, a task for which border-control authorities are neither adequately equipped nor trained.

It is dauntingly difficult to estimate fatalities among migrants irregularly crossing the border because it is not possible to keep an accurate tally of missing persons. Frontex does not record these data and can only report the number of bodies recovered during Joint Operations. In 2015, 470 dead bodies were reported in the Mediterranean area, an increase of 112% compared to 2014. According to IOM estimates, more than 3 770 persons went missing or died in the Mediterranean area in 2015.

In spite of the popular perception that mass migration may pose a threat of the spread of infectious diseases, WHO 'Public Health Aspects of Migration in Europe' (PHAME) indicates that there is no evidence to suggest such connection. Refugees and migrants are mainly exposed to the infectious diseases that are common in Europe, independently of migration. The risk that exotic infectious agents will be brought to Europe is extremely low.

In a situation of continued pressure on the EU's external borders, it is presumed that these challenges will be best addressed in a coordinated manner, requiring harmonised application of legislation and pooling of resources. In addition, efforts should be pursued in the area of returns. Indeed, in its European Agenda on Migration, the Commission states that 'one of the incentives for irregular migrants is the knowledge that the EU's return system – meant to return irregular migrants or those whose asylum applications have been refused – works imperfectly.'

Frontex has created scenarios to form a basis for an annual monitoring of changes in the environment in which the Agency operates. Very different stakeholders can make use of these scenarios to develop their own internal strategies or monitor how these strategies fit into a changing environment. Seven scenarios are outlined in the present report, spanning a large variety of possible futures.

# 3. Introduction

The Frontex *Risk Analysis for 2016* has been developed for decision-makers to make informed decisions on common and concerted actions that are most likely to have sustainable effects on the management of the external borders and ultimately on the internal security of the EU.

Frontex operational activities aim to strengthen border security by ensuring the coordination of Member States' actions in the implementation of Community measures relating to the management of the external borders. The coordination of operational activities also contributes to better allocation of Member States' resources and protection of the area of freedom, security and justice.

The *Risk Analysis for 2016* concentrates on the current scope of Frontex operational activities, which focus on irregular migration at the external borders of the EU and Schengen Associated Countries. Central to the concept of integrated border management (IBM), border management should also cover security threats present at the external borders.

This annual analysis is developed in the following sequence: (1) description of the situation by utilising a range of indicators on irregular migration as exchanged among Member States; (2) featured analyses representing the current key risks identified at the external borders; (3) scenarios aimed at preparing the management of the external borders to face a range of situations in the coming years.

The Frontex Risk Analysis Unit (RAU) would like to express its gratitude to all members of the Frontex Risk Analysis Network (FRAN) in Member States for their efforts in providing data and information, as well as Europol, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the Fundamental Right Agency (FRA), the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN), UNHCR, OECD International Migration Division, WHO and all Frontex colleagues involved in the preparation of this report.

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# 4. Methodology

A coherent and comprehensive analysis of the risks affecting security at the external borders requires, above all, the adoption of common indicators. Consistent monitoring of these indicators will allow effective measures to be taken on the ground. The analysis will need to identify the risks that arise at the external borders themselves and those that arise in third countries.

The backbone of the *Risk Analysis for 2016* is the monthly statistics exchanged among Member States within the framework of the FRAN. For the *Risk Analysis for 2016*, the key indicators collected through the FRAN were: detections of illegal border-crossing through the green border or at BCPs; refusals of entry; detections of illegal stay; detections of facilitators; detections of fraudulent documents; re-

turn decisions; effective returns; and passenger flow (when available). Data on asylum applications are still being collected within the FRAN, but increasingly Frontex relies on data collected by EASO that contributed to the dedicated section on asylum.

The data were categorised by border type (land, air, and sea) and those on land borders were additionally categorised by border section with neighbouring third countries. The data exchanged within the FRAN are compiled and analysed on a quarterly basis. Priority is given to the use of the data for management purposes and to their fast sharing among Member State border-control authorities. Member States' data that are processed by Frontex are not treated as official statistics, and thus may occa-

sionally vary from those officially published by national authorities.

Throughout 2015, some FRAN members performed backdated updates of their 2014 statistics. These updates have been accounted for in this document and so some data presented here may differ from the data presented a year ago in the 2015 *Annual Risk Analysis*.

Member States were not requested to answer specific questions in support of this analysis. Rather, bi-monthly analytical reports were important sources of information, especially as regards the analysis of routes and *modi operandi*.

Open-source information was also effectively exploited, especially in identifying the main push and pull factors for irregular migration to the EU. Among others, these sources included reports issued by government agencies, international and non-governmental organisations, as well as mainstream news agencies and official EU reports, such

as the European Commission's reports on third countries.

For the development of the scenarios, the services of an external company, Scenario Management International (ScMI), were used. A computer-aided scenario method has been designed by ScMI to assist in the computation and selection among millions of combinations, as set of relevant possible futures. About twenty experts participated in the development of these scenarios, half of them from various Frontex units, and the others half experts delegated by Member States (Finland, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands) Europol, EASO, FRA, the Commission, EEAS, EU INTCEN, UNHCR and OECD migration division.

External borders refer to the borders between Member States and third countries. The borders between the Schengen Associated Countries (Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland) and third countries are also considered as external borders. The borders between the Schengen Associated Countries and Schengen Member States are considered as internal borders. For the indicators on detections of facilitators, illegal stay and asylum, statistics are also reported for detections at the land borders between Schengen Member States and those Member States that have either not joined the Schengen area yet (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania) or have opted to stay out of it (the UK, Ireland). Thus, a total for Member States and Schengen Associated Countries as a whole can be presented. It was not possible to make this distinction for air and sea borders because Member States do not habitually differentiate between extra-EU and intra-EU air and sea connections but tend to aggregate data for all arrivals per airport.

Consistent with other law-enforcement indicators, variation in administrative data related to border control depends on several factors. In this case, the number of detections of illegal border-crossing and refusals of entry are both functions of the amount of effort spent detecting migrants and the actual flow of irregular migrants to the EU. For example, increased detections of illegal border-crossing might be due to a real increase in the flow of irregular migrants, or may in fact be an outcome of more resources made available to detect migrants. In exceptional cases, increased resources may produce a rise in reported detections while effectively masking the actual decrease in the flow of migrants, resulting from a strong deterrent effect.

# 5. Situational picture in 2015

# 5.1. Main trends

The year 2015 was marked by an unprecedented number of detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs, revealing a migration crisis without equivalent in Europe since World War II. There were three choke-points: the maritime border between Turkey and Greece, the Central Mediterranean border and, as a consequence of the entry through Greece, the border with Western Balkan countries. The situation is described in detail in subsequent chapters.

Despite this crisis situation at the borders in Southern Europe, most of the workload of border-control authorities at EU level continues to be directed towards checking the regular flow of passengers. This regular flow is constantly increasing, mostly at the land borders, due to the visa liberalisation policy and local border traffic agreements and at air borders, following a general increase in the number of air passengers worldwide. According to Eurostat, extra-EU air arrivals rose by 6% between 2013 and 2014.[1] The increase could partly be linked with the rising number of passengers transiting through the Middle East region, in particular Dubai and Doha airports, before arriving in the EU.

The regular flow of passengers is composed of EU nationals, as well as third-country nationals not requiring a visa and those requiring one. By contrast to the first two flows, the number of short-term Schengen visas issued decreased between 2013 and 2014, following a sharp fall in the number of visas issued in the Russian Federation and Ukraine in the wake of the economic crisis. However, excluding these two countries, the number of visas issued increased by 11%, reflecting growing mobility worldwide and the attractiveness of the EU for many travellers.

The number of refusals of entry at border crossing points (BCPs), as defined in the Schengen Borders Code, remained relatively stable between 2014 and 2015 (118 495 in 2015 and 114 887 in 2014). This is a very low level, considering the increasing migratory pressure, as well as the very large number of regular passengers (several million per year), but it reflects facilitators' choice to direct irregular migrants between BCPs (an area often referred to as the green border, from where detections of illegal border-crossing are reported), rather than through BCPs, where passengers not meeting the requirements for entry will be refused.

Overall, the ratio of refusals of entry per 100 000 passengers is higher at the land than at the air border, revealing the very different nature of the flows at these border types. The large differences in refusal rates among Member States also suggest differences in flows of passengers arriving through Member States.

Among regular passengers, the number of persons detected using fraudulent documents, mostly at airports remained at a very low level (fewer than 9 000 detections on entry from third countries) despite large movements across the borders. The results and observations collected during an exercise carried out under Frontex umbrella highlighted a series of vulnerabilities in the travel document inspection process. This points to the risk for detections of document fraud to underestimate the actual number of persons entering the EU upon presentation of fraudulent travel documents.

Within the EU, the number of asylum applications and the number of detections of illegal stay rose to unprecedented levels, over 1.35 million. These increases are directly connected with the arrivals at the external borders.

The number of return decisions (issued by authorities other than border-control authorities) and the number of effective returns (usually implemented by border-control authorities) remained relatively stable. There is a striking difference between the nationalities detected crossing the border illegally or staying illegally in the EU, and the nationalities effectively returned. Indeed, most people detected crossing the border illegally travelled within the EU and then applied for asylum and thus were not returned.

1 Latest year with complete statistics. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Air_transport_statistics

**Latest situation 2015**
Reported cases

(2014)
**2015**

(3 052)
**3 642**
Detections of illegal border-crossing at BCPs

(9 421)
**8 373**
Detections of fraudulent document users

(10 234)
**12 023**
Detections of facilitators

(114 887)
**118 495**
Refusals of entry

(161 309)
**175 220**
Returns (effective)

(251 990)
**286 725**
Returns (decisions)

(424 967)
**701 625**
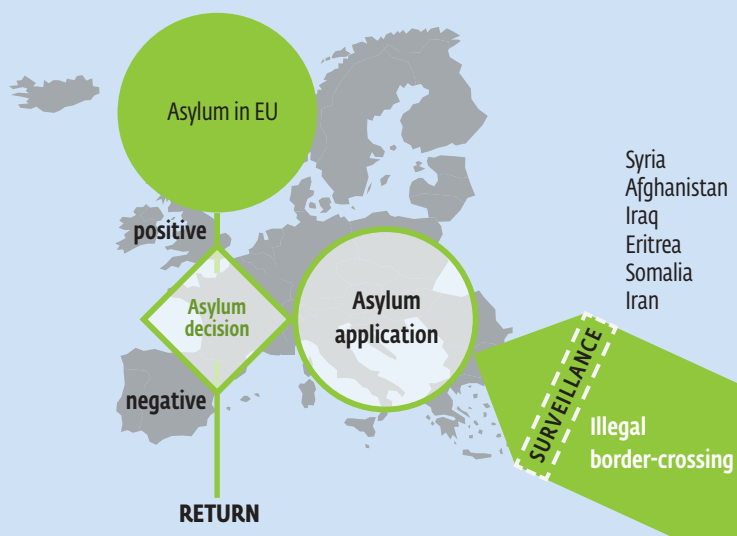Detections of persons staying illegally

(282 962)
**1 822 337**
Detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs
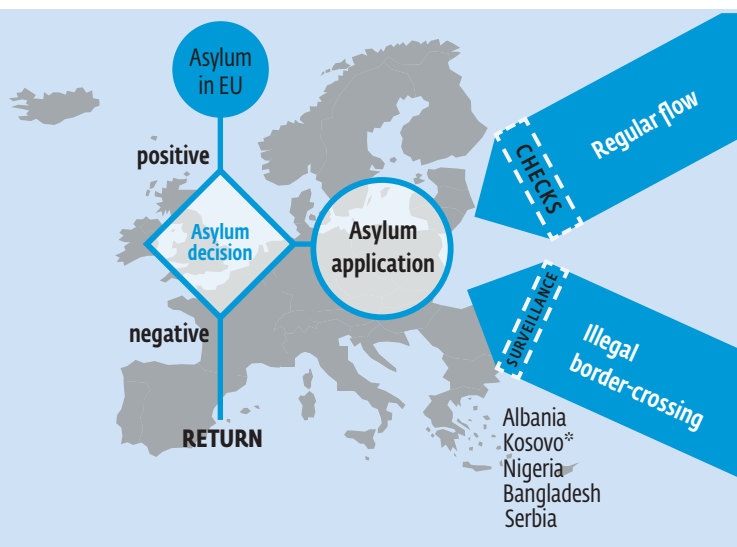
## Three main types of irregular migration flow:

**Nationalities very likely to obtain asylum in the EU:**
Efforts at the border should be geared towards their fast identification and prompt access to protection. Among the same flow, however, a proportion of applicants is likely to make false declarations of nationality, and the challenge for border guards is to identify those persons. If they do not need protection, measures should be undertaken to return them promptly to safe countries. The EU law (the Asylum Procedures Directive) considers a country safe when there is a democratic system, as well as, generally and consistently, no persecution, no torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, no threat of violence and no armed conflict. This flow corresponds mostly to detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs, where border-control authorities perform surveillance activities.

Asylum in EU

positive

Asylum decision

Asylum application

negative

RETURN

SURVEILLANCE

Illegal border-crossing

Syria
Afghanistan
Iraq
Eritrea
Somalia
Iran

**Asylum applications in a Member State different than the Member State of entry and unlikely to receive a positive asylum decision:** Here, the first challenge is to detect those crossing illegally between BCPs and rapidly identify those likely to apply for asylum in other Member States. The second and most difficult challenge is to identify among the large flow of bona fide travellers those who will eventually apply for asylum. Finally, border-control authorities are also involved in implementing the return of those who received a negative decision on their asylum application. The challenge here is to increase the ratio between return decisions and effective returns in line with the EU return policy.

Asylum in EU

positive

Asylum decision

Asylum application

negative

RETURN

CHECKS

Regular flow

SURVEILLANCE

Illegal border-crossing

Albania
Kosovo*
Nigeria
Bangladesh
Serbia

**Persons who are likely to be found staying illegally in the EU, mostly by overstaying a regular entry or not being detected at the border:** The main challenges here are to increase the detection of those entering clandestinely, for example hidden in vehicles, and to refuse entry to those who are likely to overstay their legal period of stay. This can only be done by increased collaboration with police authorities inland and the joint analysis of the profile of vehicles and persons crossing the border illegally. Prompt and harmonised return policies among Member States are essential to avoid migrants deciding to stay in Member States where the likelihood of return is low. This flow mostly corresponds to flows at BCPs, where border-control authorities perform checks.
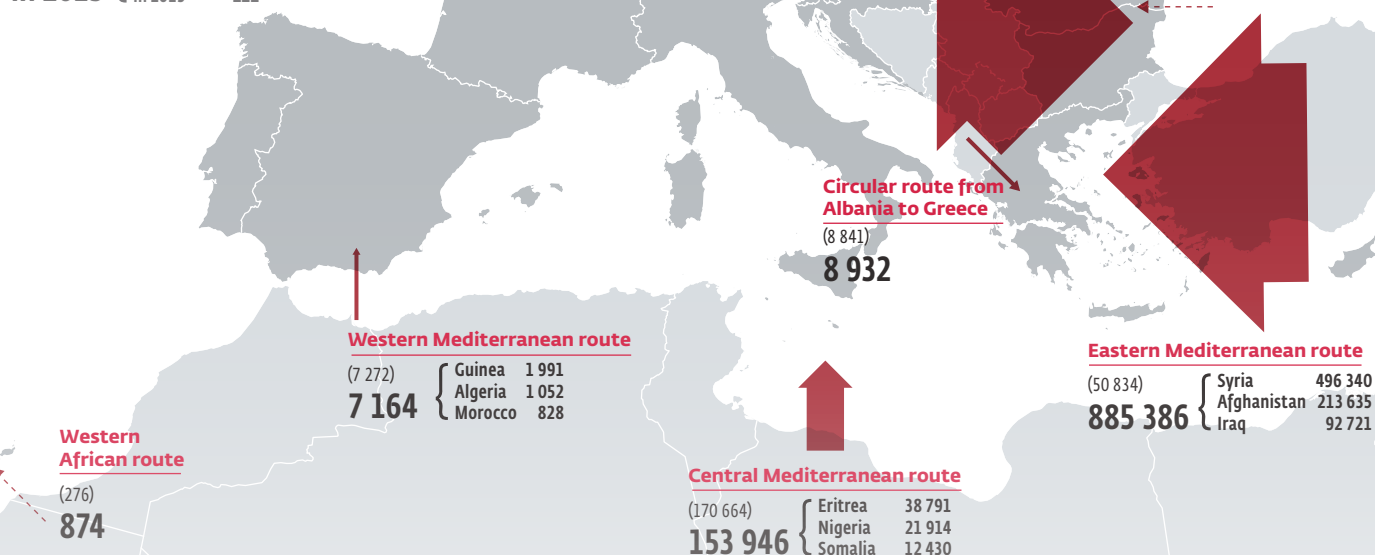
Illegal stay

RETURN

CHECKS

Regular flow

Morocco
Algeria
India
Turkey
Tunisia
China

**Detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU's external borders, 2015**

(282 962)
**1 822 337**

Route

(in 2014) { Top three X XXX
            nationalities YYY
in 2015 { in 2015 ZZZ

**Eastern borders route**
(1 275)
**1 920**

**Western Balkan route**
(43 357)                { Not specified 556 258
**764 038**              { Syria          90 065
                        { Afghanistan    53 237

**Black Sea route**
(433)
**68**

**Circular route from Albania to Greece**
(8 841)
**8 932**

**Eastern Mediterranean route**
(50 834)                  { Syria        496 340
**885 386**              { Afghanistan  213 635
                         { Iraq          92 721

**Western Mediterranean route**
(7 272)        { Guinea   1 991
**7 164**      { Algeria  1 052
               { Morocco    828

**Western African route**
(276)
**874**

**Central Mediterranean route**
(170 664)       { Eritrea  38 791
**153 946**     { Nigeria  21 914
                { Somalia  12 430

# 5.2. Surveillance: Overview

Surveillance consists in the activities of border-control authorities carried out between BCPs. During these surveillance activities, in 2015, more than 1 820 000 detections of illegal border-crossing along the EU external borders were reported, i.e. six times more than in 2014. Throughout 2015 and in particular during the summer, not only inflows surged but the routes used by asylum seekers also changed.

On the Eastern Mediterranean route, most detections (872 938) corresponded to the arrivals on the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea. Syrians accounted for the largest proportion of arrivals, although towards the end of the year, the share of Afghan nationals has risen significantly.

A total of 764 038 detections were recorded on the Western Balkan route, mainly on Hungary's and Croatia's borders with Serbia. Most of the migrants had earlier arrived on one of the Greek islands and then left the EU to travel through the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. After Hungary constructed a temporary technical obstacle along its border with Serbia and tightened border controls in September, the migrants have begun crossing Croatia's border with Serbia in record numbers.

In contrast, the Central Mediterranean route saw the number of people crossing to Italy decreasing by about 10% in 2015. This was in large part due to a decrease in the number of Syrians opting for this route, as the majority preferred the shorter Eastern Mediterranean route, bringing the figure down to 153 946 compared with approximately 170 000 in the same period of 2014. Mostly Africans, from Eritrea and West Africa, were reported on this route, and their detections increased compared to 2014.

Search and rescue operations were crucial in saving the lives of an unprecedented number of migrants. However, it is on this route that the largest death toll was reported among migrants crossing the border illegally. IOM estimates that around 3 770 persons went missing or died at sea in 2015.

On the other traditional routes, the situation remained comparable to previous years, with 7 164 detections reported from the Western Mediterranean route (-1% compared to 2014), 8 932 on the cir-

**Figure 1.** **Detections of illegal border-crossing, by main nationalities in 2015**
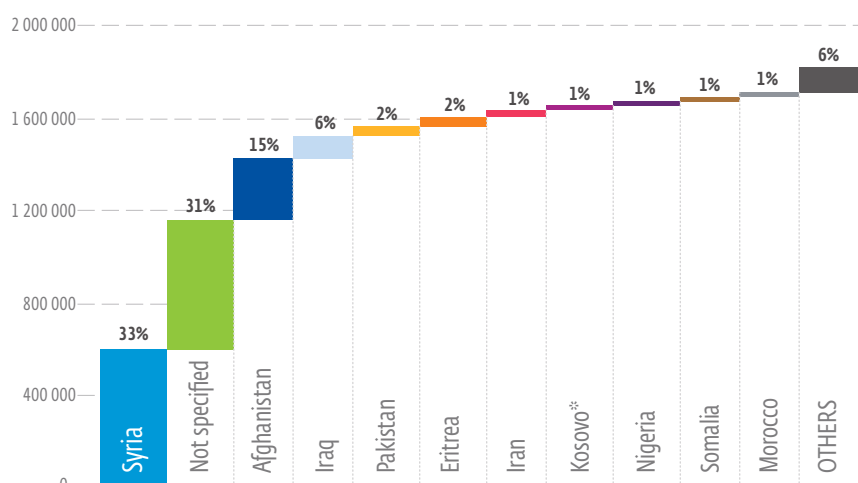
cular migration route between Albania and Greece, and 68 in the Black Sea.

Detections associated with surveillance activities on the eastern land border remained at relatively low levels (1 920), but an unusual increase in unfounded asylum applications at BCPs was reported at the Norwegian and Finnish borders with the Russian Federation (the Arctic route). On this route, starting from September 2015, an increasing number of migrants, in particular from Afghanistan and Syria, were reported crossing the border without proper documents and then applying for asylum.

Citizens from Syria and Afghanistan represented the highest share of detections of illegal border-crossing in 2015. The vast majority arrived from Turkey in Greece, and only approximately 7 448 Syrians and 117 Afghans were reported on the Central Mediterranean route. The breakdown by nationality, however, should be considered with caution as thorough interviews of a proportion of migrants during the screening procedure indicated a high degree of falsely claimed nationalities. Indeed, many migrants claimed to be from Syria or Afghanistan, to avoid being returned to Turkey or their country of origin, and so speed up their journey within the EU. Establishing the identity of a large number of poorly documented migrants is one of the main challenges border-control authorities are confronted with.

Eritreans ranked first in terms of the nationalities of migrants arriving on the Central Mediterranean route, with 38 791 detections, or 25% of this route's total. However, as regards regional totals, West Africans (54 828) represented the largest share of migrants arriving on this route.

The unprecedented number of detections of illegal border-crossing also meant that in several Member States, the authorities were not able to register the nationality of the persons arriving. Thus, the category 'not specified' for illegal border-crossing represented 30% of the total. Most of the cases under this category were reported after mid-September 2015, when the flow of migrants entered through Croatia.

Since 2014, the number of detections of West Africans has been steadily increasing, to reach 64 169 detections in 2015, nearly 86% of which on the Central Mediterranean route. While this number pales in comparison to the record annual total, this is a growing trend that needs
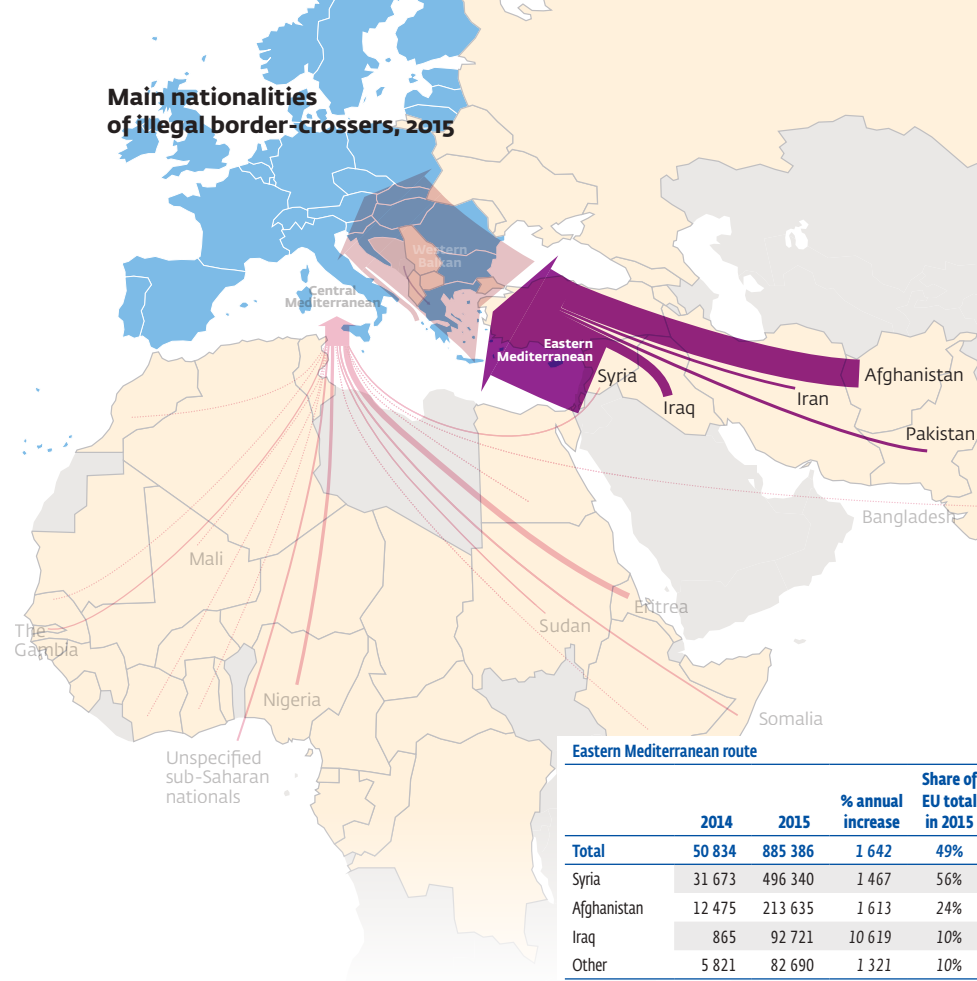
to be monitored. Compared to East Africans who do not apply for asylum in Italy but rather in other Member States, West Africans do apply for asylum in Italy and in fact constitute the largest contingent of asylum applicants in this country.

Table 1. **Detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs**

Detections reported by routes and top three nationalities at the external borders

| Routes | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Share of parent row total | % change on previous year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Eastern Mediterranean route** | **57 025** | **37 224** | **24 799** | **50 834** | **885 386** | **49** | **1 642** |
| Sea | **1 467** | **4 370** | **11 831** | **44 057** | **873 179** | **99** | **1 882** |
| Syria | 76 | 906 | 5 361 | 27 025 | 489 011 | 56 | 1 709 |
| Afghanistan | 310 | 1 593 | 4 080 | 11 582 | 212 286 | 24 | 1 733 |
| Iraq | 76 | 47 | 57 | 382 | 90 130 | 10 | 23 494 |
| Other | 1 005 | 1 824 | 2 333 | 5 068 | 81 752 | 9.4 | 1 513 |
| Land | **55 558** | **32 854** | **12 968** | **6 777** | **12 207** | **1.4** | **80** |
| Syria | 1 216 | 6 216 | 7 366 | 4 648 | 7 329 | 60 | 58 |
| Iraq | 1 054 | 987 | 372 | 483 | 2 591 | 21 | 436 |
| Afghanistan | 19 308 | 7 973 | 2 049 | 893 | 1 349 | 11 | 51 |
| Other | 33 980 | 17 678 | 3 181 | 753 | 938 | 7.7 | 25 |
| **Western Balkan route** | **4 658** | **6 391** | **19 951** | **43 357** | **764 038** | **42** | **1 662** |
| Not specified | 75 | 39 | 38 | 153 | 556 258 | 73 | 363 467 |
| Syria | 34 | 178 | 1 171 | 7 320 | 90 065 | 12 | 1 130 |
| Afghanistan | 983 | 1 665 | 2 174 | 8 342 | 53 237 | 7.0 | 538 |
| Other | 3 566 | 4 509 | 16 568 | 27 542 | 64 478 | 8.4 | 134 |
| **Central Mediterranean route** | **64 261** | **15 151** | **45 298** | **170 664** | **153 946** | **8.4** | **-9.8** |
| Eritrea | 659 | 1 889 | 10 398 | 33 559 | 38 791 | 25 | 16 |
| Nigeria | 6 078 | 449 | 2 824 | 8 233 | 21 914 | 14 | 166 |
| Somalia | 1 416 | 3 403 | 4 506 | 5 785 | 12 430 | 8.1 | 115 |
| Other | 56 108 | 9 410 | 27 570 | 123 087 | 80 811 | 52 | -34 |
| **Circular route from Albania to Greece** | **5 269** | **5 502** | **8 728** | **8 841** | **8 932** | **0.5** | **1** |
| Albania | 5 022 | 5 398 | 8 592 | 8 757 | 8 874 | 99 | 1 |
| FYR Macedonia | 23 | 36 | 21 | 31 | 16 | 0 | -48 |
| Georgia | 21 | 7 | 23 | 14 | 13 | 0.1 | -7 |
| Other | 203 | 61 | 92 | 39 | 29 | 0.3 | -26 |
| **Western Mediterranean route** | **8 448** | **6 397** | **6 838** | **7 272** | **7 164** | **0,4** | **-1** |
| Guinea | 392 | 261 | 142 | 769 | 1 991 | 28 | 159 |
| Algeria | 1 772 | 2 015 | 1 436 | 734 | 1 052 | 15 | 43 |
| Morocco | 775 | 508 | 282 | 476 | 828 | 12 | 74 |
| Other | 5 509 | 3 613 | 4 978 | 5 293 | 3 293 | 46 | -38 |
| **Eastern borders route** | **1 049** | **1 597** | **1 316** | **1 275** | **1 920** | **0.1** | **51** |
| Afghanistan | 105 | 200 | 149 | 209 | 491 | 26 | 135 |
| Vietnam | 23 | 158 | 149 | 257 | 461 | 24 | 79 |
| Syria | 4 | 22 | 64 | 98 | 153 | 8.0 | 56 |
| Other | 917 | 1 217 | 954 | 711 | 815 | 42 | 15 |
| **Western African route** | **340** | **174** | **283** | **276** | **874** | **0** | **217** |
| Guinea | 4 | 2 | 12 | 50 | 365 | 42 | 630 |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 0 | 0 | 5 | 16 | 136 | 16 | 750 |
| Gambia | 2 | 39 | 3 | 22 | 85 | 10 | 286 |
| Other | 334 | 133 | 263 | 188 | 288 | 33 | 53 |
| **Black Sea route** | **0** | **1** | **148** | **433** | **68** | **0** | **-84** |
| Syria | 0 | 0 | 80 | 14 | 42 | 62 | 200 |
| Iraq | 0 | 0 | 0 | 90 | 12 | 18 | -87 |
| Iran | 0 | 1 | 0 | 45 | 9 | 13 | -80 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 68 | 284 | 5 | 7.4 | -98 |
| **Other** | **1** | **0** | **4** | **10** | **9** | **0** | **-10** |
| Syria | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 56 | n.a. |
| Russian Federation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 22 | -50 |
| China | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11 | n.a. |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 11 | -83 |
| **Total** | **141 051** | **72 437** | **107 365** | **282 962** | **1 822 337** | **100.0** | **100.0** |

Western Balkan

Central Mediterranean

**Eastern Mediterranean**

Syria

Iraq

Iran

Afghanistan

Pakistan

Bangladesh

Mali

Eritrea

The Gambia

Sudan

Nigeria

Somalia

Unspecified sub-Saharan nationals

**Eastern Mediterranean route**

| | 2014 | 2015 | % annual increase | Share of EU total in 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** | **50 834** | **885 386** | **1 642** | **49%** |
| Syria | 31 673 | 496 340 | *1 467* | 56% |
| Afghanistan | 12 475 | 213 635 | *1 613* | 24% |
| Iraq | 865 | 92 721 | *10 619* | 10% |
| Other | 5 821 | 82 690 | *1 321* | 10% |

# 5.3. Surveillance: Eastern Mediterranean

The largest number of detections was reported on the Eastern Mediterranean route (885 386), mostly between Turkey and the Greek islands in the Eastern Aegean Sea. However, few applied for asylum in Greece and instead left Greece across the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and continued through the Western Balkans.

## Sea border

Most detections were reported from the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos, though the number of islands targeted by the smuggling groups is growing. As resources at the border are increasingly stretched in order to attend to unprecedented numbers of arrivals, it is also more likely that an unknown number of migrants cross undetected.

With the rapid increase in the number of migrants seeking facilitation, smugglers are becoming more and more aggressive and ruthless to increase their profit, forcing migrants to board already overcrowded boats. Such behaviour led to lives being lost in the Aegean Sea, in-cluding that of a three-year-old boy near Bodrum, Turkey.

Most persons illegally crossing the border in the Aegean Sea were Syrians and Afghans. Many travelled in family units, which meant that many migrants belonged to vulnerable groups requiring special attention.

The breakdown by nationality should be considered with caution as thorough interviews of a proportion of the migrants during screening procedure revealed a high degree of falsely claimed nationalities.

The vast majority of migrants do not apply for asylum in Greece. Syrian migrants receive special authorisation to stay in Greece for up to six months and many use this authorisation to travel through the country to the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and then continue through the Western Balkans to other EU Member States.

## Land border

At the land border, detections of illegal border-crossing increased by 80% between 2014 and 2105. Detections were twice as high at the Bulgarian land border with Turkey as at the neighbouring Greek land border. However, the gap narrowed after September 2015, coinciding with the transportation measures set up from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border, rendering the journey through the Greek Thrace region more attractive than the journey through Bulgaria and then Serbia.

The composition of the flow was roughly similar to the flow of migrants crossing the Aegean Sea, with the top three nationalities being Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi.



© Frontex

**Figure 2.** **Landing beaches on the shore of Greek islands near Turkey littered with discarded life jackets**

Kosovo

**Western
Balkan**

Central
Mediterranean

Kosovo

Eastern
Mediterranean

Syria

Iraq

Iran

Afghanistan

Pakistan

Bangladesh

Mali

Eritrea

Sudan

The
Gambia

Nigeria

Somalia

Unspecified
sub-Saharan
nationals

| Western Balkan route | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | **2014** | **2015** | **% annual increase** | **Share of EU total in 2015** |
| **Total** | **43 357** | **764 038** | **1 662** | **42%** |
| Not specified | 153 | 556 258 | 363 467 | 73% |
| Syria | 7 320 | 90 065 | 1 130 | 12% |
| Afghanistan | 8 342 | 53 237 | 538 | 7% |
| Other | 27 542 | 64 478 | 134 | 8% |

# 5.4. Surveillance: Western Balkans

In 2015, 766 038 detections of illegal border-crossing were reported from the borders with Western Balkan countries. Between January and February, most of the detections concerned persons from Kosovo*, i.e. a regional flow. As of March, detections were associated with non-regional flow of migrants who had initially crossed illegally from Turkey to Greece and on their way to Western Europe, mostly Germany.

Detections of non-regional migrants dramatically increased in July as a result of the increase in arrivals in Greece after April 2015. This increase also coincided with the amendments made to the Asylum Law of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia that allowed for a 72-hour period of legal transit and access to public transportation, with the measures announced by the Hungarian government aimed at curbing the irregular migratory flow entering from Serbia, and with a declaration in Germany that there was 'no upper limit to the right for asylum'.

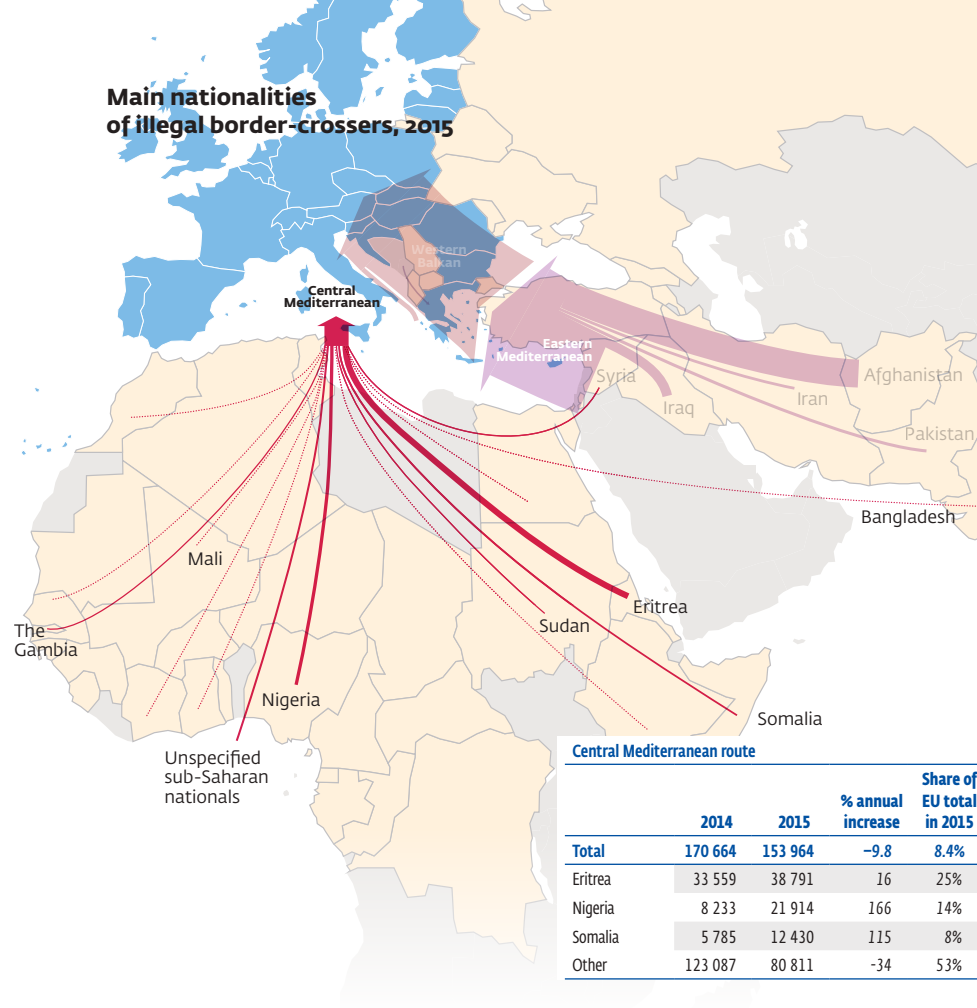As a consequence of the continued pressure, Hungary constructed a temporary technical obstacle along its border with Serbia, which was completed in mid-September 2015. This resulted in a sharp decrease of detections, and confined the flow of migrants at BCPs. Migrants applying for asylum at Hungarian BCPs would be returned to Serbia, considered as a safe country. The main flow of migrants thus quickly moved to the Croatian-Serbian land border, at a daily average of over 6 400 between mid-September and the end of October. Once in Croatia, migrants were transported by trains towards the border with Hungary. Hence, Hungary extended its construction to its land border with Croatia, thus moving the flow towards Slovenia as of mid-October.

The main reported nationalities were Syrians and Afghans. However, the large number of migrants made it impossible for the authorities to identify all of them, leading to a massive increase in the proportion of migrants whose country of origin is reported as unknown.

Although various prevention measures were attempted (i.e. the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia tried to close the border with Greece, Serbia deployed additional personnel and equipment), the authorities in the Western Balkans, like their EU neighbours, could not contain the large number of migrants arriving. In reaction to public security concerns, the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia focused their efforts on transporting migrants by trains and buses towards the next border in order to facilitate their exit. Only a fraction of the migrants were screened and fingerprinted as would normally be the case.

Kosovo*, being the only Western Balkan country that has not signed a visa liberalisation agreement, remains the main regional source of migrants crossing the border illegally. Their detections at the Hungarian-Serbian borders started to grow in August 2014, reached a peak in February 2015 and dropped afterwards, following the introduction of concerted international countermeasures. Their numbers have remained very low since then.

An increasing number of Albanians travelled legally to EU Member States, mostly Germany, where they applied for asylum. The increase started in January 2015 and peaked in August 2015. According to EASO, the rejection rate for asylum applications of Albanians between January and July 2015 was 96% at EU level. Organising the return of those not granted asylum increases the burden on the authorities in charge of return activities.

Central
Mediterranean

Eastern
Mediterranean

Western
Balkan

Syria

Iraq

Iran

Afghanistan

Pakistan

Bangladesh

Mali

The
Gambia

Nigeria

Sudan

Eritrea

Somalia

Unspecified
sub-Saharan
nationals

| Central Mediterranean route | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2014 | 2015 | % annual increase | Share of EU total in 2015 |
| **Total** | **170 664** | **153 964** | **−9.8** | **8.4%** |
| Eritrea | 33 559 | 38 791 | 16 | 25% |
| Nigeria | 8 233 | 21 914 | 166 | 14% |
| Somalia | 5 785 | 12 430 | 115 | 8% |
| Other | 123 087 | 80 811 | -34 | 53% |

# 5.5. Surveillance: Central Mediterranean

In 2015, there were 153 946 detections of illegal border-crossing on the Central Mediterranean route, representing a 10% decrease compared to 2014. The decrease is due to a fall in Syrians (about 40 000 in 2014, but fewer than 7 500 in 2015) after a shift towards the Eastern Mediterranean route. However, **the number of East and West Africans steadily increased from below 80 000 in 2014 to more than 108 000 in 2015 (+42%).** This increase indicates that this route also faces very strong pressures and migrants continue to arrive in Libya, where smugglers have established a strong foothold.

Most migrants were Africans (89% of the detections on this route), but due to the large volume of arrivals preventing their adequate identification, the nationality of a share of migrants remained unknown (6%). The nationality most often reported was Eritrean, but the regional composition of the flow indicated that the majority of the detected migrants came from West Africa.

The vast majority of migrants departed from Libya and were rescued by border-control authorities after issuing a distress call. Smugglers typically make use of frail, overcrowded boats, with a limited fuel supply to maximise their profits, putting migrants' lives at considerable risk. Search and rescue operations were crucial in saving the lives of an unprecedented number of migrants. Nevertheless, they also contributed to the enrichment of smugglers who could cut on travel costs and advertised to susceptible migrants that rescue operations make the journey safer, thus increasing the demand for crossings. IOM estimates that around 3 770 people died or went missing at sea in 2015.

On several occasions, smugglers threatened border guards and rescue teams to be able to recover the rubber or wooden boats. The share of rubber boats has increased in 2015, an indication of the limited availability of large wooden boats. This shortage may be a limiting factor in the number of crossings, whereas the demand remains high.

Upon arrival, less than half of the migrants who were rescued subsequently claimed asylum.

**The decisions to apply for asylum upon arrival is largely dependent on nationality.**

The majority of migrants from Nigeria, the Gambia, Senegal, Bangladesh, Mali, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire make an asylum application upon arrival. However, data on asylum decisions at first instance between January and July 2015 at EU level (EASO) showed that the large majority of these applications are rejected. However, very few will eventually be returned. As regards these seven nationalities, together accounting for over 54 000 detections of illegal border-crossing at EU level, only fewer than 8 000 were returned in 2015. The information of the low likelihood of being returned and the ease of travelling within the EU after arrival, is circulating among migrants and encourages those at home to attempt a perilous journey to the EU.

The remaining half (mostly from Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Ethiopia) who do not often apply for asylum upon arrival will either stay illegally in Italy, or continue towards other EU Member States, where they will apply for asylum.

## Migrant's testimony

*Some of my friends went to Europe and when they came back, they had money and bought cars for their family. One day I thought, 'I am the same as these people, I should do the same.'*

Anonymous, Côte d'Ivoire, 25

Source: *Migration Trends Across the Mediterranean: Connecting the Dots*, IOM, June 2015

# 5.6. Surveillance: Other routes

## Western Mediterranean

The cooperation between Spain and Morocco is key in maintaining low level of detections on the land route between the two countries, and the Moroccan authorities regularly prevent attempts to climb over the fences to Melilla and Ceuta. Moroccan authorities have also dug a moat and built a high fence on its own territory in the most vulnerable areas of the perimeter near the border with the Spanish cities. These measures, combined with the implementation of the readmission agreement, reinforcement of Moroccan Border Guard Units protecting the fence and dismantlement of migrants' makeshift camps, have reduced the number of attempts to cross illegally.

As a result, sub-Saharan migrants are trying to take the sea route towards Spain. During debriefing many claimed that they made several attempts to jump the fence in Melilla before taking the sea route. Migrants are also more and more encouraged to depart from Libya, as the likelihood of return in the case of detection is much lower.

## Western African routes

On the Western African route that connects Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco with the Canary Islands in Spain the numbers remain negligible despite an increasing trend for departures from Morocco. This low number is attributed to the Memorandum of Understanding between Spain, Senegal and Mauritania, that includes joint surveillance activities and effective return of those detected crossing the border illegally. The low number of departures resulted in relatively few casualties. Still, at least 12 people died in March 2015 in two separate incidents involving boats that departed from Morocco.

## Eastern land border

On the eastern land border, a new route, called the Arctic route, emerged at the land border of Norway and Finland with the Russian Federation. The main targeted BCP is the Norwegian BCP of Storskog, which registered an unusually high number of applications for asylum, with more than 5 200 applications in 2015. People seeking asylum in Norway have taken to using bicycles to cross the border from the Russian Federation because pedestrian traffic is banned and drivers of vehicles are fined if they carry passengers across without proper documents.

Until mid-October 2015 the majority of asylum applicants were from Syria, but then the number of nationalities widened, and in November Afghans took over as the main nationality. In Norway, the situation eased of as December, after the Russian authorities stopped clearing transit travellers without a Schengen visa.

However, there has been a clear displacement to the Finnish border.

After crossing the border by bicycle has been banned, migrants now acquire cars and drive to the border by themselves. Some of them have lived in the Russian Federation for a long period of time. However, the share of those in transit through the Russian Federation has been recently growing, indicating that the knowledge about the route in the origin countries is spreading.

# 5.7. Border checks: Regular flow

While activities linked to surveillance, i.e. activities between border crossing-points, received most media attention, border checks are undoubtedly the core activities of border-control authorities, with millions of checks on entry and exit carried out on a daily basis, at BCPs.

At the macro level, two factors contributed in the recent past to shape the flow of passengers: the first is the visa liberalisation policy and local border traffic agreements that resulted in higher passenger flows, mostly at the land borders with Western Balkan countries. The second is the growing overall number of passengers due to globalisation, in particular at the air borders.

Based on Eurostat data[1], the upward trend already observed in air passenger transport for previous years has been confirmed: the figures available for 2014 indicate a year-on-year rise of 4.4%. Particularly remarkable is the growth observed for Greece (+16%) and Luxembourg (+12%) as well as Portugal and Poland (+10%). Athens registered the highest rise among the largest airports (+20%), followed by Brussels (+14%) and Lisbon (+13%).

In 2014, international intra-EU flights represented more than 44% of all passengers carried at EU-28 level, followed by extra-EU flights (more than 38%) and national flights (almost 18%). In 2014, passengers on arrival from extra-EU flights totalled almost 169 million, compared to 164 million in 2013.[2]

At the land border, some Member States started to regularly report monthly data on regular passenger flow to Frontex. However, the information still contains gaps and it is not currently possible to report an EU total. Based on partial information from Member States, the largest and increasing inwards passenger traffic, was at the Croatian land border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Entries

1  http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/
   statistics-explained/index.php/
   Air_transport_statistics
2  Eurostat, Air passenger transport by
   reporting country, avia_paoc, last update
   of data 19.10.2015

Figure 3. **Population in third countries under Annex II of the Visa Code, listing countries not requiring a visa, in millions**
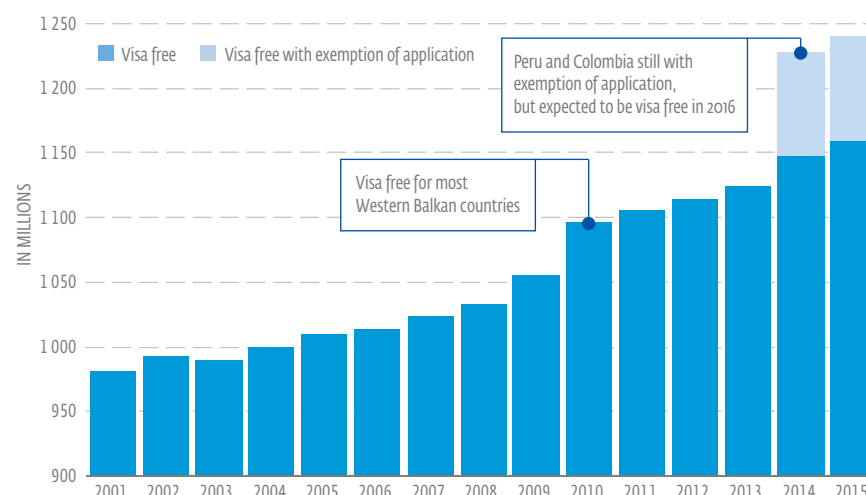


Source: UN Population Division

from Ukraine and the Russian Federation are also significant at the Polish and Finnish borders.

In 2014, 15.6 million short-term uniform Schengen visas were issued, constituting a decrease of 3.1% compared to 2013 (16.1 million). The decrease was mostly due to fewer visas being applied for and issued from the Russian Federation, a trend attributed to the economic downturn. The overall visa rejection rate remained stable, at about 6.2%, with rate for Africa (for a relatively low number of

visa issued: 1.7 million) standing out at about 20%.

In December 2015, the worldwide roll-out of the **Schengen Visa Information System (VIS)** was completed. The VIS database now contains all data related to visa applications by third-country nationals who require a visa to enter the Schengen area, including biometric data (fingerprints and a digital facial image). Each time a visa holder enters the Schengen area, their fingerprints should be checked against the database.

## Peru and Colombia granted visa-free regime

Peru and Colombia signed short-stay visa-waiver agreements with the EU in 2015. As a result Peruvian and Colombian citizens will no longer be required to request a visa for travel to the EU. Certain conditions will still apply, however; namely holding a return ticket, financial means for the visit and a biometric passport. Due to delays in the availability of biometric passports in Peru, the agreement may not take practical effect until sometime in 2016. The risks arising from a visa waiver for Colombian and Peruvian citizens will likely remain modest and concern mostly drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings. As in other visa liberalisation cases, passenger flow and refusals of entry are likely to increase.

Visa liberalisation dialogues are ongoing between the EU, Kosovo*, Georgia and Ukraine with the aim of taking gradual steps towards the long-term goal of visa-free travel, provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place.
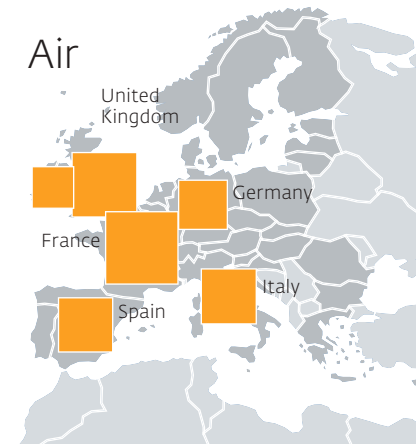
**Number per border type, 2015**
(only values higher than 500 are stipulated)

**Total: 66 503** (63 701)
Number in parenthesis is for 2014

**Total: 46 713** (46 292)
Number in parenthesis is for 2014

**Total: 5 279** (4 894)
Number in parenthesis is for 2014

### Land

Poland
Lithuania
Hungary
Croatia
Greece

### Air

United Kingdom
France
Germany
Spain
Italy

### Sea

Italy

**Trend of the total**

| | Land | | Air | | Sea | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2014 | 63 701 | | 46 292 | | | 4 894 |
| 2015 | 66 503 | | 46 713 | | | 5 279 |

# 5.8. Border checks: Refusals

In 2015, among regular travellers, Member States reported a total of 118 495 refusals of entry at the external borders of the EU, a stable trend compared to the previous year. Refusals of entry represented only a fraction of passenger flow, indicating that the overwhelming number of passengers crossing the borders are bona fide travellers.

Most refusals of entry were reported at the land border (66 503, or 56% of the total). This is linked to the nature of the flow at the land border, which is mostly composed of commuters and low budget travellers. Indeed, border-control authorities face different challenges during border checks at air and land borders.

As in 2014, Ukrainians were the top ranking nationality for refusals of entry at EU level. Among Member States, Poland reported the largest number of refusals of entry in absolute terms, mostly to nationals of Ukraine at the land borders. However, it is at the land border between Hungary and Serbia that the number of refusals of entry is the largest per passenger. This particular pressure is due to the higher passenger flow follow-ing visa liberalisation in the Western Balkans, and the subsequent increased role of border-control authorities in checking entry requirements, which was previously the responsibility of consular authorities.

At the air borders, as in 2014, Albanians continued to rank as the top nationality. Albanians ranked first for refusals of entry at the air border in eight Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. This predominance of Albanians in the data on refusals of entry coincides with the visa liberalisation regime that entered into force in 2011 for Albanians.

As in previous years, the main reasons for refusals of entry were the lack of valid visa (25%) and the lack of appropriate documentation justifying the purpose of stay (28%). The number of persons refused entry due to an alert in the SIS system represented only about 8.2% of the total, with 9 762 refusals issued in 2015.
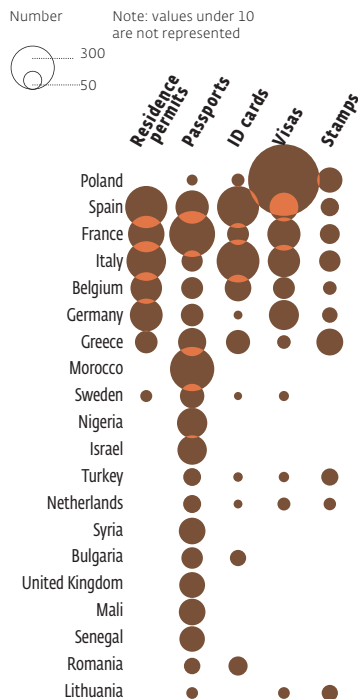


© European Commission

Figure 4. **ABC devices used for checking passengers at Madrid Barajas airport**
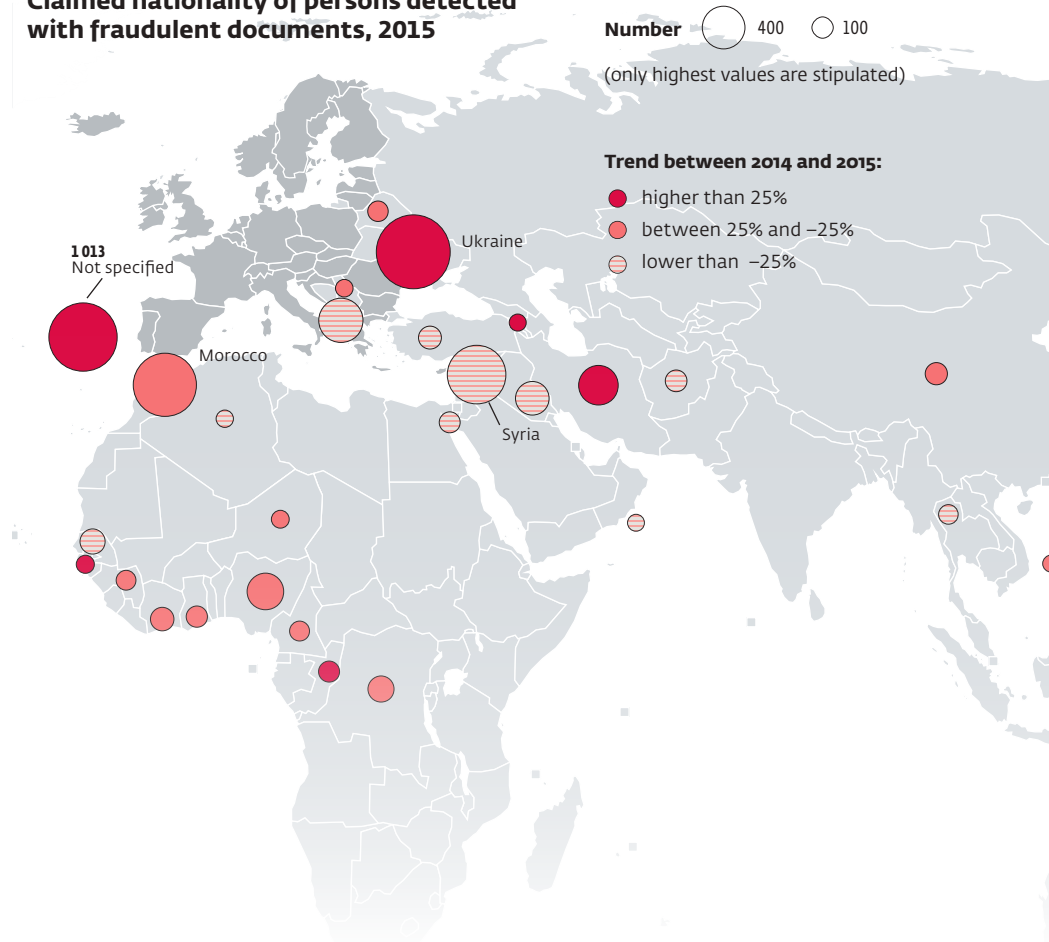
## Type

### Type of fraudulent document detected, by main countries of issuance, 2015

Number

Note: values under 10 are not represented

- 300
- 50

|  | Residence permits | Passports | ID cards | Visas | Stamps |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poland | | | | | |
| Spain | | | | | |
| France | | | | | |
| Italy | | | | | |
| Belgium | | | | | |
| Germany | | | | | |
| Greece | | | | | |
| Morocco | | | | | |
| Sweden | | | | | |
| Nigeria | | | | | |
| Israel | | | | | |
| Turkey | | | | | |
| Netherlands | | | | | |
| Syria | | | | | |
| Bulgaria | | | | | |
| United Kingdom | | | | | |
| Mali | | | | | |
| Senegal | | | | | |
| Romania | | | | | |
| Lithuania | | | | | |

## Nationality of users

### Claimed nationality of persons detected with fraudulent documents, 2015

**Number** ◯ 400 ◯ 100

(only highest values are stipulated)

**Trend between 2014 and 2015:**

- ● higher than 25%
- ● between 25% and −25%
- ◐ lower than −25%

**1 013** Not specified

Ukraine

Morocco

Syria

# 5.9. Border checks: Fraudulent documents

In 2015, Member States reported a total of 8 373 document fraudsters at BCPs on entry from third countries to the EU. This represented a decrease (-11%) compared to the previous year. The most commonly detected nationalities were Ukrainians (1 186), Moroccans (867) and Syrians (745).

## On air routes, most detections continue to be reported from Turkish airports

As in previous years, most detections were reported on air routes. At 529 detections, the number of fraudulent document users arriving from Istanbul Atatürk decreased by 29% compared to the previous year, yet it remained the top last departure airport for detections of fraudulent documents. The displacement of the passengers using fraudulent docu-

ments to Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen airport was, however, observed in the autumn of 2015 pointing to the increasing importance of this smaller, budget airport.

From Nigeria to the EU, detections steeply increased at the beginning of 2015, mostly at Rome Fiumicino, but the trend reversed when Alitalia withdrew its Accra/Lagos/Rome service at the end of March 2015. Hence most document fraud detections involving departure places in Africa were recorded on the routes leading from Dakar (Senegal) and Bamako (Mali) towards the EU.

Syrian nationals remained the most prevalent nationality detected with fraudulent documents at the air borders, mainly arriving from Turkish airports, although the number of related detections on flights from third countries was only half as high as during 2014.

## At land and sea borders, most detections of document fraud from Morocco and Ukraine

In 2015 most of the detections of fraudulent documents at land and sea borders were reported between Morocco and Spain, mostly involving Moroccans detected upon arrival from Tangier, Morocco, and in the Spanish exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, often using fraudulent Spanish documents.

The most often reported land border section for detection of document fraud remained the Polish-Ukrainian border, which is attributable to the Ukrainian nationals abusing Polish fraudulently obtained visas.

**Security risks associated with continued recognition of Syrian passports**

**The massive migration inflow** of 2015 raised many questions related to the identity of arriving people. **Concerns related to the abuse of Syrian documents** have been confirmed by the observations made during the registration process. The level of security of the Syrian supporting documents (in particular ID cards, family books, military books, etc.) is very low. Forgeries detected during the registration process are of different quality, although most of these documents could be detected during proper document checks.

**The situation is much more complex in the case of the abuse of Syrian passports.** Although the protection level of these documents is relatively low compared to EU passports, the biggest problem lies in the security (and the overall reliability) of the issuing process. Criminal organisations have access to a large number of stolen blank Syrian passports and printers used for their personalisation. This allows them to produce genuine-looking passports, which may be difficult to identify even by experienced document experts.

**The very unreliable and non-secure issuing process of Syrian passports together with the very low security protection of the Syrian breeder (supporting) documents** would normally lead to non-recognition of Syrian passports for the purpose of travel. Recently issued ordinary Syrian passports are, however, recognised for travel and for affixing a visa by all EU Member States. By contrast, similarly unreliable passports of Somalia are not recognised by most EU Member States.

### Intra-Schengen

By contrast, the number of document fraud incidents on intra-EU Schengen movements showed a marked increase. For the second year in a row, there were more fraudulent documents detected on intra-EU/Schengen movements than during border checks on passengers arriving from third countries. This is partly due to the large number of migrants undertaking secondary movements within the EU, often with fraudulent documents obtained in the country of entry to the EU.

The number of persons aiming to get to the UK with fraudulent document significantly increased (+70%) compared to 2014. This trend is mostly attributable to the increasing number of Albanian nationals often misusing Italian and Greek ID cards followed by Ukrainian nationals abusing authentic Polish ID cards. Other nationalities aiming to reach the UK with fraudulent documents were Syrian, Iranian and Chinese nationals.

The current migration crisis is obviously also having an impact on the detections of fraudulent document users on the air routes between Greece and Germany, a 20% increase compared to 2014. Most of these detections were attributable to the Syrian nationals who decided to take the fast air route to reach their final destination.

### Vulnerabilities in detecting fraudulent documents

There is no EU-wide system of document inspection performance in place and thus analyses focus on the threat of document fraud as detected at the border, rather than on the vulnerabilities related to the means deployed (staff and equipment). However, the continuous development and sophistication of the physical, optical and electronic security features of travel documents currently in circulation brings significant challenges for border-control officers.

The outcome of an exercise carried out by Frontex[1], showed that the performance of the technical equipment shows a degree of variability, indecision and inconsistency, resulting in a number of false documents being incorrectly accepted as genuine. On the other hand, the performance of border-control officers is also variable and subjective. Although some experts have very high accuracy levels, short time available for first-line check negatively affects the detections of false documents.

A number of measures could mitigate these vulnerabilities, including for example routine testing of deployed operational systems against performance requirements, establishing quality assurance process, development of intra-EU mobility programs for the exchange of first-line border-control officers and testing their skills and performance on a regular basis.

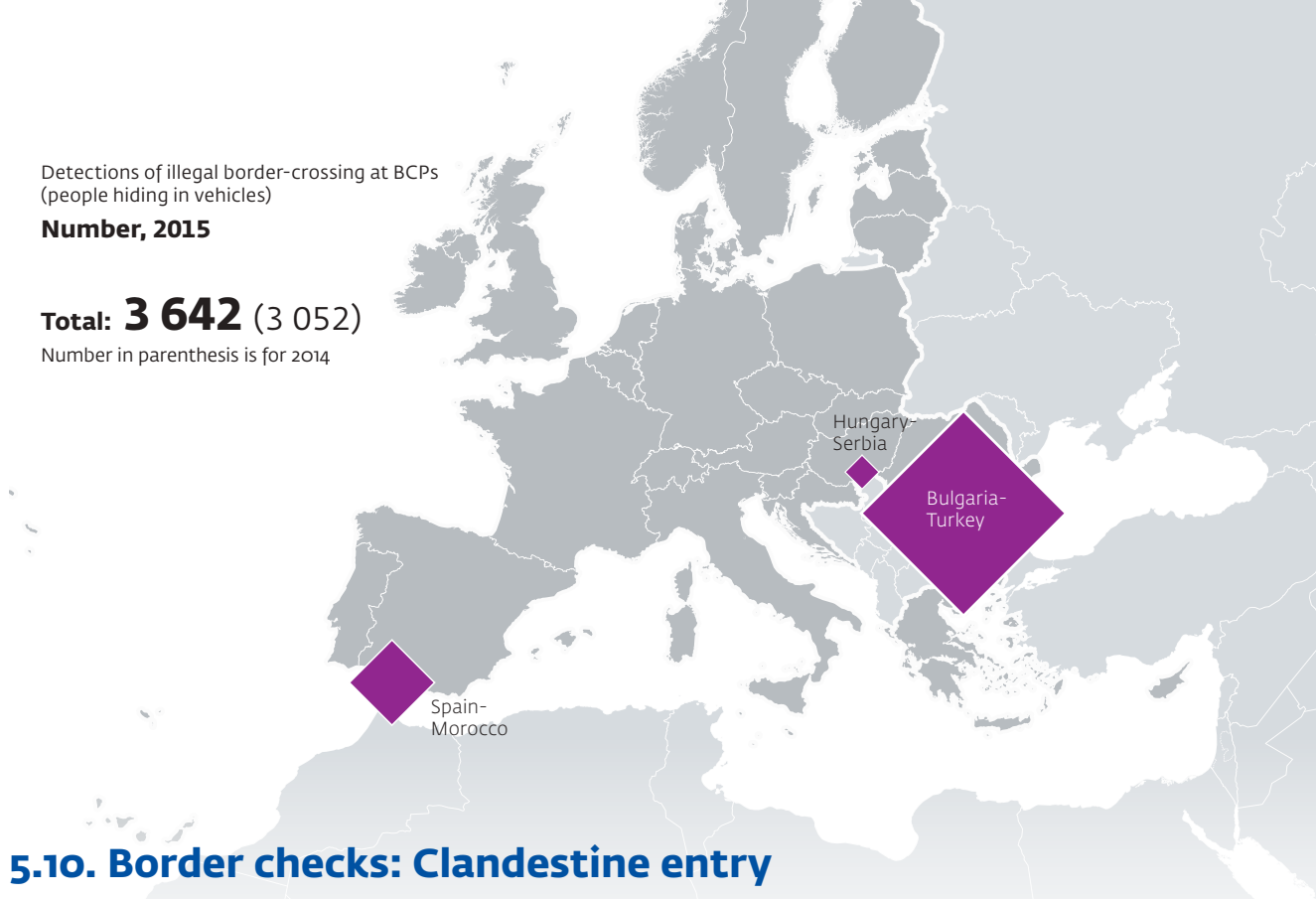1 *The document challenge II*, Frontex, October 2014

Detections of illegal border-crossing at BCPs
(people hiding in vehicles)
**Number, 2015**

**Total: 3 642** (3 052)
Number in parenthesis is for 2014

Hungary-
Serbia

Bulgaria-
Turkey

Spain-
Morocco

# 5.10. Border checks: Clandestine entry

In 2015, the number of detections of clandestine entries at BCPs during border checks (people hiding in vehicles to avoid border control) remained much lower than the number of detections between BCPs during surveillance activities (detections of illegal border-crossing). However, this indicator is not uniformly reported by Member States, and for example Greece reports clandestine entries as part of detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs, while other Member States do not report any detections although police information reveals such cases.

**The total number of detections (3 642) thus underestimates the actual situation.**

This is further confirmed by the large number of detections of clandestine entry reported at the internal border (for example between France and the UK), as well as by police reports of in land detections. The tragic discovery of 71 dead bodies in a lorry that travelled from Hungary to Austria in August 2015 illustrates that **this dangerous** *modus operandi* **is often used by smugglers, regardless of its deadly consequences.**

Most of detections were reported at the land border between Bulgaria and Turkey, through which a large share of the migratory flow transiting Turkey is channelled. The Bulgarian BCPs most affected by clandestine entries were Kapi-

tan Andreevo and Lesovo. This pressure is a consequence of intensified surveillance along the Bulgarian and Greek land borders with Turkey. Although no data are collected, it is also likely that the use of this *modus operandi* also increased at the Greek land border, as demonstrated by detections of migrants on the motorway soon after the border.

While checking all vehicles would introduce undue waiting time for many bona fide travellers, targeted checks on some vehicles meeting specific risk criteria would make it possible to determine with more precision the extent of the phenomenon and better prevent it. Oper-

ational risk analysis techniques, similar to those used by customs or for checking lorries at the border between Schengen Member States and the UK, could be adapted to the specificities of the external borders. This is an area of work for border-control authorities that would greatly benefit from gathering and pooling intelligence at EU level. This would result in preventing clandestine entries and reduce the number of casualties.



Figure 5. **Hungarian police officer sets a sensor of a heart beat detector and a flexible camera to search irregular migrants during control of a lorry at the border between Hungary and Serbia near Röszke**

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**People hiding in vehicles is a growing concern of the road transport industry**

People hiding in vehicles is a growing concern for the road transport industry, including threats to drivers, breaking into trucks and damaging loads, with inevitable economic consequences. The problem is particularly acute at specific locations near border areas, when slowly moving or stationary trucks provide an opportunity for migrants to get in. The border between France and the UK, near Dover and Calais, is a vivid example of this phenomenon.

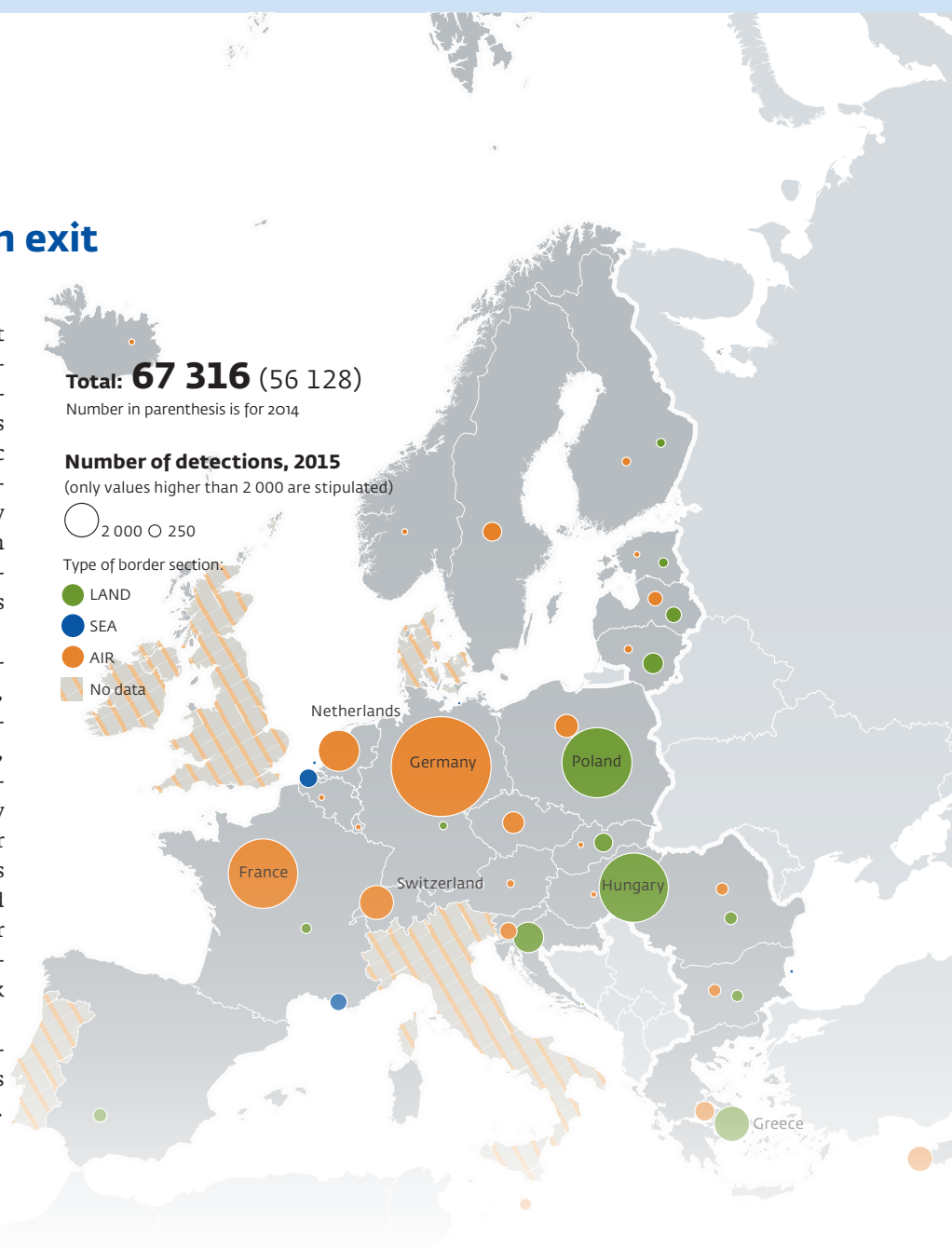Some private sector solutions are being introduced, for example drivers buy $CO_2$ detectors which can send an SMS or e-mail alert in case of the level of the sat-uration changes. Some Member States have developed a code of conduct, which sets out how drivers should secure their vehicles, but improvements and a uni-form EU approach on this issue are still needed.

# 5.11. Illegal stayers on exit

Border-control authorities also carry out checks on exit. This offers an opportunity to record the exit of potentially over-staying third-country nationals, holders of a Schengen visa or simply a biometric passport in the case of travellers benefiting from visa liberalisation who may stay up to three months within a six-month period. In 2015, border-control authorities reported a total of 67 316 detections of illegal stayers on exit.

Most illegal stayers on exit were reported by Germany at the air border, mostly nationals from Kosovo* and Turkey returning home. At the EU level, the largest number of detections was related to Ukrainians, mostly reported by Poland. The comparatively low number of illegal border-crossings of Ukrainians indicates that most of them had entered the EU legally and then overstayed, or had entered the EU abusing legal channels, such as fraudulently obtained work or business visas.

In most cases, following a detection on exit, the person continues to travel and is recorded in the SIS.
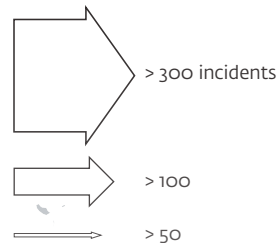
**Total: 67 316** (56 128)
Number in parenthesis is for 2014

**Number of detections, 2015**
(only values higher than 2 000 are stipulated)

◯ 2 000  ○ 250

Type of border section:
- 🟢 LAND
- 🔵 SEA
- 🟠 AIR
- No data

**Smuggling of**

 Cannabis

 Excise goods

 Heroin

 Stolen vehicles

 Weapons

**Number of incidents in 2015**

> 300 incidents

> 100

> 50

# 5.12. Cross-border crime

Frontex promotes European border management with a special focus on irregular migration flows. Applying the concept of Integrated Border Management, it additionally supports Member States in combating organised crime at the external borders, including the smuggling of goods and trafficking in human beings.

## Smuggling of illicit drugs

### Cannabis from the Western Balkans and North Africa

According to the EMCDDA European Drug Report 2014[1], 80% of drug seizures in Europe were of cannabis, Morocco being the main provider although its production is in decline. Spain reported around two thirds of the total quantity of cannabis resin seized in Europe, but routes are diversifying, and other EU countries are increasingly used as entry points. In June 2015, two vessels of the Italian Guardia di Finanza and Frontex assets intercepted a Turkish flagged cargo ship sailing from Morocco and seized 12 tonnes of cannabis resin worth more than EUR 40 million. Ten crew members, all Turkish nationals, were

[1]   EMCDDA (2014), *European Drug Report: Trends and Developments*, p. 17.

arrested on a tip received from the Turkish police.

Regarding herbal cannabis, Turkey has been seizing larger quantities of herbal cannabis than all EU countries combined. At the same time, Greece has reported large increases, pointing to an emerging route in the Eastern Mediterranean.

### Cocaine from South America

According to EMCDDA's calculations cocaine is the third most intensively smuggled drug in Europe. However, seizures, increasing from the mid-nineties till 2007, have been declining since 2009. Most of the cocaine is seized by Spain, but trafficking routes to Europe are diversifying and seizures were recently made in ports of the Eastern Mediterranean, Baltic and Black Sea. Cocaine is moreover smuggled on pleasure boats and through container shipments, where it is often hidden under legitimate goods and by air freight.

At the air borders, organised criminal networks often apply a 'shotgun approach', consisting in 'flooding' aeroplanes with dozens of couriers per flight in the expectation that a sufficient number of them would slip through controls. As shown by examples from the Neth-

erlands, some countermeasures have proven successful, such as the establishment of joint customs and border guard teams to identify couriers through pre-flight checks and risk profiles. However, stricter controls on a set of high-risk air routes tended to lead to the use of alternative routes.

### Heroin from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan

According to the EMCDDA, more than five tonnes of heroin were seized in the EU in 2014 (the latest year for which data are available), following a continuous decrease in heroin use in Europe over the past decade. Most of the heroin consumed in the EU is produced in Afghanistan and transported along a variety of routes, including through Turkey and Balkan countries, the Northern route, which heads through Central Asia and the Russian Federation, and increasingly the Southern route via the Persian Gulf by sea, sometimes including passages through Africa.

The latest annual statistics on seizures showed that more heroin was seized in Turkey than in all EU Member States combined, and the gap in large seizures within most countries of South-Eastern Europe points to a substantial num-