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# Routes in flux: is EU migration policy working?

## Falling arrivals, shifting routes, and the EU's new migration strategy

Irregular migration into the European Union (EU) has fallen dramatically for two years running. [UNHCR data](#) on entries from Africa, Türkiye and Lebanon show that the annual total number fell to 199,400 in 2024 and in 2025 to 155,100, a reduction of 43% since 2023. After years of continued border securitisation and an increasing number of migration deals with countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean and on the Atlantic, [EU President Ursula von der Leyen](#) has said that “the figures speak for themselves”.

However, this picture of the success of deterrence – and in particular, the way that the politicians who benefit from these declines paint it – fails to fully capture realities on the ground. An analysis of trends over the past decade shows that the number of irregular entries fluctuates dramatically year by year, and that irregular migration pathways shift rapidly – time and again, [smugglers adapt their operations to circumvent counter-smuggling operations](#) – making it difficult to extrapolate long-term trends from recent developments. Further, the EU’s narrative that it is disrupting the supply of irregular migration through highly securitised approaches targeting established smuggling routes masks its failure to reduce the continued demand among prospective refugees and migrants to attempt the journey.

In this paper we explore the complexity and nuance behind the headline-grabbing numbers on irregular arrivals to the EU. Building on MMC’s work on smuggling dynamics, we examine how recent counter-smuggling and externalisation policies have shaped migration patterns across key routes in reality, and how they have often displaced movement and risk rather than addressed underlying drivers. The aim is not to dismiss the impact of recent EU measures, but to explore their efficacy and sustainability, and to highlight the human, political and ethical costs embedded in the current approach, including the fact that a decline in registered fatalities does not necessarily indicate a decline in the dangers faced by people on the move. The article then considers the EU’s emerging emphasis on “demand-side” responses, including legal pathways such as labour mobility initiatives, and assesses the extent to which these developments represent a meaningful shift beyond reactive deterrence.

## The limits of success: fault lines in the EU’s current approach to managing migration

Taken in isolation, the recent figures on irregular arrivals present a seemingly unambiguous narrative of declining irregular migration into Europe, thereby implicitly validating the partnership model and the increasingly restrictive policies that the EU has promoted to curb movement across its borders. Even the justification that its policies to prevent irregular migration help save lives – a position that has often seemed disingenuous, given the

EU’s low prioritisation of search and rescue operations – appears to be borne out by recent data: [according to UNHCR](#), deaths and disappearances along these routes more than halved between 2023 and 2025. These numbers do not tell the whole story, however, and conceal several challenges that undermine this narrative and threaten the long-term sustainability of this approach to migration.

### Arrivals are down, but only on some routes, and could rise again

Given the [fluctuations in numbers](#) over the past decade, the recent reduction should not be overstated. The fall follows a continuous rise in arrivals from 96,8000 in 2020 to 275,200 in 2023, despite an EU policy of deterrence and restrictions being in place. Moreover, 2024 and 2025 may signal a decrease from 2023, but they still represent the second and fourth highest years, respectively, between 2018 and 2025. This suggests a more complicated relationship between restrictive policies and mixed migration trends than the deterrence-based narrative suggests.

The problem in focusing on recent developments, without taking broader trends into account, is that it risks presenting an overly simplified narrative of success when arrivals are falling. Irregular routes into the EU remain very much active. While border closures, interceptions at sea and mass expulsions may succeed, at least temporarily, in reducing migration along one route, other routes have (re)emerged or surged alongside this, such as the recent [uptick in movement from Libya to Crete and from Algeria to the Balearics](#): even in 2025, despite a significant fall in numbers overall, entries on some routes increased (see Box 1 on the next page).

At the same time, this narrative based on numbers also sets a flawed indicator both for the EU's policy success and its failure: any rise in numbers, however short-term, and regardless of underlying dynamics, will prompt a

perception that the EU is losing control of migration, reinforcing a reactive cycle of ever more restrictive deterrence measures that undermines the space for a long-term strategy.

### **Box 1: Shifting migration trends by route, 2018–25**

[Arrivals in Italy along the Central Mediterranean route \(CMR\)](#) fell sharply between 2023 and 2024, dropping from 157,651 to 66,617. In 2025, numbers remained largely stable at 66,316, almost the same level as in 2024. Overall, this represents a 58% decrease compared to 2023, while the difference between 2024 and 2025 amounts to a decline of less than 1%. Zooming out and comparing numbers between 2019 (11,471) and 2025, the picture is starkly different, with the total on this route increasing by six times in as many years.

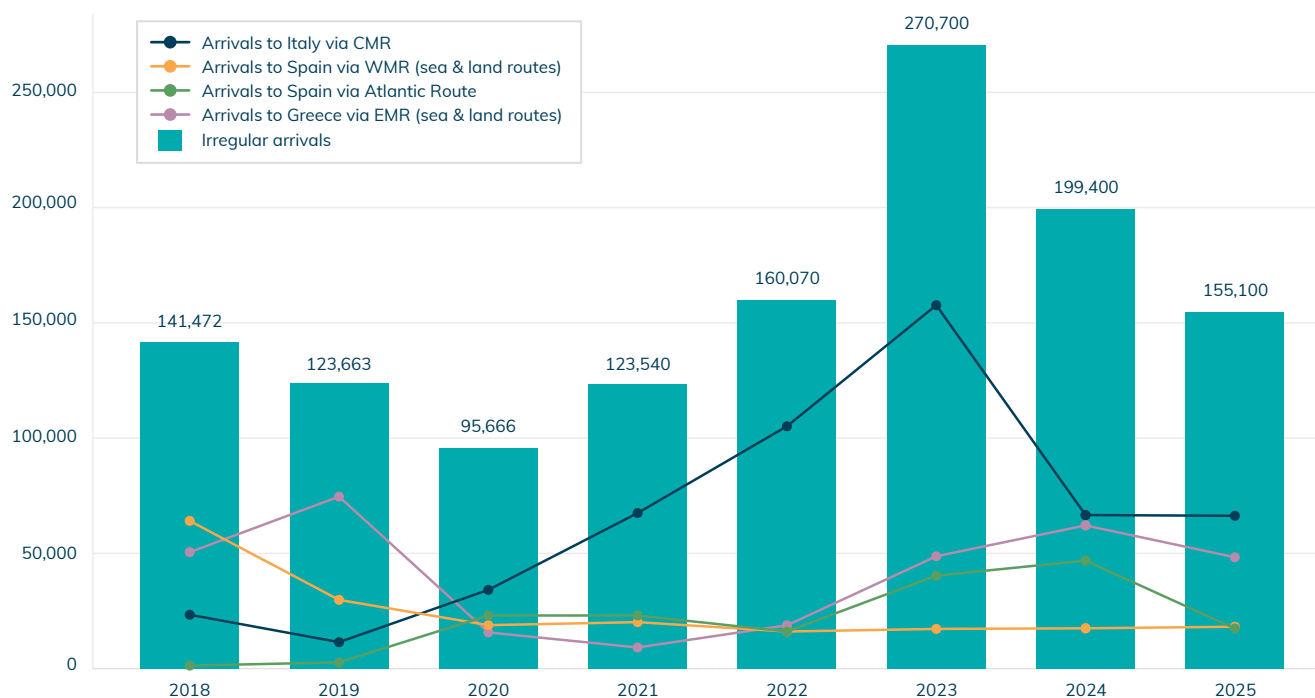
[Arrivals in Greece, along the Eastern Mediterranean route \(EMR\)](#), in contrast to Italy, jumped by 27% between 2023 (48,721) and 2024 (62,119), only to fall by 23% in 2025 to 48,795 – equal to the total in 2023. Depending on which figures are selected, the picture is of a significant recent increase, decrease, or static situation. Comparing 2025 to 2018, rather than 2023, also produces a very different narrative: a fall of under 4% over seven years.

[The number of arrivals in Cyprus](#), while more modest than other routes, has become a significant point of discussion given the small population. The recent reduction appears to be a clearer trend than elsewhere, with just 2,442 land and sea arrivals in 2025 compared to 6,097 in 2024 and 10,920 in 2023.

[As for entries into Spain along the Atlantic route](#) to the Canary Islands, the drop in 2025 was the most precipitous of any route, falling by 62% between 2024 (46,843) and 2025 (17,941). However, this is just one year-on-year fall after consistent increases: from 2018 to 2024, 2022 was the only year to register a fall in arrivals compared to the year before. This means that despite a drop since 2024, the total in 2025 was more than 13 times higher than 2018.

[Irregular migration into Spain along the Western Mediterranean route \(WMR\)](#), saw an increase between 2023 and 2025 period, of around 7% to 18,453. The total was almost identical between 2023 (17,208) and 2024 (17,475), with most of the increase occurring in 2025. As with the other routes, the picture can appear very different depending on what year is chosen for comparison: for instance, the total in 2025 was less than a third (30%) of arrivals in 2018 (64,078). It also fails to show that the recent increase is attributable to the emergence of two previously marginal sub-routes in the Western Mediterranean (Ceuta and the Balearics), and not to the previously most travelled routes (to Andalusia and the Eastern coast of the Spanish mainland).

**Figure 1. Total arrivals to Europe via the CMR, WMR, EMR and Atlantic Route**



Total number of arrivals to Europe via the CMR, WMR, EMR and Atlantic Route. Data from UNHCR's Operational Data Portal on Europe Sea Arrivals.

## Demand for irregular journeys remains as strong as ever

Despite policy changes over recent decades, demand for irregular migration has stubbornly persisted. The assumption that refugees and migrants will calibrate their decision-making in response to harsher migration policies fails to recognise the strength of drivers, such as economic insecurity, conflict and violence. Insecurity, conflict and systematic crackdown on human rights, as well as tensions and economic decline continue to push people to migrate in search of safety and opportunity elsewhere. In states along Europe's southern border, [authoritarianism is increasing](#) and governance reforms have not materialised. Security has deteriorated in the [Sahel and Horn of Africa](#), generating new and growing complex emergencies. And, despite positive developments in Syria, [growing tension and conflicts in the Middle East](#) leave many displaced and unable to return to their homes. The nationality profiles among

arrivals, for example the increase in arrivals of Sudanese nationals in [2025 compared to 2024](#), reflect countries of origin where conflict and insecurity are prevalent.

The evidence that irregular arrivals to Europe often come from countries affected by conflict and insecurity highlights that these structural drivers of migration remain largely unaffected by deterrence-focused policy measures. As long as conflict and insecurity continue to cause displacement, and major donors, including the US and others, [reduce their humanitarian aid budgets and overall funding for refugee support](#), and safe and accessible legal pathways remain scarce, demand for irregular migration towards Europe is likely to persist. Europe needs to have a more realistic understanding of the impact that it does and can have on migrant decision-making.

## Smuggling networks are thriving as restrictions intensify

Ever-greater restrictions on migration are regularly justified by the EU as a means to “break the business model” of smugglers. In practice, [smuggling organisations have proven to be remarkably creative and entrepreneurial](#), adapting quickly to changing conditions in different countries, and [far more resilient](#) than the deterrence-based narrative would suggest.

This is in large part because smugglers are operating on the ground in real time, and have the capacity to respond swiftly to rising or frustrated demand: if restrictions prevent people from using an established route, [smugglers are incentivised to develop new routes](#). Smugglers will continue to use a route and modus operandi until they see it is not working; even after interceptions increase, for as long as refugees and migrants still seek their services, they will continue to offer the route, and they can even demand higher fees. This indicates that smugglers’

activities depend mainly [on changes in demand and in the local operating environment](#).

By contrast, the EU and member states are locked into much slower and reactive decision-making processes, which tend to enter crisis mode when new routes emerge. Beside the inherent constraints they face as political entities compared to criminal businesses, the predominant emphasis on supply-led solutions – the disruption of illicit service providers – rather than addressing the drivers of the demand to migrate irregularly – means that [the impact on smuggling markets is likely to be short-lived](#). Indeed, instead of repressing illicit activity, EU funding channelled towards anti-smuggling efforts are feeding into a broader political economy creating heightened demand for more organised smuggling, and [where corrupt officials are acting in collusion with criminal organisations](#).

## Detected fatalities at sea are down, but people on the move continue to risk their lives

The EU’s longstanding justification that preventing irregular migration would help save lives – a position that has often seemed disingenuous, given the steady attrition of search and rescue operations in recent years – appears to be borne out by the data. Along the four routes discussed in this article, the number of deaths and disappearances in 2025 was 1,953, [according to UNHCR](#) – roughly half what it was two years earlier (4,110 in 2023). These figures represent a very significant and welcome reduction in fatalities.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the journey itself remains perilous. The lower number of deaths along most routes between 2023 and 2025 may appear to signal improved safety, it does not mean that the risk of dying has diminished. The decline has been driven largely by efforts to prevent arrivals in Europe through intensified surveillance, detentions, and expulsions from countries of transit. This may be displacing risk rather than reducing it, forcing people onto more dangerous, circuitous routes, leaving many stranded in increasingly precarious conditions earlier along the journey, and leading to deaths that are not recorded.

This is especially evident along the Atlantic route. A major crackdown in Mauritania beginning in early 2025 dramatically reduced the number of departures from the country, but also resulted in the arbitrary arrest and deportation of tens of thousands of vulnerable migrants. This includes many Malians who have been forcibly displaced back into Mali despite the ongoing security crisis there. In addition to the threat this poses to those

forcibly returned, the crackdown in Mauritania has driven the creation of new migratory routes further south, with reports of boats embarking from as far away as [Guinea-Conakry](#). As IOM’s Regional Director for West and Central Africa [stated in November 2025](#), these developments are “lengthening and worsening the journey” for those who do manage to attempt it.

These [longer or more protracted routes](#) may mean that more deaths are going undetected. The discovery of a number of vessels originating from West Africa in the Caribbean, including [a boat with 19 bodies on board](#) that washed up off the coast of St Kitts and Nevis in January 2025, draw attention to the many refugees and migrants who attempt the journey and disappear without ever being found, or their fates recorded. Similarly, the dangers of land-based journeys through the Sahara draw little attention and are not generally factored into discussions around the human cost of the EU’s migration policy, and in contrast to deaths in the Mediterranean, the number of deaths and disappearances [in the Sahara](#) remained fairly consistent during the 2023–2025 period.

While the apparent fall in migrant fatalities is very welcome, containment should not be mistaken for protection: [2026 has been so far one of the deadliest](#) in a decade - with limited options for safe and legal migration, as well as an increasingly hostile environment for those attempting to travel irregularly, refugees and migrants still face considerable risks at every stage of their journey.

## The current migration partnership model may be unsustainable

Much of the EU's externalisation policy is built on the ever-expanding array of partnerships it has brokered with governments in North Africa, West Africa, and the Middle East. These agreements, typically involving significant financial disbursements in return for strengthening border security and interception at sea, have contributed to reduced departures toward Europe. However, they are also becoming logistically unsustainable, and ethically unacceptable. Their true costs extend far beyond the hundreds of millions of euros that have been invested in them.

The partnership-based externalisation model has been [criticised as exploitative and rooted in colonial power imbalances](#) between Europe and the Global South, the Global South is asserting its power within them. The EU and its member states growing dependence on these agreements subjects them to the will of their partners: countries such as Morocco, Libya and Tunisia are increasingly able to use [the threat of irregular migration to pressure Europe](#) to demand funding.

These agreements are justified as mechanisms that return order and stability to migration management, but their implementation is often chaotic and harmful. The mass round-ups of refugees and migrants [in Mauritania](#), or the [Libyan's coastguard's attack](#) on a search and rescue ship in August 2025 using an EU-funded naval vessel, are all examples of the toll that the implementation of these agreements is taking on people on the move.

The abuses carried out in the name of these partnerships undermine the credibility of the EU, and have elicited widespread condemnation and protest, from civil society as well as from governments. Often brokered with authoritarian or semi-authoritarian states, the partnerships prioritise migration control over protection, fuelling abuses on the ground while contradicting the EU's stated commitment to human rights and democratic reform. The recently renewed MoU with Libya and the 2023 deal with Tunisia have generated considerable tensions both within the EU and in its diplomatic relationships. In West Africa, Senegalese and Malian officials have publicly criticised Mauritania's mass round-ups and deportations, [describing the operations as 'xenophobic'](#). Widely [criticised as fragile, short-term arrangements](#) driven by political expediency, these partnerships risk [granting repressive governments greater legitimacy](#) and exerting a corrosive effect on the EU's own political fabric.

The model, however, is self-perpetuating, and as long as the EU pursues this strategy it will likely have to agree new partnerships. As smuggling networks evolve and expand, there will need to be more agreements, which will be more costly and may be even more challenging in the increasingly combustible geopolitical context. As the emergence of the route from [eastern Libya to Crete demonstrates](#), curbing irregular migration via this means is akin to fire-fighting: as soon as one migratory flashpoint is temporarily extinguished, another one may emerge elsewhere.

# ‘Safe and regular alternatives’: essential for sustainable migration management

It is important that the recent fall in irregular arrivals in Europe is contextualised within the recent history of fluctuations in irregular migration, as well as in a more qualitative understanding of migration dynamics. As we have noted, lauding deterrence as a panacea for irregular migration based on a two-year fall in arrivals is a risky strategy, and ignores the social, political, and economic costs associated with the approach.

Demand to reach Europe persists, as does irregular migration to Europe, despite the EU’s deterrence policy and a recent fall in numbers. Curbing irregular migration over the longer term requires a move away from short-term and reactive supply-side policies to measures that engage with the needs and realities of refugees and migrants themselves, and that facilitate safe and orderly migration as an alternative to smuggling. Viable, genuinely accessible routes, which offer meaningful alternatives to irregular migration, are needed.

On a positive note, there have recently been some signs, as numbers have fallen, of a greater willingness to recognise the need and respond with “demand-side” solutions. In [her speech in November 2025](#), Von der Leyen stressed that “we must open more safe pathways, legal pathways, to Europe. We must create more bridges between our continents”.

The EU is moving forward with the creation of an [EU Talent Pool](#), a digital platform designed to match non-EU jobseekers with labour shortages across participating member states, offering a more transparent route for labour migration and potentially reducing incentives for irregular movement. The EU’s Pact on Migration and Asylum includes provisions for a [Talent Partnership model](#) aimed at expanding labour migration pathways through cooperation with partner countries. Since 2023, the EU has launched bilateral Talent Partnerships with

countries including Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, seeking to facilitate mobility across a range of skill levels while supporting vocational training and the recognition of qualifications. These initiatives pursue a dual purpose: they address labour gaps in EU labour markets and reinforce broader migration management objectives, including cooperation on return and readmission. The [Commission’s newly announced five-year migration strategy](#) also places renewed emphasis on labour and talent mobility to boost competitiveness, signalling that legal pathways are increasingly being framed as a core pillar of migration governance rather than a marginal add-on. Alongside the new migration strategy, the EU has also adopted its [first-ever EU Visa Strategy](#), presented in January 2026 as a framework for a more “strategic” visa policy capable of responding to growing mobility, regional instability and geopolitical competition.

All these initiatives seems to signal a gradual shift towards treating legal pathways as a more central component of EU migration governance. The promising elements of these initiatives, although still in their infancy, lie in their stated emphasis on creating pathways across skill levels, alongside support for professional and vocational training and the recognition and validation of qualifications. At the same time, they are framed primarily through the lens of EU interests - whether in terms of labour shortages and “talent acquisition” or security and risk management - reinforcing a model in which access to mobility remains closely conditioned on control, leverage, and broader geopolitical objectives.

It is too early to tell whether these initiatives will be able to support a reduction in irregular migration, but with EU migration policy in transition and the Pact on Migration and Asylum imminent, we offer some key considerations of what any new initiatives would need.

## Funding to match the political commitment to safe and regular migration

The EU has recently announced its proposed budget for 2028–34, with funding for border and migration management set [to triple to €81 billion](#). While this demonstrates that migration is not an under-resourced policy priority, the key question is the distribution of the funding: how much will continue to support securitisation and externalisation efforts, and how much will be invested in building effective, accessible, and sustainable safe and regular alternatives to irregular movement?

Tracking and aggregating the EU's various regional

and bilateral funding flows to partner countries is challenging. However, past breakdowns of allocations suggest that labour migration has historically been a relatively marginal concern. For instance, analysis of the [€238 million committed to Morocco](#) through the EU Trust Fund between 2015 and 2021 found that only 7% was directed towards support for labour migration. Recent years have seen the rollout of new initiatives aimed at boosting labour mobility, but such programmes must be adequately funded and scaled if legal pathways are to become credible alternatives rather than symbolic add-ons.

## Addressing exploitation risks in labour mobility schemes

Expanding labour mobility schemes without robust safeguards risks producing new forms of vulnerability, and if regular migration channels become, in practice, more expensive, opaque, or even less safe than irregular options, they risk failing to serve as genuine alternatives — and may instead push people back towards smugglers and informal routes. [Concerns have been raised](#) about the limited mechanisms currently in place to prevent exploitation within Talent Partnerships, particularly where recruitment processes rely on intermediaries

or poorly regulated labour brokers. Without strong oversight, transparency, and accessible complaints mechanisms, there is a risk that unscrupulous actors may profit at the expense of migrant workers, undermining both protection standards and the credibility of these pathways. Ensuring that safe and regular migration is not only available but also genuinely safe therefore requires enforceable labour protections, monitoring frameworks, and accountability measures across all stages of recruitment and employment.

## Targeting migration demand rather than transit cooperation

So far, the EU's labour mobility initiatives have rarely been framed as stand-alone protection or mobility measures. Instead, they are increasingly embedded within wider migration-control deals, which means that access to legal pathways is implicitly conditioned on cooperation over returns, readmission, and border enforcement — a familiar [“carrot and stick” approach](#). It risks reinforcing the externalisation model rather than fundamentally shifting away from it, and offers migration pathways as a transactional incentive for states that help contain migration flows before they reach Europe, rather than a genuine alternative for those who need it most. Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Algeria, Mali, Senegal, Guinea and Afghanistan are all among the [top nationalities](#) to have arrived in Europe via the main irregular routes in 2025, but none of these countries are beneficiaries of these schemes. In contrast, Bangladesh, Egypt and Morocco are both among this group and included in existing Talent Partnerships. This is primarily because they are also significant transit countries, and are engaged in these partnership agreements in exchange for preventing onward movement from their territories towards Europe. Should legal pathways remain part of the externalisation model, it is unlikely that they will evolve towards genuinely cooperative and rights-based mobility arrangements. In late 2025, the EU presented plans for a new €42 billion

[“Pact for the Mediterranean.”](#) which did signal a different model. Building on the [1995 Barcelona Declaration](#), it suggests a move towards a broader regional approach with Southern neighbours. Alongside job creation, education, energy, and economic integration, the proposed framework would also address security and migration management. According to the EU, it is based on principles of [“co-ownership, co-creation and joint responsibility.”](#) However, [critics argue](#) that it remains thin in concrete measures and continues to prioritise EU geopolitical interests. Time will tell whether it meaningfully expands accessible and rights-based mobility, or whether it primarily repackages longstanding strategies of containment and migration control.

Some promising bilateral examples also appear more directly oriented towards meeting unmet mobility needs. Spain, for instance, has rolled out [circular migration agreements](#) with Senegal, Mauritania and The Gambia, with some reported success.

## Labour migration cannot be a substitute for asylum and humanitarian assistance

Notwithstanding the benefits and untapped potential of labour migration agreements, these are not necessarily workable solutions for those who have been displaced by conflict or political instability and need asylum. At present, there is no mechanism in place within the European asylum system comparable to [the Safe Mobility Offices](#) introduced in the Americas by the US administration under former President Joe Biden, offering an alternative to irregular migration journeys to those seeking protection in Europe. Instead, the EU relies on sporadic measures such as humanitarian corridors, and refugee resettlement and humanitarian admission. Numbers, however, are dwindling. Only 15,230 people are currently scheduled for admission in 2026 and 2027 – just [a quarter of the 61,000](#) the EU had committed to welcoming over 2024-2025. For many of those fleeing violence in Mali or Sudan, for instance, the only available way to seek asylum in Europe remains through irregular migration.

At the same time, the [EU has recently approved tougher asylum rules](#), including fast-track rejections of asylum claims and expanded use of “safe country” designations that will allow member states to deport or reject applications from people based on transit through or origin in those countries, raising concerns that the right to seek asylum may be further constrained just as labour pathways seems to be gaining greater emphasis.

These trends raise serious questions about priorities. As mentioned above, the EU has proposed more than tripling its budget for migration and border management to €81 billion. This amounts to more than seven times the EU’s entire humanitarian aid budget – targeted at people in need of protection, and often on the move – under the current framework. Will the EU demonstrate comparable ambition for its humanitarian assistance, or will support for displacement crises continue to lag, even as needs grow? In Sudan, for instance, [only 39% of the funding requested](#) through OCHA was met, despite the crisis being widely described as [among the most severe globally](#). It makes little sense many EU member states are reducing aid disbursements and undermining the capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies that are driving displacement, just as EU expenditure on migration control is set to soar.

# Conclusion: a sustainable model incorporating safe and regular pathways

Migration remains an intensely political issue. Policymakers face pressure to appear tough, especially amid rightward political shifts across Europe. Yet hailing the recent decline in irregular arrivals as a success of deterrence is short-sighted and risky, because the underlying drivers of displacement and mobility remain largely unchanged. The current approach may deliver temporary reductions along certain routes, but it comes at a high financial, human and ethical cost, and has limited sustainability.

At the same time as celebrating the success of deterrence, we seem to be witnessing signs of a shift in the policy landscape – at least on paper – beyond a purely deterrence-led logic. The [2026 European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy](#) - alongside the EU's first-ever Visa Strategy - explicitly combines prevention of irregular migration with a commitment to protection, closer cooperation with partner countries, and a stronger emphasis on labour and talent mobility and legal pathways. Labour and talent mobility feature among its core priorities and it makes links to the Talent Partnerships and the EU Talent Pool, signalling that regular migration options are increasingly being framed as part of the mainstream policy toolkit rather than a marginal add-on.

The Strategy continues, however, to demonstrate the central tension running through current EU policy: even where “safe and regular” pathways are referenced, they are frequently embedded within an architecture dominated by migration diplomacy, external border control, and cooperation on returns and readmission. The Strategy risks keeping legal pathways conditioned on transactional deals with third countries, framed as incentives to secure containment cooperation, rather than offering truly accessible alternatives aligned with the needs and realities of refugees and migrants.

If regular channels remain limited in scale, difficult to access, or effectively conditioned on geopolitical cooperation, they will do little to reduce reliance on smugglers and may instead reproduce the same externalisation dynamics under a different label. Smuggling networks will continue to adapt to the restrictions that are imposed. As long as demand for migration persists and viable legal options remain scarce, suppliers will innovate to meet that demand. Enforcement remains important: targeting violent smuggling networks, trafficking, and those responsible for aggravated abuse and loss of life remains essential. But a strategy centred primarily on securitisation will continue to displace routes rather than sustainably reduce irregular movement.

A more credible way forward requires that the elements now increasingly present in EU policy rhetoric - legal pathways, labour mobility, resettlement and humanitarian admission, and whole-of-route engagement - are realised, that they are funded, scaled-up, made accessible, and given proper oversight. This means expanding regular routes beyond narrow pilot schemes, ensuring recruitment and labour mobility channels are protected from exploitation and predatory intermediaries, and ensuring that protection is available for people displaced by insecurity or conflict and who cannot realistically benefit from labour schemes. It also means matching spending priorities with stated commitments: if budgets for migration and border management grow dramatically, humanitarian assistance and protection mechanisms cannot be allowed to stagnate as displacement crises intensify.

Ultimately, the test is not whether irregular arrivals fall for a year or two, but whether Europe can shift from reactive containment towards a durable, human rights-based approach that reduces harm, upholds protection obligations, and offers realistic alternatives to dangerous journeys without outsourcing responsibility to partners through increasingly dubious, fragile and costly external control arrangements.



MMC is a knowledge centre engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programming on mixed migration. MMC has regional hubs in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, with a global team headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and based in several countries worldwide.

MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based mixed migration responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

MMC is part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). While its institutional link to DRC ensures MMC's work is grounded in operational reality, it acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration for policy makers, practitioners, journalists, and the broader humanitarian sector.

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