

Illegal border crossings into EU up 61% in first two months of 2022

2022-03-23

The number of illegal border crossings at EU's external borders in the first two months of 2022 rose 61% from a year ago to nearly 27 000*, according to preliminary calculations.

In the month of February, there were 11 850 detections of illegal border crossings, about a quarter more than in the same month of 2021.

The total does not include the people who have been fleeing Ukraine since the country was invaded by Russian forces in late February.

Western Balkan Route (+98% January-February 2022)

The highest number of illegal crossings was registered on the Western Balkan route, totalling 11 700 in January and February. This was double the figure from the same period of last year.

In February, nearly 5 700 irregular migrants were detected on this route.

Syrians and Afghanis were the two main nationalities registered on this route in the first two months of 2022.

Western African Route (+131%)

The second most active migratory route into the EU was the Western African Route, which leads to Spain's Canary Islands. There, more than 5 400 illegal crossings have been detected so far this year, more than double from a year ago.

In February, which had not usually seen large numbers of arrivals due to winter weather conditions, the number of irregular migrants reaching the Canary Islands rose almost 8-fold to around 2 300.

Moroccans accounted for more than half of the arrivals on this route, followed by nationals of Guinea and Senegal.

Eastern Mediterranean (+138%)

The number of illegal border crossings detected in the Eastern Mediterranean Route also more than doubled to 3 500. Cyprus accounted for over 2 700 detections.

In February, there were more than 1500 irregular migrants registered on this route.

Nationals of Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria and Bangladesh accounted for most of the detections on this route.

Central Mediterranean Route (-12%)

Meanwhile, the Central Mediterranean Route saw a small drop in the number of illegal crossings in the first two months of the year to 4500, with nearly 1500 irregular migrants detected in February.

The main nationalities on this route were Bangladeshi, Egyptian and Tunisian.

Western Mediterranean Route (+8%)

The Western Mediterranean Route was the least active sea route in the first two months of 2022, registering a rise of 8% to less than 1 800 illegal crossings. Of these, slightly more than 700 were recorded in February.

Algerians and Moroccans accounted for nearly all of the migrants registered on this route.

Eastern Land Border Route

There were some 340 illegal border crossings detected on this route in the first two months of the year, nearly three times the total from a year ago. The figure does not include the people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

The Channel (+115%)

More than 3 100 irregular migrants were detected seeking to cross the Channel towards the UK so far this year, double the number from a year ago.

In February, poor weather curtailed the number of departures to some 600.

**The figure includes other less active migratory routes not mentioned in this press release. The final figures may be higher due to delayed reporting.*

Note: The preliminary data presented in this statement refer to the number of detections of irregular border-crossing at the external borders of the European Union. The same person may attempt to cross the border several times in different locations at the external border.

NUMBER OF ILLEGAL BORDER-CROSSINGS JAN-FEB 2021/2022

Route Name



Total number
of incidents

Percentage change
from last year

Western
African

5 418
131%

Western
Mediterranean

1 648
10%

Exits towards the UK

3 107
115%

Central
Mediterranean

4 498
-12%

Eastern Land Border

150
108%

Western
Balkan

11 723
98%

Eastern Mediterranean (to

3 587
138%

Eastern
Mediterranean
(only Cyprus)

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