

Migratory situation in October: Persisting pressure on Eastern Border

2021-11-22

The number of illegal border crossings at EU's external borders in the first ten months of 2021 rose nearly 70% to 160 000* and 45% when compared with 2019, according to preliminary calculations.

In October, there were close to 22 800 illegal border crossings on Europe's main migratory routes, 30% more than in 2020 when pandemic-related border restrictions were in place. It is also 18% more compared with October 2019 and the pre-COVID situation.

The most significant increase was reported on the Eastern, Western Balkan and Central Mediterranean routes and in Cyprus. The number of detections dropped in the Western Mediterranean.

Eastern Borders

On the EU's Eastern frontier, the total number of detections of illegal border crossings this year amounted to close to 8 000, fifteen times more than in 2020. Main nationalities include migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

The EU border with Belarus remained the most affected by the migration flow in 2021. After reaching historical high of arrivals in July (climbing over 3 200), migrant arrivals on the Eastern land route decreased in the following months dropping to over 600 in October 2021.

While high level frictions between the EU and the Belarussian regime continue, the EU Member States neighbouring Belarus have all significantly strengthened their border-control measures under exceptional states of emergency. The enhanced controls prevented large-scale flows from reaching the EU from Belarus in October.

Western Balkan route

So far this year, 48 500 illegal border crossings have been reported on the Western Balkans

route. Only in October, more than 9 000 illegal crossings were detected, an increase of 140% compared with last year (3816) and an increase of 810% compared with October 2019 (1003).

That means that in October, 40% of illegal crossings into the EU occurred via the Western Balkans.

Most migrants on this route came from Syria, Afghanistan and Morocco.

Central Mediterranean route

Between January and October, European authorities reported 55 000 illegal border crossings on the Central Mediterranean route. In October alone, 6 240 illegal crossings were reported, 85% more than in the previous year under COVID-related restrictions and 186% more than in 2019.

A significant development to in October is the growing number of migrants registered in Italy arriving directly from Turkey by sea.

The main nationalities on this route included Tunisians, Bangladeshi and Egyptians. Egyptians have become the third main nationality registered in the Central Mediterranean, reported mainly from Libya.

Western Mediterranean route

In the first 10 months of this year, there were 16 390 illegal border crossings reported on the Western Mediterranean route, about 14% more than last year and 23% less as compared to 2019.

In October, 1614 illegal crossings were detected, down 42% from last year.

Algerians accounted for 63% of illegal crossings on this route, followed by Moroccans (29%).

Western African

On the Western African route, the total number of detections this year stood at 16 710, up 46%

from 2020 and an increase of 1020% compared with 2019 In October, 3515 illegal crossings were detected, 34% fewer than in the same month last year.

Most migrants on this route came from Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa.

Eastern Mediterranean

Between January and October, 15 770 illegal crossings were registered on the Eastern Mediterranean route, down 11% from 2020 and 76% from 2019. In October, 2585 illegal crossings were detected, 40% more than in the same month last year. The overall number of illegal crossings on this route remains below last year's, with the strong increase in arrivals in Cyprus partially balancing the significant decrease in arrivals in the Eastern Aegean.

Most migrants on this route came from Syria, Turkey and Congo (Kinshasa).

NUMBER OF ILLEGAL BORDER-CROSSINGS JAN-OCT 2020/2021

Route Name



Total number
of incidents

Percentage change
from last year

2020

Western
African

16 710
46%

Western
Mediterranean

16 390
14%

Central
Mediterranean

55 000
91%

Eastern
Land Border

8 000
1444%

Western
Balkan

48 500
140%

Eastern
Mediterranean

15 770
-11%

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FRONTIER