

Migration: COVID-19 continues to cause hardship for migrants and deprives children of access to education



Situation at the border

Migrants and asylum seekers continue to face additional obstacles when trying to enter the EU. Ports in many countries remain closed, many restrictions are still in place and some countries require all third-country nationals to self-quarantine or provide a negative COVID-19 test upon arrival – a requirement many people seeking safety in the EU cannot fulfil. The number of allegations of pushbacks at borders, in contravention with the EU Schengen rules, have increased.

A new Hungarian law provides for the immediate removal from the territory of any person who crosses the Hungarian border unlawfully and indicates an intent to seek asylum. Duly mandated international and regional bodies will determine the compatibility of these provisions with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the EU asylum rules and international refugee law.

Asylum procedure and residence permits

Coronavirus measures led to a 90 % decline in asylum applications in April 2020, the lowest rate since 2008. Asylum procedures are gradually resuming in many countries but challenges persist. Access to information remains problematic in many countries.

Several countries (e.g. Croatia, Greece, Italy France, Hungary) allow certain third-country nationals to remain legally in the country until the end of the pandemic.

Some countries (Italy, Poland, Spain) introduce temporary work permits to third-country nationals working in agricultural, care or hospitality sectors.

Situation in reception centres

Restrictions and quarantines in reception centres are often stricter than coronavirus restrictions for the general population.

Many new arrivals are not registered at all or with a delay. Access to legal help is limited.

In many countries, people who were supposed to leave the reception centres can stay until the pandemic is over. In others, unsuccessful asylum applicants or even recognised refugees have become homeless.

Child protection

Because of the pandemic, many asylum-seeking children cannot access education. Many centres are missing online learning tools or stable WI-FI connection, which children could access.

Detention and return

Authorities in many countries released detainees from pre-removal detention. In addition, most removals are suspended due to the coronavirus travel restrictions.

Background:

The latest migration quarterly bulletin covers the period between 1 April and 30 June 2020. Moreover, the first section of the report covers developments relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

FRA has been regularly collecting data on migration since September 2015.

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