

MIGRATION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: Cyprus Report

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p. 6-7

Increase in Asylum Applications and Refugee Population

Cyprus has the highest number of refugees per capita in the EU. Asylum applications peaked at 22,182 in 2022, fell to 10,662 in 2023 and reached 4,899 by mid-2024. The top five countries of origin are Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Afghanistan and Nigeria.

p. 10-11

Stricter Immigration Policies and Rising Deportations

Cyprus has intensified migration controls with an accelerated asylum procedure and higher deportation rates. In 2023, Cyprus had the highest return rate in the EU, deporting 9,193 individuals. The government has also reinforced border security, installing barriers along the Green Line and increasing surveillance technology.

p. 5-6

Geopolitical Tensions and Economic Vulnerabilities

Cyprus' strategic EU role is challenged by its division, natural gas disputes with Turkey, and regional instability. While its economic recovery since 2016 has made it attractive for migrants and digital nomads, its small size and import dependency make it vulnerable to external shocks.

p. 7-8, 11-12

Ongoing Human Rights Violations and Migrant Exploitation

Cyprus is facing criticism from the international community for its policies regarding asylum seekers, including a 2024 European Court of Human Rights ruling against the country. Reports also highlight instances of exploitation, particularly in the domains of domestic work, agriculture, and human trafficking. The government's anti-trafficking efforts have been criticised for their inadequacy in providing adequate support to victims.

For more information, visit our website: cyprus.fes.de



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