

## Significant rise in irregular border crossings in 2023, highest since 2016

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The number of irregular border crossings at the EU's external border in 2023 reached a total of approximately 380 000, driven by a rise in arrivals via the Mediterranean region, according to preliminary calculations by Frontex. This marks the highest level since 2016 and constitutes a 17% increase from the figures in 2022, indicating a consistent upward trend over the past three years.

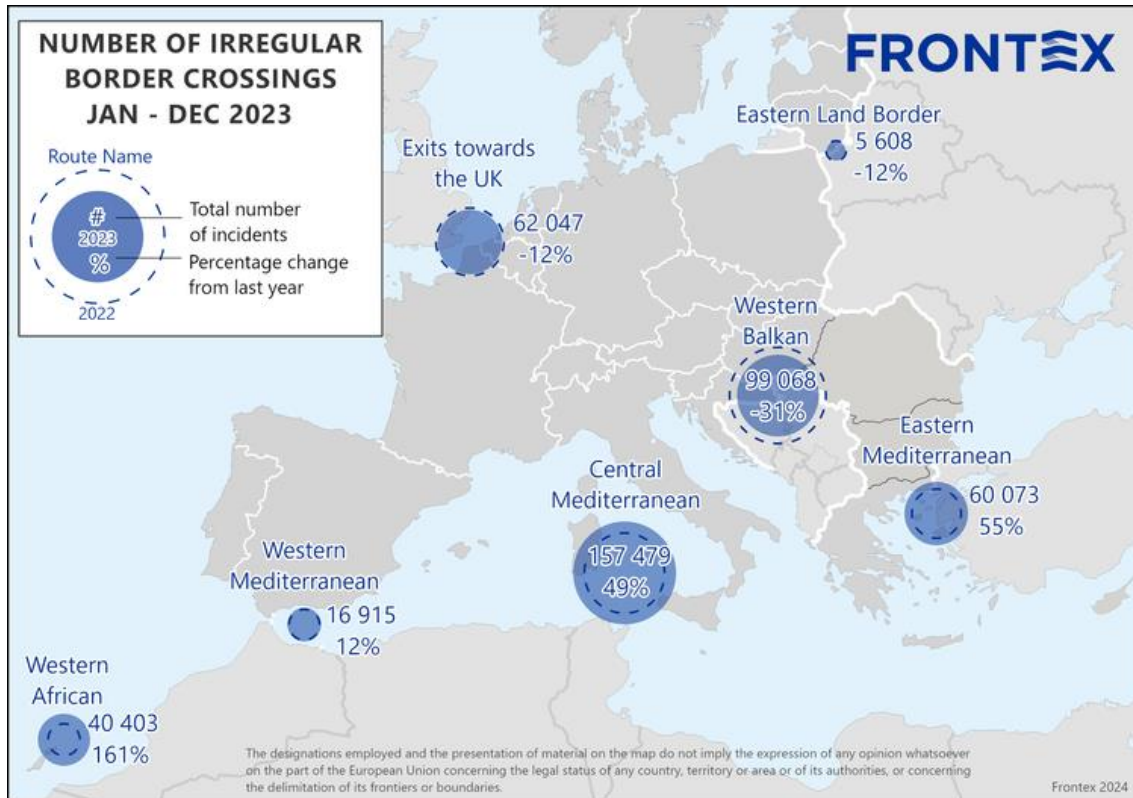
The Central Mediterranean was the most active migratory route into the EU, accounting for two out of every five irregular crossings (41%) in 2023, followed by the Western Balkans (26%) and Eastern Mediterranean (16%).

Syrians accounted for over 100 000 irregular crossings last year, the highest number among all nationalities. They were followed by Guineans and Afghans. These three top nationalities accounted for over a third of all detections.

The statistical data shows that women accounted for 10% of the total number of all irregular crossings last year, and children accounted for another 10%.

*"The numbers presented today show the evolving challenges we face in managing the EU's external borders," said Frontex Executive Director Hans Leijten. "We remain committed to ensuring the security and integrity of the EU's borders. It's equally crucial to address the humanitarian aspects of migration. These figures represent not just statistics but real people."*

Frontex currently has 2 500 EU border guard officers and other staff taking part in its joint operations at Europe's borders, supporting EU member states and third countries in managing migratory flows and contributing to preventing and detecting cross-border crime, such as migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and terrorism.



## Key Insights:

- Highest increases on the Western African, Eastern Mediterranean and Central Mediterranean routes.
- The Central Mediterranean route experienced a 50% increase in irregular border crossings compared to 2022, totalling around 158 000.
- The Eastern Mediterranean route continued its post-pandemic upward trend with around 60 000 detections.
- The Western African route marked its highest annual figure to date, with over 40 000 incidents.
- Syrians, Guineans, and Afghans were the most prevalent nationalities, comprising 37% of all irregular border crossings.
- A noticeable increase in African migrants, particularly from West Africa, who now represent nearly half (47%) of all detected migrants.
- The number of unaccompanied minors rose by 28% from the previous year, totalling over 20 000 in 2023.
- The Channel saw over 62 000 attempts and successful crossings, a decrease of 12% from the previous year.

**Note:** The figures reported are preliminary and refer to the number of detections of irregular border crossings at the EU's external borders. It is important to note that the same individual may be counted multiple times if they attempt to cross the border at different locations.

\*\*This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

| Route                 | December 2023 | 2023    | 2023/2022 | Top Nationalities (2023)        |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Central Mediterranean | 4742          | 157 479 | +49%      | Guinea, Tunisia, Cote d'Ivoire  |
| Western Balkans       | 1091          | 99 068  | -31%      | Syria, Türkiye, Afghanistan     |
| Eastern Mediterranean | 6290          | 60 073  | +55%      | Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine** |
| Western Africa        | 4973          | 40 403  | +161%     | Senegal, Morocco, Mali          |
| Western Mediterranean | 1818          | 16 915  | +12%      | Morocco, Algeria, Syria         |
| Eastern Land Border   | 94            | 5608    | -12%      | Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria     |
| Exits towards the UK  | 3308          | 62 047  | -12%      | Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria        |