EU HEADLINES

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN DEBATES

Making moves on migration

In the past week, several governments have either tried or succeeded in cracking down on migrants and asylum seekers, while the European Commission looks at ways to draw skilled labour to its Member States. We feature reporting from Italy, Spain, Finland, and France.

European Headlines is a weekly newsletter from the European Movement International highlighting media perspectives from across Europe. Click here to subscribe.



Safety not guaranteed

Earlier this week, the United Kingdom's Supreme Court ruled the government's plan for asylum seekers to be illegal, according to *Il Post*. The plan, originating in 2022 and carried through several Conservative governments, would have refugees landing in the UK deported to Rwanda while awaiting a decision from the British government. The policy has been criticised for its cost and, more importantly, for violating the "right of non-refoulement" – that is, the Geneva Convention's rule that refugees shall not be sent to a country in which they would be in danger. The first flight to Rwanda in service of this policy was blocked last June by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the eleventh hour, and the plan has seen several appeals to its legality. The main argument is that Rwanda is not a "safe country", which has been upheld by both the ECHR and now the UK Supreme Court. Sunak is now urging the UK Parliament to declare the country to be safe in an "emergency legislation" process, and furthermore, the prime minister referred to the EHCR as a "foreign court" and vowed to stem its intervention in the future – another idea that may be difficult to enforce.

Read the full article



Pandering to the right

The French government presented a new immigration law last week, reports *El Mundo*. The text introduces measures to facilitate the expulsion of foreigners who have committed crimes, pose a serious threat to France or do not respect the values of the country. These values, according to the text, are personal freedom, freedom of expression and conscience, equality between men and women, human dignity and respect for the symbols of the French Republic. The text stirred controversy in the French Senate, as it originally contained measures appealing both to the left and right political sides. However, recent changes to the draft give more concessions to the right-wing family. The most contentious example is the stripping of free healthcare for undocumented migrants who have settled in France. Other articles of the draft make expulsions easier, the conditions for family reunification tougher and the asylum application more complicated. Immigrant and anti-racism associations have written a letter to Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne to criticise this unprecedented restriction of rights. The text will now be debated in the French Parliament and might come into force beginning of next year.

Read the full article



Russian trolling

Tonight, Finland will close four border crossings with Russia in order to direct asylum seekers to two specific crossing locations, a decision that will remain in effect until at least February 18, 2024. According to *Kauppalehti*, the move comes after roughly 140 asylum seekers, mainly from Africa and the Middle East, turned up at the eastern border in the past few days without necessary entry documents. Normally, Russian authorities would not allow travellers to the border without proper documentation, but evidence suggests that Russia is deliberately trying to destabilise or, at the very least, inconvenience the Finns by allowing the migrants in question through. The Finnish government has recognised that the number is still moderate, but is concerned about escalation. The main purpose is to streamline asylum applications and centralise them into two border crossings, and the decision can be lifted as things develop – the government is "closely monitoring" the situation. Another article clarifies that Finland will respect international law and continue to accept applications for asylum even if the person in question crossed illegally.

Read the full article



It's a match!

Europe is facing labour shortages, especially of qualified workers, that impede its economic growth, reports *Les Echos*. At present, some 3% of European jobs are vacant, a ratio that is twice as high as in 2012. To palliate this scarcity, the EU is now looking to attract foreign talents: the European Commission launched a "Talent Pool" initiative this week, which consists of a platform where jobs and jobs seekers from the entire world can match. Participation from Member States will be on a voluntary basis. In addition, the Commission recommends facilitating the recognition of qualifications acquired outside the EU as it could improve qualified migration. At the moment, non-European candidates are fearing the "brain waste" syndrome, i.e. the under-utilisation of their skills. "Europe is engaged in a global race for talent, just as it is for critical raw materials and energy", stressed Margaritis Schinas, the European Commissioner responsible for migration. Another Commissioner also underlined this as a useful way to prevent irregular flows of population to Europe. The EU has still not finalised the migration and asylum pact proposed by the Commission in 2020 – a final agreement is expected by the first quarter of 2024.

Read the full article

Copyright © The European Movement International, all rights reserved.
The European Movement International
Place du Luxembourg 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

This is a weekly newsletter from the European Movement International.
Click here to subscribe.