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CURRENT MIGRATION TRENDS IN POLAND

Asylum seekers in:

2024

HALINA NIEĆ LEGAL AID CENTER

Current Migration Trends in Poland:

Asylum seekers in 2024

Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center

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This report includes data provided by the Border Guard for the year 2024 in response to a request for public information, presented in comparison with 2023 based on statistical data from the Border Guard, as well as internal data from the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center (HNLAC).

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Key Findings from the Report:

1. In 2024, there was a **sharp increase in the number of people applying for international protection in Poland**. The last time a similar situation occurred was in 2021. However, the scale differs: in 2021, 7,000 people applied for international protection, while **in 2024, this number rose to 14,500**.
2. Citizens of **Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia** continue to constitute the largest group of applicants. However, the growth dynamics are not uniform. Compared to 2023, **Ukrainian citizens submitted more than twice as many applications**, Belarusian citizens filed the same number, while applications from Russian citizens decreased by half.
3. Among applicants from outside Europe, the most significant numbers come from **East Africa and the Middle East**.
4. **Irregular crossings of the Polish-Belarusian border are rising sharply**, while crossings on the so-called Slovak route, which was frequently used by Syrian citizens, have significantly declined, aligning with the broader trend of **decreasing migration via the Balkans**.
5. The highest approval rate for applications is among nationals from war-torn countries. However, an exception is Russia, where the approval rate stands at 23%.

Findings Based on Monthly Reports from the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center:

1. Data from HNLAC aligns with statistics from the Border Guard and Frontex regarding both the national composition of those applying for international protection in Poland and changes in the number of applicants throughout the year.

- a. **Irregular border crossings on the Polish-Belarusian route peak in the spring and summer months**, with the highest numbers recorded between April and September.
 - b. During these months, the number of new HNLAC beneficiaries **was significantly higher compared to autumn and winter**. This period saw a noticeable increase in beneficiaries from the Horn of Africa and Sudan.
 - c. **The trend shifted in autumn** when fewer individuals from these countries sought assistance from HNLAC or were found in the monitored centers.
 - d. For most of these individuals, **Poland was merely a transit country**. These nationalities exhibit the highest rate of discontinued proceedings.
2. There was also a slight increase, particularly in the second half of the year, in cases from **Western and Central Africa (mainly from Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Cameroon)**. Additionally, at the turn of 2024 and 2025, individuals from Central Africa, who are still in Belarus, sought assistance, suggesting that if the eastern migration route becomes active again around April, the national composition of migrants will change. **The surge in migration from the Horn of Africa in 2024 appears to have been a seasonal phenomenon**.
 3. The proportion of cases from other migration routes remains unchanged (**Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, India, and Pakistan dominate among HNLAC cases**).

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1. Number of Protection Applications Submitted in Poland

In 2024, the Border Guard received **11,460 applications for international protection, covering 14,524 individuals**. In comparison, in 2023, the Border Guard received 6,316 applications covering 8,843 individuals. This represents an **81% increase in applications and a 64% increase in the number of affected individuals**.

The number of applications and affected individuals rose significantly compared to previous years, marking the highest year-over-year increase since the beginning of the migration crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border. While the number of applications grows each year, the increase is not uniform. Over the past years, the trend has been as follows:

Year	Number of Applications (% Change from Previous Year)	Number of Individuals (% Change from Previous Year)
2020	1,532 (-16%)	2,650 (-30%)
2021	4,298 (+181%)	7,252 (+174%)
2022	6,247 (+45%)	9,240 (+27%)
2023	6,316 (+1%)	8,843 (-4%)
2024	11,460 (+81%)	14,524 (+64%)

2. Nationality of Foreign Nationals Applying for International Protection

1. Border Guard Statistics¹

In 2024, the largest numbers of international protection applications were submitted by citizens of:

Rank	Nationality	Number of Applicants (2024) (% Change from 2023)	Number of Applicants (2023)
1	Ukraine	5,912 (+256%)	1,662
2	Belarus	3,506 (-3%)	3,618
3	Russia	797 (-48%)	1,527
4	Ethiopia	500 (+1329%)	35
5	Eritrea	491 (+1344%)	34
6	Somalia	476 (+782%)	54
7	Syria	408 (+255%)	115
8	Tajikistan	321 (+118%)	147
9	Sudan	220 (+1058%)	19
10	Afghanistan	220 (+49%)	148

2. Office for Foreigners Statistics²³

Country of origin of the applicant:	No of foreigners in relation to whom proceedings on international protection were carried out by in 2024:	No of foreigners who received a positive decision in the 1st instance (granting refugee status or supplementary protection) in 2024	No of foreigners whose proceedings were discontinued in 2024	Recognition rate (the average percentage of proceedings on international protection that result in a positive decision, disregarding the discontinued cases)
Ukraine	7 010	3 902	174	98%

¹ Statistical data provided by the Border Guard in response to a public information request.

² <https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/ochrona-miedzynarodowa-w-2024-r>

³ Statistical data provided by the Office for Foreigners in response to a public information request.

Belarus	3 938	2 589	82	94%
Russia	981	194	332	23%
Etiopia	554	29	350	100%
Eritrea	564	18	455	100%
Somalia	604	18	441	100%
Syria	516	21	391	88%
Tajikistan	342	26	158	41%
Sudan	241	4	172	100%
Afghanistan	275	59	199	95%
Palestine	21	9	3	100%
Yemen	224	17	154	94%
Mali	25	0	7	Lack of positive decisions, resulting in a 0% recognition rate
Iran	103	32	59	60%
Iraq	77	4	44	15%
Guinea	37	3	4	75%
Turkey	65	31	34	61%
Demokratic Republic of the Congo	19	1	12	10%

3. Conclusions

Last year, 7,000 foreigners met the conditions for being granted international protection. These were primarily citizens of: Ukraine – 3.9 thousand people, Belarus – 2.6 thousand people, and Russia – 0.2 thousand people.

Negative decisions were issued to 1.6 thousand foreigners. The largest groups among them were citizens of: Russia – 660 people, Belarus – 150 people, and India – 90 people.

Proceedings concerning 3.4 thousand people were discontinued. This mainly applied to citizens of: Eritrea – 460 people, Somalia – 440 people, and Syria – 390 people.

Citizens of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia consistently represent the largest group of applicants for international protection, despite the fact that the number of Russian citizens applying for protection halved in 2024.

The total number of applications has increased significantly compared to the previous year, and this applies to every country ranked 4th to 10th.

Most people applying for international protection in Poland wish to stay in the country. This is because the majority of applicants are **Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians.** Their cases overwhelmingly do not result in discontinued proceedings, which typically occur when a foreigner leaves Poland. Among other nationalities most frequently applying for international protection, the trend is reversed. This suggests that, generally, for non-European applicants, Poland is merely a transit country. These individuals, after submitting their applications (and usually being released from detention), leave Poland. This is particularly evident among **East African nationals, where the discontinuation rates are as follows: Ethiopia – 70%, Eritrea**

– 93%, Somalia – 93%, Sudan – 78%, as well as Syria and Afghanistan (96% and 90% discontinued proceedings, respectively).

It is also worth noting the correlation between countries where deportations are suspended and the recognition rate of applications for international protection from nationals of those countries. Positive decisions are issued in over 90% of cases. This percentage is often higher than the average recognition rate in the European Union, as demonstrated in section 4 of this report.

3. Migration Routes⁴

- **The Eastern Route**, covering a 6,000-kilometer land border of EU member states with Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation.

1. Frontex data:

In 2024, the number of irregular border crossings tripled, primarily along the borders with Ukraine and Belarus. This involved 17,000 people who entered the European Union via the Eastern Route.

2. Border Guard Data:

In the first half of 2024, the Polish Border Guard detained 1,581 foreigners who irregularly crossed the Polish-Belarusian border. In the same period the previous year, this number was just 360 people. This represents a **339% increase in irregular crossings of the Polish-Belarusian border**.

Among foreigners irregularly crossing the Polish-Belarusian border (from the Belarusian direction), as identified by the Border Guard, the dominant nationalities are as follows (data presented in a table, ranked from the highest to lowest number of foreigners among the ten most frequently detected nationalities):

Rank	1st half of 2024	1st half of 2023
1	Syria - 294	Afghanistan - 71
2	Somalia - 286	Syria - 50
3	Eritrea - 265	Belarus - 32
4	Ethiopia - 240	Somalia - 24
5	Yemen - 129	India - 22
6	Afghanistan - 109	Yemen - 19
7	Sudan - 76	Russia - 19
8	Iran - 38	Iraq - 18
9	India - 20	Iran - 18
10	Egypt - 16	Turkmenistan - 11

⁴ <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/irregular-border-crossings-into-eu-drop-sharply-in-2024-oqpweX>

In the first half of 2024, the Border Guard detained 22 foreigners who irregularly crossed the Polish-Slovak border. In the same period in 2023, this number was 134 people. This represents an 84% decrease in the number of third-country nationals irregularly entering Poland from Slovakia.

Among foreigners irregularly crossing the **Polish-Slovak border (from Slovakia)**, as identified by the Border Guard, the dominant nationalities are as follows (sorted by nationality in a table from the highest to lowest number of detected cases):

Rank	1st half of 2024	1st half of 2023
1	Syria - 1	Syria - 80
2	Ukraine – 6	Turkey - 29
3	Somalia – 1	Ukraine – 1
4	Eritrea – 2	Afghanistan - 2
5	Ethiopia – 1	Białoruś – 4
6	Georgia – 2	Russia – 1
7	Afghanistan – 2	Iraq – 4
8	Belarus – 2	Uzbekistan – 2
9	UK – 1	Moldova – 1
10	Bangladesh - 2	Vietnam – 6
11	Palestine - 1	Serbia – 2
12	Bosnia and Herzegovina - 1	Kyrgyzstan - 1
13	-	Argentina - 1

- **Other Migration Routes:**

New preliminary data from Frontex reveals a **significant 38% decrease in the number of irregular border crossings into the EU in 2024**, reaching the lowest level since 2021, when migration was still affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There were in total over **239,000 detected cases** last year.

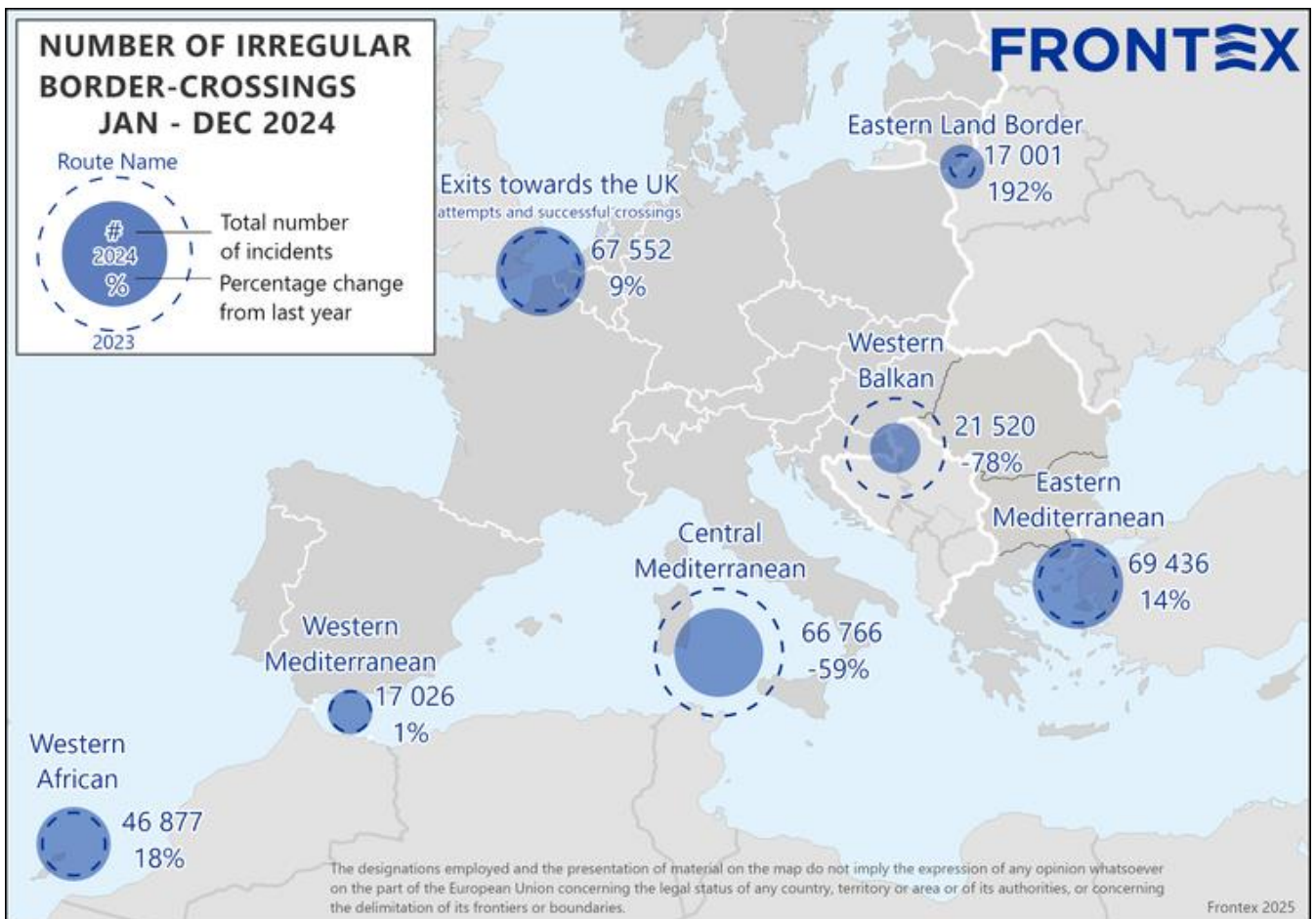
The decline in total migrant numbers was primarily driven by a **59% decrease in arrivals via the Central Mediterranean route** and a **78% drop in detections along the Western Balkan route**.

Not all routes exhibited the same trends, as migration patterns shifted across the continent. Key developments include:

- **Central Mediterranean Route:** Crossings dropped by **59%** due to significant restrictions on departures from Tunisia and Libya. Despite the sharp decline, this route still accounted for **approximately 67,000 crossings**, making it the second busiest among all routes.

- **Western Balkan Route:** A sharp **78% decline** followed intensified efforts by regional states to curb migration along this pathway.
- **Eastern Mediterranean Route:** The number of detections **increased by 14% to 69,400**, driven by the emergence of new corridors from eastern Libya. Most migrants arriving via this route originated from **Syria, Afghanistan, and Egypt**.
- **Western African Route:** The **Canary Islands saw an 18% increase** in arrivals, reaching nearly **47,000**, the highest number since Frontex began collecting data in 2009. This surge was largely driven by departures from **Mauritania**, despite a decline in migrant flows from other departure points.
- **English Channel:** The number of **detected attempts to cross into the United Kingdom slightly increased by 9%** compared to 2023.

All migration routes and trends are illustrated in the following graphics:



ROUTE	DECEMBER 2024	JAN-DEC 2024	JAN-DEC 2023/ JAN-DEC 2024	TOP NATIONALITIES (JAN-DEC 2024)
Western African	4 961	46 877	+18%	Mali, Senegal, Morocco
Eastern Mediterranean	4 411	69 436	+14%	Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt
Central Mediterranean	3 074	66 766	-59%	Bangladesh, Syria, Tunisia
Western Mediterranean	1 459	17 026	+1%	Algeria, Morocco, Mali
Western Balkan	813	21 520	-78%	Syria, Türkiye, Afghanistan
Eastern Land Border	385	17 001	+192%	Ukraine, Ethiopia, Somalia
Exits towards the UK	5 376	67 552	+9%	Afghanistan, Syria, Vietnam

4. Recognition Rate of International Protection Applications

The following table presents the countries with the **highest recognition rates for asylum applications in the EU** (based on Eurostat data for 2023, as more recent data is unavailable) **compared to Poland in 2024**. The number in parentheses represents the number of positive decisions, i.e., refugee status or subsidiary protection granted in the first instance:

EU: 2023	Poland: 2024
1. Syria (131,507) 94%	(21) 88%
2. Ukraine (10,092) 92%	(3902) 98%
3. Palestine (8,969) 87%	(9) 100%
4. Yemen (4,585) 84%	(17) 94%
5. Erytrea (11,811) 83%	(18) 100%
6. Mali (5,079) 72%	-
7. Somalia (14,089) 64%	(18) 100%
8. Afghanistan (88,510) 61%	(59) 95%
9. Iran (8,637) 46%	(32%) 60%
10. Iraq (21,206) 44%	(4) 15%
11. Russia (10,258) 33%	(194) 23%
12. Guinea (8,970) 31%	(3) 75%
13. Ivory Coast (8,096) 29%	-
14. Turkey (37,841) 25%	(31) 61%
15. Democratic Republic of the Congo (11,074) 25%	(1) 10%

5. Detention in Poland:

i. Detention statistics:

The following table presents the countries with the highest recognition rates for asylum applications in the EU (based on Eurostat data for 2023, as more recent data is unavailable) compared to Poland in 2024. The number in parentheses represents the number of positive decisions, i.e., refugee status or subsidiary protection granted in the first instance:

Guarded Center For Foreigners (SOC)	No of foreigners placed in detention	Average detention time
SOC in Lesznowola	411	55 days
SOC in Kętrzyn	339	118 days
SOC in Przemyśl	464	97 days
SOC in Krosno Odrzańskie*	138	94 days
SOC in Białystok	480	82 days
SOC in Biała Podlaska	446	76 days

**SOC in Krosno Odrzańskie has been closed for renovations in October 2024.*

ii. Detention of Minors in Poland:

Currently, only the **Guarded Center for Foreigners in Lesznowola** has a dedicated **unit for unaccompanied minors**. In 2024, **22 unaccompanied minors** were placed in the Lesznowola facility, where their **average stay was 20.14 days**. Additionally, cases were recorded where unaccompanied minors were initially placed in other guarded centers. This occurred because they were originally registered as **adults**. However, after **identification and age verification procedures** (including X-ray examinations), which confirmed their minor status, they were either **transferred to intervention care and educational facilities** or relocated to the **Lesznowola guarded center's minor unit**.

Guarded Center for Foreigners in Krosno Odrzańskie – two foreigners: one Egyptian national (stay: **46 days**, transferred to an educational care facility) and one **Iranian national** (stay: **84 days**, transferred to Lesznowola's minor unit).

Guarded Center for Foreigners in Kętrzyn – two Moroccan nationals, with an **average stay of 37 days**. Both were transferred to an educational care facility.

Guarded Center for Foreigners in Biała Podlaska – four foreigners (three Moroccan nationals and one Egyptian national). They were **immediately released** to intervention care and educational facilities, with an **average stay of 33 days**.

Guarded Center for Foreigners in Przemyśl – six foreigners (five Somali nationals and one Egyptian national), with an **average stay of 14 days**.

The tables below provide supporting sources that enabled the formulation of comprehensive and accurate conclusions regarding the **migration situation in 2024**, particularly **irregular migration from Belarus**. Currently available data from the **Polish Border Guard only covers the first three quarters of 2024** and confirms **migration and detention trends** among nationalities most frequently applying for protection in Poland.

Number of **Irregular Crossings** on the Eastern Route in 2024 (Frontex Data).⁵

Nationality	JAN20 24	FEB20 24	MAR20 24	APR20 24	MAY20 24	JUN20 24	JUL20 24	AUG20 24	SEP20 24	OCT20 24	NOV20 24	
Ukraine	340	495	623	985	1888	1609	2035	1536	1580	1663	1096	13850
Ethiopia	1	0	11	49	72	107	30	42	81	33	25	451
Eritrea	1	1	11	19	77	153	17	20	95	11	25	430
Somalia	0	0	11	60	141	72	33	13	69	16	22	437
Afghanistan	0	0	14	23	39	30	11	9	12	9	4	151
Belarus	8	4	4	1	4	4	3	3	6	2	2	41
Syria	4	0	17	20	155	100	10	12	39	8	2	367
Cameroon	0	0	1	2	2	7	1	10	1	3	1	28
Morocco	0	0	1	1	4	3	1	1	3	5	1	20
Israel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
India	0	1	0	14	2	4	0	0	0	5	0	26
Iraq	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	5	6	0	0	14
Burundi	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	2	0	2	0	11
Congo (Kinshasa)	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	5
Guinea	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	5	0	0	9
Colombia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Egypt	0	0	3	2	6	6	0	0	0	1	0	18

⁵ <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-map/>

Chad	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Central African Republic	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3
Guinea-Bissau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Comoros	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	5
Bangladesh	0	0	1	6	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	11
Kazakhstan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Algeria	0	0	1	0	2	6	1	0	3	2	0	15
Ghana	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Côte d'Ivoire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moldova	0	0	6	4	2	0	8	0	0	1	0	21
Georgia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Gambia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Benin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Cuba	0	0	0	2	5	0	3	2	0	0	0	12
Libya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mali	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	1	6	1	0	12
Iran	0	1	5	12	10	14	5	11	3	2	0	63
Congo (Brazzaville)	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	5
Pakistan	0	0	4	6	1	3	1	0	3	1	0	19
Nigeria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Russia	3	2	5	4	16	2	2	3	1	5	0	43
Turkmenistan	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2

Palestine^	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tajikistan	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Yemen	0	0	1	23	68	35	7	3	30	17	0	184
Sri Lanka	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Sudan	0	0	2	17	12	45	32	47	19	12	0	186
Togo	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Tunisia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Türkiye	0	2	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	8
Stateless	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
United States	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Unknown	29	0	0	4	4	2	17	6	6	1	0	69

HNLAC Data:

The following table presents the number of new beneficiaries of each nationality within the **TOP 10 most frequent applicants** for international protection in Poland for each month of **2024**.

Country of origin	No of new cases registered		Total No of new beneficiaries registered in a given month (all nationalities)																					
															January	February		March		April		May		June
Ukraine	3	79 (+8 starych)	6	43	2	43	1	57	5	71	2	76	2	51	2	57	1	43	2	37	4	21	1	29
Belarus	5		1		5		0		1		1		3		0		5		2		0		1	
Russia	0		0		6		0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0		1	
Ethiopia	4		2		1		4		1		2		4		2		1		2		2		1	
Eritrea	9		3		2		9		1		8		5		1		0		1		0		1	
Somalia	5		1		0		0		3		4		1		5		0		0		0		0	
Syria	3		0		0		2		1		2		1		0		2		1		0		3	
Tajikistan	1		0		0		0		2		0		0		1		0		1		0		0	
Sudan	0		0		0		0		1		1		3		1		0		3		0		0	
Afghanistan	3		5		2		4		1		2		2		1		0		2		1		0	

According to **monthly reports**, the total number of new beneficiaries in **2024** was **615**, broken down by nationality as follows:

Ukraine	32
Belarus	26
Russia	9
Ethiopia	39
Eritrea	40
Somalia	20
Syria	15
Tajikistan	5
Sudan	10
Afghanistan	22

Note: The above data is **underestimated** due to the lack of a centralized beneficiaries database until October **2024**. This changed with the **implementation of a unified database**, ensuring that **2025 data will be significantly more accurate** and will include all nationalities that approached us. However, the **trend dynamics remain valid**, excluding **Ukraine and Belarus**, as individuals from these countries **rarely stayed in centers or contacted us via email** (likely due to the **almost 100% recognition rate** for international protection applications).

Sources:

1. Atlas of Migration 2024 by Publications Office of the European Union
2. <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-map/>
3. <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/irregular-border-crossings-into-eu-drop-sharply-in-2024-oqpweX>
4. <https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/ochrona-miedzynarodowa-w-2024-r>
5. Statistical data provided by the Office for Foreigners in response to a public information request.
6. Statistical data provided by the Border Guard in response to a public information request
7. <https://www.strazgraniczna.pl/pl/granica/statystyki-sg/2206,Statystyki-SG.html>
8. HNLAC monthly reports