Migration news roundup 20 March 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

The University of Sheffield has launched a Ukrainian language conversion course, the first of its kind in the UK, for those who are already familiar with other Slavonic languages and wanting to learn at a faster pace. (Source: University of Sheffield)

A Syrian man who is training to be a solicitor in Manchester shares about his long and difficult journey to flee the conflict in his homeland and how his experiences of the UK asylum system have inspired him to pursue a career in law. (Source: Manchester World)

Read about some of the people with a refugee background who have achieved flourishing careers in the world of film and television and won awards at the Oscars. This includes 2023 Oscar winner Ke Huy Quan who was a child film-star and a child refugee originally from Vietnam. (Sources: International Rescue Committee, BBC)

UK borders and migration policy

Following budget week, here's an overview of announcements relating to migration, including additional language support for Ukrainians and business visitor changes. In light of review of the construction and hospitality sectors, five occupations in construction will be added to the shortage occupation list. A full

review of the list is expected later this year. (Sources: Free Movement, Migration Advisory Committee, BBC)

The Illegal Migration Bill passed its second reading in the House of Commons despite criticism from prominent Conservatives including former Prime Minister Teresa May and calls from moderate Tories to see the legal advice for the proposed laws. Amid backbench calls to leave the European Court of Human Rights, Justice Secretary Dominic Raab told a parliamentary committee that there is no risk of this 'in the short to medium term'. (Sources: BBC, iNews, Evening Standard)

Here is an overview of the detention provisions in the Bill, with the Home Secretary clarifying that unaccompanied children seeking asylum will be exempt from these. (Sources: Free Movement, the Guardian)

Outside Parliament, Gary Lineker was reinstated as Match of the Day presenter in the wake of the row prompted by his tweet criticising the bill, but critique of the proposed legislation continues. Former Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Sara Thornton has warned of the implications for trafficking survivors, while charities, businesses and other groups have voiced their opposition in an open letter to government, and a protest took place in Parliament Square. (Sources: BBC, Independent, the Guardian)

Relatedly, the UK is to step up its funding to France to tackle small boat crossings with nearly £500 million agreed to be paid

over three years. (Source: BBC)

Specific migrant groups

A group of ten people seeking asylum won a legal challenge giving them permission to challenge the Home Office plans to remove them to Rwanda. The Home Office previously won a High Court ruling that the scheme was lawful. This new challenge will consider whether the court properly considered whether Rwanda is a safe place for people seeking asylum. Some individuals are reportedly going 'underground' due to fears of removal to Rwanda. (Sources: the Guardian, Sky News)

A new report exploring the experiences of lesbian and bisexual women in the UK asylum system highlights the challenges faced by women such as around disclosure and reigniting trauma. (Source: Women for Refugee Women)

The Home Office published new details of a new fast-track process to speed up child asylum claims, similar to the streamlined asylum process recently announced for adult and family claims. The new process, which applies to those under 18 including unaccompanied children, involves a Preliminary Information Meeting with a view to possibly being able to make a decision without a substantive interview. Meanwhile, the British Association of Social Workers urged its members not to work for the new National Age Assessment Board for fears of political pressures influencing social workers' judgement and negatively impacting on child welfare. (Sources: Home Office, the Guardian)

Two pieces of research on Homes for Ukraine are out, reporting that the scheme has been broadly successful and could be a blueprint for a similar programme for other nationalities, with 81% of hosts reporting a positive experience of the scheme and 88% saying they would host again. A poll conducted as part of the research found 68% of Britons in general thought taking 150,000 refugees from Ukraine was a good thing. However, the issue with securing new accommodation remains, following the end of sponsorship arrangements. (Sources: Commonweal Housing, More in Common, the Guardian)

This article looks at the current environment for Afghan women refugees in the UK following International Women's Day. It discusses threats Afghan women face in their own country and their needs once they arrive to the UK, including integration, employment and mental health support. (Source: Refugee Council)

Hong Kong activists are disappointed with the assessment of China as not a national threat to the UK and call on the UK government to take a tougher stand. (Source: iNews)

There is a suspected rise in Roma children taken into care, including in Bradford, but the increase in cases observed by community workers may not show up in official data as many families are reluctant to identify themselves as Roma or gypsy. (Source: BBC)

Cohesion and integration

This article discusses a cycle where charity workers experience rising cases of abuse following comments about migration from ministers, charities step-up their vocal opposition which leads to a greater public backlash . In response, the chair of the Charity Commission confirmed the right of charities to campaign and speak on behalf of those in need, including refugees, but called on the sector to use a balanced approach to avoid alienating the public. (Sources: Open Democracy, Civil Society)

Police revealed a series of incidents under investigation where staff and residents at an asylum hotel in Knowsley have been attacked. The site was also the scene of a violent far-right protest last month. (Source: Sky News)

International news

The EU flew 60 Bangladeshi migrants to Dhaka, confirming its intention to step up returns for migrants and people seeking asylum. In contrast, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development says governments should create a legal status for people displaced due to climate change, as they currently have no rights nor legal migration options in Europe. (Source: InfoMigrants)

Outside Europe, these videos bring a spotlight on migration and discrimination experienced by migrants in African countries, in particular in Tunisia. Also in Africa, violent clashes between non-state armed groups and government forces have driven hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in Ethiopia around

100,000 Somalis have arrived in the past four weeks to escape clashes and insecurity. (Sources: InfoMigrants, UNHCR)

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