Migration news roundup 3 February 2025

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UK borders and migration policy

The government published its Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill. The Bill will create a new offence of endangering lives at sea and puts forward counterterror-style tactics to tackle small boat Channel crossings. It will also formally repeal the Safety of Rwanda Act 2024 and some provisions of the Illegal Migration Act 2023. Mixed reactions to the Bill from the refugee sector highlight missed opportunities, criminalization of vulnerable people, scepticism about how effective the plans will be, and a summing up that the Bill 'isn't … terrible.' Parliament will first debate the Bill on 10 February. (Sources: UK Parliament, Electronic Immigration Network)

New official projections suggest the UK population could pass 72 million by 2032, with faster growth in the coming decade than the previous one, almost wholly due to the anticipated net migration of nearly five million people. (Source: BBC)

Specific migrant groups

The government confirmed that Syrian asylum claims remain on hold until 'there is a clear basis on which to make decisions' and the stability of Syria is understood. (Source: Hansard)

On children and young people:

- this article describes the perspective of an unaccompanied asylum seeking child who was jailed for his involvement in a riot outside an asylum hotel last summer. A caseworker described his treatment as 'shocking' in a report by the Children's Commissioner for England about children who were charged in connection to the riots. (Sources: the Guardian, Children's Commissioner).
- a charity supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children has partnered with Durham Cricket, finding ways to support young Afghans by building on their love of playing cricket. (Source: Durham Cricket)

The charity Settled has highlighted to government that some Ukrainian parents are using unofficial routes to bring their children to the UK after sudden rule changes by the previous government preventing them from sponsoring family members to join them here. The Home Office said it will take action to resolve issues caused by the rule change. (Source: Independent)

A grant scheme has been launched for refugee film makers to create stories focused on the experience of displaced people. Actor Cate Blanchett is leading the scheme as goodwill ambassador for UNHCR. Winners will be announced at the Cannes Film Festival in May. (Source: the Guardian)

In case you missed it, a recent study explored the mental health consequences of the Windrush Scandal, highlighting complex trauma, and how the scandal resulted in fracturing of all spheres of life. The authors recommend addressing systemic marginalisation and exclusion. (Source: EIN)

The proposal for a ‘Scottish Graduate Visa’ by the Scottish government was rejected by the UK government. (Source: ST network)

The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC) published her 2024-2026 strategic plan focused on children, women and girls, UK nationals, and people affected by recent immigration legislation – she observes that provisions in the Illegal Migration Act have made victims fearful to come forward. (Source: IASC)

Seasonal horticultural workers from overseas are taking their employer to a tribunal over claims including unfair dismissal, unlawful deduction of wages, discrimination and harassment. Workers recently staged a protest outside a Home Office building. (Source: the Guardian)

Cohesion and integration

A briefing on the attitudes of the public towards immigration according to polling data finds that immigration views had been softening since the Brexit referendum until the most recent data in 2023. UK views of immigration and immigrants still tend to be positive compared to our European neighbours. (Source: Migration Observatory)

The Big Issue 'Changemakers' of 2025 include those working with refugees and asylum seekers. Organisations spotlighted include a football club, a student action group, and a recruitment platform connecting refugees with businesses. (Source: The Big Issue)

International news

In the USA, suspension of foreign aid includes federal funding to the refugee resettlement sector, causing concern that tens of thousands of newly resettled refugees may lose essential support, while many Afghan nationals who had permission to resettle to the US from Albania have been left in uncertainty. President Trump has also ordered a 30,000-bed migrant detention facility to be built in Guantanamo Bay, a decision condemned by Cuba. (Sources: Independent, InfoMigrants, BBC)

In Europe, Italy has resumed operation of asylum processing centres in Albania, sending 49 people who were intercepted in international waters. Ahead of imminent elections in Germany, the opposition leader is trying to quickly change asylum laws to facilitate deportations, and appears willing to work with the far right party AfD to do so. (Sources: Independent, the Guardian)

Stories that inspired us this week

A documentary has been released on Anita Lasker, the last survivor of the Auschwitz Women's Orchestra. It also includes stories told by Roma women who survived, alongside interpretations of the music they wrote. (Source: BBC, 90 minutes)

We'd like to share two stories about young Syrian men in the UK:

- Maher Fattouh, who lost his sight after a bomb explosion when he was crossing Lebanon 10 years ago, shared his story during his graduation at Bristol University. (Source: BBC)
- Ahmad Zaitoun is receiving positive support from the local community for starting a street food business in Amble's Town Square. He's following in his late father's footsteps, who had the same business in Syria. (Source: Northumberland Gazette)

Contact us about research

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