Migration news roundup 16 December 2024

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Stories that inspired us this week

Conversation Over Borders, a UK refugee support charity, has launched a Christmas poster campaign to send messages of solidarity to people seeking asylum, as they are aware of the impacts of the recent riots on their mental wellbeing. (Source: Express and Star)

Mahbuba Maqsodi, an artist who was born in Afghanistan and lived in Germany, shares how she feels honoured to become the first woman ever and a first living artists to have her artwork chosen for the special German Christmas stamp. (Source: InfoMigrants)

At a job fair at the Kia Oval, home of Surrey County Cricket Club, hundreds of people from refugee background gathered in order to learn about job opportunities and to connect with major recruiting companies. (Source: London News)

International news

Bulgaria and Romania have been cleared to join the Schengen travel-free zone, after Austria lifted its veto, originally imposed due to fears over irregular migration. This brings Schengen membership to 29 countries: 25 EU member states along with

Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. More on the news on borders, the Netherlands started doing additional border checks hoping to curb irregular migration. Dutch border inspections for now consist of random checks as the Netherlands has only 50 border officers and 840 border crossings. (Sources: Al Jazeera, InfoMigrants)

After the fall of the Assad regime many Syrians who fled to neighbouring countries, such as Turkey and Lebanon, are starting to make their way back to Syria. Despite significant uncertainty over what lies ahead, many returning migrants are celebrating their new sense of freedom. Meanwhile, many European countries have ceased processing asylum claims by Syrian applicants, raising significant concerns among citizens and migration support organisations. This article provides a country-by-country overview of EU member states which have opted to stop considering asylum application by people from Syria, and assesses the likely impact on Syrian migrants in each country. (Sources: DW, Al Jazeera)

UK borders and migration policy

Germany will criminalise the facilitation of people smuggling to the UK as part of a new agreement between the two countries. Meanwhile, a person seeking asylum convicted of manslaughter after four people died when he steered a dinghy across the English Channel is appealing his convictions and sentence. Ibrahima Bah, from Senegal, said the smugglers forced him to pilot the boat. (Sources: Home Office, The Standard)

There are ongoing issues with transition to eVisa, including mismatch of nationalities experienced by Hongkongers who are classed as Chinese on the new system, and worries that people will be refused entry to the UK. (Sources: inews, the Guardian)

In other news, Prime Minister Keir Starmer has been criticised for not including migration in the six 'milestones' announced last week, while this briefing provides an overview of fee waivers for immigration applications. (Sources: The Standard, Free Movement)

Specific migrant groups

A new briefing from the House of Commons Library provides an analysis of the Ukrainian schemes as a possible model for responses to other conflicts. (Source: House of Commons Library)

On children and young people, a recently concluded litigation reveals a local authority had continued to dispute age of a child arriving into their care, although significant evidence proved his claimed age. Elsewhere, ECPAT reports on the rise of child trafficking referrals over the last five years, with 2023 recording the highest figures. Although, most referrals were for those with British nationality, 22% were for Albanian, Sudanese and Eritrean (Sources: Doughty Street Chambers, ECPAT)

Continuing on the modern slavery theme, an agency which recruited workers for the UK agricultural sector has had its licence revoked by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority

following an investigation. AG International brought more than 1,450 people from Indonesia to pick fruit in 2022, some of whom were left with debts of more than £5,000. (Source: the Guardian)

There have also been a few publications on various aspects of modern slavery:

- Inspection of the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (ICEA), the body that makes modern slavery decisions about people likely to be facing removal, concluded that the speed of decisions was to the detriment of quality. (Source: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration)

- Local authority staff training, with recommendations including developing regularly delivered, standardised training modules, promoting inclusive language (including in relation to migration status), and incorporating Equality, Diversity and inclusion (EDI) and cultural sensitivity themes. (Source: UK BME Anti-Slavery Network)

- Ethics in modern slavery research. (Source: Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre)

- The annual report of the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Programme (MSOIC), which looks back at the police's response to this issue in the past year. (Source: MSOIC)

- The study on the importance of support after surviving modern slavery (focused on people experienced labour exploitation in India. (Source: University of Bath)

On international students, a new report by the Higher Education Policy Institute found that not much is done by those institutions to improve their integration, with students feeling treated like revenue sources rather than valued community members. (Source: the Guardian)

Cohesion and integration

British Future has released a new report on the importance of creative projects and activities to social cohesion. The research found a strong appetite amongst the public for participation in community arts projects and presents case studies for how projects can bring together local inhabitants and new arrivals. (Source: British Future)

Another research, this time by Migration Observatory, examines experiences of different migrant groups when interacting with the UK immigration system. The results indicate that many

migrants had a good experience of the system, but their understanding of their status – and the entitlements and responsibilities that come with it – varies across groups. (Source: Migration Observatory)

The Scottish Refugee Council has published a new toolkit on Building Stronger Community Organisations. The toolkit, developed in association with Scottish Community Development Centre, is intended to empower refugee-led and refugee supporting organisations across Scotland. (Source: Scottish Refugee Council)

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