Migration news roundup 22 May 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

Teenagers who have fled war or persecution to South Yorkshire are being trained to become community leaders through the Young Changemakers project led by the University of Sheffield as part of their University of Sanctuary initiative. Meanwhile in York, 'The Big House', a play created by young people from refugee backgrounds, is being performed at Theatre Royal on Friday 2 June. You can book a free ticket here. (Sources: The Star, Eventbrite)

Read how women are breaking the gender stereotypes of the construction industry and using their engineering skills to lead on the construction of traditional shelters in refugee camps in Sudan. (Source: UNHCR)

International news

In Ireland, high tensions around the housing of migrants resulted in violent protests between pro and anti-migrant groups around a makeshift migrant camp in Dublin, before the camp was burnt down. (Source: InfoMigrants)

Across Europe, national governments are increasing their efforts to stop people seeking asylum by using deterrence measures, including longer detention and deportation. Meanwhile, regional authorities are taking more positive approach to address

challenges resulting from migration. One example is the northern Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, which pledged nearly €2 million to help unaccompanied minors gain the skills they need to enter employment and to help with social integration into the community. (Source: InfoMigrants)

Outside of Europe, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) One app, designed to offer a “safe, orderly and humane border processing” system at the US-Mexico border, has been criticised for bias and the lack of available appointments to meet the needs of those seeking asylum. (Source: Al Jazeera)

UK borders and migration policy

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak remains non-committal on reducing net migration, ahead of official figures due to be released in the next weeks, with tackling ‘illegal migration’ his stated priority. While attending a Council of Europe meeting in Iceland this week , he agreed a new working arrangement with the European Commission on border issues. However, his request for reform to European Court of Human Rights rules, to remove blocks to the Rwanda scheme, was not well received. Meanwhile, he has announced an additional 10,000 seasonal worker visas, despite ongoing concerns about exploitation of seasonal workers, with issues including debt and poor living and working conditions. Furthermore, Home Secretary Suella Braverman has said the agricultural and haulage sectors should recruit British workers. This analysis of her speech considers some of the factors behind the high net migration numbers. (Sources: Sky News, BBC,

Independent, Free Movement, the Guardian)

On the Sudanese situation:

- Some are calling for a hosting scheme similar to Homes for Ukraine.
- This article conveys the reality for some people with legal status in the UK who are struggling to leave Sudan with their families.

(Sources: the Guardian, The National)

This article clarifies a few aspects of international law relating to refugees, challenging Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick's assertion that refugees should seek asylum in the first safe country they reach. (Source: Channel 4 News)

It's been reported that people from Iraq and Iran awaiting asylum decisions will have their applications fast-tracked, following the introduction of a similar process for some other nationalities earlier this year. Relatedly, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) launched a call for evidence as part of an inspection of asylum casework. (Sources: the Guardian, ICIBI)

Specific migrant groups

Parliament will vote soon on new asylum housing proposals enabling landlords providing asylum accommodation in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs – more than one household in a

property) to be exempt for two years from the usual requirements ensuring minimum standards around overcrowding and safety. (Source: the Guardian)

Hongkongers applying for asylum in the UK are finding the process very difficult and fearing deportation. (Source: the Guardian)

Defence minister James Heappey was called out for overstating the number of applications for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme to parliament. He was speaking in relation to an Afghan pilot who has a well-publicised case. (Source: Independent)

Recent research shows the increasing contribution international students make to the UK's economy suggesting that efforts should be made to keep the UK as an open and welcoming destination for overseas students. (Source: the Guardian)

On modern slavery:

- There was a record number of calls to the modern slavery helpline last year, with numbers doubling compared to the previous year. Romanian remains the most common nationality of potential victims, followed by Indian where there has been a marked increase in numbers from last year - this is thought to be linked to care worker exploitation.
- The Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre (MSPEC), established in 2019, has published its first impact report,

reviewing its policy and research work.
- Mo Farah has received a BAFTA for last year's BBC documentary about his life – he dedicated it to trafficked children.

(Sources: Unseen, MSPEC, Evening Standard)

The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor's report shows the disparity in treatment and protection of unaccompanied children compared to children migrating with families across Europe. Meanwhile, a watchdog's report revealed that UK border staff are handcuffing unaccompanied children and detaining them for too long. Following a legal challenge, Scotland extended eligibility for free tuition enabling children in the asylum process to access support. (Sources: reliefweb, Independent, The National)

Over 1,200 people from Ukraine have arrived in North Yorkshire through the Homes for Ukraine scheme since March 2022. About 700 people are still living in North Yorkshire supported by the scheme, while approximately 500 have either moved on to live in independent accommodation, relocated to another council area or have returned to Ukraine. Meanwhile, this new report on community sponsorship schemes considers barriers to involvement for refugee community organisations. (Sources: Scarborough News, Refugee Council)

Cohesion and integration

The Schools of Sanctuary programme is highlighted as a great way to welcome children seeking sanctuary in UK schools. It supports schools to review their core principles, to foster empathy and provide practical resources to raise awareness of why people flee. (Source: The Conversation)

Well-known academic Mike Chick highlights the importance of learning English for overall refugee integration, calling for less focus on assessment and instead more emphasis on 'participatory' learning approaches to better meet the needs of refugee learners. (Source: The Conversation)

A new exhibition 'No Place Like Home' at the Museum of the Home in London focuses on the Vietnamese diaspora and is helping to share their stories. (Source: The Conversation)

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