Migration news roundup 29 May 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

Gary Lineker accepted an Amnesty award for his commitment to immigration and human rights, saying ‘we need to be careful with the language we use towards people who have to flee their countries ... we need to show them compassion, empathy and kindness.’ (Source: the Guardian)

The Chelsea Flower Show features a ‘Choose Love’ garden using flowers and materials found in refugee camps and on migration routes. (Source: Gardens Illustrated)

International news

In northern Italy officials are considering using reception centres, or ‘hotspots’, to house the increasing number of migrants using the Balkan route despite local government resistance. Meanwhile, other European countries are increasing their border controls - Austria has strengthened checks at the border with Hungary and tensions continue at the Polish-Belarusian border with an increase in irregular border crossing attempts despite the recent border wall. (Source: InfoMigrants)

There was distressing news of a boat in difficulties in Maltese waters, with approximately 500 people on board (including a baby born overnight at sea) and delays in responding by both Maltese and Italian search and rescue. (Source: Aljazeera)

On a more positive note, Germany is proposing modernisation of its citizenship laws, including reducing the length of the naturalisation process for skilled people and allowing people to hold multiple citizenships. (Source: InfoMigrants)

UK borders and migration policy

Net migration reached 606,000 during 2022, a record high. The increase is attributed to several factors including a rise in international students since the pandemic, schemes for people from Ukraine and Hong Kong and an increase in skilled worker visas (especially in health and care). There's some analysis of the figures here. It's important to highlight the new net migration calculations include asylum seekers and resettled refugees for the first time. Home Office Immigration Statistics (on visas issued to the end of March 2023) were also published. It's worth noting Albanians are no longer a significant group among those arriving on small boats across the Channel (between January and March 2023 they accounted for just 1%). (Sources: ONS, Migration Observatory, Home Office)

To curb future numbers relating to international students, government announced new measures including no longer allowing family members of postgraduate students on taught courses from abroad to come to the UK. (Source: BBC)

The Home Secretary faced criticism over issues including potential undisclosed links to the Rwandan government and alleged factual errors such as overstating the numbers of

Ukrainian and Hongkonger arrivals. (Sources: Independent, the Guardian)

In the post-Brexit environment a recent survey found wages have risen in the hospitality sector due to skills shortages. (Source: The Telegraph)

The Illegal Migration bill reached Committee stage in the House of Lords which involves detailed scrutiny of the legislation, after which it will be reprinted with any agreed amendments and move to report stage. Resistance to the bill continues to come from many quarters, most recently from trade unions in Lancashire, petitioning their county council against the Bill and calling for Lancashire to become a County of Sanctuary. (Sources: UK Parliament, Lancashire Telegraph)

There are reports of poor conditions at Brook House immigration removal centre, as well as self-harm and suicide attempts, based on interviews with seven detainees. Meanwhile there are concerns about plans to remove the 72 hour limit on detention for pregnant women. (Sources: The News Movement, British Medical Journal)

Specific migrant groups

The Home Office's proposed asylum accommodation site at RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire is set to start housing arrivals from August. The site will accommodate up to 2,000 people. (Source: BBC)

New guidance has been published to support Afghans moving out of bridging hotels, covering issues such as finding housing and schools. (Source: Home Office)

On modern slavery:

- The Global Slavery Index 2023 estimates 122,000 people in the UK are living in conditions of modern slavery (50 million globally).
- Here's an overview of live UK police investigations.
- A UK-Romania joint action plan to tackle human trafficking has been announced. The plan includes steps to prevent re-trafficking of people returning to Romania.

(Sources: Walk Free, Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit, Home Office)

At a meeting with a Home Office minister in Westminster, individuals affected by the Windrush scandal expressed their disappointment and dissatisfaction at how things have been handled. (Source: the Guardian).

A new British Nationality bill is planned to regularise the British nationality of children of EU nationals born in the UK between 1983 and October 2000 whose parents have been living in the UK under the right to free movement. Here's an analysis of the bill. (Sources: Home Office, Free Movement)

Cohesion and integration

A report has been published exploring how government and media attitudes towards immigration is linked to rising far-right action. (Source: Hope not Hate)

A contributor to the Sewell Report on race relations and the director of the Migration Observatory have been asked by the BBC to assess whether its coverage of small-boat crossings is impartial. (Source: the Guardian)

Following a twitter debate on what can and can't be included in a British Chinese takeaway, this article looks at the history of Chinese food in the UK with links to trade, migration and colonialism. (Source: The Conversation)

Refugee Action released its own 20 minute version of Gogglebox, 'Welcome Box', where refugees give their honest reactions to some key moments of British TV culture and get the chance to turn the tables and present clips from their own countries. (Source: Refugee Action)

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