Migration news roundup 31 July 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

People seeking asylum and temporarily placed in hotels are sharing the impact of a sewing project in Bristol. (Source: BBC)

Two artists share their stories here: a comic artist who came to the UK from Somalia who sees comics as a way to share his refugee experience, and a photographer who migrated from Hong Kong uses art to remember his homeland. (Sources: Metro, the Guardian)

International news

Listen to what happens to migrants when they reach reception centres in southern Italy. In Greece, the Aegean Boat Report group records an increase in arrivals to Greek Islands and decrease in pushbacks over the same period. (Sources: BBC – listen from 00:30, 16:10, 27:00 and 44:30, InfoMigrants)

Beyond Europe, in Hong Kong there are reports of family members of prominent pro-democracy activists being taken for questioning by police, while in the USA changes to the asylum process disproportionally affect indigenous South American groups. (Sources: the Guardian, Al Jazeera)

UK borders and migration policy

Following last week's changes to the Immigration Rules:

- UK Border Force Union revealed some staff are uncomfortable about new visa requirements for some nationalities, due to concerns that new rules discriminate against national groups like East Timorese.
- This article examines the government's decision to widen the scope for withdrawing asylum claims and what this means in practice. (Sources: Free Movement the Guardian)

Since the passing of the Illegal Migration Act:

- The professional body for solicitors issued a statement condemning the new legislation for being unworkable and posing a 'threat to the law and justice system'.
- In protest against the Act's potential impact, an LGBT rights campaign group displayed images of the Home Secretary and Prime Minister as Barbie and Ken.
- A National Refugee Strategy from the Refugee Council proposes alternative solutions to the Act including a call for the government to introduce a refugee visa.
- A recent poll found that British voters support the proposals from the Illegal Migration Act by two to one, but they also support specific schemes for Ukrainians, HongKongers and Afghans. (Sources: Law Society, Metro, Refugee Council, the Guardian, New Statesman, British Foreign Policy Group)

Costs of housing asylum seekers in hotels is resulting in millions of pounds of the UK's foreign aid budget being spent on tax payments that return to the Treasury. Further, since the Illegal

Migration Act no longer allows many people who arrive through irregular routes to claim asylum the rules governing international aid spending on refugees could end the government using this budget to support them. (Sources: the Guardian, Devex)

The Solicitor's Regulation Authority is to investigate claims that some solicitors were found to be assisting clients to make false asylum claims to regularise their stay in the UK. (Source: BBC)

Specific migrant groups

Asylum support rates have increased from £45 to £47.39 per week. The High Court found the Home Secretary unlawfully withheld financial support for families with young children and pregnant women. (Sources: gov.uk, the Guardian)

New guidance has been published for local authorities on pre-matching Afghan refugees for settled accommodation. (Source: Home Office)

On children and young people:

- The High Court ruled that 'routine' housing of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in hotels is unlawful.
- Following murals being painted over at a reception centre in Kent, pupils from a primary school in Birmingham sent drawings to unaccompanied children seeking asylum housed there to show that they are 'welcome' and 'not

alone’.
- Refugee Education UK has been commissioned to conduct a study into access to education for newly arrived displaced adolescents aged 13-19 and is asking practitioners to complete a survey. (Sources: BBC, Refugee Education UK)

On modern slavery, the Home Office has been ordered by the High Court to change the policy on trafficking which disqualifies people with criminal convictions from accessing support and protection. Meanwhile, an increase in cases of modern slavery in the care industry has been reported. (Sources: the Guardian, BBC)

Some UK universities have introduced flexible payment deadlines to support Nigerian students due to the sudden devaluation of their currency. (Source: The Pie News)

Here’s a useful reminder on how absences from the UK impacts on applications to the EU Settlement Scheme. (Source: Free Movement)

Cohesion and integration

In Llanelli, Wales, a solidarity picnic in support of asylum seekers who may soon be housed in hotels nearby was held. Relatedly, this piece talks about ‘performative hostility’ and how housing asylum seekers in inhospitable and unwelcoming sites can be seen as part of a strategy to take away agency and a sense of belonging. (Sources: Hope not Hate, the Conversation)

The former goalkeeper and captain of the Afghan women's national football team describes adapting to a new culture, and the role of football in healing. (Source: UNHCR)

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