

Concluding remarks

Concluding remarks

The past year was marked by intensive preparations for the operationalisation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum by June 2026. Both the EUAA and national authorities invested significant resources to lay the foundation for the new framework to manage the European protection system.

To this end, EU+ countries made substantial financial allocations and accelerated procurement procedures to ensure that the Eurodac system is operational on time. Following staff recruitment initiatives in recent years, national asylum authorities focused on reducing their pending cases to avoid the parallel use of different legislative frameworks after June 2026 as much as possible. Several countries invested in the establishment of multipurpose centres, where screening, the asylum border procedure and the return border procedure can take place at the same location.

The EUAA supported EU+ countries in these efforts through various activities. The Agency developed guidance and tools on the new procedures, updated existing guides and trained practitioners from national administrations on the provisions of the Pact. In 12 countries, the Agency provided direct operational support. And at the EU level, the Agency analysed new developments and rapidly provided situational updates to support the European Commission in steering response processes and to better inform national policymakers.

Undertaking these preparations was somewhat eased by the fact that applications declined to 822,000 in 2025, the lowest level since 2021. This allowed national authorities to focus more resources on developing new workflows, standard operating procedures and templates, and piloting these new approaches in the national context.

In 2026, the entry into application of the Pact will show the practical value of these investments. Since its adoption, stakeholders have underlined that the Pact will be measured by its capacity to create resilient asylum and reception systems capable of adapting to rapid changes in the world. 2026 will bring to the spotlight the practical relevance and the impact of the CEAS reform. It will prove, for example, to what extent the reform will enable a fair burden-sharing between Member States.

The new arrangements will be tested in acute situations, while the system must remain flexible to address developments at the global, EU and national levels. Changing dynamics in the

political, security and economic sectors and international crises and wars have impacted the availability of humanitarian funding and the mechanisms to address displacement globally. The protection needs resulting from conflicts, such as the wars in Iran and Ukraine, will likely increase, while financial allocations at the global level are diminishing.

Amidst complex, global interdependencies, Europe has proactively engaged and built partnerships with third countries in order to build capacity in providing effective protection and to address irregular migration. Increasing capacities in partner countries to manage migration with full respect for fundamental rights has the potential to expand the global protection space.

At the European level, the first European Asylum and Migration Strategy sets the policy direction for the next 5 years. With a strong focus on enhancing border control, strict rules against the abuse of asylum systems and fast and effective returns, it may lead to a further decrease in the number of applications across EU+ countries. Changes to the Asylum Procedure Regulation on safe country concepts and the advancement of the new Return Regulation can act as deterrents for new arrivals. However, in practice they may also limit access to international protection to those in need.

At the national level, the practical application of the Pact and measures to increase effectiveness will be under tight scrutiny. This will probably include the application of screening, issuing inadmissibility decisions for applicants who transited through a third country and could have requested effective protection there, and some of the proposed digital solutions for more effective processing. As the application of the Pact unfolds, national authorities will adjust their systems based on the first experiences on the ground. Questions for legal clarification are to be expected in 2026, with more anticipated in the years to come, at the level of national courts, the ECtHR and the CJEU.

Developments in the larger context of migration governance – such as the Spanish government’s decision for an extraordinary regularisation of third-country nationals for their integration – will also impact the workload of national asylum authorities and thus the operationalisation of the Pact. When it comes to the future of the 4.5 million of Ukrainians registered under the Temporary Protection Directive, several countries have started to create paths to transition from temporary protection to another type of residence permit, opening new perspectives to stay in Europe. This trend is likely to become more prominent in 2026, as the end of the extension of the temporary protection regime in March 2027 is nearing.

Against this background, EU+ countries need up-to-date, factual information to adjust their processes in a timely manner. In this, the EUAA plays a central role with its enhanced situational awareness portfolio and cooperation networks that offer a platform to exchange good practices and address challenges. The Agency actively supported EU+ countries in 2025 in the transitionary period of operationalising the Pact, and it stands ready in 2026 and beyond to provide direct support and maintain constructive dialogue to build an enhanced protection environment in Europe. As stakeholders have to navigate through the complex Pact measures and quickly changing political realities, information and engagement become even more crucial for the future of CEAS.

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu