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Warsaw, October 4, 2011 — All indicators of irregular migration to the EU rose during the second quarter (Q2) of 2011, compared to Q1. At the same time, illegal border crossing, clandestine entry and refusals of entry all increased significantly against a year earlier, as did the number of asylum applications received by Member States. The flows were typified by two main routes — via the Greek-Turkish land border, which saw seasonally increased migratory pressure, and via the Central Mediterranean route from North Africa, particularly to the Italian mainland, Sicily and Malta. The main point of departure on this latter route was Libya from where many East African and sub-Saharan migrants were forced to migrate by the subsequently ousted regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Illegal entry via the EU external border as a whole reached a level not recorded since the third quarter of 2008 despite an offset effect of a reduction in Albanian irregular migration following new visa-free travel rules. The total number of irregular entries to the EU in Q2 2011 stood at over 40 000 — 50% up on the same period a year earlier.

Eastern Mediterranean route

At the Greek land border with Turkey, detections rose to a level comparable with that of Q2 2010 — over 11 000 illegal entries — with Afghans previously resident in Iran representing the commonest profile. Consequently, the Iranian authorities' policies towards its estimated 3-million population of Afghan refugees are seen as a key push factor for short-term migratory trends. Additional regions of origin on this route were Asia (Pakistan), North Africa (Algeria, Morocco) and sub-Saharan Africa (Somalia, Congo). Greece remains a key entry point for people-smuggling networks with secondary movements most often detected in the Western Balkans, Slovenia and Hungary as well as at the maritime border with Italy and at a range of international European airports.

Central Mediterranean route

Following a surge of some 20 000 Tunisian nationals in Q1 2011, the second quarter saw a 75% reduction in volumes of Tunisian migrants due to an accelerated readmission agreement between Italy and Tunisia. Nonetheless, the overall number of detections on this route increased due to large numbers of inter alia Central African, Nigerian and Ghanaian nationals previously resident in Libya travelling by boat to Lampedusa, Sicily and Malta. Many of these migrants claimed to have been forcibly expelled from Libya by the then-ruling regime of Colonel Gaddafi. Since the effective fall of the Gaddafi regime, irregular migration from Libya has dropped dramatically, though the situation there remains unstable and difficult to predict.

Others

Circular migration between Albania and Greece was significantly affected by visa-free travel rules for Albanians. Although many are believed to still be migrating for work, the now-legal flow is predominantly via border crossing points (BCPs). Hence, there was a concurrent rise in refusals of entry for Albanians at BCPs.

On the eastern border with Belarus, an increasing number of migrants were detected from Georgia; some 6 800 arrived in the EU via Belarus in the first six months of 2011.