

## MIGRATION AS A CHALLENGE FOR CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC SECURITY: LITHUANIAN CASE

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**Abstract.** *Migration and security as social phenomena, which in recent times have often been levelled or even staged against each other.*

*Migration can sometimes pose certain challenges to the interests of the state if it is perceived as a threat to national security. This perception can lead to the implementation of various political or legal measures and instruments aimed at protecting borders, regulating immigration flows and monitoring the movement of migrants. The European Parliament has tried to tighten border controls and improve the ability of Member States to manage the flow of people arriving in Europe. To achieve this, the new Pact on Migration and Asylum was approved, which proposes to better address the complexity and challenges of migration management, while ensuring that the rights and needs of illegal migrants are respected and protected.*

*Over the past few years, the countries of the European Union have from time to time reintroduced border controls within the Schengen area, which often last for a long time. In order to preserve free movement while addressing real security threats, the European Commission presented its proposal for a revision of the Schengen rules in 2021.*

*In February 2024, Parliament reached a provisional agreement with national governments on rules stressing that the reintroduction of border controls is a last resort. EU countries can exceptionally reintroduce border controls when there is a serious threat to public policy or internal security.*

*This article analyses the challenges posed by migration processes to contemporary public security, focusing on the case of Lithuania. The article analyses the impact of irregular migration on the public security aspects of Lithuania and discusses possible solutions to address these challenges. The article reviews the migration situation in Lithuania over the last decade using statistical data and assesses the decision-making challenges for the actors involved in migration processes, as well as providing an overview of the latest regional legal framework.*

**Keywords:** *irregular migration, migration processes, public security.*

### Introduction

Migration and security today are among the most pressing issues discussed in various fields of science. There is an increasing number of people around the world who migrate voluntarily or as a result of military conflicts, natural disasters, poverty or persecution in their home country. Migration as a phenomenon itself is not a criminal phenomenon in itself, but it has a tendency to sometimes escalate into irregular or irregular migration, which is already a matter of concern for the states through or to which these migratory flows enter. It is not uncommon for irregular migration flows to cause anxiety for the states to which these flows reach for security reasons; national governments are trying to find a balance between the protection of their citizens and the help and support of those seeking protection.

Migration can be a concern for the interests of the state if it is perceived as a threat to national security, for example, if it is associated with hybrid attacks, terrorism, organised crime or, for example, the spread of communicable diseases. This perception can lead to the implementation of various political or legal measures and instruments aimed at protecting borders, regulating immigration flows and monitoring the movement of migrants.

The main task of the article is to show using the method of content analysis and statistical analysis and using the case of Lithuania that migration issues can have an impact on security issues and remain important in today's context and require constant attention and the application of common measures for the management of migration flows.

### **Free movement of persons within the European Union, aspects of legal regulation**

The creation of an area of freedom, security and justice is one of the main tasks of the European Union (hereinafter - EU), and the free movement of persons, goods and services is considered to be one of the main achievements of the EU.

Since the introduction of the concept of the free movement of persons, its meaning has changed significantly. The first provisions on that point, included in the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community of 1957, included the free movement of workers and freedom of establishment, and thus persons in employment or in service. The Treaty of Maastricht enshrines the concept of EU citizenship, according to which all citizens of the Member States automatically hold EU citizenship. It is this EU citizenship that provides the basis for the right of individuals to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. This right was confirmed by the Treaty of Lisbon, which also includes general provisions relating to the area of freedom, security and justice (European Parliament, 2023).

The creation of an area of freedom, security and justice is enshrined in Title V (Articles 67 to 89) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This area was created in order to avoid border controls at internal borders and to provide citizens with a high level of protection (Consolidated version of the Functioning of the Treaty on European Union, 2016).

According to Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, which sets out the objectives of the European Union, the EU offers its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal borders.

The absence of border control shall be ensured by the combined application of appropriate measures for the control of external borders, asylum, immigration and the prevention and fight against crime, as well as police cooperation.

One of the measures to regulate legal migration flows is the competence of the EU to determine the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals entering and legally residing in a Member State, as well as for the purposes of family reunification. Member States shall have the right to determine the number of jobseekers from third countries admitted to their territory. At the same time, the EU can encourage Member States to take measures aimed at integrating legally residing third-country nationals and can support these measures by Member States. However, the EU does not provide for the harmonisation of national laws and regulations.

In addition to these measures, the EU attaches a major role to the fight against irregular, irregular migration. The European Union has a duty to prevent and reduce illegal immigration, in particular through an effective return policy and respect for fundamental rights. The European Union has the competence to conclude agreements with third countries on the readmission to their country of origin or departure of third-country nationals who do not fulfil or no longer fulfil the conditions for entry, stay or residence in one of the Member States.

The European Union has the task of ensuring that there are no controls on persons when crossing internal borders and of formulating a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border controls, based on solidarity between eu Member States, which is fair to nationals of non-EU countries. It is also envisaged that the EU must develop a policy for the control of persons and for the effective surveillance of the crossing of external borders, while

ensuring that there are no controls on persons when crossing internal borders, and to gradually introduce an integrated management system for external borders (Consolidated version on the functioning of the Treaty on European Union, 2016).

The treaty requires the EU to develop a common policy of asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection for non-EU nationals in need of international protection in order to offer appropriate status and ensure that the principle of non-refoulement is not violated (a fundamental principle of international refugee and human rights law, which prohibits states from returning persons to a country where there is a real risk that they will be persecuted, tortured, treated inhumanely or degradingly or otherwise violated human rights).

The EU's immigration policy aims to ensure the management of migratory flows, a favourable treatment for non-EU nationals legally residing in the Member States, and to prevent and combat illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.

In the area of legal immigration, the EU has the right to determine the conditions of entry and residence of non-EU nationals entering and legally residing in a Member State, including for the purposes of family reunification. However, it is up to the Member States to decide how many non-EU nationals can be allowed to seek employment by setting quotas.

The EU aims to prevent and reduce illegal immigration, in particular through an effective return and readmission policy and respect for human rights. The EU's migration and asylum policy and its implementation are subject to the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibilities between the Member States, including its financial implications.

For many years, the EU has been developing and improving its common approach to migration and asylum. Since 1999, the EU has been working towards the creation of a common European asylum system. In 2020, the European Commission published a new pact on migration, which covers the different elements needed for a comprehensive European approach to migration and aims to ensure greater coherence in integrating the internal and external dimensions of migration policy. The Commission proposes improved and faster, better integrated procedures across the asylum and migration system and aims to ensure a balanced common framework that brings together all aspects of asylum and migration policy. It recognises the need to improve intra-EU procedures in order to achieve effective returns, which help to reduce fragmentation of national approaches and to strengthen cooperation and solidarity between all Member States (consolidated version of the functioning of the Treaty on European Union, 2016).

The New Pact reflects the growing political will to deter irregular arrivals, especially those who do not have a legal asylum application. However, this assumption that many people arriving in Europe are not in danger and use the system is difficult to prove, and is also refuted by official statistics showing that the majority of asylum seekers are fleeing persecution and violence (European Council, 2024).

The Pact defines the instrumentalisation of migrants as a situation in which a third country or a non-state entity encourages or facilitates the movement of third-country nationals towards the EU's external borders or into a Member State with a view to destabilising the EU or a Member State. It introduces new measures to manage this phenomenon, including limiting the number of border crossing points at the external borders or their working hours, as well as the intensification of border surveillance.

In 2024, there will be more forcibly displaced persons in the world than ever before. Given the lack of safe pathways, the majority of asylum seekers have very little choice but to spontaneously enter European borders, which is their right under international law. This was also followed by the updating of another instrument enshrined in the regulation, the Schengen Borders Code (Schengen Borders Code, 2024).

The likely consequences of the agreement are the development of harmful detention throughout Europe, increased pressure on border states and more frequent application of emergency measures that violate human rights (Chuang, 2022).

Under the new rules, people arriving at the EU's borders will be screened and detained at the border to determine whether they pose a security risk or are particularly vulnerable, and certain categories of asylum seekers will be subject to accelerated asylum procedures. States have the right to deviate from EU legal standards in so-called crisis situations, while the new 'solidarity mechanism' aims to allocate responsibility for granting asylum to states. The Pact also updates the standard of living conditions of asylum seekers, increases the way their data is used and sets common standards for resettlement procedures.

### **Ensuring security is a priority area for the European Union**

The European Union's security environment has changed dramatically in recent years. The main challenges related to peace and stability in the EU's eastern and southern neighbourhoods continue to stress the need for the EU to adapt and increase its capacity as a security provider, with a focus on a close external-internal security relationship. Many of the current challenges to peace, security and prosperity stem from instability in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and changing forms of threats (European Commission, 2016, p. 2).

National security is the protection of the independence of a state, its territorial integrity and constitutional order, its defense against various threats arising both externally and within the country.

The concept of national security is inseparable from the concept of international security. There are threats that arise not only to man or the state, but also to society as a whole or even to humanity, such as air or water pollution, terrorism, etc. Problems that threaten international security must be addressed by each state acting in concert with the others. Ignoring the solution to international security problems (e.g. environmental security, irregular migration, terrorist threats, etc.) can put not only individual states at risk, but also the region as a whole or even the world.

Globalisation, free movement and digital transformation continue to deliver well-being, make our lives easier and stimulate innovation and economic growth. But along with this benefit, both risks and costs arise (Erdogan, 2020). They can be manipulated by terrorism, organised crime, drug trafficking and human trafficking, all of which pose a direct threat to citizens and to our European way of life. In other words, with increasing connectivity and technological developments, the EU faces complex security challenges, including hybrid threats, which include conventional and unconventional tactics to undermine stability and security (Sanz-Caballero, 2023).

Citizens cannot be protected solely by the member states acting independently. It has never been more important to build on our strengths so that we can work together.

The work must also take place outside the EU. The protection of the EU and its citizens is not only about ensuring security within the EU, but also about the external dimension of security (European Commission, 2020, pp. 2-3).

The global security environment is becoming increasingly contentious, complex and interdependent (Chuang, p.409, 2022). Even with the resurgence of armed conflicts and civil wars in the EU's neighbourhood, new and unconventional security threats have emerged or intensified, including cyberattacks, hybrid threats, terrorism, disinformation, climate change or artificial intelligence. In an increasingly interconnected world, European security begins abroad (EEAS, 2023).

What is happening outside the EU's borders and security in Europe are closely linked. In a rapidly changing world, security challenges have become more complex and multifaceted. As far as security is concerned, the interests of all the Member States are inextricably linked. In its Global Strategy, the EU considers security a priority and has made efforts in recent years to allow for closer cooperation between Member States in the area of security and defence (EEAS, 2023).

As the recent example shows, the use and de-escalation of the migration flow to a neighbouring state on the Belarusian-Lithuanian border must be treated as a hybrid threat aimed at destabilising the country's security. Hybrid threats are often difficult to describe and deliberately target the vulnerability of states. EU policies are thus developing common recommendations to strengthening security in the region and developing a coordinated strategy to address critical vulnerabilities across the European Union. This is the key to making states more capable of withstanding and recovering from shocks.

### **Migration flows, case of Lithuania**

Each country faces unique security challenges based on its geopolitical situation, history and socio-economic factors. Lithuania, as a member of NATO and the EU and located close to Russia and Belarus, has to deal with specific security issues such as hybrid warfare tactics, energy security and strategic communication.

EU integration is essentially seen as a success story and a cornerstone of European stability with more than 50 years of peace (Archick, 2016). However, the nature of new threats and crises, such as those of Belarus and, in particular, Ukraine in the east and Syria or Libya's south, has shown that the EU is not able to cope with a number of external challenges that could become internal challenges. These threats clearly demonstrate the need for a stronger EU common security and defence policy.

There is no doubt that the resolution of today's conflicts, especially in areas relating to vital European interests, requires a holistic approach and unity of the Member States. Security and defence are becoming just as important, or even more important, than other instruments of influence and stability, such as political, diplomatic, economic, financial or development aid. The EU should have a clearly defined strategy for resolving conflicts that pose a clear threat to the EU. To date, the unanimity demand for intervention and the lack of commitment have led to several failures. The situation in Belarus – the Lithuanian border in 2021 and the situation in Ukraine are cases when the EU as a whole has not done enough.

Migration flows and border management challenges can be caused by a variety of causes, including wars and unresolved conflicts. The current EU refugee crisis is rooted mainly in Belarusian politics and in the Ukrainian conflict, which is 'led' by Russia, as well as the poor response of EU Member States. At the same time, the situation in Ukraine has become a humanitarian crisis, especially in Poland and other neighbouring countries, and has partly undermined the essence of free movement within the Schengen area. These situations prove how intertwined today's challenges are.

Russia's infiltration into Ukraine, constant bullying in the Baltic States, hybrid and cyberattacks, Europe's energy dependence and other topics opened up the possibility of a conflict with Russia, which was unthinkable just a few years ago (Baylon, 2019).

As already mentioned, EU citizens enjoy a wide freedom of movement, which is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union, enshrined in the TEU and developed in EU secondary legislation (Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council).

According to data for January 2023, the Schengen area consists of 27 countries with a total population of more than 420 million people (European Commission, 2024). In the Schengen area, more than 400 million people can travel freely, without border controls, from one Member State to another. Every day, around 3.5 million people cross internal borders for work or study purposes or to visit family and friends. Nearly 1.7 million people are living in poverty. People live in one Schengen country and work in another (European Commission, 2024).

Eligible entry must be entered by the country of origin in various ways. This means that if you are an EU citizen, you have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the EU Member States. List of non-EU countries through which it is not necessary to join the Schengen area (including Lithuania), if it is no longer than 90 days in any 180 days period (Seniutienė, 2023).

If a person comes from a country that is neither part of the EU nor the country of origin is listed in the above list, then such a person will need a visa or residence permit in order to enter the Schengen area legally.

According to the method of entry into the country, migration can be divided into legal (legal) and illegal migration. Legal migration takes place in accordance with the international, regional and specific legal requirements of the country of entry, and illegal migration implies entering or staying in the country without a valid permit.

However, it should be noted that a person who has entered the country illegally does not lose his rights as a human being. All migrants have the right to fundamental human rights and are protected in accordance with international human rights principles. However, states are not obliged to grant migrants the same rights as their own nationals (e.g. the right to vote, to participate in state governance) and may restrict the rights of migrants who have entered the country illegally compared to migrants legally residing in the country (e.g. the right to work or to receive social security).

Unauthorized border crossings can be punished. In the case of Lithuania, according to the Criminal Code, illegal crossing of the Lithuanian state border is punishable by imprisonment for up to two years. An exception is made for persons who have been granted refugee status. The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (UN, 1954) obliges states to make exceptions for refugees fleeing persecution. The Convention prohibits States from holding persons liable for illegal entry when they enter the territory of a State without permission, arriving directly from the territory where the life or freedom of a person was in danger. In this case, the authorities cannot send the person back until the asylum application has been processed. If a person has no legal basis to be in Lithuania, the Migration Department or the State Border Guard Service obliges the person to leave the country. A person may be given a deadline for voluntary departure or be forced to leave immediately. The obligation usually indicates a ban on entering Lithuania for a certain period of time. A person has the right to challenge the obligation to leave and the ban on entry by applying to the administrative court. In some cases, the authorities may detain a person who has crossed the border illegally in order to force deportation. State authorities are allowed to detain you if you have entered or are in Lithuania without a legal basis. However, detention is a very strict restriction of freedom, so it must be legal. The grounds for detention are set out in the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2024). These and many other legal norms are applied when migration takes place legally (regularly) or in certain cases of illegal migration is recorded. (Seniutienė, 2023).

2021 It has been an exceptional year for Lithuania, recording the number of migrants, and especially irregular migrants. Since Lithuania is an external EU country, it has been an exceptional year for the whole EU. Comparing the data of the statistics for 2020 and 2021 at

the Lithuanian-Belarusian border in 2021, 23 times more migrants tried to cross than in 2020, it was not an ordinary migration crisis, it was a targeted act of hybrid aggression against Lithuania. Almost 4.2 thousand migrants entered Lithuania illegally from Belarus. Lithuania calls this influx of migrants from Belarus a hybrid attack by the Minsk regime and accuses it of organizing illegal migration (Seniutienė, 2022).

It can be argued that the usual legal regulation and human resources and technical measures to combat this crisis were incapable and insufficient to combat the hybrid attack, which led to the use of unusually harsh and deterrent measures. The mass movement of migrants towards Lithuania, which has begun, is nothing more than the reaction of the Belarusian regime to the sanctions imposed on it (Zagaris, 2023). And thousands of citizens of Iraq and other countries have become an instrument of political pressure, which the Belarusian regime has been carrying out and continues to carry out in part. The intelligence collected showed that migrants are transported in an organized manner, and Belarusian officials also contribute to this illegal migration scheme by issuing visas for foreigners to enter Belarus and escorting them to the border with Lithuania.

In the case of Lithuania, the usual international, regional and national legal regulation could not offer any measure for the control and prevention of irregular migration flows, therefore it was necessary to introduce a separate regime and propose amendments to national legislation so that officials of state institutions could properly perform the functions assigned to them, that is, to protect the state border and ensure public security. As a result, a state of emergency was introduced, the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners was amended, and a policy of revocation was introduced.

The Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners of the Republic of Lithuania was supplemented by the following norm: "After the declaration of a state of war, a state of emergency, as well as a state of emergency or an extreme event due to a mass influx of foreigners, <... > asylum seekers may be subject to temporary and proportionate restrictions if they cannot be guaranteed for objective and reasonable grounds, with the exception of the right to material reception conditions, the provision of emergency medical care and state-guaranteed legal aid, and the right of vulnerable persons to access reception conditions appropriate to their specific needs." (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2024).

In addition to the above-mentioned measures, the installation of a physical border guard barrier was also started – the construction of a physical fence began. The construction of a physical barrier between Lithuania and Belarus began after the regime led by the dictator of the neighboring country organized the influx of illegal migrants into Lithuania. Various measures were taken to prevent migrants from entering the territory of Lithuania, and if migrants entered Lithuania, to return them to the territory from which they crossed the border, that is, to Belarus. In other words, migrants who try to enter the territory of Lithuania illegally are not allowed in, they are instructed to cross the border through border points, as established by the Law on the Status of Foreigners. The law provides that an application for asylum can be submitted only at border checkpoints after legal entry or at Lithuanian embassies abroad.

The policy of rejecting migrants launched in Lithuania has sparked a lot of debate. There are those who argue that these withdrawal actions can be considered as expulsions in violation of international law. Officials say that they do not send migrants, but do not enter the territory of Lithuania.

As we can see, the dilemma between the interests of state security and violations of human rights has become apparent in the discussions: "People who are forcibly pushed into our territory, we push them back - they are not sent anywhere" (Gutauskas, 2022). As the Judge of the Supreme Court of Lithuania Aurelijus Gutauskas said: lower standards are applied, as a

result of which the rights of other vulnerable groups may be disregarded, those persons are identified as a threat." Also, prof. A. Gutauskas argues that society begins to tolerate such government measures as beatings and detention without trial. It is said that migrants are criminals, terrorists, full of diseases, that they are a threat. However, continuing to assess the situation on the Lithuanian-Belarusian border, prof. A. Gutauskas says that this is "neither legal nor illegal migration", since the Belarusian regime uses migrants as a political tool, forcing them to violate the established border crossing procedure. And this can be illustrated with facts. Frontex records that: "In the first week of July alone, the Lithuanian authorities recorded more than 800 cases of illegal border crossings at the border with Belarus. Although most of the migrants arrived from Iraq, Iran and Syria in the first half of the year, recently the authorities have noticed that the composition of migration flows has changed. In July, citizens of the Republic of Congo, the Gambia, Guinea, Mali and Senegal made up the majority of arrivals" (Frontex, 2021). It is important to note that the geographical range of states changed when Lithuania began to apply the policy of withdrawing people from Iraq, Iran, Syria, and the Belarusian regime began to negotiate with other states and invite people to come.

Prof. A. Gutauskas, summarizing the situation on the Lithuanian-Belarusian border, argues that the decision to return migrants is imperfect from a legal point of view, but acceptable in order to control the situation in such special conditions.

The Fundamental Rights Office of frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, has criticised Lithuania for collectively rejecting migrants by border guards. According to the service, this practice is contrary to international law and the European Convention on Human Rights, and the possibility of applying for asylum at an official border checkpoint does not really work.

However, Frontex is also responding to Lithuania's request for help, and the Executive Director of Frontex said: "The situation on Lithuania's border with Belarus is still worrying. I decided to send an urgent border intervention to Lithuania to strengthen the EU's external border" (Frontex, 2021). "We will step up our assistance and send additional border guards, patrol cars and specialised officers for interviews with migrants to gather information on the criminal networks involved. These are actions of EU solidarity," the Executive Director of Frontex added.

The purpose of rapid border intervention is to provide rapid assistance to an EU Member State that is under urgent and exceptional pressure at its external border, in particular as regards the large number of non-EU nationals attempting to enter its territory illegally.

These and other discussions show that in international law, the response to specific cases and their analysis, but the policy of cancellation itself, as a tool, is not called into question.

In 2022, Europe was shocked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In 2022, since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, more than 1,303,000 Russian citizens have already entered the European Union through its land borders. Following Russia's partial mobilisation, border crossings have increased in neighbouring EU Member States. In the last week, almost 66 000 Russian citizens have arrived in the EU, more than 30% compared to the previous week. Most of them came to Finland and Estonia. In the last four days, 30,000 Russian citizens have arrived in Finland.

Most of them have residence permits or visas to EU Member States or Schengen associated countries, while others have dual citizenship. Member States shall also notify the arrival of Ukrainian nationals in need of temporary protection on their way from the occupied eastern region of Ukraine via Russia.

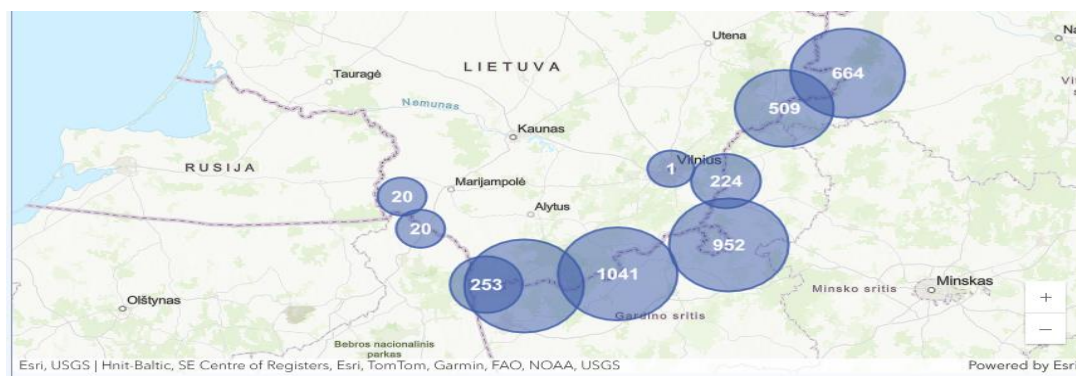


In order to manage the situation, on 19 September 2022, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia imposed restrictions on the entry of Russian citizens traveling only for tourism or leisure purposes. Similar restrictions are being considered in Finland.

2023 a decrease in the flow of irregular migration from Belarus to Lithuania was observed (compared to 2022, the number of deterred foreigners decreased by more than 4 times), but when assessing the scale of illegal migration at the regional level, illegal migration to EU states bordering Belarus increased by more than a third (in 2023, illegal migration flows to Latvia increased more than 2.5 times, and to Poland by more than 1, 5 times) (SBGS, 2024).

In 2023 (until 2 May 2023, in accordance with the Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Introduction of the State of Emergency", and from 3 May 2023 – Resolution No. 315 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Protection of the State Border of the Republic of Lithuania in the event of a declared state-level emergency"), 2643 foreigners were refused entry to Lithuania (in 2022 – 11211), and another 65 foreigners were detained for illegal crossing of the state border (in 2022– 231). Most often, citizens of India, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka tried to enter Lithuania illegally from Belarus. 2023 third-country nationals increasingly chose the Latvian border for illegal access to the EU. Such a change was due not only to the installation of a physical barrier in Lithuania and the introduction of border surveillance systems, but also to a more strengthened border protection in Poland, where additional police and army forces were used. However, this change in irregular migration routes in 2023 led to a significant increase in irregular secondary migration from Latvia. (SBGS, 2024).

In 2023, 1193 third-country nationals who illegally entered / were brought from Latvia were detained (for comparison, in 2022, 84 foreigners were detained after illegally entering Lithuania from Latvia), i.e. in 2023, about 14 times more third-country nationals were detained than in 2022 (Figure 1.).



**Figure 1. Registered irregular migrants in Lithuania by municipality**

*Source: Official Statistics portal, 2024*

As irregular migration has become the activity of organised crime groups in most cases, these groups are adapting very quickly to the changed situation, and in 2023 the activities of criminal networks engaged in smuggling people from Latvia towards migrants' destination countries increased significantly. Of the 134 pre-trial investigations launched on "Smuggling of foreigners across the border", about 90% of the investigations were related to the smuggling of foreigners from Latvia.

Undoubtedly, the above figures also affect the situation of Lithuanian public security. Therefore, although in 2023 there was a decrease in the "pressure" of irregular migration from Belarus to Lithuania, due to the ongoing phenomenon of instrumentalization of irregular

migration in the region, the increase in illegal secondary migration from Latvia, as well as the adoption / planned decisions in the Russian Federation and Belarus to facilitate the entry of foreigners into these countries (negotiations on direct flights with third countries or The mutual recognition of visas between the RF and Belarus, etc.), the threat of illegal migration in Lithuania, and at the same time, Lithuania being an EU external state and the EU, remains high.

## Conclusions

The creation of an area of Freedom, Security and Justice is one of the main tasks of the European Union in order to ensure a high level of protection for citizens on the territory of the Member States.

In order to ensure security in the region, the European Union and its Member States must act in a spirit of solidarity and coordination in order to effectively combat irregular migration, ensure human rights and security, and maintain stability in the region.

Although Lithuania has not seen any major irregular migration flows in the last few years, over the past decade migration flows have increased exceptionally only in 2021, however, due to the interdepartmental decisions taken or planned to be taken in neighboring states that are unfriendly to Lithuania, which would simplify the entry of foreigners to these countries, the threat of illegal migration in Lithuania remains high, therefore, it is necessary to implement measures aimed at strengthening border control, interdepartmental strengthening cooperation, reviewing asylum procedures and supporting integration initiatives.

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