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Russia's Mobilization

How the call to arms is causing a new
migration flow

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A new migration flow started after Putin's declaration on the 21st of September, the so-called "[mobilization](#)". Such a mobilization, namely an action of a country or its government of preparing and organizing troops for active service, has been [completed](#) at the beginning of November. However no final figures for the number of men called up have been disclosed.

But how many fled? Why are people leaving Russia? Which are the main destinations?

These questions seem easy to answer, but behind them lies a very complex situation and the emergence of a new humanitarian crisis at the doorstep of Europe demanding new solutions.

A New Migration Flow: Key Features

Russia's army was not expecting the war in Ukraine to last this long: its troops suffered severe losses and new combatants are now needed. This is the purpose of the mobilization announced by Putin on 21 September, that however was reportedly not meet with favour by the Russian population. Since the beginning of the operation, it is estimated that [400.000](#) people have fled the country. Men are the most affected category of this new exodus and the main reason to flee is the fear of being drafted. While those who could afford it managed to exit Russia by plane - countries like Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Armenia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are yet to close their air space to Russian aircrafts - the main migration routes are mainly overland.



People exiting Russia are mostly directed towards neighbouring countries such as Kazakhstan ([over 200.000 people](#)), [Finland](#), [Estonia](#), [Georgia](#) and Mongolia.

EU Reaction

European countries are not the most targeted by the outflow of people from Russia. Still, in the first two weeks after the mobilization, about [100.000 citizens](#) crossed the EU borders, requiring European institutions to focus on the positions they want to take.

On September 30th, the European Commission released the [Guidelines](#) on general visa issuance in relation to Russian applicants and controls of Russian citizens at the external borders.

The [statement](#) of the Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, clarified that the EU's position is based on the premise that escaping the mobilization does not automatically amount to opposing the war, and that it should not be excluded that these citizens might constitute a threat to public policy, to internal security, or to the EU's international relations.

In their opening point, the guidelines address the issuance of visas, stating that Member States ought to assess the conditions of eligibility for issuing Schengen visas based on an individual assessment and in a restrictive and coordinated manner.



However, this must not be interpreted as to deprive Russian citizens of their right to asylum, considering it is every person's right to ask for international protection, which can be offered in the form of refugee status or of subsidiary protection to those in need. Russian citizens equally maintain their chance to apply for national long-stay visas or residence permits at EU consulates.

In addition, Member State's consulates are encouraged to deny the request of short-stay visas to Russian citizens applying from a third country - outside of Russia - and to direct these cases to the consulate competent based on their place of residence. On November 10th, the Council presidency and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on a [decision](#) on the non-acceptance of Russian travel documents issued in Ukraine and Georgia.

Subsequently, the Commission reminds Member States that the possession of a visa does not confer an automatic right of entry into the Schengen area and that there are grounds for annulment or revocation. Hence, Consulates and border guards are requested to increase scrutiny and to carry out a strict approach when reassessing already issued visas.

Lastly, regarding external borders, the Commission asks all Member States to strengthen security controls at EU's borders with Russia and to follow a coordinated approach, while respecting principles as non-refoulement.



Which is the position of Italy on this new development? Given its geographical collocation, currently, there is not a relevant flow of migrants coming from Russia to Italy. Therefore, no real discussion has been opened at a political level yet.

Entering the EU from Russia: Which Possibilities?

Considering the EU guidelines and the non-application of the [Temporary Protection Decision](#) of 4 March 2022 to those coming from Russia, the most suitable venue for persons fleeing Russian mobilization and seeking protection would be to request international protection under [Directive 2011/95/EU](#).

Is the strict position adopted a good solution? It is debatable, since by establishing a hard system for entering the EU, migrants may be led to cross borders illegally endangering their lives and posing threats to the security of EU border areas.

