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# EUROPEAN COUNTRIES INCREASINGLY ADOPTING 'AMERICA FIRST' STYLE BORDER SECURITY POLICIES

*Chad Wolf and Robert Law*

## TOPLINE POINTS

- ★ The Biden Administration and the European Union (EU) share similar flawed approaches to addressing illegal immigration by focusing on processing migrants and releasing them instead of deterring them from taking the journey in the first place.
- ★ Polling in the U.S. shows that voters reject the Biden Administration's failed strategy and support America First policies that secure the border, end human trafficking, and defeat the cartels.
- ★ For many years, Hungary was the only EU country to prioritize border security and impose immigration consequences. But recently, a number of European countries have rejected the EU's open borders policies and implemented enforcement policies that prioritize the safety and security of their citizens.

The ongoing historic crisis along the U.S.-Mexico border is the result of the intentional policy decisions of the Biden Administration. After inheriting one of the most secure borders, the Biden Administration implemented [94 executive actions](#) in its first 100 days to dismantle the successful America First policies of the Trump Administration. As a result, the Biden Administration invited large-scale asylum fraud by instituting a strategy



that focuses on processing migrants and releasing them into American community regardless of the merits of the asylum claim.

A similar phenomenon is occurring across the Atlantic Ocean in Europe. The European Union's (EU) [Schengen Borders Agreement](#) allows for the free movement within the covered countries without border checks. The Schengen area includes most EU countries, except for Cyprus and Ireland, and also includes four non-EU countries: Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein. The EU Parliament, based in Brussels, recently adopted the [Pact on Asylum and Migration](#) (The Pact) that establishes “a set of new rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system at EU level [sic], that delivers results while remaining grounded in our European values.” There are four significant areas of similarity between the Biden Administration's policies in the U.S. and the EU's new asylum and migration pact:

**1. Both prioritize managing and processing illegal aliens instead of deterrence.**

In the United States, the Biden Administration's strategy involves processing illegal aliens encountered at the southern border and releasing them into the American community of their choice until their immigration court date several years down the road.

In the EU, The Pact establishes “solidarity measures,” or burden sharing, of migrants where Brussels prioritizes the even redistribution of migrants across the member states instead relocating them to non-EU countries.

**2. Both operate under the premise that migrants have a right to make an asylum claim, regardless of the merits.**

In the U.S., asylum is a discretionary form of relief, but the Biden Administration continues to operate a nationwide catch-and-release scheme despite 90% of claims failing. The Biden Administration could reinstate the Migrant Protection Protocols or implement additional mandatory bars to asylum that would automatically disqualify migrants from consideration but they have failed to do so.

Under The Pact, migrants encountered at a Schengen border are entitled to make an asylum claim regardless of the merits of the case.

**3. Both punish those who favor border security.**

In the U.S., the Biden Administration has repeatedly gone to court to sue states like Texas and Florida to block state-level efforts to secure the border.

In the EU, The Pact establishes a 20,000 euro (\$21,300) penalty per migrant per year for each migrant a member country refuses to accept for resettlement during the asylum process.



#### 4. Both policies are unpopular with the citizenry.

In the U.S., the border crisis is a [leading](#) issue for voters ahead of the 2024 presidential election. In recent polling, [70%](#) of Americans disapproved of the way President Biden is handling immigration. In separate polling, [51%](#) of Americans support mass deportations—a policy that candidate Donald Trump has endorsed.

In the EU, 52% of Europeans oppose The Pact and 64% want stronger border controls.

#### ‘America First’-style policies gaining momentum across Europe

In 2015-2016, the EU experienced a humanitarian and security crisis when Germany pledged to accept an unlimited number of Syrians and Northern Africans claiming to be refugees. As many of these military aged males started committing crimes in the EU countries they passed through on their way to Germany and France, Hungary was the first EU member to object. Under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Hungary passed strict border security laws and constructed physical infrastructure to deter illegal migration. AFPI’s [visit](#) to Budapest earlier this year confirmed that many of Hungary’s border controls are similar to policies put in place during the Trump Administration or advocated for by AFPI to solve the current crisis at the U.S. southern border.

While the Biden Administration’s self-inflicted border crisis has received growing media attention in the U.S., most Americans may be unaware that Europe has also seen an increase in unlawful migration over the past few years. The following EU members have recently adopted ‘America First’ style border control policies designed to secure their borders and keep their communities safe, including increasing screening and vetting and restricting the travel of non-EU migrants. The stated [rationale](#) for these [border control](#) measures include:

- Austria: “Persistent threat situation in connection with the extremely unstable migration and security situation in the EU, high migratory pressure on the migration routes towards Central Europe,... [and] increase in migrant smuggling along the illegal migration routes....”
- Denmark: “Terrorist threat relating to the conflict between Israel and militant groups in Gaza and the Quran desecrations in 2023 which created a renewed focus on Denmark as a prioritized target among militant Islamist groups....”
- France: “[C]onstant migratory pressure at the Schengen external borders, significant increase in irregular crossings especially from [Turkey] and North Africa, pressure on the reception system....”



- Germany: “High level of migrant smuggling activity, the impact on security and migration in the Schengen area due to the security situation in the Middle East....”
- Italy: “Increased threat of violence within the EU following the attack on Israel, risk of possible terrorist infiltration into irregular migration flows from the Balkan route....”
- Poland: Increase in irregular migrants attempting to illegally enter through the border with Slovakia.
- Slovenia: “Risks associated with the global security situation... increased security risks due to organized crime in the Western Balkans, including people smuggling, risk of infiltration in mixed migration flows....”
- Slovakia: Desire to limit the number of illegal migrant arrivals.
- Sweden: “The attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and the Israeli offensive in Gaza which have increased tensions in Sweden and in other Member States....”
- Norway: “Increased threat to critical infrastructure, Russian intelligence operations threatening Norwegian exports of gas or military support to Ukraine; ports with ferry connections to the Schengen area.”

## Conclusion

The failed border security policies of the Biden Administration and Brussels are unpopular and are failing Americans and Europeans alike. Despite growing public opposition, political leaders in the EU and U.S. continue to focus on migration management—an impossible task given the volume of migrants trying to cross borders unlawfully. This failed strategy has overwhelmed the system and resulted in unvetted migrants being allowed into countries they have no legal right to be in.

The America First approach to border security builds off the proven policies of the Trump Administration which demonstrated that enforcement reforms and imposing immigration consequences deters illegal immigration. A growing number of EU countries have finally recognized that mass illegal immigration is harmful to their countries and are taking measures similar to those implemented in Hungary over the last decade and advocated for by AFPI. For the last three years, the Biden Administration in the U.S. has admired the border crisis and failed to meaningfully act to secure the border with Mexico. It remains to be seen whether Brussels will recognize the flaws of its Pact on Asylum and Migration and pivot from a migration management and processing approach to one that emphasizes border security, deterrence, and consequences for violating immigration laws.

