

Germany: plans to lift permanent border controls with Luxembourg

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Federal Minister of the Interior Alexander Dobrindt (CSU) announced on 29 April that controls at the border with Luxembourg would be lifted at the beginning of May, with enforcement efforts instead focused on the immediate border area. At the same time, his ministry confirmed that existing procedures would remain in place at the country's other borders. Minister Dobrindt denied that the decision had been driven by a ruling issued by a court in Koblenz on 27 April, which found the German border controls to be unlawful. The complaint was lodged by a German citizen who regularly crosses the Luxembourg border for professional reasons. The court held that the authorities had failed to demonstrate that the alleged threat linked to irregular migration was sudden and exceptional in nature. It also found that they must demonstrate that, in the absence of border controls, institutions responsible for migration management would become overstretched. Furthermore, the government failed to demonstrate that the absence of controls could pose a genuine threat to the functioning of the EU's system of free movement. The Interior Ministry has announced that it will appeal this ruling. The German–Luxembourg border is 136 km long and, alongside the section with Denmark (68 km), is among the shortest international borders of Germany. In 2025, it recorded the lowest number of detentions at 1,300, compared with 10,000 on the border with France, as well as the lowest number of refusals of entry at 909, compared with 7,500 along the French border.

The Interior Ministry's decision introduces differentiated control regimes at Germany's borders. In future, spot identity checks in the border area may also be applied on selected sections of other German borders. At the same time, it appears unlikely that all permanent controls will be lifted. Controls on the border with Austria have been in place continuously since 2015.

Commentary

- **The removal of permanent random checks at the border with Luxembourg reflects pressure from both that country and German border communities.** Their suspension was largely uncontroversial, owing to the limited number of crossings and the relatively small proportion of individuals refused entry at the border. The restrictions had been criticised by the Luxembourg authorities, as well as by local politicians, municipal officials and business representatives on both sides of the border. Around 50,000 Germans commute daily to work in Luxembourg, and the border controls – particularly on motorways near the Schengen area and on the A64 towards Trier – significantly extended their travel

times.

- **The illegality of border controls had already been identified by German administrative courts; however, this did not automatically lead to changes in procedural arrangements.** In Bavaria, a court of second instance ruled on several occasions against Germany, finding certain instances of identity checks on the German–Austrian border to be unlawful. Similar rulings were also issued in other federal states, including Baden–Württemberg. However, these decisions did not compel the automatic suspension of monitoring at border crossings, as they concerned the legality of individual actions that had already taken place, rather than their implementation as a matter of state policy.
- **The German government maintains that border controls should be upheld, as they contribute significantly to reducing migration pressure.** Since the beginning of this year, the number of asylum applications has fallen by 38% compared with 2025, with 22,000 submitted to date. In 2025 as a whole, the figure declined by 51% year-on-year to 113,000. This trend **has been** driven primarily by a decrease in the number of irregular migrants entering the EU. According to data from Frontex, migration pressure at the EU's borders in 2025 fell by 26% compared with 2024, reaching its lowest level since 2021. Since the beginning of this year, a further decline of around 40% year-on-year has been recorded.
- **The improvement in Germany's migration situation has also been influenced by political developments in Syria.** Previously, Syrians constituted the largest group of asylum applicants in Germany. At present, Afghan nationals submit the highest number of applications. The reduction in the number of applications has also been driven by changes in Berlin's policy, including the restriction of benefits for asylum seekers, the resumption of deportations to Afghanistan, and the extension of the time required to obtain German citizenship (see '[Germany: a significant drop in the number of asylum applications](#)').
- **Pressure to maintain border controls is consistently exerted by the anti-immigration AfD, which leads in nationwide polls with 28% support, compared with 24% for the CDU.** Despite the decline in the number of asylum applications, migration policy remains one of the party's central programme priorities. Alongside economic issues, it will also be one of the key themes of the campaign ahead of the September elections to the *Landtags* in Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania, as well as to the Berlin House of Representatives. In the first two federal states, the AfD could win the largest share of the vote.