# Merkel warns EU risks disintegration over rising border controls and migration rifts



Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel has re-emerged in the political dialogue, delivering a stark warning regarding the future stability of the European Union. Speaking at the Southwestern Press Forum in Neu-Ulm during a presentation of her memoir, "Freedom," she expressed grave concerns that the EU could face disintegration if member states persist in tightening border controls and abandoning collective migration policies. Merkel's remarks coincide with growing nationalism throughout Europe, reflecting a significant shift in political sentiment, particularly in light of newly implemented migration controls by Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s cabinet.

These stringent new measures, which prohibit asylum applications at all German land borders with limited exceptions for vulnerable groups, mark a considerable deviation from Merkel’s 2015 “open-door” policy. That policy, which facilitated the entry of over a million migrants during a time of crisis, has now been replaced by a hardline approach, championed by Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt, that aims to deter illegal migration. “I do not believe we can decisively combat illegal migration at the German-Austrian or German-Polish border… I have always advocated European solutions,” Merkel stated, emphasising that unilateral border closures risk undermining the foundational principles of the EU, particularly the freedom of movement within the Schengen Area.

The urgency of Merkel's warnings is magnified by the recent electoral landscape in Germany, where the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has sharply increased its political clout, garnering 20.8% of the vote in February’s elections. The ruling coalition, formed in response to AfD’s rising influence, has adopted a stance aimed at curbing its appeal, which has led to the current government’s embrace of stricter border controls as a direct response to public sentiment. This shift is perceived not only as a political strategy but also as a reflection of deep-seated frustrations directed towards the EU's failure to address migration issues effectively.

Recent statistics illustrate the immediate impact of these new border controls: Germany reported a 45% increase in individuals turned away from its borders within just a week following the implementation of tighter measures. Interior Minister Dobrindt highlighted the need to combat smuggling networks that exploit migrants, asserting that the government is acting to protect Germany’s welfare system from abuse. Despite these intentions, the efficacy and practicality of such measures are already under scrutiny, as German police are finding enforcement to be challenging due to staff shortages and logistical issues.

The dynamic of Merkel’s resurgence in this discussion illuminates a growing schism not only in Germany but across Europe. Recent controversies have surfaced, most notably, criticisms from leaders of Poland and Greece who condemned Germany's unilateral approach, further complicating EU discussions aimed at a unified response to migration. While Merkel has vocally insisted on a collaborative EU solution, historical resistance from countries rejecting mandatory refugee quotas has hindered progress. This stagnancy raises concerns that Germany’s current trajectory towards unilateralism may inadvertently deepen fractures within the EU, counteracting the very stability Merkel advocates.

The European Union has faced numerous crises over the past two decades, yet the current migration debate may pose its most formidable challenge. Striving for a unified approach has become increasingly difficult as national governments prioritise local political pressures over collective responsibilities. This shift risks undoing decades of integration within the EU framework, a reality Merkel warns could lead to the fruition of a “destroyed” Europe, should current trends persist.

In a climate where far-right rhetoric is gaining ground, the challenge remains to balance political autonomy with European solidarity. Merkel’s call for a coordinated response to migration is timely yet fraught with obstacles. Whether her assertions resonate enough to encourage a reevaluation of EU migration policies—or prompt a broader dialogue regarding shared European values—remains a critical question as the continent grapples with the complexities of immigration in an increasingly fragmented world.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://weeklyblitz.net/2025/05/27/merkel-warns-of-eu-collapse-over-border-controls-is-europe-turning-its-back-on-itself/), [[6]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/09/16/current-events-in-germany-show-that-there-is-no-miracle-solution-when-it-comes-to-migration-policy_6726164_23.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://weeklyblitz.net/2025/05/27/merkel-warns-of-eu-collapse-over-border-controls-is-europe-turning-its-back-on-itself/), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-reject-undocumented-migrants-border-bild-reports-2025-05-07/), [[5]](https://apnews.com/article/aa86a4d73a67a36c71b32daec7654e84)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/6ea641645a932d97bd15669d2f6615a5), [[4]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/09/15/europe-trapped-on-immigration-once-again_6726142_23.html), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-minister-expects-sharp-fall-asylum-seekers-this-year-2025-05-04/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://weeklyblitz.net/2025/05/27/merkel-warns-of-eu-collapse-over-border-controls-is-europe-turning-its-back-on-itself/), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-reject-undocumented-migrants-border-bild-reports-2025-05-07/), [[5]](https://apnews.com/article/aa86a4d73a67a36c71b32daec7654e84)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/09/16/current-events-in-germany-show-that-there-is-no-miracle-solution-when-it-comes-to-migration-policy_6726164_23.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://weeklyblitz.net/2025/05/27/merkel-warns-of-eu-collapse-over-border-controls-is-europe-turning-its-back-on-itself/), [[4]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/09/15/europe-trapped-on-immigration-once-again_6726142_23.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://weeklyblitz.net/2025/05/27/merkel-warns-of-eu-collapse-over-border-controls-is-europe-turning-its-back-on-itself/), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/6ea641645a932d97bd15669d2f6615a5)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://weeklyblitz.net/2025/05/27/merkel-warns-of-eu-collapse-over-border-controls-is-europe-turning-its-back-on-itself/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/6ea641645a932d97bd15669d2f6615a5> - Germany has intensified border controls, leading to a 45% increase in individuals being turned back at its borders. Between May 6 and May 13, 739 people were denied entry, up from 511 the previous week. Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt emphasized the need to stop smuggling networks that exploit migrants with false promises of access to Germany’s welfare system. These measures reflect the government's tougher stance on migration, a key theme in Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s campaign.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-reject-undocumented-migrants-border-bild-reports-2025-05-07/> - Germany's new interior minister, Alexander Dobrindt, has ordered the rejection of undocumented migrants at the country's borders, reversing a 2015 policy initiated by former Chancellor Angela Merkel. In addition to this policy change, Dobrindt plans to reinforce border security by deploying up to 3,000 additional police officers, increasing the total border force to 14,000 officers. These measures align with Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s pre-election promises to tighten migration controls in response to a rise in violent crimes involving migrant suspects and growing support for far-right parties.
4. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/09/15/europe-trapped-on-immigration-once-again_6726142_23.html> - In July 2024, Ursula von der Leyen, upon confirmation as president of the European Commission, emphasized a fair and firm European response to migration, rooted in human rights. However, by September 2024, Germany announced the reintroduction of border controls without consultation amid challenging electoral contexts, undermining European solidarity. This unilateral move, though within Germany's rights under Schengen laws, contributes to divisiveness. Poland and Greece's leaders criticized the action, highlighting risks to the free movement area. With Germany being the primary host for asylum seekers entering via the south, a truly unified approach is essential, as epitomized by the EU's recent yet unimplemented Pact on Migration and Asylum, set for 2026. Meanwhile, Germany's about-face could complicate future EU negotiations, such as the law on returns. This scenario underscores the need for collective, non-improvisational responses to immigration within a fragmented Europe, where far-right rhetoric increasingly challenges shared values and cohesion.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/aa86a4d73a67a36c71b32daec7654e84> - Germany’s new government, led by Chancellor Friedrich Merz, announced plans to bolster border controls in an effort to curb illegal migration. Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt confirmed that more police will be deployed at the borders to enforce stricter checks and carry out rejections of some asylum-seekers. While vulnerable individuals will still be allowed entry, the government aims to gradually increase push-backs. This marks a tougher stance on migration compared to the previous administration under Olaf Scholz. Merz emphasized stricter migration policies during his campaign, particularly after a violent incident involving a rejected asylum-seeker. Scholz’s administration had already extended border checks and negotiated return agreements but faced mounting pressure amid overflowing shelters. Although the EU’s Schengen area allows largely open borders, temporary controls are permitted during serious threats. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which placed second in the February elections, also pushed anti-immigration rhetoric but was recently labeled a “right-wing extremist” group by the domestic intelligence agency. Despite overall EU irregular migration dropping in 2024 and Germany seeing a 30% decline in asylum applications, the new government is moving forward with tougher enforcement measures citing ongoing dysfunction in the system.
6. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/09/16/current-events-in-germany-show-that-there-is-no-miracle-solution-when-it-comes-to-migration-policy_6726164_23.html> - Germany has been facing significant challenges with its migration policies, particularly evident with the influx of 1.4 million Syrian immigrants in 2015 and many Ukrainians thereafter. In 2023, Germany led Europe in asylum applications, registering over 350,000. Chancellor Angela Merkel's 2015 slogan 'Wir schaffen das' indicated a welcoming attitude towards migrants, but incidents like the 2016 New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Cologne created public backlash and bolstered the far-right AfD party. Recent events, including a deadly knife attack by a Syrian in Solingen, have intensified the political discourse, leading to proposed security measures and tighter controls on irregular migration. Additionally, local municipalities struggle with housing and integration, exacerbating tensions among citizens. Efforts to balance welcoming skilled immigrants with increased deportations have been challenging. Continued far-right advancements in regional elections reflect the complexities and the public's growing frustration. The German government is now under pressure to adopt a more inward-looking stance while maintaining legal and historical commitments to asylum. Achieving a balance between state interests and solidarity remains crucial for successful integration and public acceptance.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-minister-expects-sharp-fall-asylum-seekers-this-year-2025-05-04/> - Germany is projected to see the lowest number of asylum seekers in over a decade, with approximately 100,000 applications expected in 2025, according to outgoing Interior Minister Nancy Faeser. This follows a sharp decline from nearly 352,000 applications in 2023 to just under 251,000 in 2024. The federal migration office noted that such low figures were last recorded in 2012. Faeser attributed the decline to successful efforts in curbing irregular migration over the past two years. Her successor, Alexander Dobrindt of the conservative CSU party, plans to intensify border controls, implement stricter migration policies, and bolster border enforcement with thousands of additional officials and aerial surveillance. These measures are part of the new government's broader commitment to reducing illegal migration and countering the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which has gained traction by leveraging public concerns over border security.