

2024

a year in review
& reflections on
learning

A hand is shown holding a white protest sign with black, hand-drawn text. The text on the sign reads "STOP Supporting RACISM". The background of the sign is slightly blurred, and the hand is in the foreground, wearing a black wristband.

STOP
Supporting
RACISM

2024

a year in review

As we reflect on 2024, we are proud to present a comprehensive overview of our EUSS (EU Settlement Scheme) service provision and the significant strides we have made in supporting people and communities throughout London and Leicester.

This report highlights key milestones, including impactful case studies, our ongoing efforts to address current challenges, and our continued influence within the sector. It also showcases the breadth of our outreach activities, both in-person and online, demonstrating our expanding reach and engagement with diverse audiences.

Additionally, we review the resources we have produced to empower applicants and partners, and the ways in which our online presence has amplified our work. This year has been one of growth, resilience, and meaningful impact as we remain committed to providing crucial support for EU citizens in the UK and contributing to the broader conversation on immigration and settlement policy.

Providing EU Settlement Scheme advice

2024

Total number of people engaged with information and support on the EU Settlement Scheme

This includes EUSS advice, capacity building and website views



5,572



571

Total number of vulnerable people supported with their application on the EU Settlement Scheme

This includes more than 66 new complex applications submitted

Main challenges we are facing in our casework

Cases are becoming **more demanding and complex**, because of people's complex situations, coupled with increasingly stricter requirements set by the EUSS guidance, and additional barriers introduced by changes in the law.



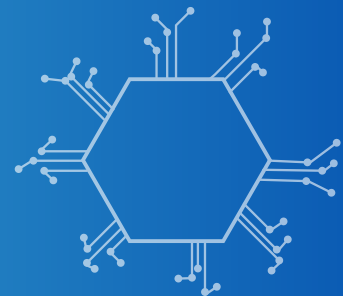
Prolonged **waiting times** are exacerbated by unclear or unnecessary requests from the Home Office, making it difficult to identify the underlying issues that prevent a decision on a case being made.



Effective **communication with the Home Office** and transparent and consistent decision-making remains a significant challenge, either regarding people's applications, or wider policy communications to the public, which often cause confusion for those we support.



People face significant **challenges in accessing and proving their digital status** due to technical issues, inadequate escalation processes, and delays in resolution by the Home Office, often requiring intervention from support organisations to uphold their rights.



Case studies from our advice work in London

2024

N., an **Italian national**, moved to London in 2014. A **stay-at-home mother caring for two children** since 2015, she **faced language barriers and lacked IT literacy**. In July 2023, she applied to upgrade her Pre-settled status to Settled status with the help of New Europeans UK, submitting standard residency evidence like council tax bills, utility bills, and bank statements.

The **Home Office unexpectedly requested additional documents**, including those already submitted, and alleged a council tax bill was falsified. We **verified the document's authenticity through a subject access request** after delays from the local council and successfully refuted the forgery claim. Despite resolving these issues by January 2024, the **application remained pending** due to the Home Office's lack of communication and was finally granted Settled status in January 2025.

Without New Europeans UK's assistance, N. would have **struggled to navigate the application process amidst repeated requests** and delays, which exacerbated uncertainty about her status for over a year.

P., an **Italian national married to a British citizen**, was granted Pre-settled status in April 2024 through a paper application. While he received a confirmation letter and instructions for accessing his digital status, he was **unable to log in or generate a share code**, therefore, proving his status, leading to lost job opportunities.

Notwithstanding his multiple calls and assurances from the EU Settlement Resolution Centre, **the problem remained unresolved as it had not been properly escalated**. New Europeans UK raised the issue again, but the Home Office could not provide a timeline for resolution. After a week, P. received an email stating the problem was fixed—but it was not. More calls followed, but **no progress or explanation of the reasons for the issue were provided**.

Finally, the issue was resolved in November 2024, allowing P. to access his digital status. If not for his British spouse, the **lack of access to his digital status could have left him unable to secure housing or meet basic living needs**, as the confirmation letter was not accepted as proof.

Case studies from our advice work in Leicester

2024

H., a **Somali national**, was **previously married to an EU national**. Following their divorce, H. sought to apply for Settled status in the UK. She had **an expired passport and was initially advised by a private solicitor to apply for a travel document as a prerequisite**. Unfortunately, her travel document application was rejected, as she was ineligible to apply for one.

New Europeans UK assessed her situation and advised her that she could **proceed with a Settled status application under the retained rights of residence route, even with an expired passport**. We assisted her in preparing and submitting the application, which was subsequently granted.

Additionally, H.'s **5-year-old son, born in the UK**, did not have any immigration status. However, as H. now holds Settled status, we informed her that her son could be **registered as a British citizen**, to secure his future in the UK.

O., a **Slovak national of Roma origin**, faced significant challenges as he had **lost his passport and had no other form of ID**. Without immigration status, he was homeless and destitute. O. had lived in the UK since childhood and had never left the country. However, he was **unable to travel to the Slovak embassy in London to obtain replacement documents** due to a lack of funds and support from his family.

We assisted O. by submitting a **late Settled status application** on his behalf. Despite the challenges, his application was successful. This outcome allowed O. to begin rebuilding his life. He was thrilled to be able to apply for jobs, secure housing, and prove his right to work.

O. expressed great relief at being able to live with dignity and stability once again, being able to apply for jobs and secure housing. This case highlights the **profound impact of obtaining legal status** on people's ability to uphold their rights.

Our partnership model in London

Building on the foundation of our previous work, in 2024 we expanded our outreach efforts and strengthened our partnerships with grassroots organisations and community groups. By **recognising the diverse needs of the communities we work with**, we **refined our communication strategies with partner organisations**, ensuring a deeper understanding of their specific needs. This allowed us to tailor our support more effectively, empowering local leaders and organisations to better assist vulnerable EU citizens.

We have consistently reviewed our outreach activities, concentrating on methods to address immediate needs and equip communities with knowledge on the EU Settlement Scheme. This is why **we have alternated EUSS drop-in sessions, Information sessions, and other outreach activities in several London boroughs**, targeting diverse groups to reach the most vulnerable.

With this approach, we have managed to equip our London Community Partners (**Shpresa, Latin American House, Community House and ROTA**) to assist their communities by providing resources, a referral platform and informal networks to their service users. Our partners have reported that they **engaged with over 200 people on the EU Settlement Scheme in 2024**, out of which they **submitted over 70 direct applications**, provided **continuous support to over 100 people** and **referred to our advice service over 66 people**. The people they engaged with were especially diverse, ranging from eight Latin American countries to all over Europe. Notably, many were dual-nationals.

The **topics most commonly discussed** regarded accessing UKVI accounts, updating personal information, Pre-settled to Settled applications, absence allowances with Pre-settled status, eVisas and general information on rights and entitlements with their EUSS status.

Together with our partners and via wider outreach events, **we have managed to support over 384 people via direct advice, skill-enhancement workshops and informative sessions**. Overall, in 2024, we have facilitated circa **20 in-person events** in our target London boroughs, particularly Barking and Dagenham, Camden, Edmonton and Southwark, where we reached several communities such as Albanian, Latin-American, and Italian.

In addition to this, at the above sessions as well as at wider engagement events, we distributed our comprehensive resources to people, organisations and wider networks to share information on the EUSS. We have **shared over 300 leaflets and resources** directly at in person events, as well as with our community partners, to distribute and utilise in their ongoing support efforts.

Our partnership model in Leicester

In 2024, we supported **more than 400 EU and non-EU nationals in Leicester**. We submitted 44 applications, the majority of which were transitions from Pre-settled status to Settled status.

We also **helped over 360 people with essential support** on their applications to the EUSS and with one-off advice.

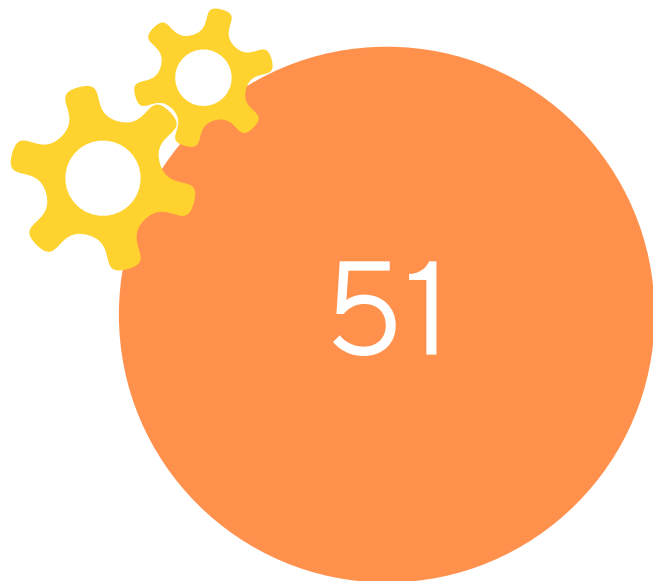
We continued to receive **referrals from our partners**: Leicester Roma Community Services (now Social Justice for All), SOCOPA (Somali Community Parents Association), and General Information in the UK (online Romanian group).

We also provided a **12-week IAA (formerly OISC) training course** for six community workers from three different agencies, with the help of our partner Seraphus. We are now supporting two of those groups to register themselves with IAA (formerly OISC) as a legacy for the communities involved.

In the final months of 2024, we started receiving referrals from Women for Change (a women-only Somali organisation) and the British Red Cross.

Total number of capacity building sessions delivered

This includes activity in London and Leicester



Our resource production

During 2024 we produced a set of resources providing comprehensive guidance for people navigating the processes required for applying to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), and in understanding the rights granted through a status. Our particular focus has been on those with Pre-settled status and those who are impacted by the introduction of eVisas. We also recognised the need for our clients and networks to be informed about securing long-term settlement in the UK, and ensuring they are informed of their voting rights for General and local elections.

Pre-settled status and the path to Settled status

This resource highlights the importance of transitioning from Pre-settled to Settled status.



Uploading New Evidence for EU Settlement Scheme Applications

This guide provides clear instructions on how to upload additional evidence during the EUSS online application process.



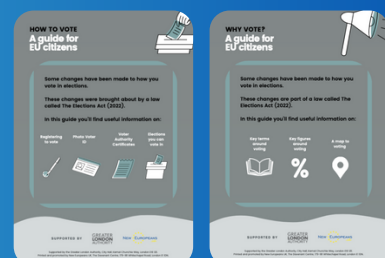
The Introduction of e-Visas: Implications for EUSS Holders

Our latest resource addresses the e-Visa system, explaining its impact on people holding Pre-settled or Settled status under the EUSS.



Voting Rights under the Elections Act (2022)

We developed two guides on the vital information about voting rights for EU citizens living in the UK.



Our current concerns

Changes introduced on 8 October 2024 **retroactively move the deadline for joining family members to apply under the EUSS to the date of their first entry in the UK** after the transition period. This significantly impacts people already in the UK, particularly those whose immigration status is refused, requiring them to submit a different category of application, and from overseas.



The **iterative approach to policy and implementation results in constant legislative changes and inconsistent rule interpretation** significantly causes confusion and uncertainty for people we support, increasing the workload for support organisations, while funding remains insufficient and uncertain.



The **number of late applications remains consistent and high** - according to Home Office data, late applications are 14% of those submitted. Our casework shows that those who fall into this category include people who have lived in the UK for many years, some may have had an initial application refused; and those with language barriers, digital exclusion and a fear of engaging with authority. We believe the Home Office is not taking sufficient action to address this ongoing and particularly complex need through policy changes or additional support.



The Home Office's implementation of **e-Visas** has not been straightforward and whilst a small percentage of our clientele would be directly affected, many others have also been impacted. The rollout is currently postponed to March 2025, raising wider concerns about their ability to manage digital systems effectively, and communications from the Home Office have caused unnecessary concerns.



We see persistent and ongoing issues with the **EUSS digital immigration status**, including a significant backlog of applications which leaves people unable to prove their immigration status and rights in the UK; technical issues for those who have been granted a status; and for those with a status engaging with services or travelling in and out of the UK.



How we influence thinking

2024

Staff at New Europeans UK continued to be present in all significant fora to remain informed of changes to the EUSS scheme and its impact on vulnerable EU citizens, and to provide feedback, raise concerns and hold the Home Office to account.

Our attendance at these meetings - notably the **Home Office's Supported Users Group** allowed us to understand changes brought in by the Home Office, and the reasoning behind them. We are able to raise issues and join others concerned with changes of practice and policy. Furthermore, our proximity to this team tasked with safeguarding vulnerable users allowed us to seek their help with specific egregious cases which has led to a successful resolution in many cases.

The **EEAS EU Citizens Monitoring Network** is an opportunity to engage with Embassies on their concerns for their citizens' cases, and government departments outlining new policies or changes to existing ones under the EUSS. As one of a few civil society actors we have the opportunity to raise issues impacting specific vulnerable groups directly to embassies and consulates, and the EU Commission. New Europeans UK contributed to the **EEAS Citizens gathering in December 2024** with a broad cross section of attendees including UK government representatives, MPs and EU counterparts, and the broader voluntary and community sector representing EU communities across the UK.

As members of the **GLA's Migrant, Refugee and Asylum Seekers Panel** we were able to inform discussions on the functioning of EUSS and its impact on EU citizens, and help shape the wider debate on the roll out of the E-visa system, sharing our experiences and insights on a digital immigration process that will now be part of the lives of many millions of migrants living in the UK.

We have also engaged consistently with the **Independent Monitoring Authority**, through our coordination of the EUSS Alliance and in other fora to help improve its work in protecting the rights of citizens under the Withdrawal Agreement. We supported the Third Sector Alliance, (recently announced as closing), to raise broader issues about failures of the Withdrawal Agreement, and compliance with the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Citizens' Rights** informs Members of Parliament about challenges facing EU citizens in the UK and Britons abroad. New Europeans UK holds the secretariat of the APPG and works with other organisations, representing EU citizens in the UK and Britons abroad, to bring issues to the attention of MPs and Peers and try to influence government policy through the APPG. Topics discussed have related to immigration status, such as barriers in accessing the digital EUSS system for vulnerable communities, along with voting rights for EU citizens ahead of local elections in the UK and the European Parliament Elections in 2024.

Our coordination of the Civil Society EUSS Alliance

2024

We have **coordinated and convened the Civil Society EUSS Alliance since 2019** to offer support for the sector and to develop a civil society voice and response to the EU Settlement Scheme and those impacted by a digital immigration status. Currently **an average of 30-40 people attend our monthly meetings**, from across the UK, bringing a diversity of insights and experience as caseworkers, campaigners and legal experts.

These monthly meetings online allow those working frontline as caseworkers, those in policy and advocacy and legal experts to meet, and explore persistent and emerging issues. As a result **the Alliance organises regular sessions to support caseworkers in their work led by experts in particular aspects of the EUSS.**

The space created by the Alliance has **facilitated a collective response from the sector**, and to engage with UK and EU institutions on particular aspects of the Scheme. We have had **meaningful engagement with the Home Office** on the roll out of the automated process to 'upgrade' those with Pre-settled status to Settled status. Our engagement is on-going and has extended into written feedback on aspects of the roll out that we have concerns about or anticipate issues. We have also met with **FCDO** and **EU Commission representatives** to hear about on-going negotiations on ensuring the UK government adheres to commitments under the Withdrawal Agreement. We also regularly meet **the Independent Monitoring Authority** to hear about its work and where the Alliance can influence the Authority's focus.

The Civil Society EUSS Alliance survey

2024

Since 2023 we have been **surveying the Civil Society EUSS Alliance to gain insights into the state of the sector and tracking the evolving challenges and needs** related to the EU Settlement Scheme. **The data collected is instrumental** and is shared with various stakeholders to help inform policy, guide sectoral responses and ensure the needs of the sector supporting EU citizens and their families are highlighted.

Throughout the ongoing support provided by organisations in the Civil Society EUSS Alliance, several **key themes have emerged** regarding the reasons for late applications and the common grounds for refusals by the Home Office.

Vulnerability

Many clients have faced significant barriers in completing their EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) applications on time, a major obstacle has been digital literacy and lack of access to technology. In addition, clients with limited English proficiency often struggle to understand the process, unable to access information in their native language makes navigating the application process even harder.

In some cases, clients are unaware that children need to apply separately, or they misunderstand their status, thinking that existing documents like a Permanent Residence (PR) or Biometric Residence Card (BRC) issued under EEA rules mean no further action is necessary.

Clients often make late applications to the EUSS due to a combination of language barriers, lack of awareness or understanding of the process, limited digital skills, and misinformation from various sources. Personal circumstances, such as incarceration or previous refusals, also contributed to delays.

Submission

Another common issue arises when applicants are deemed not vulnerable enough to meet the Home Office's criteria for submitting a late application, even when they face significant challenges like extended periods of homelessness or rough sleeping. Furthermore, applications are frequently rejected for lack of reasonable grounds for late submission, with the Home Office often not accepting compassionate or personal circumstances as valid reasons for missing the original deadline. In cases where applicants do not meet these criteria or have gaps in the evidence for their residence or relationships, their applications were not approved.

The Civil Society EUSS Alliance survey

2024

Assessment

At the assessment stage, the Home Office frequently refuse applications for a range of reasons, including insufficient evidence, particularly regarding residence or relationship history. In some cases, NHS evidence can not be verified, and there are challenges in contacting applicants who lack digital skills. Applications are also rejected when applicants fail to challenge previous refusals, or when the reason for delay in making a late application is not deemed sufficient or compelling enough.

Pre-settled status

People with Pre-settled status are facing a range of difficulties, from confusion over rights and access to support services, to issues around document verification and late applications. The most pressing concerns include destitution and homelessness due to limited access to benefits or work, compounded by complex personal situations, such as mental health challenges or immigration history. Clearer understanding and guidance for both clients and statutory services are critical to addressing these issues effectively.

e-Visas

The support of people with e-Visas face numerous challenges, particularly due to digital exclusion. Key issues include lack of awareness about the e-Visa system, challenges in accessing status information despite receiving notifications, and discrepancies with expiry dates that cause confusion. Additionally, problems with damaged or incorrect BRPs, outdated contact details, and inconsistent access to online accounts complicate the process further.

The increasing importance of quality, accredited legal advice and support

A large number of applicants also face difficulties with the administrative burden of the application, which they find complex and overwhelming. Many lack the necessary evidence or guidance to complete their applications accurately, and incorrect advice from unregulated sources –such as family members or friends– further compounded the confusion. For some, personal circumstances such as serving a custodial sentence or being held on remand, or experiencing periods of homelessness or rough sleeping, delay their ability to apply on time.

Our online presence and reach

2024



42,516

Post reach



40,834

Impressions



575,822

Impressions



Newsletter opens



Website sessions



Newsletter clicks



Website users

2021-24

reflections on learning

In recent years, we have made significant strides in supporting and developing our service provision as well as our organisational reach. Central to our mission is providing vulnerable communities with access to free legal advice and support, and we are proud of the positive impact we've had.

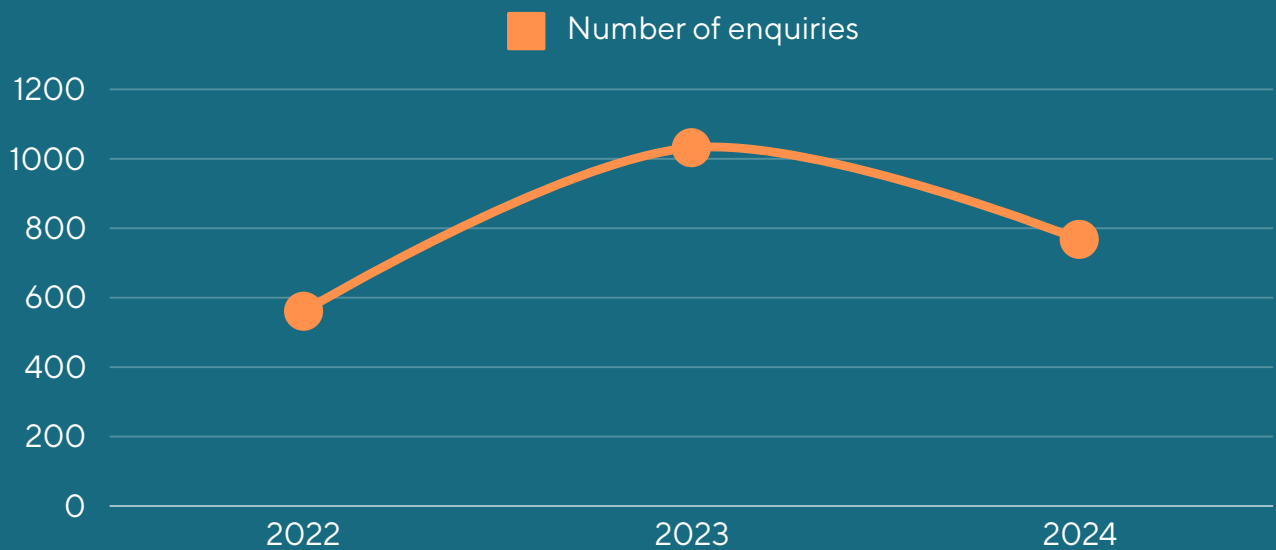
We have focused delivering specialised legal advice, particularly to those facing barriers like language, digital access, or personal circumstances.

As we expanded our online presence, we ensure key information is accessible and available in multiple languages, increasing our reach and helping more people connect with our support. Additionally, our capacity-building and influencing thinking efforts, through partnerships with community organisations and sector bodies, have strengthened local networks and enhanced support for EU citizens.

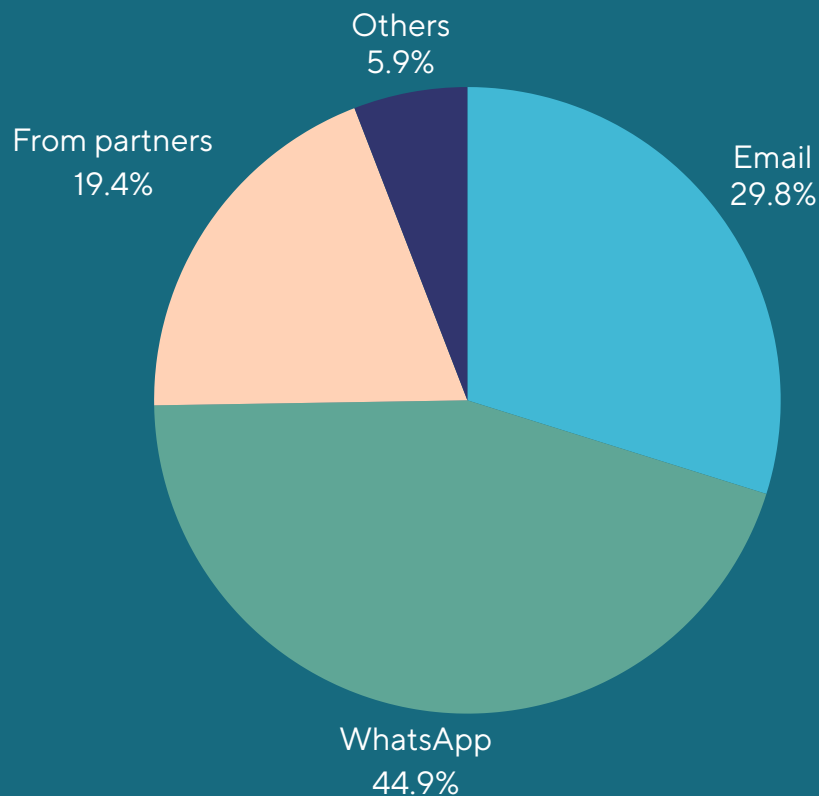
Through these combined efforts, we've helped EU citizens secure their rights, integrate into UK society, and build a lasting support network that continues to assist them long after their initial legal advice.

Providing EU Settlement Scheme advice 2022 - 24

Total enquiries received:

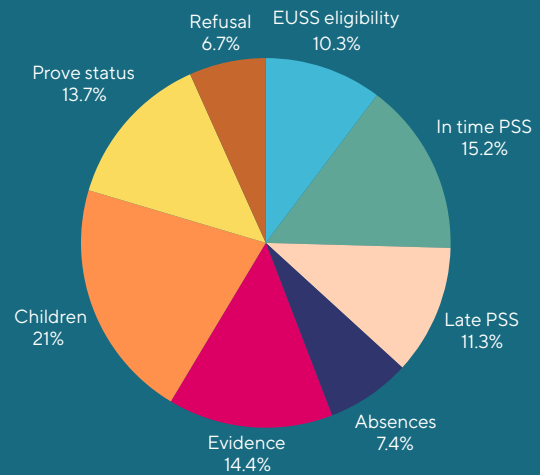


Enquires received via:

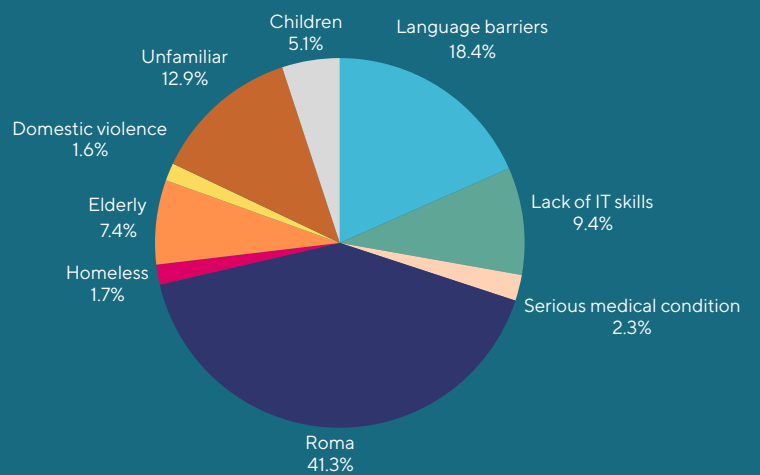


Providing EU Settlement Scheme advice 2022 - 24

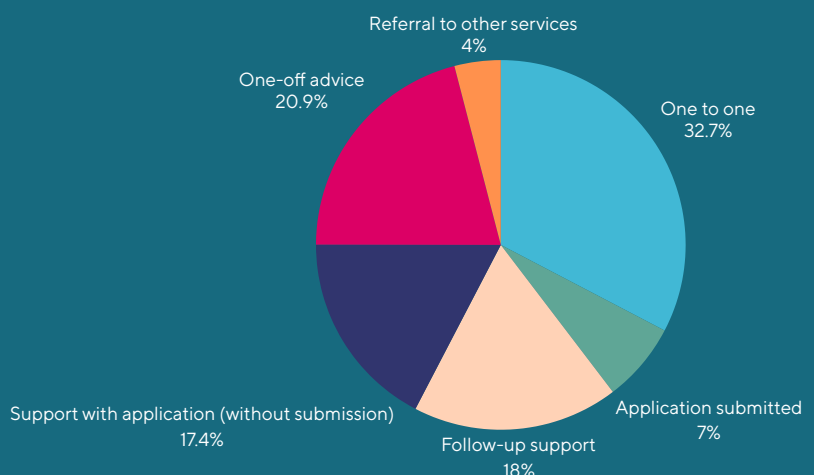
Enquiries were about:



Vulnerabilities recorded as:

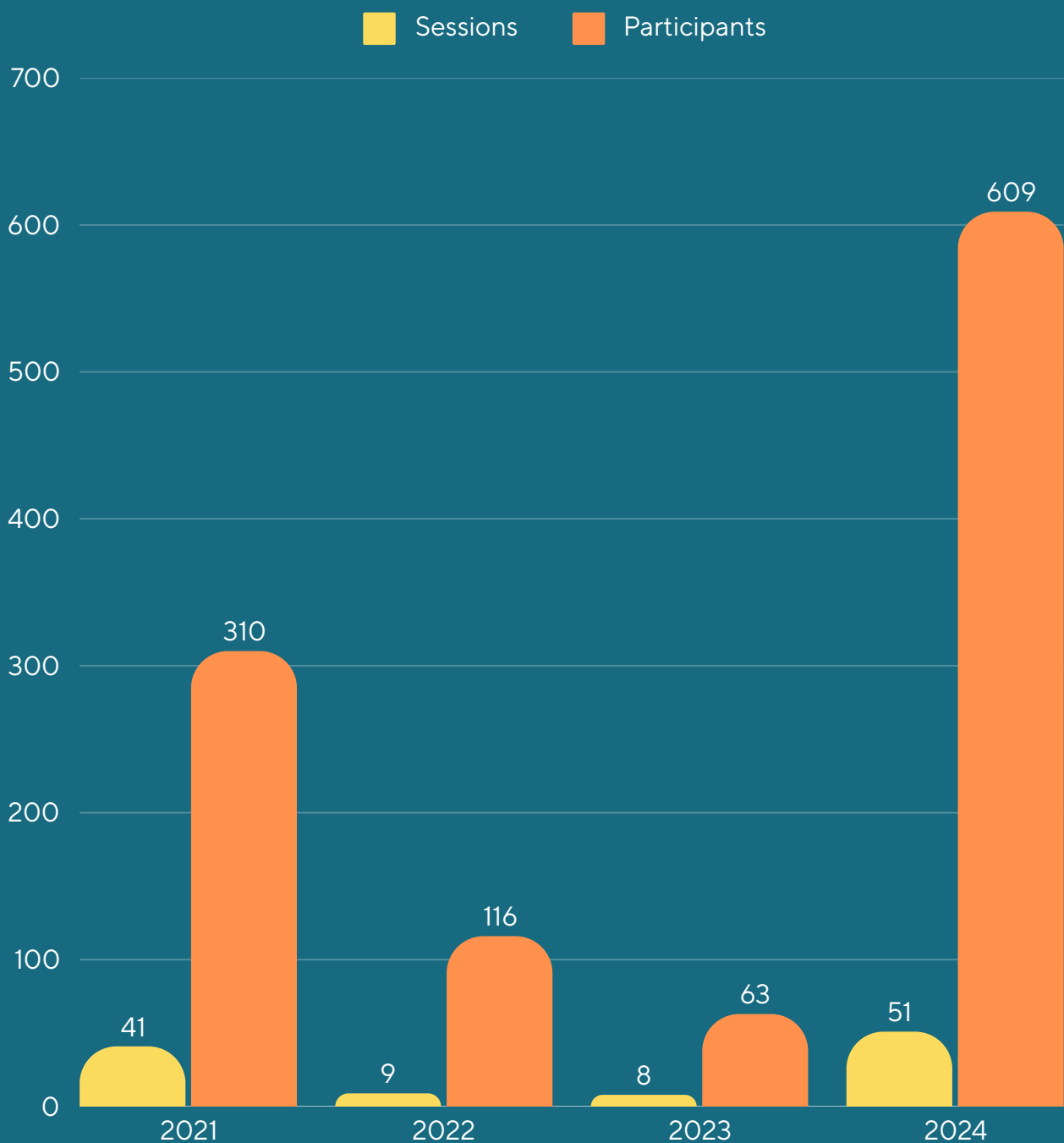


Type of support provided:



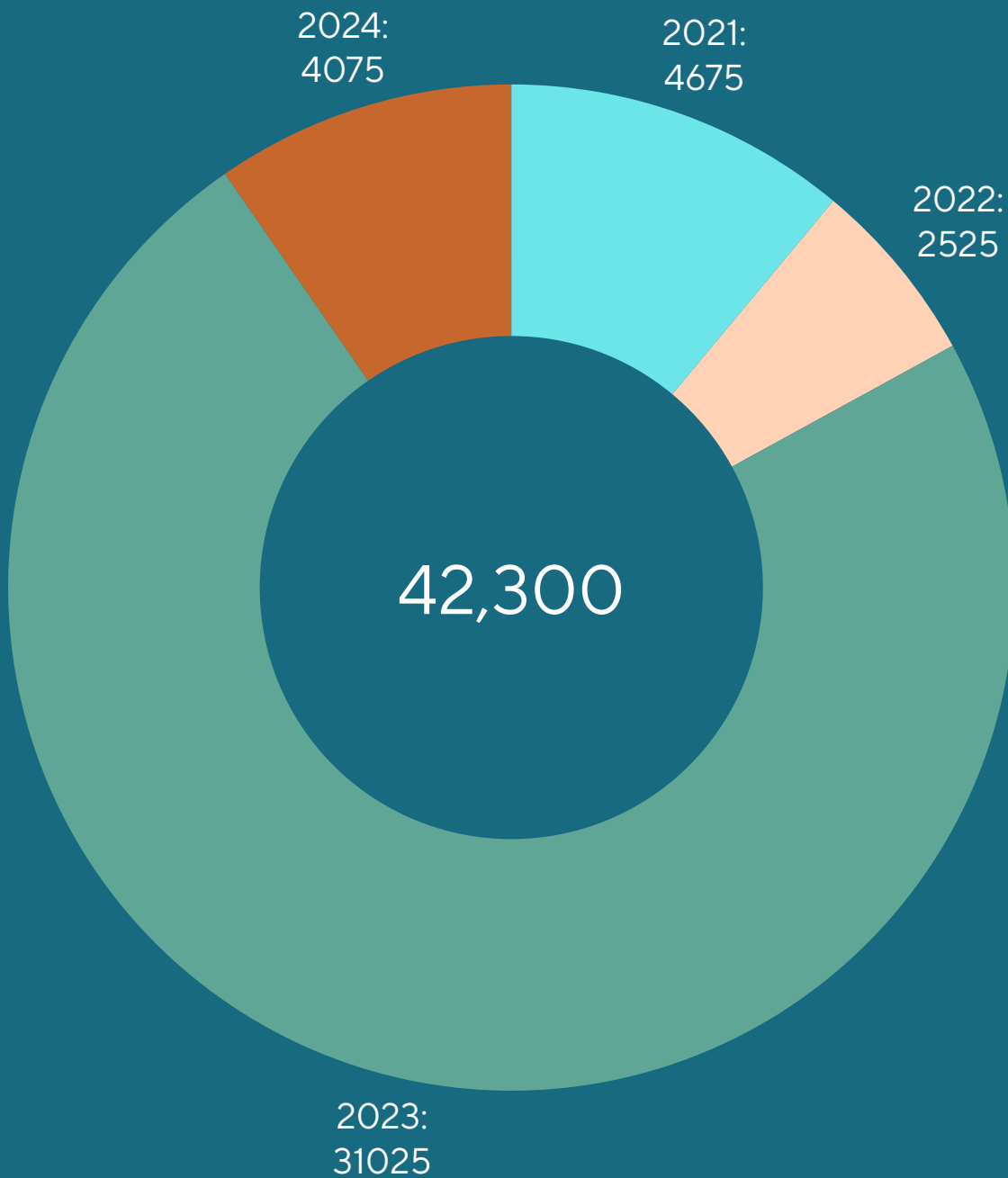
Working in partnerships and capacity building 2021 - 24

Capacity building sessions delivered and participants reached:



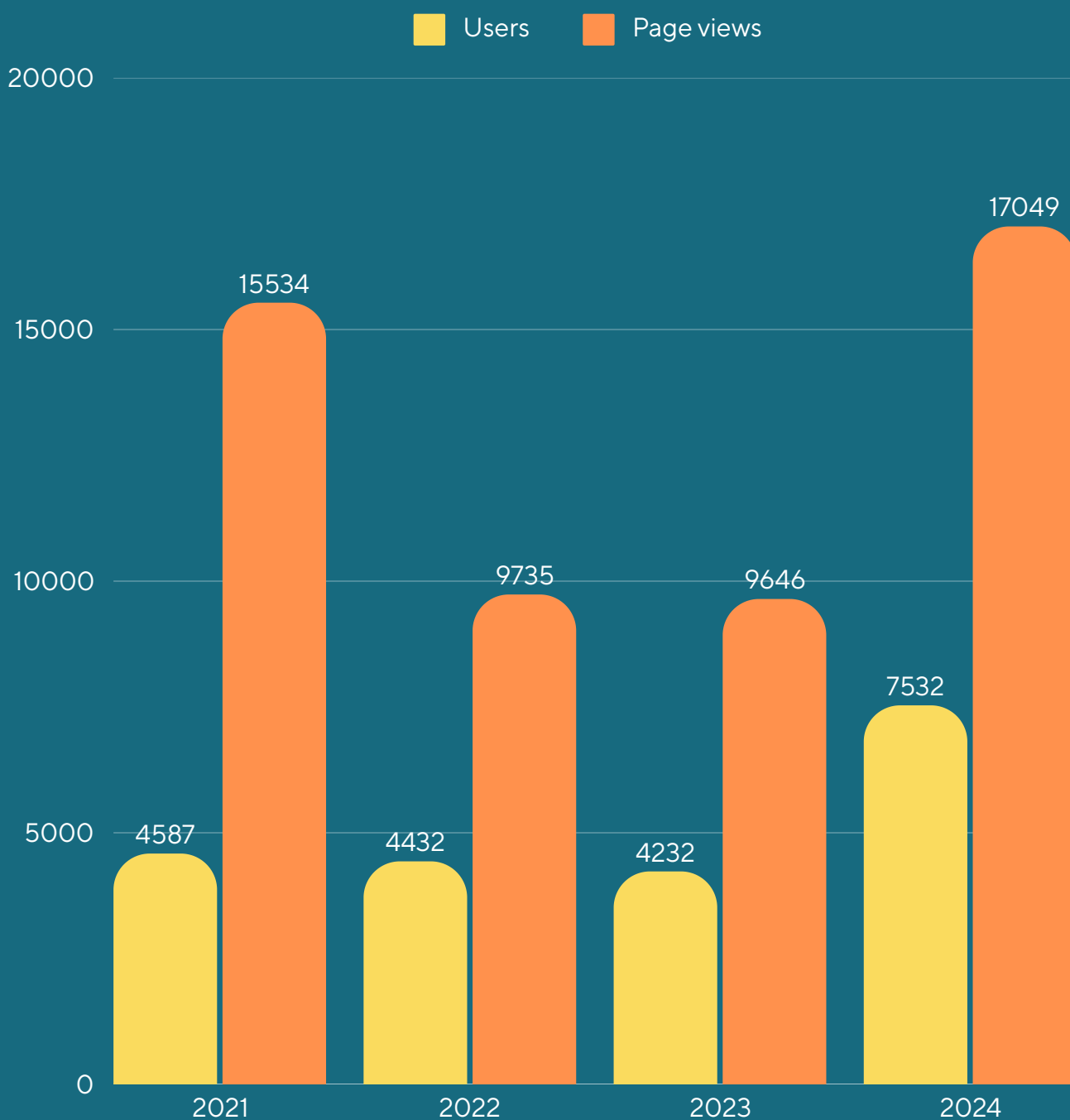
Resource distribution 2021 - 24

The numbers of physical resources distributed to partners and people:



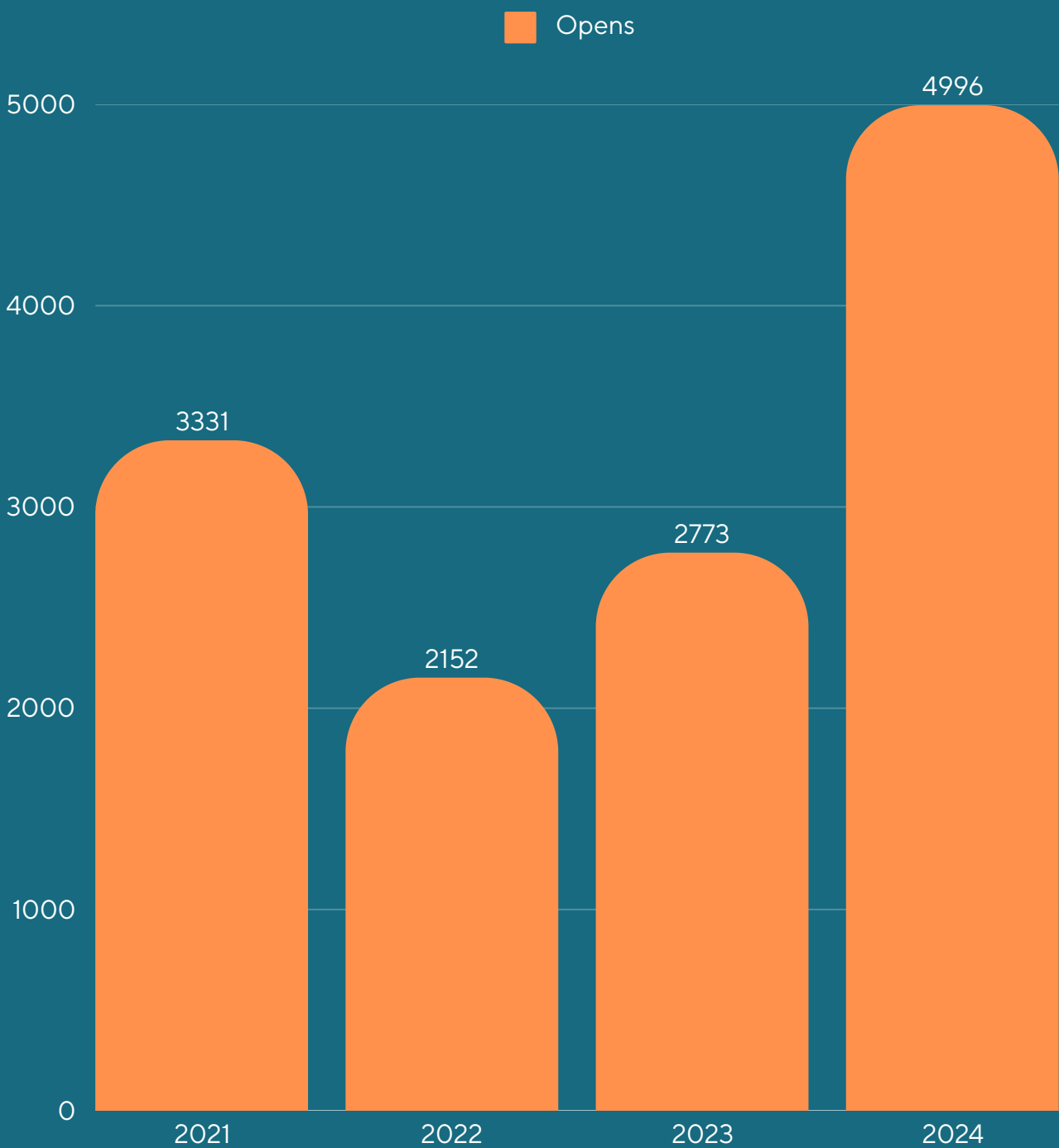
Our online presence 2021 - 24

Website users and page views:



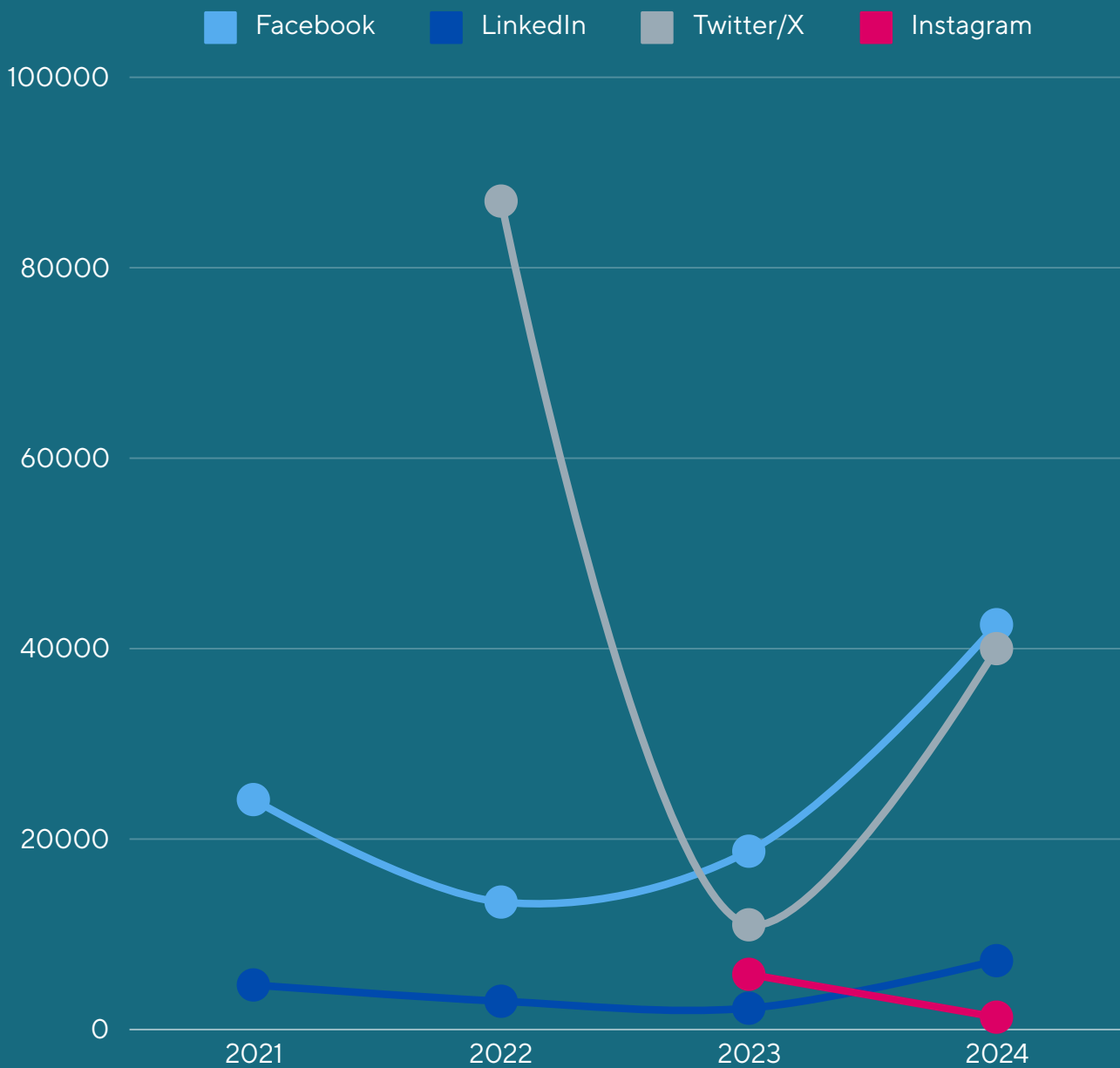
Our online presence 2021 - 24

Newsletter clicks:



Our online presence 2021 - 24

Combined impressions and reach across our social media channels:



see you next year!

Our service delivery funders:



✉ help@new europeans.uk

🌐 www.new europeans.uk

