

'Fences protect Europe', Hungary's Orban says ahead of EU migration summit

BUDAPEST/BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Tuesday called for European Union financing for border fences, reviving an idea long seen as inadmissible ahead of a summit of the bloc's leaders to discuss curbing irregular immigration.

The gathering of the 27 national EU leaders was called after Austria and the Netherlands led a growing choir of complaints about increasing arrivals. The bloc's border agency reported 330,000 irregular crossings last year, the highest since 2016.

EU states are bitterly split over sharing out the task of caring for refugees on their soil, and have for years focused on tightening their external borders to prevent people from arriving through unofficial - and often deadly - routes.

Countries including Poland, Hungary and Slovenia erected border fences to keep refugees and migrants away, though the EU executive European Commission, which manages the bloc's shared budget, has so far refused to pay for such barriers, saying it would run against liberal democratic values and human rights.

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