

# ESTONIA

## EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

# 2017

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION, INCLUDING LATEST STATISTICS



### LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

#### PROMOTING LEGAL MIGRATION CHANNELS

Several amendments streamlining and simplifying the **legal migration system to attract IT professionals and start-up employees/entrepreneurs** came into force in 2017. For instance, IT workers from third countries are now outside the official quota limit, and start-ups can employ third country nationals without any salary criteria and without the labour market test, among other things.

Furthermore, a new **Work in Estonia Action Plan** was adopted to promote Estonia as a destination for foreign employees and to simplify the process of employing overseas experts in local companies.

The transposition into Estonian legislation of the relevant EU directives covering Intra-Corporate Transferees (Directive 2014/66/EU) and Seasonal Workers (Directive 2014/36/EU) was completed in January 2017. The transposition of the EU Directive on Students and Researchers (Directive 2016/801) is planned for 2018.

2017 was strongly marked by the **rise of initiatives that addressed migration as a potential solution to the demographic crisis** approaching Estonia. In November, the Estonian Parliament Committee to Solve the Demographic Crisis formed a broad-based working group with the purpose of drafting **the fundamentals of population policy for the period of 2018-2035** that would inform all the laws and policy plans that

### KEY POINTS



A number of amendments to the Aliens Act streamlined and simplified the legal migration system to attract IT professionals and start-up entrepreneurs and employees.



Work to reform the immigration quota system was initiated, as the immigration quota was exhausted both in 2016 and 2017.



Integration policy developments aimed at boosting the rate of employment among beneficiaries of international protection and increased the amount of free Estonian language training available to them.

follow. In parallel, a grassroots-based roundtable was initiated to bring together different interested parties, ranging from civil society representatives, entrepreneurs, scientists, universities, chambers of commerce and other relevant stakeholders. Its aim is to ensure that the issue of shrinking population and future of Estonia is strategically addressed during the upcoming parliamentary elections, and managed on the national level.

In March, the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB) launched a free of charge **migration advisory service**, which offers information and counselling about the legal grounds for entering and staying in Estonia, documents, application processes and requirements.

## ECONOMIC MIGRATION

In response to private sector organisations' concern that the immigration quota has begun to have a negative effect on economic growth, the Minister of the Interior gathered a group of stakeholders and experts in 2017 to discuss and reform the immigration quota. The work will continue in 2018.

## FAMILY REUNIFICATION

In 2017, amendments were made to family reunification legislation removing the requirement for the sponsor to have resided in Estonia for two years prior to the application. A third-country national can bring over a spouse immediately after receiving a residence permit (some categories have the possibility to apply for the permit simultaneously). Family members of start-up entrepreneurs, for instance, may be issued a visa or a residence permit under the same terms.

Starting from October 2017, all children born to third-country nationals with residence permits (or who settle in Estonia right after birth), will receive a residence permit without needing to apply for one. This residence permit is linked to their parents' residence permit and will be extended automatically if their parents' residence permit is extended. Parents only need to apply for a residence permit card for the child when they are 15 years old.

## MANAGING MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

Since 2017, third-country nationals legally residing in Estonia have an opportunity to apply for long-term D type visas and change their status in Estonia at the PBGB rather than having to submit the application abroad at an Estonian representation. Also, the D-visa may now be issued for up to 12 months compared to 6 months before 2017.



## INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

**The Estonian government decided to end relocation and resettlement in the framework of European Migration Agenda in December 2017.** In total, Estonia has relocated and resettled 206 persons in the framework of EMA from 2015 onwards, 141 of whom came from Greece, 59 from Turkey and six from Italy. It was decided that Estonia will start resettling

beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs) from Turkey in 2018 and 2019.

The PBGB continued to carry out **training activities** in 2017 in relation to international protection issues. More reserve asylum officers are set to be engaged in asylum proceedings in the event of a significant rise in the number of asylum applications. Consistent training and involvement of asylum reserve officers made resettlement and relocation procedures more effective over the course of 2017.



## UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

No significant developments in 2017.



## INTEGRATION

**Several new initiatives were launched in 2017 regarding the integration of third-country nationals, yet most of them focused on the integration of BIPs.** For example, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Agency's 'My First Job in Estonia' scheme<sup>1</sup> aimed to boost the rate of employment among BIPs. Employers participating in this scheme receive a wage subsidy and compensation to cover the costs to obtain qualifications, work-related translation services, and Estonian language training and/or professional mentoring. In addition, free Estonian language training (up to the A2 level) for BIPs is set to increase from 100 hours (in 2017) to 300 hours in 2018.

Moreover, the Ministry of the Interior analysed the efficiency of the Welcoming Programme and launched a call for proposals under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to improve the module for BIPs.

2017 also brought about a considerable range of new integration services for BIPs offered by NGOs and predominantly financed by AMIF. Group-based activities mainly include initiatives such as language buddies and language cafés. In addition, highly interactive courses for job seeking and career building were introduced in 2017, as well as jobseekers' club.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tootukassa.ee/eng/content/subsidies-and-benefits/my-first-job-estonia-recipients-international-protection>



## IRREGULAR MIGRATION

No major developments took place regarding irregular migration in 2017. However, new arrangements were introduced to **prevent irregular migration as a result of the misuse of legal migration channels**. Since 1 March 2017, follow-up checks on registering residence permits and short-term work permits can be carried out by the prefectures as they are better equipped to check the requirements at the local level.



## RETURN

While there were no major developments in 2017, legislative amendments are planned for 2018. These would include **granting the PBGB the right to use special measures in derogation of the general regulations in the event of an emergency** (e.g. an unusually large number of third-country nationals or applicants for international protection are detained in Estonia).

A new detention centre is to open in 2018 that will allow for the detention of up to 120 irregular migrants as regulated by the Obligation to Leave and Prohibition on Entry Act (OLPEA)<sup>2</sup> and the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens (AGIPA).<sup>3</sup>



## ACTIONS AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

In 2017, Estonia significantly enhanced its capacity to identify and support victims of human trafficking (THB). Several amendments to the Victim Support Act<sup>4</sup> came into force on 1 January 2017. Estonia also ratified the **Istanbul Convention**, prompting several legislative changes impacting also victims of THB.

The major development in this field, however, was a **national public awareness campaign** called '1ELU' (1LIFE) on preventing THB. The campaign focused on preventing different types of THB (labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and children used for criminal acts) and educating people about the possibilities of getting help and advice.



## MAXIMISING DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

In 2017, Estonia planned to increase the weight of humanitarian aid in its official development assistance budget by 13% by 2020. As a result, the capacity of the Estonian NGOs to design and **implement livelihood-based projects** in the humanitarian aid sector was increased.

## STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Statistical Annex provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Estonia on aspects of migration and international protection (2014-2017), including residence, asylum, unaccompanied minors, irregular migration, return and visas. Where statistics are not yet available, this is indicated in the Annex as "N/A".

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/519092014004/consolide>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530102013009/consolide>

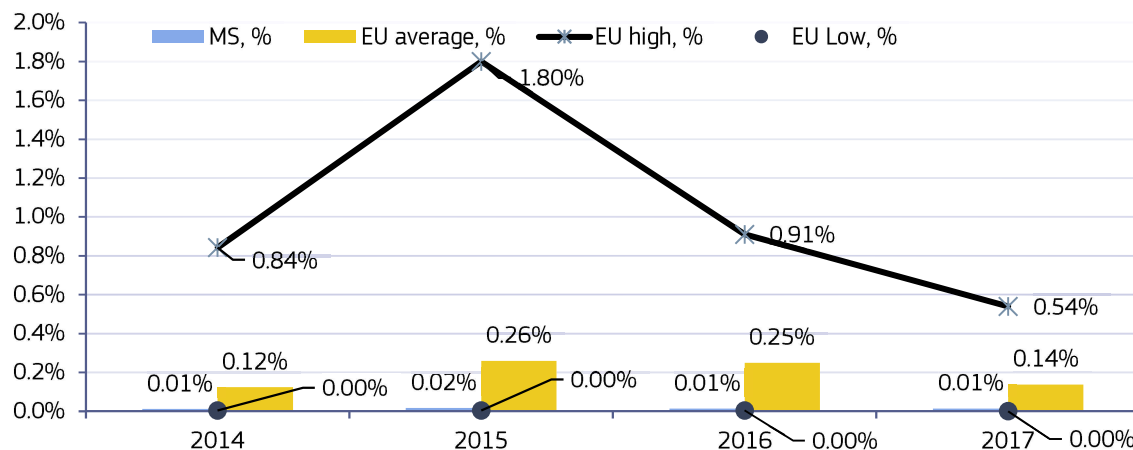
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/521122013001/consolide>

# STATISTICAL ANNEX: MIGRATION AND ASYLUM IN ESTONIA (2014-2017)



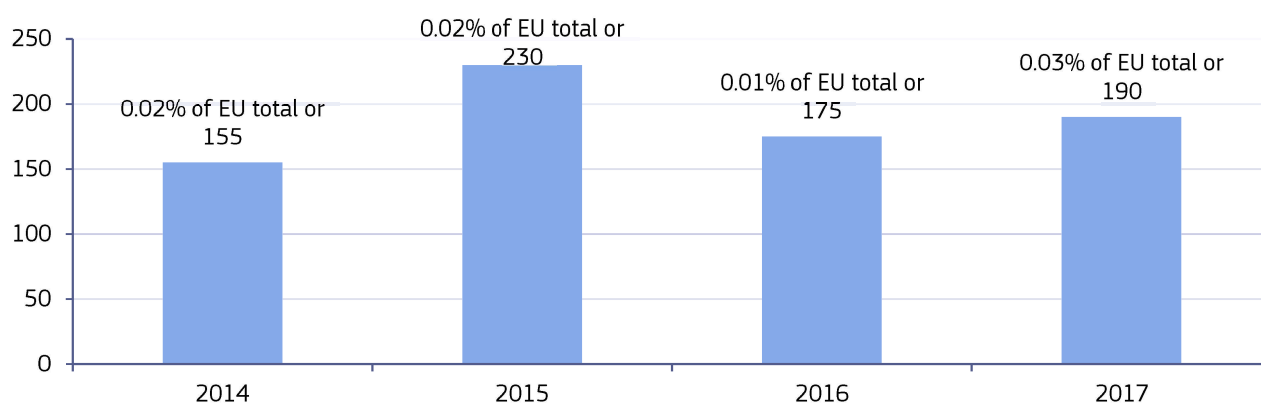
## 1. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND ASYLUM

**Figure 1: Asylum applications as a share of the total population in Estonia, EU average and EU high and low (2014-2017)**



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_asyappctza](#)), data extracted 30.03.18

**Figure 2: Number of asylum applications and as a share of the total number of applications in the EU (2014-2017)**



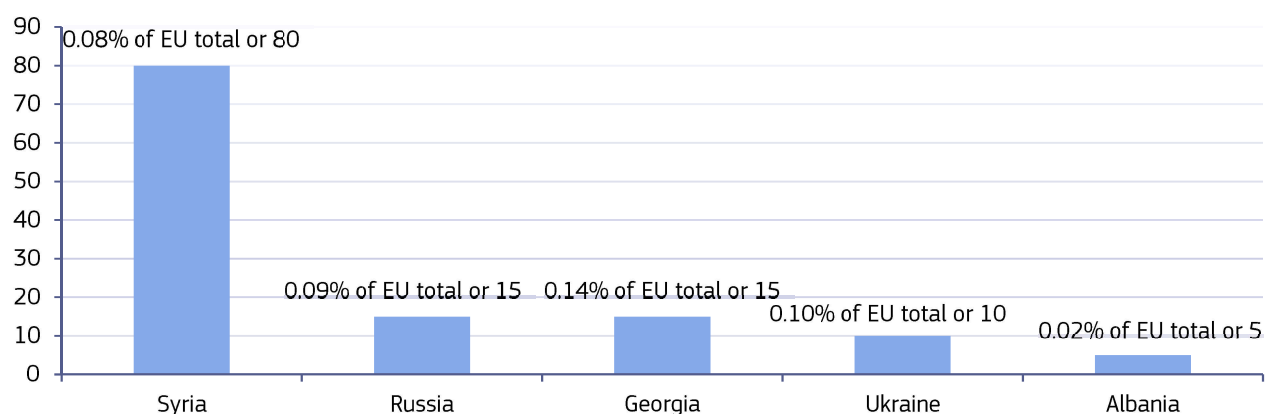
Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_asyappctza](#)), data extracted 30.03.18

**Table 1: Asylum applications: Top five third-country nationalities (2014-2017)**

2014			2015			2016			2017		
Nationality	No.	% of total	Nationality	No.	% of total	Nationality	No.	% of total	Nationality	No.	% of total
Ukraine	60	39%	Ukraine	95	41%	Syria	45	26%	Syria	80	42%
Russia, Sudan	20	13%	Russia, Iraq, Syria	15	7%	Iraq	20	11%	Russia	15	8%
Egypt	10	6%	Sudan, Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Palestine	10	4%	Russia	15	9%	Georgia	15	8%
Belarus, Algeria, Mali, Georgia, Syria	5	3%	Cameroon, Egypt, Nigeria, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka	5	2%	Albania	10	6%	Ukraine	10	5%
						Ukraine	10	6%	Albania	5	3%

Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_asyappctza](#)), data extracted 30.03.18

**Figure 3: Asylum applications: Top five third-country nationalities as a share of EU totals per given nationality (2017)**



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_asyappctza](#)), data extracted 30.03.18

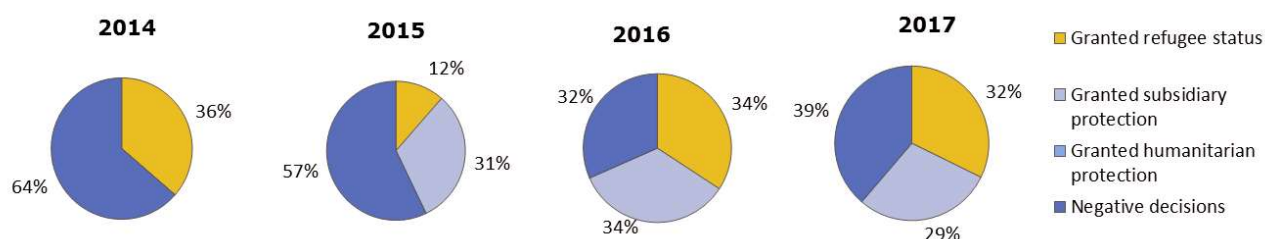
Note: the figure reads as: Estonia received 80 asylum applications from Syria or 0.08% of all asylum applications launched by Syria in EU in 2017.

**Table 2: Asylum applications - First instance decisions by outcome (2014-2017)**

	Total decisions	Positive decisions	Of which:			Negative decisions
			Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian reasons	
2014	55	20	20	0		35
2015	180	80	20	55	0	100
2016	190	130	65	65	0	60
2017	155	95	50	45	0	60

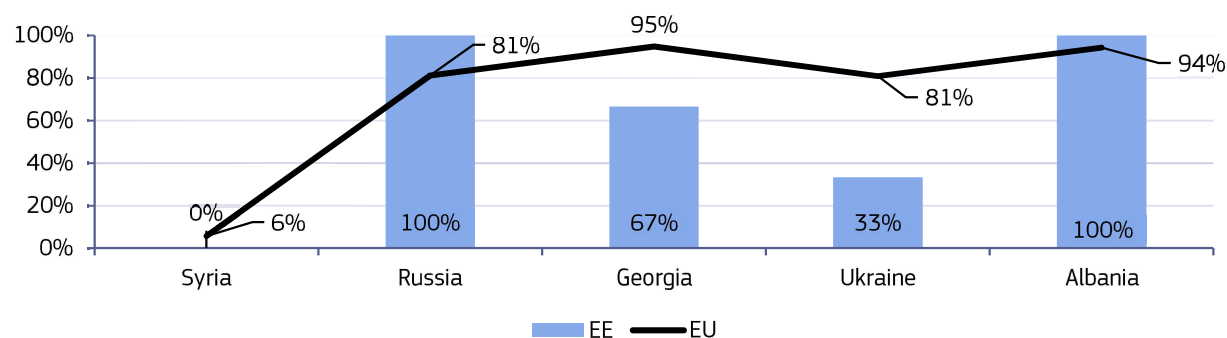
Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_asydcfsta](#)), data extracted 30.03.18

**Figure 4: Asylum applications - First instance decisions by outcome (2014-2017)**



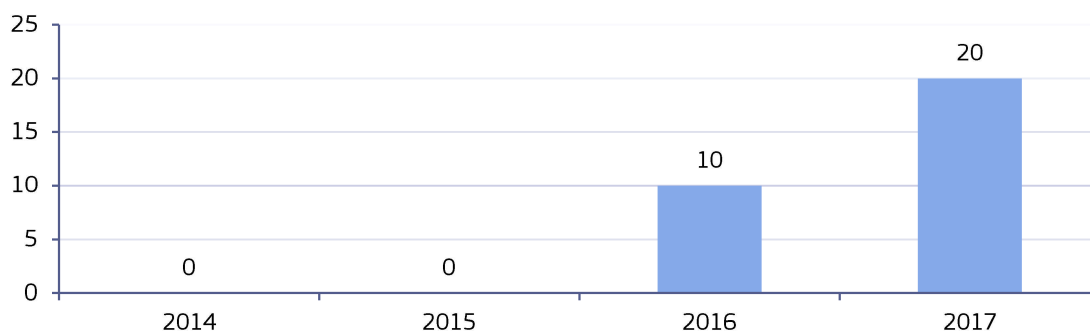
Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_asydcfsta](#)), data extracted 30.03.18

**Figure 5: Negative decision rate for the top five nationalities of applicants at the first instance in comparison with EU for the same given nationality (2017)**



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_asydcfsta](#)), data extracted 30.03.18

**Figure 6: Third-country nationals resettled (2014-2017)**

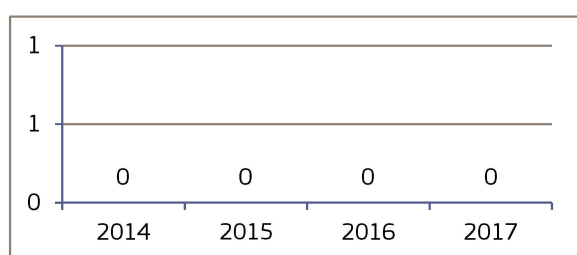


Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_asyresa](#)), data extracted 02.05.18



## 2. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

**Figure 7: Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum (2014-2017)**



**Table 3: Unaccompanied minors (2014-2017)**

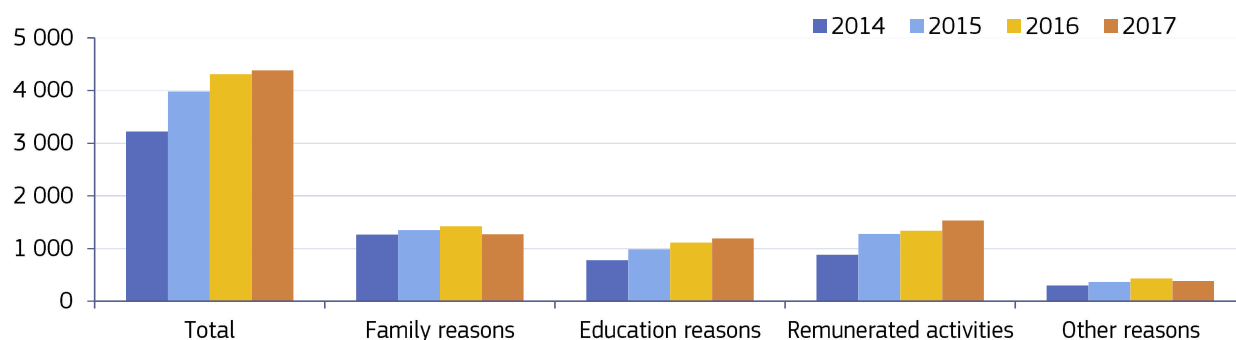
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Unaccompanied minors (total)	n/a	4		
Unaccompanied minor asylum applicants	0	0	0	0

Source: Eurostat Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors by citizenship, age and sex Annual data (rounded) ([migr\\_asyunaa](#)), data extracted 04.04.18; EMN NCPs



## 3. LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

**Figure 8: First residence permits, by reason (2014-2017)**



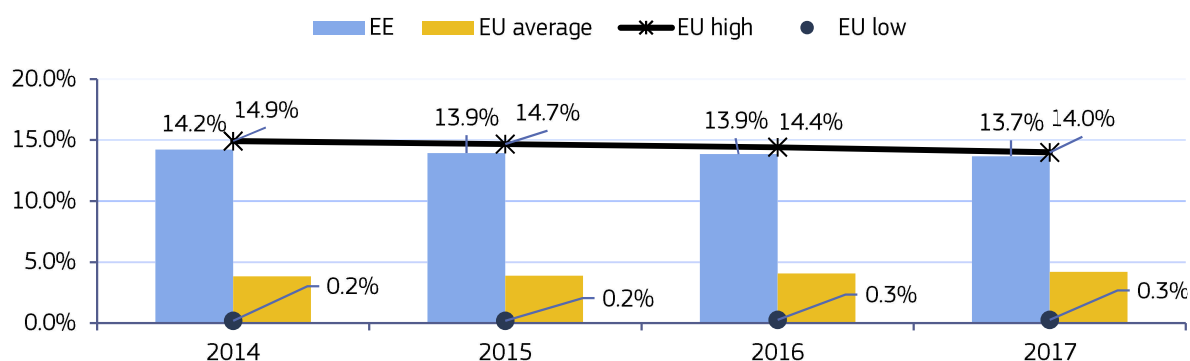
Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_resfirst](#)), data extracted 17.07.2018.

**Table 4: First residence permits: Top five third-country nationalities (2014-2017)**

2014		2015		2016		2017	
Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number
Russia	908	Ukraine	1 447	Ukraine	1 303	Ukraine	1 336
Ukraine	853	Russia	970	Russia	1 051	Russia	881
Recognised Non-Citizens	243	Recognised Non-Citizens	214	Recognised non-citizens	162	Recognised non-citizens	178
United States	150	United States	161	United States	160	Belarus	171
India	112	Nigeria	131	Belarus	151	India	165

Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_resfirst](#)), data extracted 17.07.2018

**Figure 9 Resident population of third-country nationals as a share of total population in Estonia, EU average, EU high and low (2014-2017)**



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_pop1ctz](#)), data extracted 30.03.18



## 4. IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND RETURN

**Table 5: Number of third-country nationals refused entry at external borders (2014–2017)**

Third country nationals:	2014	2015	2016	2017
Refused entry at external borders	695	965	875	1 175
Found to be illegally present	720	980	665	755
Ordered to leave	475	590	505	645
Returned following an order to leave	445	560	465	630

Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr\\_eirfs](#))([migr\\_eipre](#))([migr\\_eiord](#))([migr\\_eirtn](#)) data extracted 02.05.18

**Table 6: Third-country nationals returned (2014-2017)**

Year	Returned as part of forced return measure	Returned voluntarily	Returned through an Assisted Voluntary Return Programme
2014	117	313	17
2015	81	427	48
2016	115	371	40
2017	137	501	83

Source: EMN NCPs



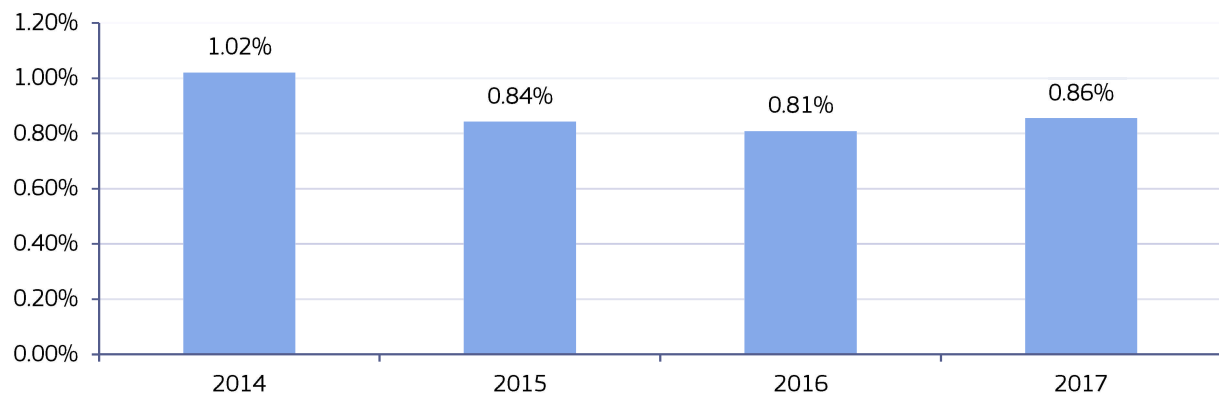
## 5. SECURING EUROPE'S EXTERNAL BORDERS

**Table 7: Number of Schengen visas applications (2014–2017)**

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Uniform visas (short-stay visas)	170 731	130 197	122 872	138 249

Source: DG Migration and Home – Complete statistics on short-stay visas issued by the Schengen States

**Figure 10: Uniform visa applications received in Estonia as a share of the total number of uniform visa applications in all Schengen states consulates (2014-2017)**



Source: DG Migration and Home Affairs – Complete statistics on short-stay visas issued by the Schengen States

**Table 8: Top five countries in which the highest number of visa applications for Estonia was lodged (2014-2017)**

2014		2015		2016		2017	
Country	Number	Country	Number	Country	Number	Country	Number
<b>Russia</b>	109 208	<b>Russian Federation</b>	80 668	<b>Russian Federation</b>	91 644	<b>Russian Federation</b>	110 817
<b>Belarus</b>	41 874	<b>Belarus</b>	27 599	<b>Belarus</b>	19 758	<b>Belarus</b>	14 313
<b>Ukraine</b>	14 993	<b>Ukraine</b>	15 840	<b>Ukraine</b>	12 905	<b>Ukraine</b>	5 700
<b>Georgia</b>	1 651	<b>Georgia</b>	2 260	<b>Georgia</b>	2 002	<b>China</b>	1 990
<b>China</b>	929	<b>China</b>	1 006	<b>China</b>	2 049	<b>Kazakhstan</b>	1 426

Source: DG Migration and Home Affairs