



ESTONIA 2021

Main developments in migration
and international protection,
including latest statistics

EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

August 2022



OVERARCHING CHANGES

No significant developments in 2021.



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

In June 2021, the government approved the [Internal Security Development Plan 2020-2030](#), setting goals for Estonian migration, citizenship and identity management policy.

In July 2021, [legislation](#) on the creation of a national automated biometric identification system (ABIS) database entered into force. The ABIS database allows the state to centrally capture, store and compare biometric data (e.g. fingerprints and facial images). The creation of the new database seeks to improve authentication and verification of identity to help law enforcement bodies to prevent forgeries and solve crimes. Due to go live in 2022, it will increase reliability and verification of identity to ensure that an individual only has one identity in Estonia.

WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

Enterprise Estonia developed a new Action Plan for Work in Estonia programme for 2021-2025. The main priorities set out in the Action Plan were to attract highly-skilled migrants; to alleviate shortages of skilled labour in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector and natural sciences; and to support employers hiring foreign specialists.

KEY POINTS



In 2021, the Estonian government approved three relevant strategic plans with a major impact on Estonian migration and asylum policy: Internal Security Development Plan 2020-2030; Cohesive Estonia Development Plan 2021-2030; and the Violence Prevention Agreement.



Legislation on a national automated biometric identification system (ABIS) database entered into force in July 2021, with the database itself due to go live in 2022.



In November 2021, due to the situation at the Belarusian border and the growing risk of irregular border crossings under the military exercise 'Okas 2021', a 40-kilometre temporary razor wire barrier was installed on Estonia's border with the Russian Federation.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

In February 2021, the government added an [exception](#) to the order 'Imposition of temporary restrictions on crossing the state border to prevent a new outbreak of COVID-19'. That exception allowed the entry of family members of third-country nationals who were employed in a start-up, as a top specialist, or in an ICT position.

In April, the Estonia's Supreme Court concluded that it would be unconstitutional to refuse a third-country

national a temporary residence permit for settling with their registered same-sex partner with an Estonian residence permit.



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT¹

In August 2021, the Estonian government offered protection to 30 Afghan nationals: 10 people (and their families) who cooperated with the EU and NATO, and 20 people (and their families) who have cooperated with Estonian organisations. In August and September 2021, 14 evacuated Afghan nationals arrived in Estonia, with two additional Afghan nationals arriving in November. All were regarded as applicants for international protection, and 14 of them were granted protection by 31 December 2021.



MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

No significant developments in 2021.



INTEGRATION

NATIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY

In November 2021, the government approved the Cohe-sive Estonia Development Plan 2021-2030, setting goals for integration (including adaptation of newly-arrived immigrants) for the next 10 years. The Plan sought to promote integration and adaptation activities, develop a multifaceted diaspora policy, strengthen civil society, improve childcare and support structures for families, and implement smart demographic analysis.

From May 2021, the Ministry of Culture became respon-sible for both adaptation and integration policy in Estonia. Adaptation policy was formerly a task of the Ministry of the Interior and targeted newly-arrived migrants, while integration policy focused primarily on ethnic minorities living in Estonia for longer than five years.

The Social Insurance Board (SIB) reorganised refugee support services, empowering beneficiaries of interna-tional protection to be self-sufficient and independent. Support services were now to be assigned by local municipalities based on a needs assessment by municipal social workers.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF ADULTS/ LABOUR MARKET AND SKILLS

Two changes were made to the language module of the 'Settle in Estonia' programme. Firstly, to meet demand, A2-level training was offered in addition to A1-level training. Secondly, language courses were based on a new teaching methodology, with language learning in

Estonian, and groups not divided by the native language anymore. In addition, the Work and Entrepreneurship module of 'Settle in Estonia' was divided into a Work module and an Entrepreneurship module in order to better meet participants' needs.

Estonia approved the Global Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education of UNESCO (Global Convention). The Global Convention establishes the rights of individuals to have their foreign qualifica-tions assessed in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner, particularly in the context of increasing student migration. It will enter into force once 20 countries have signed up.



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

No significant developments in 2021.



BORDERS AND VISAS

BORDER MANAGEMENT

In response to the influx of irregular migrants to Lith-uania, since mid-June 2021, Estonia deployed Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB) ESTPOL5 units to the Lithuanian-Belarusian border each month. Between July and December 2021, Estonia deployed six units, with a total of 80 police officers, to support Lithuania's border operations and provide equipment (i.e. drones).

In November 2021, under the military exercise 'Okas 2021', a 40-kilometre temporary razor wire barrier was installed on Estonia's border with the Russian Federation. This reflected the situation at the Belarusian border and the growing risk of irregular border crossings. In October 2021, an amendment to Government Order No. 169 entered into force, allowing vaccinated persons to travel to Estonia (including for tourism purpose). That change increased the number of travellers entering the country.

NATIONAL VISA POLICY

In 2021, the Parliament was in process to develop an amendment to the Aliens Act by allowing visa refusals to be challenged in court.

The government began to develop an amendment to the Aliens Act, allowing visa refusals to be challenged in court. The amendment concerned foreigners who file an appeal of a decision on the refusal to issue a visa, annul-ment of a visa, revocation of a visa, refusal to extend the period of stay, and premature termination of the period of stay. The action was prompted when the Constitutional Review Chamber of the Supreme Court **decided** that Arti-cles 100¹⁰(1), 100¹³(2) and 100¹⁸ of the Aliens Act were unconstitutional and invalid insofar as they precluded filing an appeal with the administrative court for chal-lenging premature termination of the period of stay.

¹ Includes Humanitarian Admission Programmes



IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

PREVENTING AND TACKLING IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN LEGAL MIGRATION CHANNELS

In 2021, the PGBG detected a new trend: falsification of COVID-19 certificates (PCR negative results/vaccination certificates), as well as falsified registrations of short-term employment.

PREVENTING FACILITATION OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION ('SMUGGLING') AND PREVENTING IRREGULAR STAY

In June 2021, the government approved the Internal Security Development Plan 2020-2030. The Plan sets goals for the Estonian border management, i.e. to ensure the protection of Estonia's external border, as an external border of the EU, and to ensure that border control complies with the requirements of the Schengen common visa area, including irregular border crossings, illegal border activities, trafficking and smuggling.



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

NATIONAL STRATEGIC POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In July 2021, the [Violence Prevention Agreement](#) was adopted by the government. It sets out 14 measures of violence prevention, one of which is specifically addressed trafficking in human beings. The Agreement is comprised of a list of activities for 2021-2025, including activities targeting third country nationals and employers who hire them.

IDENTIFICATION AND INFORMATION TO VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Since May 2021, all victim support services are provided by the Social Insurance Board. Previously, shelter services, psychological counselling and judicial counselling services were provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under a public procurement contract.



RETURN AND READMISSION

MAIN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In order to implement the recommendations of the 2018 Schengen return-related evaluation, the Ministry of the Interior drafted legislative amendments, which are currently in the Parliament. One proposed amendment was related to the possibility of short-term detention of a person, to be able to determine whether the person's stay in the country is legal or unlawful.



MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In July 2021, the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV) was established. The new centre aims to increase coherence, transparency and effectiveness between humanitarian aid and development cooperation, and that local civil society actors are involved in decision-making.

In May 2021, Estonia and Germany signed a joint declaration creating a framework for Estonia and Germany to implement development cooperation projects in partner countries (primarily Eastern Partnership countries and Africa) to support sustainable green and digital transformation in e-governance, innovation, business, education, healthcare and other areas.

In June 2021, Estonia and the United States of America signed a Memorandum of Understanding on development cooperation in Ukraine. The focus was on advancing democracy and good governance, supporting education and developing entrepreneurship, e-services and cybersecurity.

In September 2021, Estonia and Sweden signed a joint declaration on development cooperation in Ukraine. Again, the focus was on advancing democracy, establishing good governance, supporting education, and developing entrepreneurship, e-services and cybersecurity.



STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Statistical Annex was prepared by ICF, the European Migration Network Service Provider, with statistics provided by Eurostat. It provides an overview of the latest available statistics (2018-2021) for Estonia on aspects of migration and international protection, including legal residence, asylum, unaccompanied minors, integration, irregular migration, return and visas. Where statistics were not available at the time of publication, this is indicated in the Annex as "N/A".

STATISTICAL ANNEX



GENERAL NOTES

This statistical annex complements the Country Factsheet with relevant migration-related data organised in up to nine thematic sections – depending on data availability. The dashboard-like layout of the annex allows comparability across countries as well as simultaneous visualisation of different indicators. Whenever data are not available, the relative chart is indicated with 'N/A'. Data are provided for the latest available year or the latest available four-year period. For some indicators, data are rounded in the source. The sum of percentages or of individual values might not add up to 100 or to the total value. This is due to rounding and confidence intervals in the original data. For this edition, figures for Third Country Nationals refer to 'non-EU27 nor reporting country' across all indicators and years. The How to Read Guide is available [here](#).



COLOUR LEGEND

Whenever not specified, the following colour legend is adopted. Colours for multiple nationalities are randomly chosen.

Data relative to Estonia

Data relative to EU



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

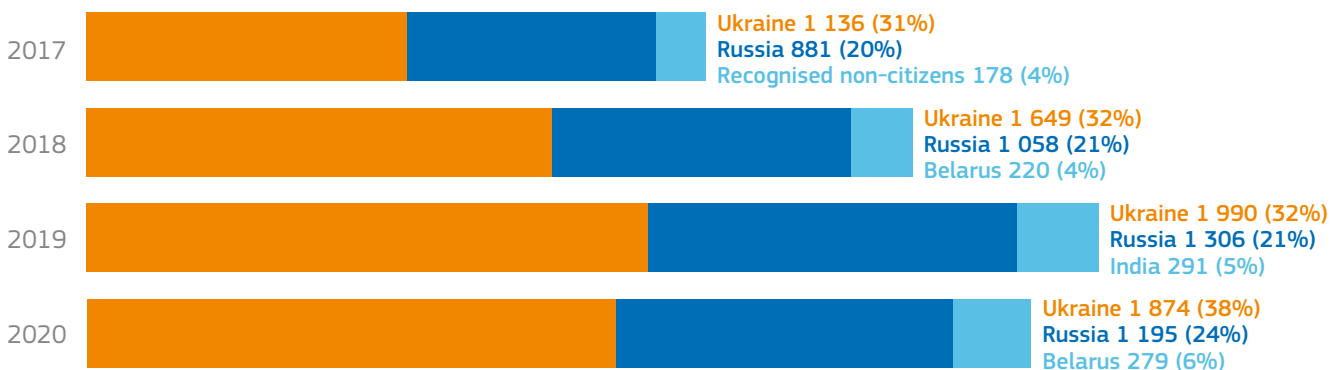
Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) as % of total population in the country (and in the EU) and in absolute numbers

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1.ctz)



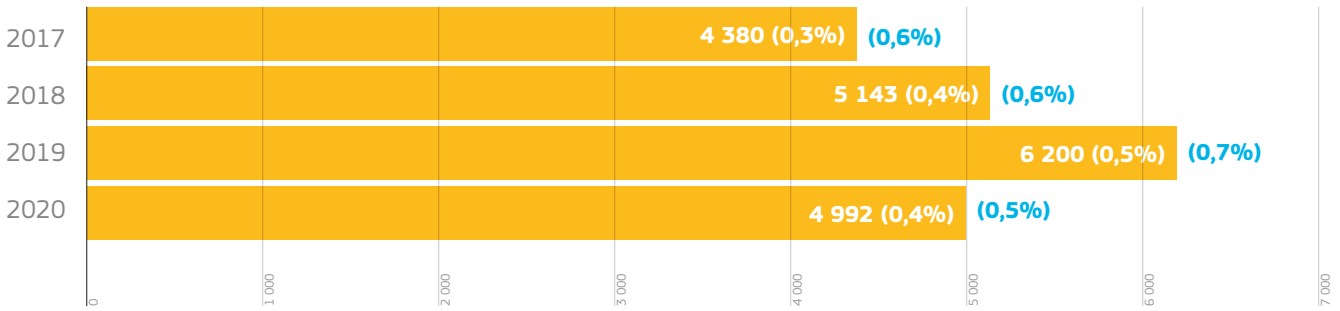
Top 3 nationalities of number of first residence permits annually issued: number of permits and % of total annual permits

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



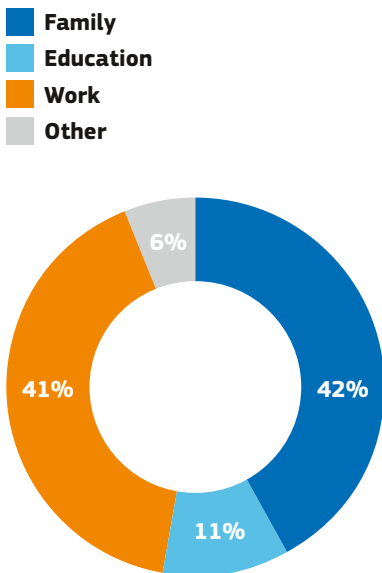
First residence permits annually issued: total number and % of total population in the country (and in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



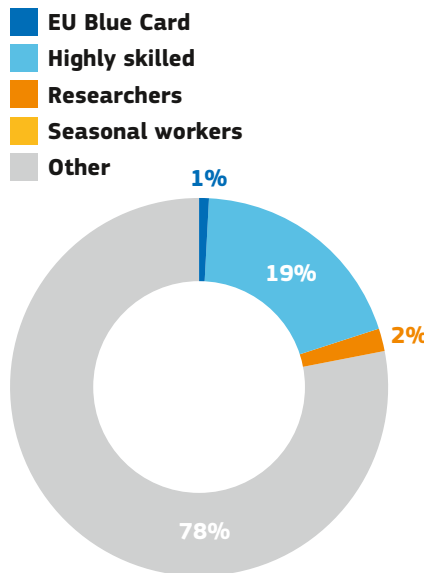
First residence permits annually issued by reason in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



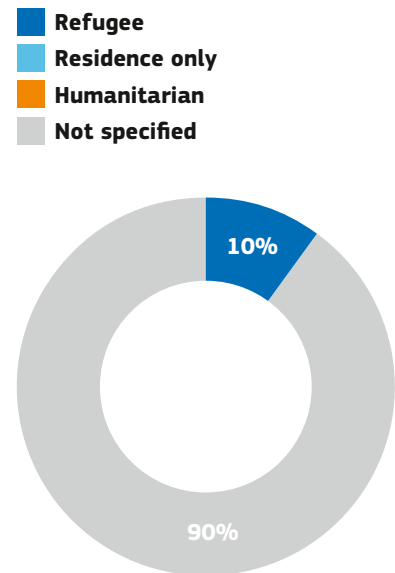
First residence permits annually issued for work reasons in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resocc)



First residence permits annually issued for 'other reasons' in 2020

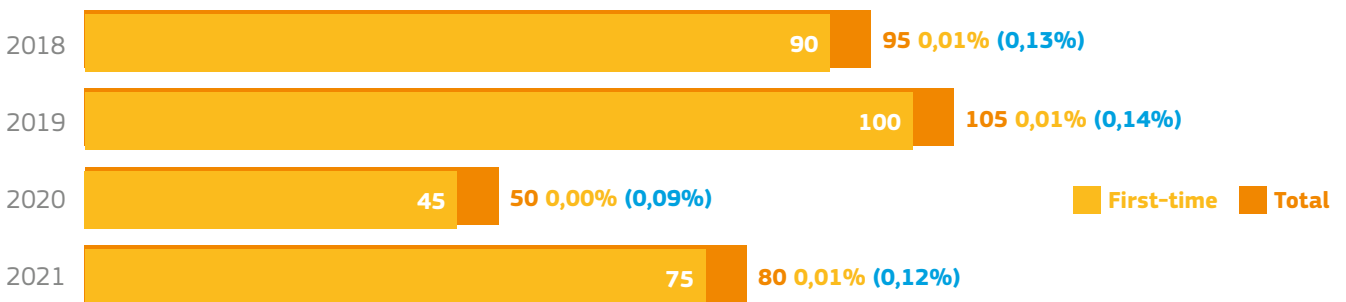
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resoth)



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

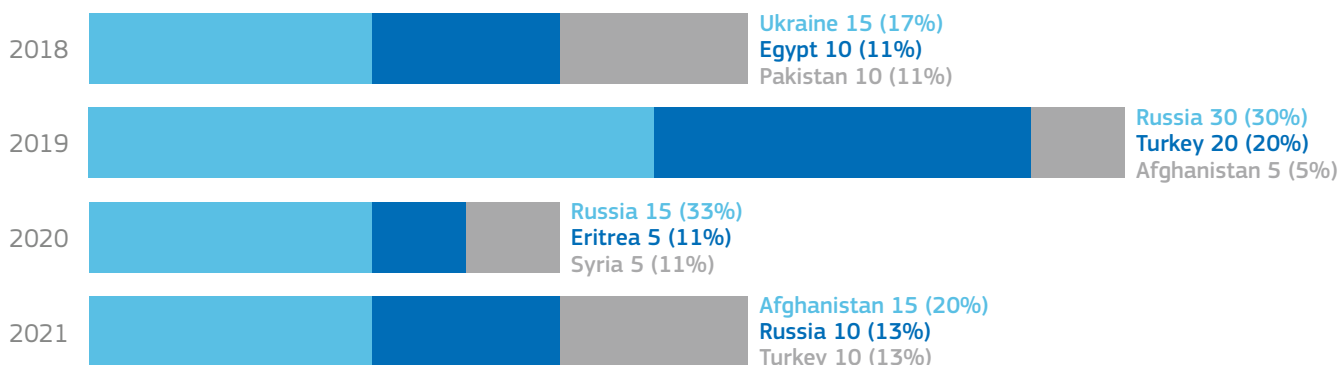
Total/first-time asylum applications; first-time asylum applications as % of population in the country (and in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza, migr_pop1ctz)



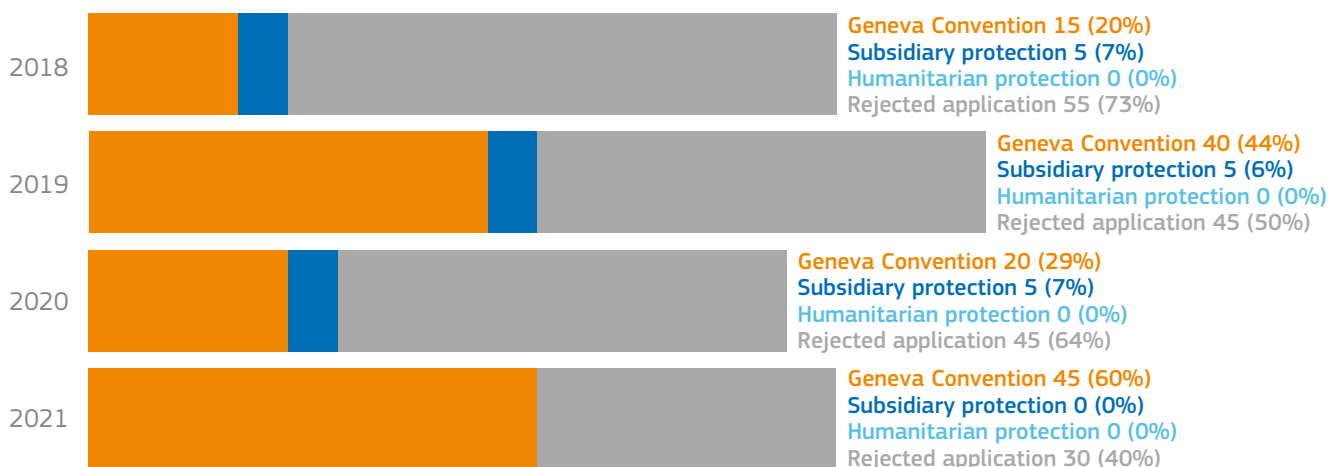
Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-time asylum applications: number of applications and % of total first-time annual applications

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza)



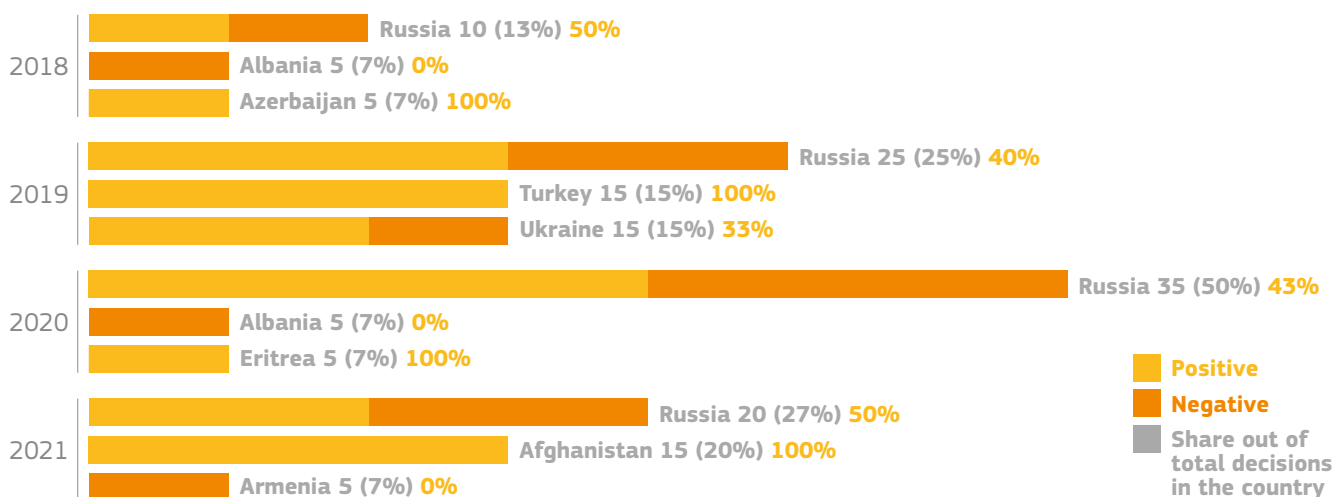
Number of first-instance asylum decisions by outcome (% of total decisions)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)



Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-instance decisions: number of decisions (% of total decisions in the country) and % of positive outcomes

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)



■ Positive
■ Negative
■ Share out of total decisions in the country

Third-Country Nationals resettled: absolute number and as % of total resettled in the EU

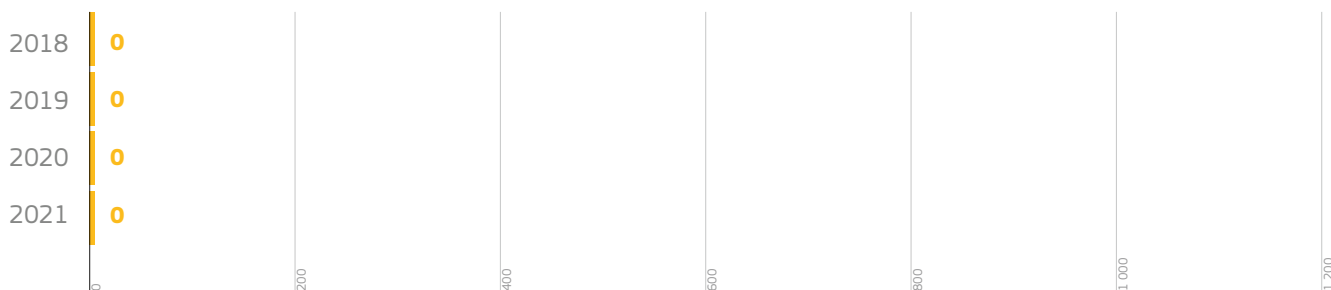
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyresa)



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

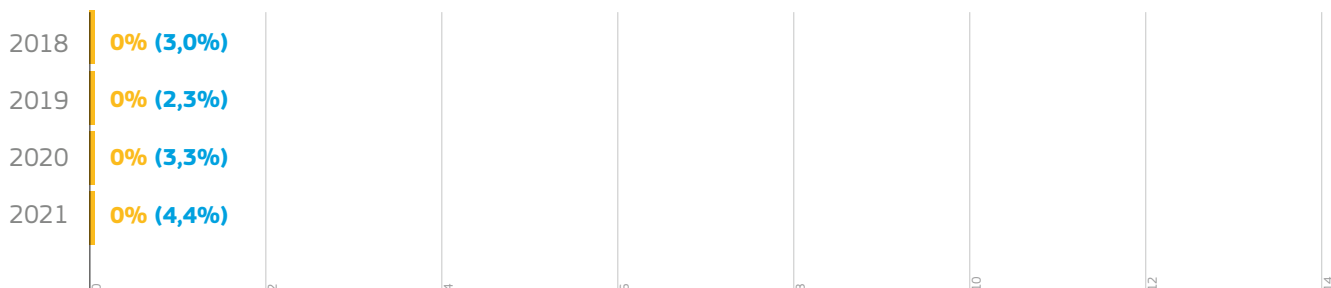
Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in the country (and % of total applications from unaccompanied minors in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa)



Unaccompanied minors as % of first asylum applications in the country (and in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa, migr_asyappctza)

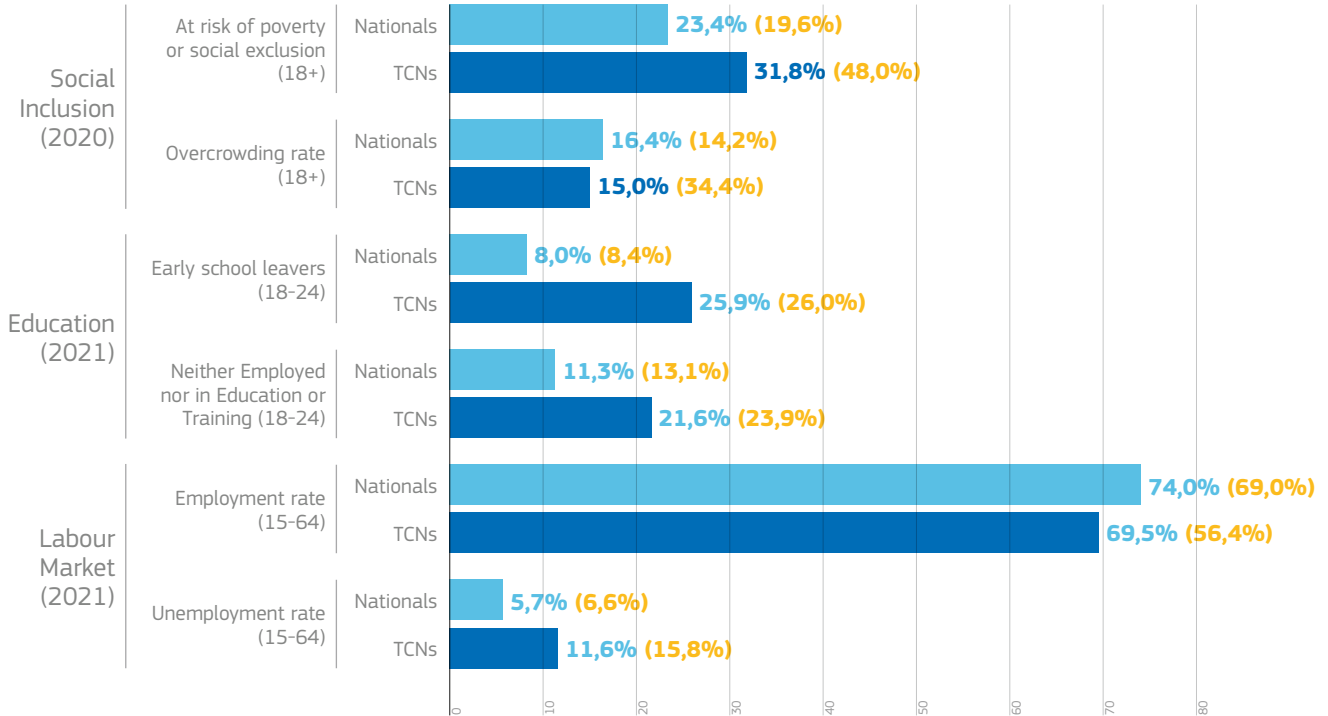




INTEGRATION

Integration indicators for nationals (light blue) and Third-Country Nationals (dark blue) in the country (when available). The same indicator is provided in yellow for the EU.

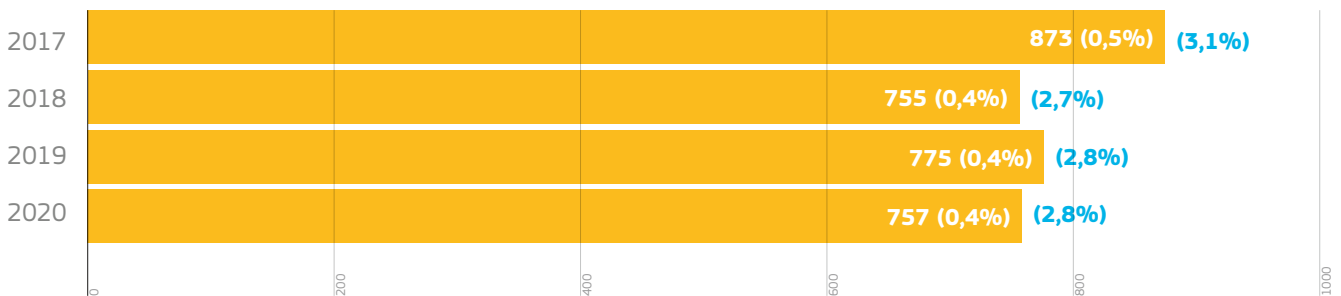
SOURCE: Eurostat (ilc_peps05, ilc_lwho15, edat_lfse_01, edat_lfse_23, lfsa_ergan, lfsa_urgan)



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

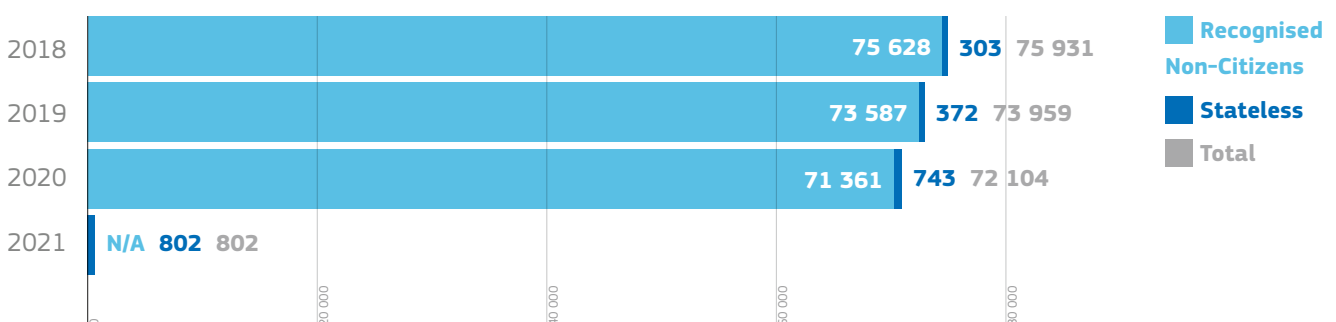
Third-Country Nationals who have acquired citizenship as a share of total Third-Country Nationals (in the country and in the EU) and in absolute numbers

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acqs, migr_acq)



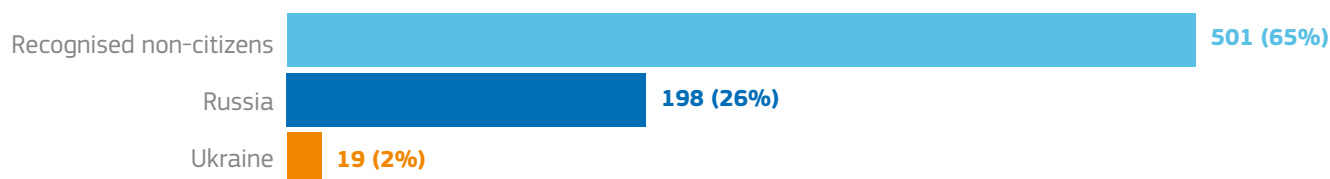
Stateless, unknown citizens and recognised non-citizens (RNC) - where present

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)



Top 3 nationalities by number of citizenship acquisition in 2020: absolute number and % of total acquisitions in the country by Third-Country Nationals

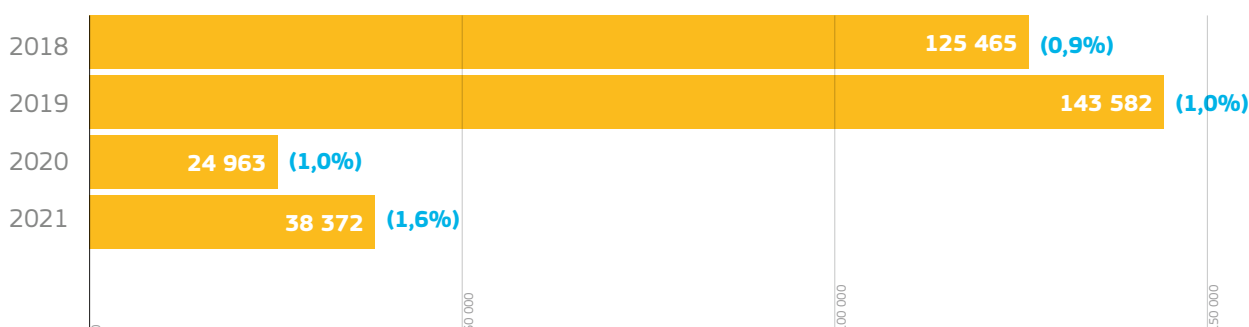
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acq)



BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

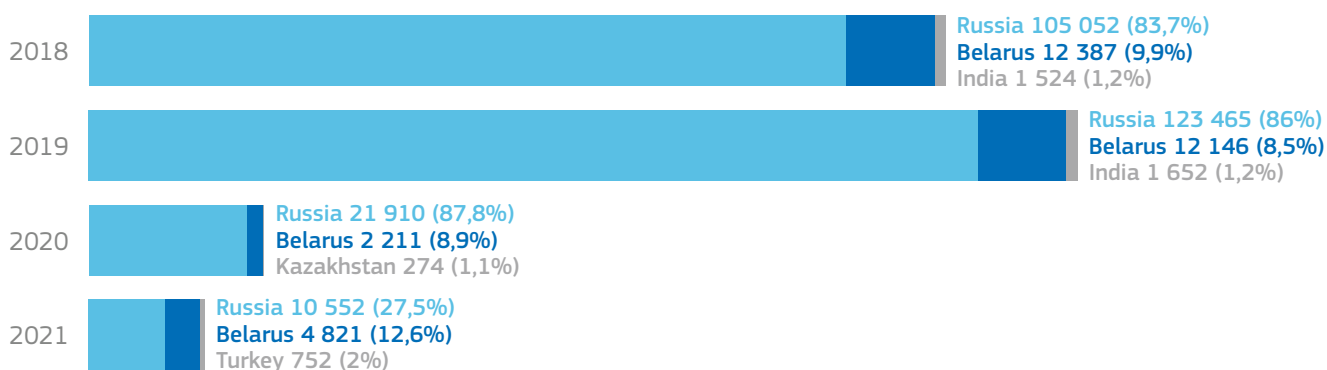
Short-term visa issued (% of Schengen)

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



Short-term visa issued in top 3 consulate countries (and % of total issued)

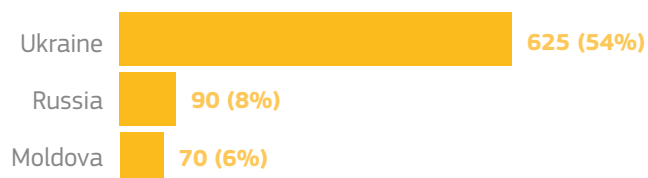
SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



IRREGULAR MIGRATION

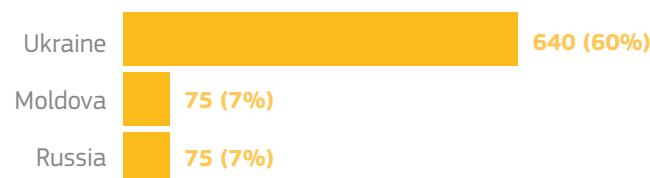
Top 3 nationalities ordered to leave the country in 2021, in absolute number and as a share of all nationalities ordered to leave the country

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eiord)



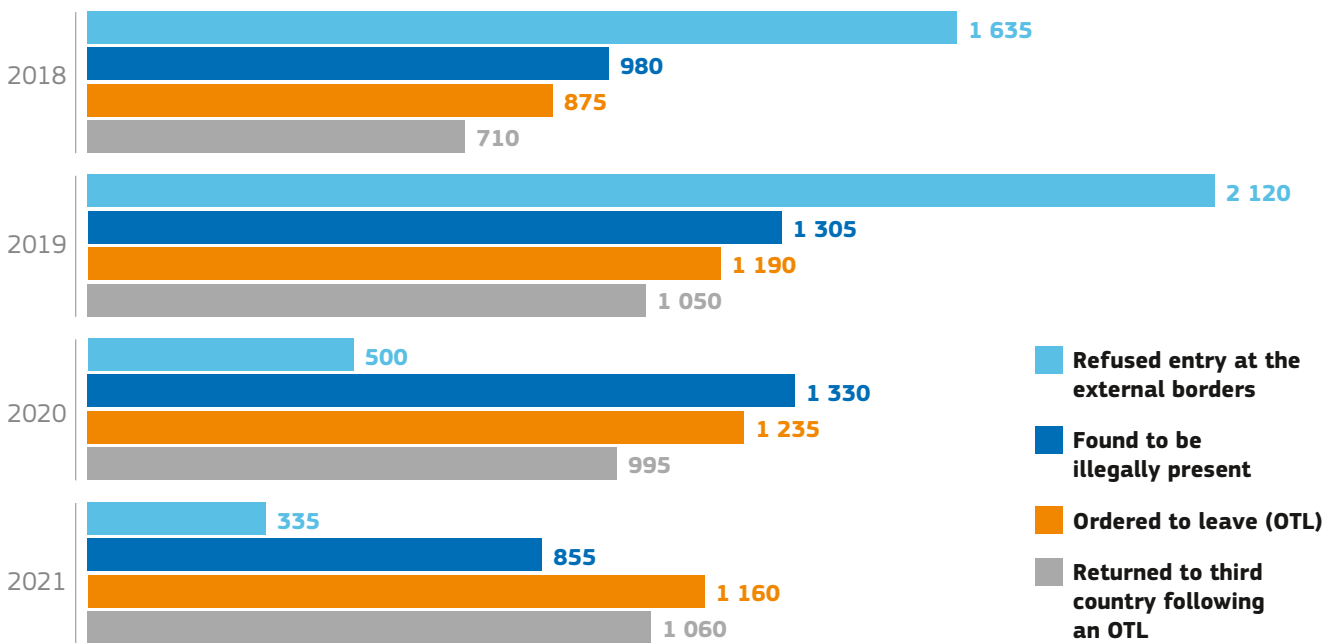
Top 3 nationalities returned to third country in 2021, in absolute number and as a share of all nationalities ordered to leave the country

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirtn)



General statistics on irregular migration

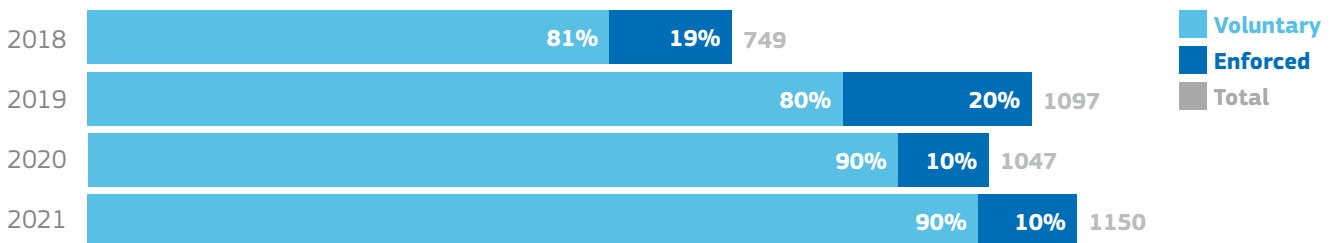
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirfs, migr_eipre, migr_eiord, migr_eirtn)



RETURN AND READMISSION

Number of Third-Country Nationals who left the territory by type of return (in %) and total returns

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirt_vol)



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Number of first residence permits issued to victims of trafficking in human beings

SOURCE: Eurostat(migr_resoth)

