

European Migration Network

EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum Estonia 2019

**European Migration Network
ANNUAL POLICY REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM
ESTONIA 2019**

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The European Migration Network (EMN), established by the Council of the European Union in 2008 and co-ordinated by the European Commission, is a network for information collection and exchange on migration and asylum issues, comprised of National Contact Points (EMN NCPs) and national networks of relevant stakeholder organisations. The EMN plays a key role in providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum topics to policy makers (at EU and Member State level) and the general public.

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ACRONYMS

AMIF	ASYLUM, MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION FUND
PBGB	POLICE AND BORDER GUARD BOARD
UNHCR	UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
EMN	EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK
FRONTEX	EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY
IOM	INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION
SIS	SCHENGEN INFORMATION SYSTEM
TCN	THIRD COUNTRY NATIONAL
THB	TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS
EU	EUROPEAN UNION

Statistical disclaimer

The statistical data used in this annual report is based on the Statistical Annex, into which input has been obtained from the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board. Statistics not based on the Annex are indicated separately.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to outline **the most significant developments in 2019 in the area of migration and asylum in Estonia**. It includes an overview of statistics, legislative, policy and practical changes, as well as third sector and public initiatives and debates.

There were no major overarching changes in the national migration and asylum system in Estonia. In 2019, the government, however, continued the process of reviewing and developing **new national strategies and action plans in the field of migration, asylum and integration**, which are expected to be adopted in the beginning of 2020.

Drafting of the „**Internal Security Development Plan 2020-2030**” was initiated by the **Ministry of the Interior** in spring 2018 and in spring of 2019 the draft was sent to all co-authors of the document for a coordination round. The goal of drafting this Development Plan is planning of a safe Estonian society considering different global trends. The Development Plan considered the main global trends that have a major influence on internal security, such as development of technology, urbanization, growing areas of low population density, increasing migration, aging population, international conflicts and climate change.

The PBGB has issued its strategy # PPA 2030 that includes plans for the construction of 338-kilometer eastern border, a technologically advanced hi-tech infrastructure with 24/7 capacity and surveillance solutions. In addition, the strategy includes plans to automatize border checks of both people and vehicles, using biometrics-based solutions. For managing all the resources and events on the border as well as administrating the information, there are plans to create a common border-management information system.

In 2018 **the Government Office initiated the strategy “Estonia 2035”**. The purpose of the strategy being prepared is to give a long-term, sustainable direction to the development of Estonia. The Strategy will provide politicians and decision-makers of different areas with common directions for further development and use of European funds.

Meanwhile, the **Ministry of Culture** and the **Ministry of the Interior** have been working on the development plan **The Strategy of Population and Social Cohesion in Estonia**. The goal is to formulate the objectives of the integration policy of the Republic of Estonia and the activities needed to achieve them. The completion of the strategy is planned by the end of 2020.

In Estonia, there were some changes in population and migration statistics.

According to the initial data of Statistics Estonia,¹ the population of Estonia was 1 328 360 as of 1 January 2020, which is 3540 people more than the year before. Due to negative natural population decrease (the number of deaths exceeded the number of births), the population decreased by 1490 persons; however, due to the positive migration rate (more people immigrated to than emigrated from Estonia), the population increased by 3539 persons. **Altogether, in 2019 the population of Estonia grew by 0,3%.**

In 2019, compared to 2018, **the number of first temporary residence permits** issued by the PBGB has grown by 20% – from 5073 residence permits in 2018 to 6104 permits in 2019. While increase can be seen in all main types of first-time residence permits, the largest growth since 2018 was 36% increase in family migration (with 2427 first-time permits issued in 2019) and 17% increase in labour migration (with 2102 first-time permits issued in 2019). Almost 60% of first residence permits were issued to men and 40% to women.²

¹ Estonian Statistics publishes more detailed population statistics on May 2020.

² The statistical data is consistent with the Statistical Annex of this document.

In 2019 there was also a substantial increase in registrations of short-term employment. Compared to the previous year, the increase was 40%, from 19 858 in 2018 to 32 245 in 2019. Third-country nationals whose short-term employment was registered in 2019 were most often citizens of Ukraine (75% of total short-term employment registrations), Belarus (6% from total number) and the Russian Federation (4% of total).

There was an increase in the number of beneficiaries of international protection (incl. those granted international protection in the framework of the National Program). When in 2018, international protection was granted to 35 persons, then in 2019, there were 50 persons. Protection was granted most often to Turkish citizens.

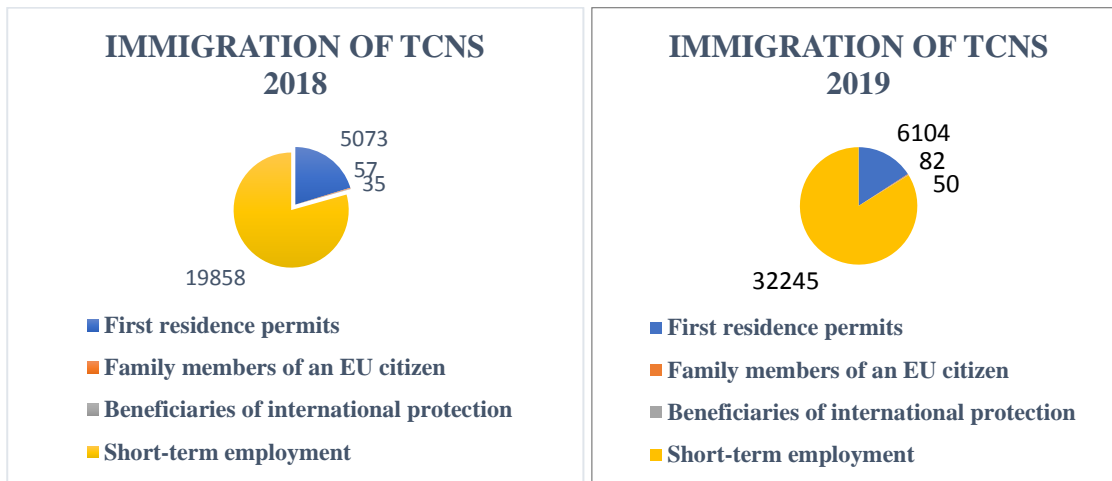


Figure 1. Total immigration in 2018 (incl. first temporary residence permits, first residence permits of family member of a EU citizen, beneficiaries of international protection, registrations of short-term employment)

Source: the PBGB

Figure 2. Total immigration in 2019 (incl. first temporary residence permits, first residence permits of family member of an EU citizen, beneficiaries of international protection, registrations of short-term employment)

Source: the PBGB

In 2019, short-term employment accounted for almost 84% of the overall immigration, thus reducing the share of other types of immigration.

In 2019 the PBGB issued 1121 **return decisions, which is 37% more than in 2018**. 79% of these were voluntary return decisions (82% in last year). In 2019 the number of assisted voluntary returns increased threefold compared to the previous year up to 132 persons.

1 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Article 9 (1) of Council Decision 2008/381/EC establishing the EMN, every year each National Contact Point is required to provide a report describing the migration and asylum situation in the Member State, which shall include policy developments and statistical data.

The EMN Annual Policy Report consists of two parts and a statistical annex. Part I and the statistical annex are intended to inform policy-makers within the European Commission about national developments. Part II, however, is aimed at a wider audience interested in an overview of the asylum and immigration situation in Estonia.

This report is structured to provide an overview of all aspects of migration and asylum in Estonia, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019. However, in some instances, it will also refer to some developments that are planned to come into force in 2020. This is the fourteenth annual report by the Estonian National Contact Point.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

The Estonian National Contact Point of the European Migration Network produced this report in accordance with the network's general research guidelines. The terminology used in the report is based on the EMN Glossary published and maintained by the European Migration Network. The structure and headings of the report are based on a model jointly agreed on by the European Migration Network. The division into topics follows the structure used by the European Commission, which has also been adopted by the European Migration Network.

Report is based on both primary and secondary data obtained from the Estonian key stakeholders in the field of migration and asylum. Where necessary, report uses publicly available information, such as policy papers, statistics, reports, news and public websites. The majority of information was collected from our stakeholders through formal inquiries and interviews, in order to gather more detailed information.

Stakeholders involved in the making of this report include the relevant ministries – the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Education and Research. One of the main sources of information and statistical data is the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board. Other contributing agencies and organisations are Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, Social Insurance Board, Estonian Tax and Customs Board, Enterprise Estonia's "Work in Estonia" program, IOM, UNHCR, Integration Foundation, Tartu Folk High School, AS Hoolekandeteenused, Tartu University, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, The Institute of Baltic Studies, Archimedes Foundation, Red Cross Estonian Office, NGOs like Estonian Refugee Council, Johannes Mihkelson Centre, Mondo, Living for Tomorrow, Estonian Human Rights Centre. The information and data presented in this report were obtained from these organisations unless specified otherwise.

1.2 THE STRUCTURE OF MIGRATION RELATED MINISTRIES/ORGANISATION AND LEGAL SYSTEM

The institutional and legal framework of migration and asylum related ministries and organisations remained overall the same as in 2018.

There were two significant changes – within the Ministry of the Interior in addition to the Minister of the Interior, a new position of **the Minister of Population** was created. The new Minister of Population is responsible among other topics for newly arrived immigrants' adaptation policy.

The second change was that the structure of migration-related services in the context of asylum, was moved from the Ministry of Social Affairs to **Social Insurance Board**. Policy-making regarding asylum related services remained with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The institutional framework

The primary institution responsible for policy-making in the area of migration and asylum is **the Estonian Ministry of the Interior**. These policies are mainly implemented by **the Police and Border Guard Board** (hereinafter PBGB), subordinated under the Ministry. The PBGB is involved in processing of all applications of TCNs (including asylum seekers, persons staying in the country illegally, as well as applicants for residence permits and applying for Estonian citizenship) as well as the applications of the citizens of the European Union. Although the decision-making capacity (e.g. granting a residence permit, etc.) lies with the PBGB, the decisions are taken in close cooperation with the Estonian Ministry of the Interior, the **Estonian Internal Security Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund** etc.

The **Ministry of Social Affairs** is responsible for policy-making regarding services for the beneficiaries of international protection, unaccompanied minors as well as victims of trafficking in human beings. Its subordinate organisation, the **Social Insurance Board** coordinates organisation of those services.

The Ministry of Justice coordinates policy-making in relation to victims of human trafficking and non-discrimination.

In close cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, the **Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications** develops policies in relation to skilled migration.

The **Ministry of Education and Research** gives its input to Ministry of the Interior concerning study migration and researchers' mobility.

Their respective subordinate agencies responsible for executing these policies are Enterprise Estonia (responsible for talent attraction and retention) and Archimedes Foundation (responsible for academic and professional recognition).

The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** is responsible for visa issues, development cooperation and humanitarian aid policy, and via the diplomatic corps, advances relations with third countries.

The **Ministry of Culture** is the main institution responsible for developing integration policies. Its subordinate institution Integration Foundation offers for example various language learning possibilities.

In addition, several **NGO-s** and organisations play a role in supporting the implementation of migration and asylum policies. The Estonian Refugee Council and Johannes Mihkelson Center are responsible for providing the support person service to the beneficiaries of international protection, the Estonian branch of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is responsible for providing the assisted voluntary return service for persons with no legal basis to stay.

The legal system

The **Aliens Act** regulates the entry of third country nationals, their stay, residence and employment as well as the bases for legal liability of aliens. **Citizens of the European Union Act** regulates the bases for stay and residence of citizens of the European Union and their family members. **Act of Granting International Protection to Aliens** regulates the granting international protection to person, the legal status and basis for stay. **Citizenship Act** regulates issues related to citizenship. **Obligation to Leave and Prohibition on Entry Act** provides the basis and procedures regarding obligations to leave, prohibition of entry and the assistance for travel through Estonia. **State Borders Act** defines the state border, the border regime and the liability for violation and illegal crossing. **Administrative Procedure Act** provides the general principles of administrative procedures. All of the above-mentioned legislation is passed by the Estonian Parliament and signed into law by the president. There are also numerous regulations of the ministers responsible for the area (e.g. the Welcoming Programme regulation, the Establishment of state register of granting international protection and statutes for maintenance of register, etc.)

2 OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION AND ASYLUM POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2019

2.1 POLITICAL CHANGES IN 2019

In March 2019, parliamentary elections took place in Estonia and after the elections the new government was formed by the Centre Party (Keskerakond), Pro Patria (Isamaa) and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE).

A new position of the Minister of Population was created within the Ministry of the Interior in addition to the Minister of the Interior. The new Minister of Population is responsible among other topics for newly arrived immigrants' adaptation policy.

2.2 MAIN HIGHLIGHTS IN MIGRATION AND ASYLUM SYSTEM IN 2019

Legal migration

- There was a substantial increase in short-term employment registrations in 2019 with 32 245 short-term employment registrations compared to 19 858 registrations in the previous year. In 2019, the top three countries remain the same as in 2018, Ukraine (24 327 registrations, 75% of total registrations), followed by Belarus and Russian Federation. The number of short-term employment registrations has increased substantially in the recent years. Some changes were made in 2019 to facilitate the application process.
- The Minister of the Interior established a division of the annual immigration quota for 2020. Differently from previous years the quota is divided into parts depending on the ground of the residence permit.
- In addition to Tallinn International House of Estonia, which was opened in 2018, Tartu Welcome Center opened its doors in August 2019, with the support of the Ministry of the Interior. The center has a team of local advisers providing information and guidance for international newcomers settling in Estonia.
- As for other support measures in 2019, International House of Estonia, in cooperation with the Unemployment Insurance Fund successfully launched a program named MoveMyTalent for hiring specialists from abroad and talent mobility and introduced a spouse program "Re-invent yourself" with the objective to find professional activities for the partners of foreign specialists recruited to Estonia.
- The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications changed the conditions of applying for the foreign recruitment grant broadening the scope of the support in order to also start hiring top specialists in the field of science and engineering.
- The PBGB in collaboration with the Estonian Tax and Customs Board and the Labour Inspectorate are in the process to develop a common migration information system. The new system would simplify the exchange of information and resources between different authorities. This development is planned for 2020-2021.

International protection

- The main change that was introduced compared to earlier practice was that as of September 2019, the PBGB started to issue 3-in-1 decisions. Together with the negative asylum decision the person receives a return decision and a decision to impose an entry ban - all with the same administrative act.

- As for institutional changes, implementation of migration-related services was relocated from the Ministry of Social Affairs to Social Insurance Board.
- In 2019 Estonia received 101 applications for international protection. Refugee status was granted to 38 persons and subsidiary protection was granted to five persons. Estonia resettled seven Syrian citizens from Turkey.

Integration

- The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Interior have been working on the development plan “The Strategy of Population and Social Cohesion in Estonia”. The goal is to formulate the objectives of the integration policy of Estonia and the activities needed to achieve them. The completion of the strategy is planned by the end of 2020.
- The Ministry of the Interior developed a new [e-population register](#), which is a common self-service portal for population register services.
- In 2019 various centers were opened to enhance integration. In addition to Tartu Welcome Centre, Integration Foundation opened the Estonian Language Houses in Tallinn and Narva offering various language learning possibilities.
- Additionally, a Health Centre was opened in Ülemiste City where all necessary health-related services have been gathered in one place with teams of experts in various fields of health care. Services are aimed at for locals as well as for foreigners as family doctors and other health care specialists are able to provide the service in different foreign languages.

Acquisition of citizenship

- From 1 January 2019, persons who have resided in Estonia on a legal basis for at least five years and have not participated in government-financed Estonian language courses in the past two years and are interested in applying for Estonian citizenship, can sign a language learning contract with the government. By the 23th January 2020, 461 language learning contracts had been signed, 27 persons finalized their language studies and applied for citizenship.

Borders, Schengen and Visas

- In autumn 2019, the PBGB organized a largescale exercise “HotSpot 2019”, where mass intake of thousands of the irregular immigrants or asylum seekers was rehearsed at the border checkpoint located in South-Eastern part of Estonia. The aim of this exercise was to practice the performance of initial procedural acts – first screening of health problems, security checks, identification of persons, fingerprinting, photographing etc carried out upon the reception of incoming migrants. Nearly 400 PBGB officials took part of this exercise. In addition to local experts the training was also evaluated by partners from Finland and Frontex.
- The automatic border control (ABC) project was launched in 2019. The first stage of the project will only concern the border crossing points in Tallinn, but the project is under process.
- As for planned changes, an amendment to the Aliens Act was developed, which introduces a new digital nomad visa. A digital visa can be both short-term or long-term. The amendment is expected to take effect in mid-2021.

Irregular Migration

- To prevent and tackle illegal employment a new action plan 'The Illegal Employment Prevention and Prohibiting Action Plan' was approved by the Government in 2018. In 2019 the Action Plan was updated.
- The PBGB compiled information materials mainly for embassies on legal entrance and stay in Estonia and departure from Estonia in case of unlawful stay. The material highlights the key information on the most common types of migration, and legal bases for third-country nationals to arrive and stay in Estonia. The material was compiled by IOM Estonian office and the PBGB in the framework of the project 'Improving cooperation with third countries on the return of persons'. Materials are translated into English and Russian.

Trafficking in Human Beings

- New guide to identifying and referring victims of human trafficking to services was finalized by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2019.
- Estonia participates in the EU campaign for drawing attention to the rights of victims of THB. The campaign started in October 2019. Estonia uses these campaign materials in the victim support services.

Return

- On 1 July 2019 a new amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure and Obligation to Leave and Prohibition on Entry Act came into force. The new provisions enable to make an agreement with the suspect, accused or a sentenced third-country national on the obligation to depart from the Republic of Estonia to a host country, including a prohibition on entry. At the request of the Prosecutor's office or prison the PBGB shall give a personal assessment concerning the possibility of returning the TCN who wishes to leave Estonia to the receiving state. In 2019 several cases were launched to make an agreement with the TCN.
- As of September 2019, the PBGB has started to make three-in-one decisions in case of negative asylum decisions, a person receives a negative decision on their his or her asylum application, a return decision and a decision to impose a prohibition to entry is issued at the same time. The return decision and decision to impose an entry ban will be suspended and will take effect after the final asylum decision has been made.
- Several readmission agreements have been initiated by Estonia (in cooperation with relevant authorities as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the PBGB), so far no agreements have been reached.

2.3 PUBLIC DEBATES ON MIGRATION IN 2019

Public debates on migration

An active public debate on the topic on foreign labour, mainly foreign labour from Ukraine, continued in 2019.

One of the reasons for the continued debate is the fast and dominating growth of Ukrainian labour in Estonia (75% of short-term registrations in 2019 were short-term work visa registrations for

Ukrainian citizens, the same proportion as in 2018).³ The employers tend to not fulfil the obligations concerning recruitment of third county nationals. Violations as not paying the salary required, incomplete agreements of employment or violations of agreements on working-time are frequent.⁴ The problem is intensified by the sectoral shortage of labour in Estonia and by the employers' interest in cheaper labour, especially in construction and transport sector. On one hand there is a shortage of workers and on the other hand, foreign labour is cheap and therefore Estonian workers are pushed out from these sectors.⁵

One more topic that has been discussed in the Estonian press is the fact that the number of Ukrainian workers who have been sent back from the Estonian border has grown significantly as their reasons for entry and stay are not righteous. Ukrainians arriving to Estonia are confused by the misconception that with a visa-freedom clause they are entitled to come to Estonia to work despite not having the necessary documentation that would allow them to enter the labour market.⁶

³ Newsletter Eesti Päevaleht, 18.02.2019 [Eestisse on jõudnud Ukraina töömigrantide suurim laine](#)

⁴ Newsletter Postimees, 13.09.2019 [Välis­tööjõud saab Eestis üha rohkem petta.](#)

⁵ Newsletter Postimees 22.03.2019 [Ukraina odavtööjõud ründab juba Eesti autojuhametit.](#)

⁶ News portal Delfi 27.07.2019 [Tänavu on piirilt tagasi saadetud juba üle 500 välismaalase, eriti palju probleeme on ukrainlastega,](#)

3 LEGAL MIGRATION

3.1 FIRST TEMPORARY RESIDENCE PERMITS IN NUMBERS

In 2019, compared to 2018, the number of first temporary residence permits issued by the PBGB has grown by 20% – from 5073 residence permits in 2018 to 6104 permits in 2019.

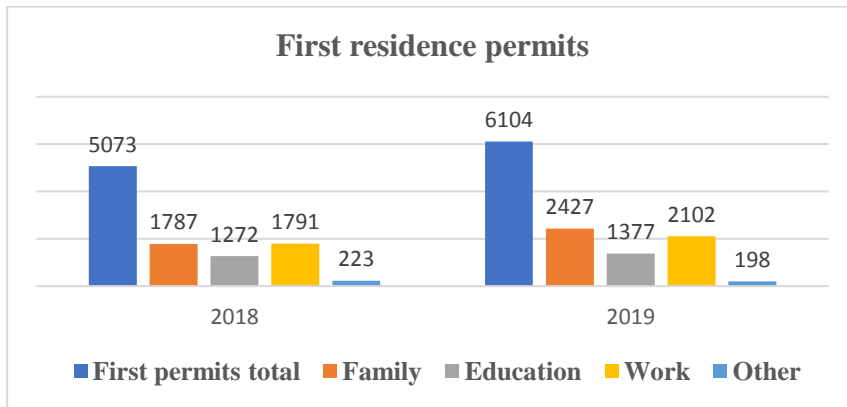


Figure 3. Number of first temporary residence permits issued in 2018-2019
Source: PBGB

While increases can be seen in almost all of the important types of first-time residence permits, the largest growth since 2018 was the 36% increase in family migration (with 2427 first-time permits issued in 2019) and 17% increase in labour migration (with 2102 first-time permits issued in 2019). Almost 60% of first residence permits were issued to men and 40% to woman.

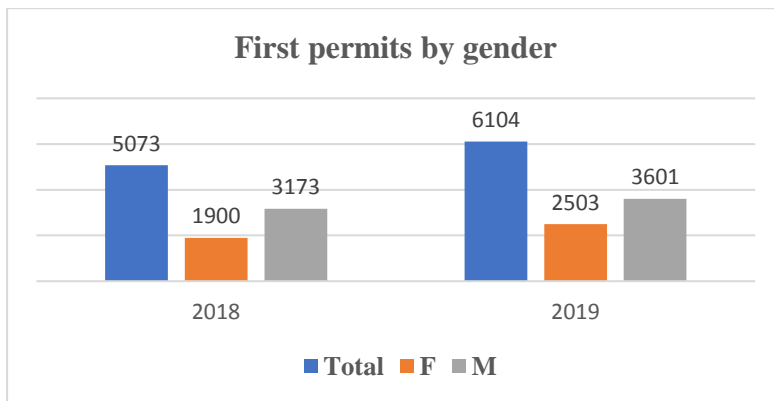


Figure 4. Total number of first temporary residence permits issued, by gender, in 2018-2019
Source: PBGB

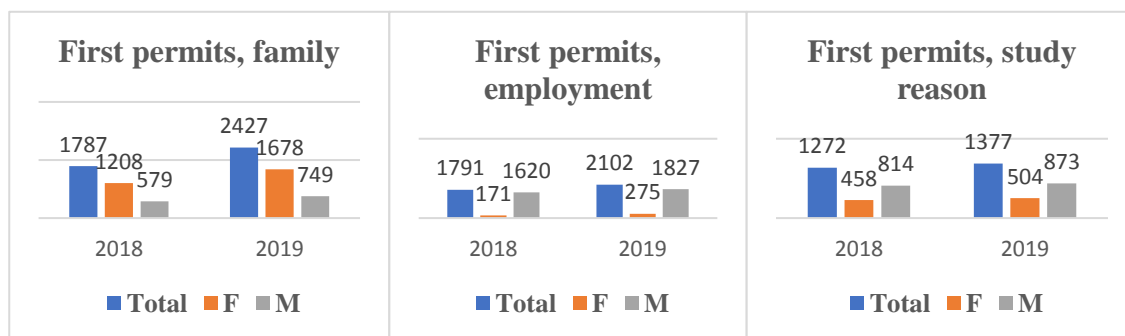


Figure 5. First residence permits for family migration by gender, 2018-2019

Figure 6. First residence permits for study reason by gender, 2018-2019

Figure 7. First residence permits for employment by gender, 2018-2019

Source: PBGB

The gender proportion of first-time temporary residence permits issued has remained such that women tend to migrate for family purposes, while men tend to migrate for the purpose of employment or study.

Third-country nationals who settled in Estonia in 2019 on the basis of a first-time residence permit were most often citizens of Ukraine (1930 persons), the Russian Federation (1236 persons), India (346 persons), Belarus (284) and Nigeria (232).

1. Ukraine	1930
2. Russian Federation	1236
3. India	346
4. Belarus	284
5. Nigeria	232

Figure 8. Top 5 first-time issued residence permits by nationality, 2019
Source: PBGB

Basis	No1 nationality
First-time temporary residence permit	Ukraine
Family-migration	Russian Federation
Studying	Nigeria
Employment	Ukraine
Entrepreneurship	Russian Federation

Figure 9. First-time residence permits by type of migration and by nationality, 2019
Source: PBGB

3.2 EMPLOYMENT RELATED MIGRATION



Figure 10. First-time temporary residence permits for employment, by profession 2018-2019 (statistics for 2019 are highlighted)⁷

Source: PBGB

In 2018, the number of first-time residence permits issued for employment was 2218, amounting to a 20% increase compared to 2019. The start-up scheme has continued to be popular with the numbers of residence permits issued for working in a start-up rising from 186 in 2018 to 315 in 2019. Also, there was a rise in the number of top specialists in 2019, from 228 to 390.

However, the number of residence permits issued does not reflect the total size of the foreign labour force in Estonia. In 2019, there were also 32 245 registrations of short-term employment. Furthermore, Estonia also allows citizens of the European Union and European Economic Area, and their third-country national family members to reside and work in the country. Citizens of the European Union can reside and work in Estonia without registering for three months; if they wish to stay longer, they need to register their place of residence in the population register. In 2019, the largest groups of EU citizens registering in Estonia were from Latvia (627 persons), Finland (581), Germany (558), France (334) and Italy (309).⁸

Short-term employment

Also in 2019 there were a substantial increase in registrations of short-term employment, increase compared to the previous year was 40%.

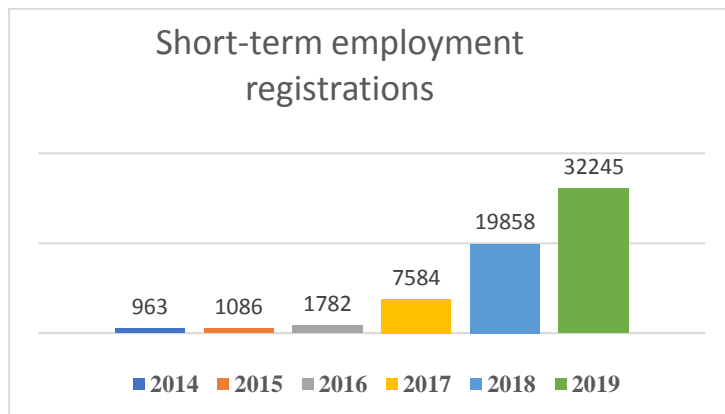


Figure 11. Registrations of short-term employment, 2014-2019

Source: PBGB

Basis for short-term employment	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Expert/counsellor/consultant	138	142	6	0	0
Replacement within the company	0	0	0	5	5
Seasonal employment	0	0	1 150	2 780	5 023
Seasonal employment in agriculture	82	181	0	0	0
Au-pair/housekeeping help	0	1	0	0	0
Creative professionals	100	116	218	102	217
Posted workers	0	0	226	333	303
Youth project or programme	0	0	3	26	52
Installation of equipment/specialists	570	1 100	74	0	0
Sportsman/coach/referee/sports administrator	27	25	44	101	129
Researcher/ lecturer	27	44	55	74	97

⁷ First-time issued residence permits are issued to person who is applying for residence permit in Estonia for first time in his life.

⁸ Source: Population register

Top specialist	93	125	216	343	445
Working in a start-up employment	0	0	95	231	523
Internship	8	18	31	21	40
Clergymen/nun/monk	0	0	2	13	30
Au-pair	0	0	1	8	9
Free movement of services	0	0	0	12	73
Services to diplomatic representation of a foreign country	13	7	0	0	0
Teacher	28	23	24	40	63
On general grounds	0	0	5 364	15 694	25 236
Total	1 086	1 782	7 509	19 783	32 245

Figure 12. Number of short-term employments by reason in 2015-2019

Source: PBGB

In 2019 saw a rise in the applications for seasonal workers. While in 2018, 2916 applications were submitted by the seasonal workers, then year 2019 saw 1.8 times bigger number with 5238 applications.

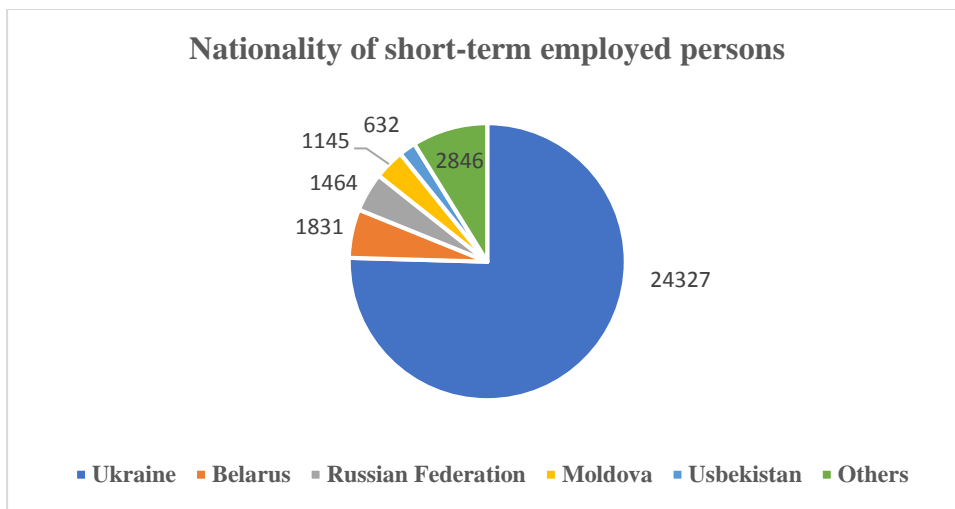


Figure 13. Top 5 countries of nationality of persons who’s short-term employment was registered, 2019

Source: PBGB

Third-country nationals whose short-term employment was registered in 2019 were most often citizens of Ukraine (75% of total short-term employment registrations), Belarus (6% from total number) and the Russian Federation (4% of total).

Top 5 areas of occupation for registration of short-term employment were construction, processing industry, agriculture and forestry, service sector and transport sector.

3.3 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND START-UP’S

In 2019, there was an increase in the number of visas and residence permits issued for business purposes as a result of the new start-up-related legislation adopted in 2017. Since the legislation was launched three years ago 1972 companies have applied for the ‘start-up’ status. The success rate of companies applying, however, has been steadily decreasing from 43% in 2017 to 20% in 2019.⁹

The number of incoming start-uppers continue to show a positive trend – while 483 employees and 174 founders settled to Estonia in 2018, the numbers were significantly higher in 2019 – i.e., 701

⁹ Startup Estonia, <https://www.startupestonia.ee/>

employees and 201 founders. In 2019 the top 5 countries among employees who received the visa and temporary residence permits were Russian Federation, Brazil, Ukraine, India and Iran. Most of the founders came from Russian Federation, India, Turkey, Ukraine and Iran.¹⁰

3.4 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES IN THE FIELD OF LEGAL MIGRATION

In 2019 no significant changes were introduced into legislation concerning legal migration. The main changes were:

1. Legislative changes concerning the conditions for residing in Estonia after Brexit

In response to the UK leaving the European Union some amendments were made into the Citizen of the European Union Act that will become effective as of 1 April 2021. According to the amendment, the Citizen of the European Union Act will be applied to UK citizens who have received an Estonian residence permit or who will acquire a residence permit in Estonia by 31 March 2021. After the named date the Aliens Act will be applied to UK citizens.

Another amendment introduced into the Aliens Act was adding UK citizens to the list of persons to whom immigration quota does not extend. Furthermore, the Aliens Act was also amended as a result of withdrawal of the UK from the EU and some provisions for the transition period introduced. This means that UK citizens who have a temporary residence permit in Estonia on the date of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU will be granted a temporary residence permit with a period of validity of up to five years for settling in Estonia and UK citizens who have acquired a long-term residence permit will be granted a long-term residence permit. These rights are also extended to family members of EU citizens. Amendments will enter into force as of 1 April 2021.

2. Immigration quota

In November the Minister of the Interior established a division of the immigration quota¹² for 2020 (which is in total 1314 persons) according to Government of the Republic's regulation.¹¹

According to § 114 section 2 in the Aliens Act the minister responsible for this area (the Minister of the Interior) may within the limits of the immigration quota, by a ruling, establish a distribution of the immigration quota according to the grounds for application and the basis for the issue of a residence permit, as well as the temporal distribution within a year. The immigration quota for 2020 distributed according to both on the basis of the grounds of application of residence permit as well as issue of the residence permit as follows: 28 residence permits for employment in performing arts institution as person engaged in creative activities; 18 residence permits for employment in the professional activities in the capacity of a sportsman, coach, referee or sports official by summons of a respective sports federation; 10 residence permits on the basis of a treaty; 1258 residence permits on general grounds for employment and entrepreneurship.

The main reason for this change, was the need to safeguard the division of immigration quota in a way that would coincide with the development needs of the Estonian economy and the society. Furthermore, this would also safeguard that immigration management would be both efficient and purposeful.

Concerning the basis for temporary residence permits during the latest years, the division of temporary residence permits under the immigration quota has been divided in the following way: in 98% of all cases on the basis of work, for 0.03% the basis has been entrepreneurship, and in none of cases the basis has been a foreign agreement or major public interest. The changes introduced will create possibilities for those foreign citizens to settle in Estonia whose stay is in line with the public interest, is synchronised with the interests of the state and the society and who create added value.¹¹

¹⁰ Startup Estonia, <https://www.startupestonia.ee/>

¹¹ Explanatory of Aliens Act

3. New Higher Education Act came into force in September 2019, creating pre-conditions for Estonian research and higher education institutions to create clear career track systems for their researchers (compulsory measure with the deadline in September 2020). This could also make Estonian institutions more attractive for international researchers.¹² The new Act focuses on studies in higher educational institutions and studying in higher educational institutions. In the new Act, the right to higher education has been outlined in a more specific way as well as rights and obligations of students and the main tasks of higher education institutions. In addition, the new Act supports updated career models in higher education and research institutions in order to motivate young people to choose careers of researchers.
4. On 28 February 2019 amendments of an order¹³ of the Minister of the Interior entered into force. The purpose of the changes was to make the application process of long-term visa (D-visa) more comfortable and fast.
5. On 5 September 2019 amendments of an order¹⁴ of the Minister of the Interior entered into force, according to which the time for registration of an application for short-term employment in Estonia was extended to **15 working days** (instead of 10 working days as it was before).
6. Changes were introduced in order to facilitate the application process of short-term employment for the employers. It is now possible to submit applications for short-term employment registration in the [self-service environment](#). By the end of the year 2019 already 50% of the applications were submitted through the self-service environment.
7. As of 22 August 2019 when the employer receives the confirmation for registration of the short-term employment of the third-country national from the PBGB, it is possible to receive the personal identification code of the TCN simultaneously.
8. Since 1 March 2019, new salary criteria entered into force. According to Statistics Estonia [the average gross income in 2018](#) was EUR 1310. This means that salary criteria for foreign workforce as well as for short-term labour in Estonia were also changed to EUR1310 and the double top specialist remuneration criteria was amended to EUR 2620. Employers are obliged to pay a remuneration equal to at least the annual gross monthly salary according to the criteria or average annual salaries.
9. The PBGB in collaboration with the Estonian Tax and Customs Board and The Labour Inspectorate are in process of developing a common migration information system. The system would simplify the exchange of information and resources between different authorities. This development is planned for 2020-2021.

Planned changes for 2020 –

1. In January 2020 the Government of Estonia approved the amendment to the Aliens Act, which enables to create a visa for a digital nomad. The visa would allow employment in Estonia for those foreigners whose work is web-based and is not dependant on their current location. The digital nomad visa may be issued for short-term as well as for long-term stay.
2. An amendment to the Aliens Act in order to adjust conditions for studying in Estonia was introduced. Discussions and approval of proposed amendments are planned for 2020. The number of foreign students in Estonia has increased in recent years. The growth continued in 2019 with 10% more foreign students than in 2018.

¹² Ministry of Education and Research

¹³ Regulation of the Minister of the Interior nr 82 on long-term visa

¹⁴ Regulation of the Minister of the Interior nr 67 on short-term employment

3. As of 6 January 2020, amendments of State Fees Act entered into force. These changes concern registrations of short-term labour, residence permits and long-term visa applications.

1) According to the changes, the state fee for registration of an application of short-term labour in online self-service of the PBGB is 48 EUR and in case the application is submitted in a different way (in the service centre, by mail or e-mail) the state fee is now 55 EUR.

2) The state fee for processing of an application of a long-term visa has been raised to 100 EUR.

3) State fees for submitting an application for a residence permit in the PBGB remain unchanged. Instead, when submitting an application for a temporary residence permit in an Estonian embassy, the state fee is 95EUR, for processing of an application of temporary residence permit for work in Estonia the fee is 125 EUR and for temporary residence permit for entrepreneurship the fee is 190 EUR.

3.5 STUDENT AND RESEARCHERS' MIGRATION

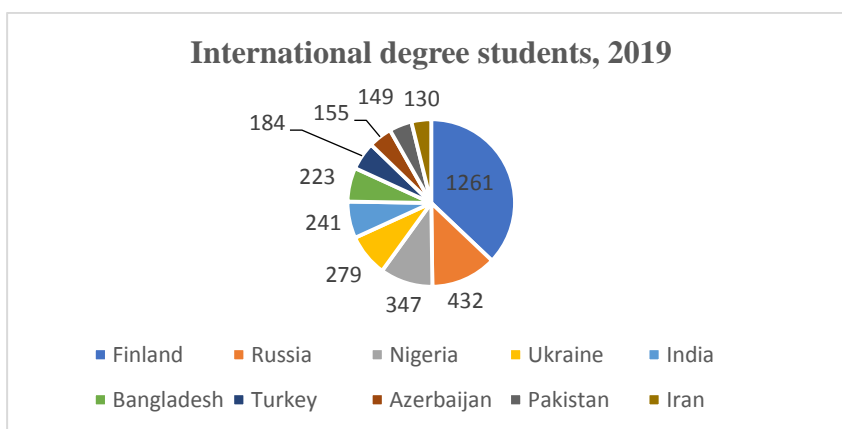


Figure 14. International degree students in Estonia, top 10 countries, 2019

Source: Archimedes Foundation

According to Archimedes Foundation among top 10 countries there is only one EU country (Finland). Top-3 TCNs remained the same as in 2018 – citizens of Russian Federation, Nigeria and Ukraine.

Archimedes Foundation¹⁵ organized different activities in 2019 in order to support the development of higher education in Estonia. These activities focus at promoting higher education in Estonia and encourage foreign students to study in Estonia and offer support-networks for students who already are engaged in studies in Estonia.

For example, the first student ambassadors were elected in 2019. Student ambassadors are foreign degree students from different countries who study in different higher education institutions in Estonia. On the homepage of Study in Estonia student ambassadors share their own experiences of studies, adaptation, student life etc.

On target markets, including Russia, Finland, Ukraine and India, different events were organized as well as networking-seminars in Kazakhstan and Japan, where admission criteria, international curricula and working possibilities were presented.

In order to facilitate cooperation between foreign students and entrepreneurs, different contact events in cooperation with „Work in Estonia” have been carried out. In cooperation with the Embassy of India in Helsinki, covering both Finland and Estonia, a reception and an information seminar was

¹⁵ Archimedes Foundation is an independent body established by the Estonian government with the objective to coordinate and implement different international and national programmes and projects in the field of training, education and research.

organized for Indian students in Estonia. A similar seminar was organized in cooperation with the Turkish embassy in order to encourage Turkish students to cooperate actively with entrepreneurs. In cooperation with the team of „Work in Estonia” a seminar named "Kickstart your career in Estonia" was carried out with the support of four businesses (Studioworks, Bolt, Veriff and Proekspert) presenting their work opportunities. Feedback of employers on these seminars has been positive.

„Study in Estonia” under Archimedes Foundation ordered a study from Statistics Estonia on participation of foreign students in labour market and the effects on the Estonian economy. According to the conclusions of the study, foreign students paid eight million euros in income and social tax in Estonia in the previous academic year. International students who graduated the year prior contributed additionally over two million euros. The share of international students who in addition to studying have also started to work has increased significantly in the last three years. Half of them continue working in Estonia even after receiving a diploma.¹⁶

In cooperation with the biggest news-portal of technology „Geenius”, a series of articles about foreign students who have continued to work in Estonia after they concluded their studies was initiated and now 13 stories are available.

3.6 OTHER LEGAL MIGRATION SUPPORTIVE ACTIVITIES

- The Ministry of the Interior prepared a graphical booklet of migration statistics for the period of 2014-2018. The aim of compiling this statistical data is to make migration statistics more available for general public and to describe the main trends and data in a simple format. This information is available in both Estonian and English. There are plans to continue to publish the same type of migration statistics for period 2015-2019 in 2020.
- The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications changed the conditions of applying for the foreign recruitment grant.¹⁷ If previously the grant was aimed at supporting recruitment of foreign information and communication technology (ICT) specialists to help alleviate shortage of ICT specialists, then now it is also possible to use the grant for hiring top specialists in the field of science and engineering. The amount of the grant per one recruited top specialist is 3000 euros. The aim is to cover the costs that employers make in the recruitment of new people, which means that the trained specialist must not have worked or studied in Estonia in the last three years.
- The Estonian government approved the e-Residency 2.0 action plan that aims to make the e-Residency program more secure, more beneficial for Estonian entrepreneurs and more convenient for the e-residency community.¹⁸ One of the most important objectives of the e-Residency 2.0 action plan is to enhance security in order to minimise the risks that are linked to the use of e-services. The Minister of the Interior and head of the PBGB signed an agreement for issuing e-residency digital identity cards in the near future also in San Francisco and Tokyo.¹⁹
- A new agreement came into effect. On 18 December 2019 the Convention between the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China for the elimination of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and the prevention of tax evasion and avoidance came into force.²⁰

3.7 OTHER DEVELOPMENTS THAT SUPPORT LEGAL MIGRANTS AND EMPLOYERS

¹⁶ <https://www.stat.ee/news-release-2019-155>

¹⁷ <https://www.eas.ee/teenus/valisvarbamise-toetus/?lang=en>

¹⁸ <https://e-estonia.com/e-residency-2-0-enhanced-efficiency-security-and-convenience/>

¹⁹ <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/uudised/e-residendid-saavad-peagi-digitaalseid-isikutunnistusi-katte-ka-tokyos-ja-san-franciscos>

²⁰ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/218122019004>

In order to support and facilitate the settling of third-country nationals, the PBGB began providing migration advisory services in 2017.²¹ In 2019, the service remained popular by making a new record – PBGB four advisors provided altogether 19 157 consultations (14 984 in 2018), including 61 trainings. 40% of the consultations were provided in Estonian language, 25% in English and 35% in Russian. The number of consultations in Russian language increased indicating that foreigners themselves have started to use the service, but also Russian speaking employees have shown bigger interest towards the service.²²



Figure 15. Number of migration consultations provided by PBGB advisors, 2018-2019
Source: PBGB

- In August 2019, Tartu City Government, Tartu University, Tartu Academy of Life Sciences with support of Ministry of the Interior opened, Tartu Welcome Center. As in Tallinn International House, Tartu center has an information hotline and special reception hours for individual consultations.
- A general report on the needs of labour and skills of OSKA under the Estonian Qualification Authority with monitoring and prognosis was published. The report was titled ”Estonian Labour Market Today and Tomorrow 2018”. The main aim of this study of labour and skills needs was to analyse and make a prognosis on how employment and skills needs will change over the next 5-10 years and what kind of changes have to be introduced by educational institutions and others in order to respond to the altered needs in the best possible way.
- An intermediate assessment on adaptation and integration activities during 2014-2018 was produced and published.²³ The main finding of the report was that the ones who had been in the Adaptation Programme have acquired better knowledge about Estonia. Participants of integration trainings appreciate knowledge of the Estonian language more than earlier and sense more the Estonian cultural space as well as value more the differences between different cultures. This intermediate assessment was conducted by Civitta and it is available in Estonian but the summary has also been translated into English.
- In summer 2019 Ülemiste Health Center was opened in the vicinity of Tallinn International House. Physicians of this center work in foreign languages that is of great help to people who have recently moved to Estonia and who have difficulties in finding a family physician or are not able to communicate in Estonian.
- Starting from 01 January 2020 the national family physician hotline 1220 provides advice in English from 15 PM to 17 PM. Consultations in Estonian and Russian are available 24/7.
- Booklets providing information about Estonian healthcare system were completed by Ministry of the Interior in English and Russian.

²¹ The main purpose of the advisors is to support the foreigners who are settling to Estonia, offer legal advice and operate as a partner to employers, entrepreneurs, educational institutions and others receiving foreign nationals in Estonia. Since November 2018, PBGB advisors also offer consultations in the International House of Estonia.

²² Source: the PBGB

²³ Adaptation and integration activities were launched in 2014 with the support of the European Social Fund.

3.8 Activities of Work in Estonia

Work in Estonia programme is today active in more than 12 foreign markets. In 2019 Brazil was included into the list of target markets and various marketing activities have been carried out to find relevant specialists for the Estonian market.

The web-page of Work in Estonia programme was renewed and the design was changed to be more user-friendly and modern. The lists of communities' foreign specialists were updated (Expatriate Communities). It is now possible to find information about communities of foreign specialists on one single address that can be helpful for widening of social or professional networks or finding friends.

Relocation guide, which helps the foreigners with practical issues a person may come across living and working in Estonia, was printed and made available also in the Russian language.

Estonian businesses that have been recruiting foreign specialists prepared video-presentations of their activities. „Sharing Experiences on Foreign Recruitment” presents companies like Bolt, Pipedrive, Derivco Estonia. At the moment 13 videos are available.

In 2019 Work in Estonia launched a Spouse program „Re-invent yourself”. Six-weeks program aims to support spouses of foreign specialists recruited in Estonia in re-inventing themselves professionally. Program is available in Tallinn and in Tartu.

‘International House of Estonia’, a one-stop-shop service centre was opened in Ülemiste City, Tallinn in 2018. In 2019 the center continued its activities and provided more than 1937 consultations. As an initiative of Work in Estonia's programme team an overview of the client's roadmap was developed for foreign specialists in order to find out, what are the bottlenecks for foreigners for finding the necessary services and what enhancements have been introduced during the latest years. The same kind of a road-map was prepared also from the point of view of employers. Compared to the findings of the earlier studies, the road has now become much smoother.

In spring 2019, a campaign named Career Hunt Tallinn was organized for the second time. ICT professionals were offered a possibility to apply for a five-day trip to Estonia including a final round of a recruitment interview. 14 employers were involved in the campaign including Transferwise, Pipedrive, Taxify, Veriff. 25 best candidates were elected and they were invited to Estonia for a job interview.

3.9 E-RESIDENCY

Estonia is the first country in the world to offer e-residency or digital identity services for foreigners. Starting from December 2014 non-residents can apply for a status of an e-resident and a digital ID-card that is a safe identification possibility and offers foreigners a possibility to use the Estonian e-services according to the needs notwithstanding their physical location. The digital ID of an e-resident is not an ID for identification of person nor is it a travel document (there is no photo added). E-residency does not equal with citizenship, tax-residency or residence permit. It is not a permission to entry to neither Estonia nor the European Union.²⁴

The number of e-residents during the period of 2014-2019 reached 64 110, out of them 13% were women and 87% were men. The citizens of Finland, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Germany and the UK were the top-5 countries for applying for e-residency during these years.

The number of digital ID recipients has sharply risen in the last years – while only 114 digital IDs were issued in 2014, 16 630 were issued in 2019. In 2019, the top three countries of nationality of e-Residents were Russian Federation, Germany and Ukraine.²⁵

²⁴ Source: Enterprise Estonia

²⁵ Overview of migration statistics 2015-2019, Ministry of the Interior

4 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

4.1 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN NUMBERS

Since 1997, 1202 foreigners have applied for international protection in Estonia. Protection (i.e. refugee status + subsidiary protection) has been granted to 531 foreigners, including 213 persons who received protection and came to Estonia as a part of the EU migration agenda. Out of these 213 persons refugee status was granted to 86 applicants and the subsidiary protection was granted to 127 persons. In 96 cases family member residence permits were granted for family members of individuals who had been granted international protection.

In 2019, Estonia received 101 first-time applications for asylum, 3 applications were extensions. The top three countries by nationality of asylum applicants were the Russian Federation, Turkey and Syria.

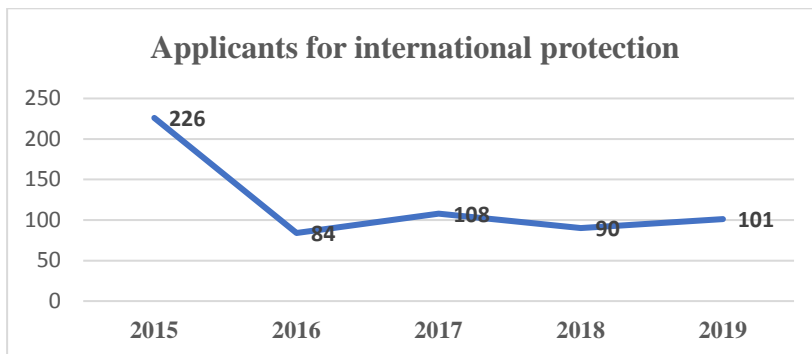


Figure 16. Number of applicants of international protection, 2015-2019
Source: the PBGB

In 2019, refugee status was granted to 38 persons and subsidiary protection to 5 persons. The top four countries of nationality of persons granted international protection were Turkey, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Egypt.

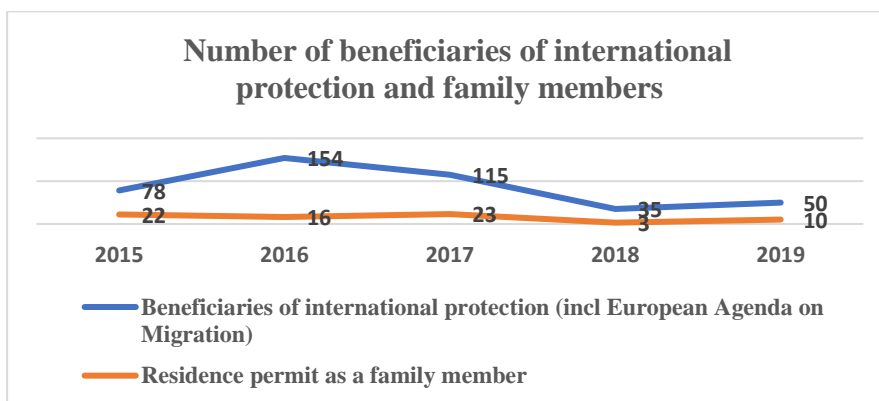


Figure 17. Number of beneficiaries of international protection and residence permits of family members, 2015-2019
Source: the PBGB

Resettlement

In 2019 Estonia resettled 7 Syrian citizens from Turkey.

Estonia made a decision not to continue with resettlement activities in 2020.

4.2 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

There were no major legal, institutional or practical changes with regard to international protection.

As for institutional changes the implementation of migration-related services for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection were moved from the Ministry of Social Affairs to Social Insurance Board. According to the Statute of the Social Insurance Board that came into effect starting from 11 February 2019, the Board is now obliged to organize services connected to migration.²⁶

As of September 2019, the PBGB started to issue 3-in-1 decisions. Together with the negative asylum decision the person receives a return decision and a decision to impose an entry ban - all with the same administrative act. In this case the return decision together with the entry ban shall be automatically suspended and take effect only after the final decision on the international protection. After the final decision on international protection is made, the court still has the right to suspend the enforcement of the return decision as an interim measure.

In 2019, the number of counsellors for asylum seekers and returnees increased to 3 persons (two female and one male). One of the counsellors is working in the detention center, one in the accommodation centers and one in needs- based locations.

Planned changes for 2020

Amendment act to the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens passed the first reading in the Parliament. Alongside with the main amendments concerning the situation of mass influx, the amendments also cover the concept of a safe country. In order to operate even more in-line with the Asylum Procedures Directive, the Act will specify that the national list of safe countries of origin has to be updated at least once a year and the duty to notify the European Commission lies with the Ministry of the Interior.

4.3 SUPPORTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

In order to assist applicants and beneficiaries of international protection to settle in, several supporting activities were made in 2019. Support for integration of refugees is mainly provided by active NGOs and organisations as Estonian Refugee Council, Johannes Mihkelson Center, AS Hoolekandeteenus, IOM Estonian Office, Tartu International House etc.

- [Estonian Refugee Council](#)²⁷ opened a new office in the city centre of Tallinn in 2019.

In 2019 they continued the project „Support Services to Beneficiaries of International Protection” in order to support the ones who had been granted international protection with services. Support person service was offered to 73 persons. In addition, as a part of the project, different kind of group activities were carried out as life competence workshops (information about how to enter the labour market); group activities for supporting of mental health, e.g. art therapy; women’s group and groups for men etc. that were started in Tallinn and Tartu on the initiative of volunteers; also, an activity called “Language-buddies” was initiated, whereby voluntary support person supports **beneficiaries of international protection** with language studies.

In 2019, a social enterprise [Siin & Sääl OÜ](#) (Here and There Ltd) was founded with the support of the US Embassy and UNHCR. It is a social enterprise driven by the Estonian Refugee Council offering catering services and workshops. An indirect aim of this social enterprise is to present the rich cultural heritage of refugees to wider general public in Estonia. In 2019, several courses of the

²⁶ The tasks of the Social Insurance Board are implemented retroactively from 1 January 2019

²⁷ Estonian Refugee Council is a renowned independent competence center on forced migration and integration as well as a provider of direct support to refugees both in and outside Estonia.

Arabic language, dance- and cooking workshops and the first Christmas Bazaar of the Estonian Refugee Council were organized.

A project named „Saame tutvavaks” (Let’s get acquainted)²⁸ was finalized. During the first three months of 2019 the last 12 events took place in different locations all over Estonia. The whole project was started anew in 2019. This time there are plans to organize a total 45 events in all counties around Estonia during a period of two years. The aim of these events is to create contacts between newly arrived immigrants and local communities. In addition to a series of events, there are plans to compile a book during the project with stories of newly arrived immigrants (including refugees) and with recipes that they would like to share. The social enterprise „Siin & Sääl OÜ” has also been involved in the project as a partner.

➤ The welfare service provider AS Hoolekandeteenus is a partner of the Ministry of Social Affairs offering accommodation services to applicants of international protection. AS Hoolekandeteenus continued the project ”Support services in accommodation centers”²⁹ and their main activities in 2019 were as follows: a programme ”Adaptation Café” was meant for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection for orientation in Estonian culture and local traditions and in order to explain the basic functioning principles of Estonia as a country in order to support adaptation of people with different backgrounds in Estonia. Events of ”Adaptation Café” were organized in Vao accommodation Center and in the branch of Vao Center in Vägeva on average four times a month.

An agreement on psychological counselling of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection in Vao and Vägeva centers was signed. A psychological counsellor supports individuals in the process of decision-making and finding out their real wishes, helps and explains, what alternative choices are available and offers possibilities for development. Participating in counselling sessions is helpful as it supports adaptation in the new culture and offers solutions for problems connected to entering the labour market. Psychological counselling was organized based on the needs in both centers. These counsellors managed to support some clients in a critical situation. The sessions are individual, some clients used counselling only once but some used this option regularly.

In 2019, 21 different events and activities were organized for inhabitants of accommodation centers in Vao and Vägeva, including visits to museums, street-food festival, a visit to the Song Festival, etc. In total it was about 600 participations, involving also people who already had moved out from accommodation centers.

4.3.1 Supporting the beneficiaries of international protection in entering the labour market

➤ The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund carried on with its labour market measure for beneficiaries of international protection ”[My First Job in Estonia](#)”.³⁰ In total, the Fund offered services or counselling in more than 70 cases in 2019.³¹ The majority of individuals who contacted the Unemployment Insurance Fund within the service were citizens of Syria, Ukraine and Iraq, who already had been granted international protection or were applicants with a permission to work.

²⁸ Projects under AMIF - AMIF2017-3 and AMIF2019-5

²⁹ Project under AMIF - AMIF2018-7

³⁰ Within this service following activities are provided –

- a wage subsidy, will be paid to employer who recruits an applicant of international protection who has the right to work, if the person is registered as unemployed. The amount of the subsidy is 50% of the employee's salary (gross) but not more than 50% of the employee's one-month estimated salary provided in the wage subsidy contract that has entered into force and no more than [the minimum wage](#) established on the grounds of the Employment Contracts Act. The service was provided in 2019 in five cases (in 2018 in six cases).

- mentoring support or mentoring compensation will be paid to employer to support employee’s adaption to working life and for staying at work. It is paid up to four months within a five-year-period from the first time the residence permit or certificate was obtained. Service was provided in 2019 in one case (in 2018 in three cases).

- Estonian language studies, obtaining qualifications and work-related translation service costs will be compensated to employer to a value of up to 2500 euros within a five-year-period from the first time the residence permit or certificate was obtained. Service has provided in 2019 in one case.

³¹As of 30 January 2019

➤ International House Tartu developed a website www.koomen.ee for their social enterprise Kõömen founded in 2018. This enterprise offers catering services and workshops in both Tallinn and Tartu for refugees and new immigrants for entering the labour market and for wider social involvement. Kõömen organizes special trainings, language training events, and this is a place for first experiences on the Estonian labour market.

4.3.2 Estonian language learning services for beneficiaries of international protection

➤ [The Tartu Folk High School](#) continued the project „Estonian language training for beneficiaries of international protection 2017-2018” also in 2019. The aim of the project is to offer A2-level language lessons during 300 hours of training. During language learning individual needs of trainees were considered (time and location suitable for trainees). During the two first years of the project language lessons were offered to 92 participants.

In 2019, the Folk High School prepared two new language learning materials, specially designed for the specific target group and considering their needs; work-books for A2-level „Lukust lahti” and a pilot version of a work-book for beginners in reading and writing „Alustame!”. The latter is specially designed for illiterate students with no learning experience. The materials also include general methodological instructions for teachers.

4.3.3 Other activities that support the beneficiaries of international protection

➤ [Human Rights Center in Estonia](#), in cooperation with UNHCR, continued in 2019 to offer free legal aid for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. These activities included legal counselling and representing applicants of international protection in procedural activities carried out by the PBGB, including representation of applicants during application interviews and writing the queries to preliminary decisions of the PBGB.

During 2019 lawyers of the center offered counselling to 59 asylum seekers and potential asylum seekers (people who had not submitted an application yet but were considering it and wanted more information about the requirements and proceedings). Counselling was mainly directed to citizens of Russian Federation, Ukraine and Georgia.

Furthermore, lawyers of the center were also involved in advising more than twenty beneficiaries of international protection. Beneficiaries of international protection most frequently turned to the center with a reference to annulment of their international protection. In addition, counselling was required in questions connected to family reunification.

Moreover, two monitoring visits were organized to both Vao and Vägeva accommodation centers and Soodevahe detention center in 2019. The aim of these monitoring visits was to gather and assess information about what are the possibilities of asylum seekers to exercise their rights and the situation of access to services in the centers.

➤ [UNHCR Representation for Northern Europe \(RNE\)](#) has developed a five-year “Multi-year, Multi-partner Protection and Solutions Strategy” covering the period between 2018 and 2022.³² Their other activities in 2019 were as follows:

For World Refugee Day, UNHCR and Estonian Human Rights Centre organized screening of the movie “The White Crow” in Cinema Artis in Tallinn, followed by an overview of the asylum situation in Estonia and a discussion with participation of a refugee living in Estonia.

³² RNE’s strategic objectives include: a) access to territory and to quality asylum procedures, including reception; b) refugee integration, including through family reunification and access to labour market; c) establishment of child-sensitive systems for refugee and migrant children; d) ending statelessness; and e) finding solutions beyond Europe, including increased unconditional donor support, increased resettlement and use of legal pathways.

RNE supported also opening of an exhibition of Estonian World War II refugees' experiences in Patarei prison/museum, where the Estonian refugees spoke in support of the rights and needs of refugees in current world.

In October RNE organized the UN Day in Estonia together with NGO Mondo and in cooperation with IOM and the Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation on the topic of UN Sustainable Development Goals.

On EMN EE NCP conference 'Global Workplace is Here!', RNE (in cooperation with UNHCR's European Bureau) presented OECD-UNHCR 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society.

4.4 TRAINING OF PUBLIC SERVANTS AND WORKERS IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

- In November 2019, Estonian Refugee Council organized a study trip to Denmark in order to learn more about the Danish experiences and practices on how to support mental health of refugees. Refugee Council pointed out that one of the main differences of practices in Estonia compared to Denmark is that in Denmark it is considered very important that refugees can start to work as quick as possible. Language can be acquired while working in a working environment.
- As a part of UNHCR's support to improve the knowledge of the PBGB officials training was organized in cooperation with the PBGB. As a result, 20 employees of PBGB have improved their knowledge on identification of vulnerabilities and of persons with special procedural needs.
- 5 officials of the PBGB responsible for international protection procedures have been continuously trained. In 2019 they have participated 8 times in various EASO modules. In 2019, 66 new reserve PBGB asylum officers were trained and 20 of them have also passed the module for case workers. Additionally, the training for assessment of vulnerabilities was offered to case workers, lawyers and for the reserve officers who have been previously trained as case workers (about 20 persons). They also passed the course for assessment of public threat in international protection procedures.

4.5 RELATED STUDIES

UNHCR in partnership with the Estonian Human Rights Centre published a comprehensive analysis on Access to Legal Aid for Asylum-Seekers in Estonia. UNHCR, in cooperation with partners assessed whether current law and practice regarding the provision of legal aid in Estonia are in line with regional and international standards. RNE developed this study to support Estonia's commitment to developing a fair and efficient asylum system.

In cooperation with partners and refugees, UNHCR conducted a survey to collect refugee perceptions of integration processes in Estonia. The results of the survey will be summarized and published in the course of 2020.

4.6 Developments in area of developing databases

The development of RAKS³³ information system was initiated. The project began in summer 2018 and is expected to conclude in 2020. The development will significantly improve the reliability and user-friendliness of the register.

³³ RAKS is a system for processing the personal data of those who have submitted an application for residence permit on the basis of Act on Granting International Protection, and the data related to asylum or subsidiary protection proceedings carried out on the basis of the said Act.

5 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

5.1 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS IN NUMBERS

In 2019, there were no cases with unaccompanied minors.

5.2 OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN FIELD OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

In 2019, there were no important developments in the field of unaccompanied minors.

6 INTEGRATION

6.1 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING INTEGRATION

There were no significant legislative changes in relation to integration of TCNs.

The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Interior have been working on a new development plan “[The Strategy of Population and Social Cohesion in Estonia](#)”, where objectives of the integration policy of Estonia will be formulated as well as the necessary activities defined. The new sector-based development plan will provide the basis for planning of implementation and financing of national integration policy for 2021 to 2027. Up to the end of 2019 the strategy was under “Integrating Estonia 2030”. To prepare the development plan, a series of research studies, consultations, discussions, seminars and inclusion meetings were conducted. From August to October 2019 discussion seminars were held in all municipalities. Third-country nationals were also involved in the discussions. The new integration plan is expected to be approved by the end of 2020.

The Ministry of the Interior developed a new [e-population register](#), which is a common self-service portal for population register services.

6.2 OTHER INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

There were several activities initiated/continued to support TCNs integration in Estonia.

6.2.1. Labour market-specific integration activities for third-country nationals

➤ [The Welcoming programme](#)³⁴ is a first-instance measure for supporting newly arrived immigrants. It consists of thematic training modules (basic module; working and entrepreneurship module; education module; family module; research module; children and youth module) and beginner-level (A1) Estonian language training.

All foreigners who have lived in Estonia for less than 5 years are welcome to participate in the Welcoming programme. The Welcoming programme was initiated in 2015 and to the end of 2019, clients had participated in programme for 6276 times. The number of participants of the modules of the Welcoming programme reached record high levels in 2019 – the total number of participants reached 2073. The participants were mostly citizens of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, India, Nigeria and Turkey. 1327 of the participants were TCNs with temporary residence permit, 326 European Union citizens and 60 persons had been granted international protection.³⁵

➤ In 2019, Integration Foundation continued with a labour market-specific supportive measure that was started already in 2018 „Advice and Training for Employers on Accommodating and Integrating Their Employees to the Estonian Society” that aimed to support employers with practical and personal tips for organising efficient Estonian language learning at the workplace.³⁶ Counselling of employers was extended in 2019. For organizing Estonian language trainings at workplaces, personalized support was offered for 19 employers. In addition, a short guide of European Center of Modern Languages on how to support work-related language learning of adult migrants was published in Estonian. This toolkit is available on the webpage of Integration Foundation as well as on the webpage of the European Center of Modern Languages.

³⁴ The Welcoming programme is funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund (ESF) and Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Estonia.

³⁵ Overview of migration statistics 2015-2019, Ministry of the Interior

³⁶ Since 1 June 2018, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund and Integration Foundation have been supporting employers in improving the Estonian language skills of their employees.

➤ Johannes Mihkelson Center continued its labour market integration programme in Tallinn and Harju County that consists of a preparedness-for-work training and additional support services (how to find job services, work-club, work-practice, support-person service, creative-therapy and other supportive activities). The purpose of the program is to help the unemployed who have been off the labour market for at least 6 months to find their motivation and vocation in the process of entering the labour market.

6.2.2. Integration measures and language courses for third-country nationals

➤ The Welcoming programme provides opportunities for beginner-level (A1) Estonian language training, in 2019 there were 1036 participants, which is 41% more compared to 2018.

➤ Integration Foundation³⁷ underwent several developments in 2019:

In 2019, Integration Foundation opened two Estonian Language Houses, on January 16 in Tallinn and on October 1 in Narva. In Estonian Language Houses services for language studies and practical communication trainings and events as workshops, movie-nights, studies by twos, also language training counselling. Estonian Language Houses provided 580 learning places in 2019 and in total there were 3855 participants on different events for practicing the Estonian language.

➤ Language-learners find their way to these language courses as a result of counselling services of Integration Foundation during which the prerequisites and needs for language learning are mapped and the most suitable language training options offered. In 2019, more counsellors were recruited in order to offer counselling for the majority of the people who are interested in language learning and integration possibilities. Counselling was offered to almost 4000 clients in 2019. There is a free information hotline available for clients and information is accessible also via e-mails. Starting from November 2018, counselling services are available also in the International House opened in Ülemiste City in Tallinn. Since November 2019 counselling is offered once a week in Ida-Viru County for inhabitants of both Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve.

In 2019, fairs for advertising Estonian language learning under the name „KU-ky” were organized both in Narva and in Tallinn. The aim of language fairs is to bring together adult language learners and institutions or businesses that offer language learning services and printing-houses that sell study materials.

In September 2019, offices of Narva Estonian Language House were opened in Kohtla-Järve and Sillamäe. This happened as a result of cooperation between Virumaa College of TalTech University of Technology and municipal governments of Kohtla-Järve and Sillamäe. Activities carried out are supportive services for language learning and counselling.

In 2019, trainings for the members of counselling networks and information system networks (providing services for migrants) were continued. Initial activities for development of e-tools (service roadmaps), as well as compiling a checklist of competences of an integration counsellor and preparations for launching an online environment for the network were carried out. The aim of these activities is to enhance the quality of counselling of people with migration background, raise the awareness of counsellors about different public services and support measures as well as to develop the counselling skills of counsellors.

Integration Foundation in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research organized a project for the rail company ELRON named “Eesti keele rong” - the Train of the Estonian Language. The project involved language training for passengers on trains from Tallinn to Narva.

➤ With the financial support of the Ministry of Education and Research a new online language learning course KEELETEE was finalized in 2019. The course enables to develop different language

³⁷ Integration Foundation is a private legal entity founded by the Government of the Republic of Estonia in order to initiate and support activities that advance the integration of the Estonian society. The Foundation is one of the largest umbrella organisations in Estonia engaging in integration-related activities directed to foreign nationals.

skills (speaking, writing, reading, listening) on B1 language level and it is possible to use assistance from a teacher. The courses are offered free of charge on the website www.keeletee.ee.

➤ The activities under the project “Kultuurisamm”- Culture Step, run by the [Estonian Institute](#)³⁸ and launched in 2018, expanded in 2019 also to people whose mother tongue is not Estonian and who live in Ida-Virumaa county. The aim of the project is to provide study visits, lectures and discussions to less integrated permanent residents and immigrants. Within the framework of the project, participants will be offered information on Estonia as well as events introducing Estonian culture, nature, history and life and possibilities to go on study visits. The Culture Step Program is offered in English and Russian.

6.3 SOCIAL INTEGRATION

➤ The Institute of Baltic Studies³⁹ conducted an analysis on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior for describing the level of integration and adaptation of newcomers to Estonia in order to find out, what are the bottlenecks of the adaption process and what aspects are supportive for adaptation in the Estonian society. The study-analyse included also an intermediate assessment of the adaptation program. As for now, the report is available only in Estonian but conclusions have been translated into English.⁴⁰

In 2019, the Institute also continued to participate in COST network “The International Ethnic and Immigrant Minorities Survey Data Network” in order to advance its research on migration. In 2019, a web-archive prototype of a questionnaire on migration and adaptation (covering 30 countries) was finalized. In different workshops, a question of potential creation of pan-European adaptations meters has been discussed.

➤ In 2019, a project named “Supporting new immigrants’ adaption at school”⁴¹ was carried out by the International House Tartu. The aim of the project was to offer different public schools a training program that would help them to gain knowledge and skills about how to support new immigrants in the school system.

➤ The Institute of Baltic Studies conducted a study for mapping multicultural education in Estonia. The aim of the study was to map all organisations that are active in multicultural education activities and to give an overview of their competences and capabilities in order to find out problems and possible solutions for multicultural education in Estonia. The study is available in Estonian.

➤ In 2019 the migration-related project RITA⁴² focused on integration and multilingual education topics.

➤ The Ministry of the Interior signed a contract with NGO Kodukant⁴³ (the Estonian Village Movement), to develop the opportunities for newly-arrived foreigners to take part in voluntary work

³⁸ The Estonian Institute is a non-governmental cultural institution which spreads the knowledge about Estonia and Estonian culture, also coordinates the Estonian studies abroad.

³⁹ The Institute of Baltic Studies is an independent think tank.

⁴⁰ According to the conclusions of the study, the main obstacles of adaptations for newly immigrated foreigners were as follows: Main obstacles which raised up from this study –

- 1) newly-arrived immigrants are not a homogeneous group of people and there are significant variations inside this target group (different nationalities and different reasons to move to Estonia) and it may lead to persons different adaptability);
- 2) fragmentation and insufficient cooperation between different institutions and information providers e.g. when transferring or directing foreigner from one service to another;
- 3) the lack of communication between the locals and newly-arrived immigrants. It is one of the major challenges for Estonia of how to promote meaningful contacts on the local level between locals and immigrants in a way which would, on the one hand, prevent the feeling of alienation and, on the other hand, support a sense of belonging and mutual integration, i.e. decrease in prejudices on both sides;
- 4) the Estonian language skills of the newly-arrived immigrants are also important preconditions for the mutual interaction, which is why it is important to ensure that everyone who wants can consistently learn Estonian.

⁴¹ Project AMIF 2019-8 “Supporting new immigrants’ adaption at school”

⁴² The aim of the RITA-project is to support elaboration of research-based innovative approaches of management of migration and integration. Better management would support economic development and enhance cohesion processes in the society. The project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

⁴³ The measure is funded by European Social Fund.

and activities. The scope of the actions was mainly to develop the online platform Vabatahtlikud.ee and offer NGOs a training programme which helps them to gain knowledge and skills involving newly-arrived foreigners.

- The Ministry of the Interior also published a handbook and a website kriis.ee with instructions on how to cope in different crisis situations, materials are in three languages - Estonian, Russian and English, that foreigners residing in Estonia would also be informed.
- Ministry of the Interior launched a communication service in order to implement a strategic approach towards migration and adaption policy. The main aim of this service is to provide objective fact-based information about migration and adaption to wider public. In 2019 the main activities were in preparatory phase.

6.4 INTEGRATION TRAININGS FOR GENERAL PUBLIC, SCHOOL TEACHERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

- Estonian Refugee Council arranged a training program “Open beginning: recipes for designing a multicultural nursery“ in the autumn and winter of 2019. Specialists working with children learned new methods and practical skills on how to support children with different cultural backgrounds.
- The Ministry of Education and Research in collaboration with Tallinn University carried out the pilot project "Highly Professional Estonian Teacher in Russian Speaking Kindergartens" that aims at improving the accessibility and quality of learning Estonian for the youngest age group (regardless of their origin). The project continues in 2020.

7 CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

7.1 POPULATION OF ESTONIA AND ACQUISITION OF ESTONIAN CITIZENSHIP

More and more people settle in Estonia for work or studies and the number of Estonian citizens returning to their country of origin is increasing as well. Until 2014 migration balance was negative (minus 733 in 2014) but starting from 2015 the trend of net migration has been positive. According to Statistics Estonia the number of population in Estonia decreased of 1490 people due to negative natural growth (more deaths than births) but increased due to positive net migration (more people immigrated to Estonia than emigrated from the country) the population growth was 3539 persons. The population of Estonia as at 1 January 2020 was 1,328,360, which is 0,3% more than in 2018.

Net migration	2018	2019
Immigration	13030	12 240
Emigration	6940	7210
Difference in net migration	6090	5028
Change	+ 0,4%	+ 0,3%

Tabel 18. Net migration 2018-2019

Source: Statistics Estonia

In the period of 2015-2019,⁴⁴ 5092 people received Estonian citizenship through naturalisation, of whom 2728 were women and 2364 were men. In 2019 there were 909 citizenship applications (+ 22% compared to 2018) and the citizenship was granted to 768 persons (the same amount as in 2018).

The top 5 nationalities to whom Estonian citizenship was granted based on naturalisation in 2019 were persons with undetermined citizenship, citizens of Russian Federation, Ukraine, Turkey and Georgia.

Persons with undetermined citizenship

The number of persons with undetermined citizenship has been decreasing year by year.⁴⁵ The main factors in this decrease have been the acquisition of Estonian citizenship, acquisition of some other citizenship or unfortunately, since the group of those with undetermined citizenship includes many elderly people, the reason is also death of the person. Since the Estonian Restoration of Independence, Estonian citizenship has been given or restored to more than 160 000 people. In 1992, 32% of the population of Estonia had undetermined citizenship, 494 000 persons; by 2019, this number had dropped to 76 148 persons.⁴⁶

7.2 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING THE ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP

There was a legal change with regard to the acquisition of citizenship.

- From 1 January 2019, persons who have resided in Estonia on a legal basis for at least five years and have not participated in government financed Estonian language courses in the past two years, as well as are interested in applying for Estonian citizenship, can sign a language learning contract with the government, which enables the signatory to participate in free language courses and also allows them to take a paid study leave for up to 20 days (the compensation is based on Estonian average salary). In return, they are obliged to pass the B1 level test and apply for citizenship within a year

⁴⁴ Data from PBGB and the Ministry of the Interior

⁴⁵ Postimees <https://www.postimees.ee/6490564/maaratlemata-kodakondsusega-inimeste-arv-vahenes-mullu>

⁴⁶ Data from presentation by K. Mesilane, "Acquisition of Estonian citizenship", available online

from passing the B1 level test (in special circumstances, this period can be extended to three years). Courses are provided from level zero up to level B1. In order to apply for Estonian citizenship, a person has to hold a long-term or permanent residence permit, reside in Estonia for 8 years, know Estonian constitution and citizenship law, have a stable and legal income and command of Estonian on a B1 level. By the 23 January 2020, 461 language contracts had been signed, of them 27 persons finished their language courses and applied for citizenship.

In order to support the process of implementation of the activities described above, an order No 32 of the Minister of the Interior „Circumstances and Order of Participation in Language Learning” came into effect on 1 January 2019 with the aim to regulate signing of language learning contracts, participation in language learning classes, payment of study leave, conditions for how to calculate study leave compensation and reimbursement conditions and the list of personal data to be presented.

Planned changes for 2020

- In September 2019, the first reading of the Bill on Amendments to the Citizenship Act was held at the Parliament. According to these amendments, the Citizenship Act will regulate the provision of Estonian citizenship to a child under 18 years of age whose parent or grandparent with undetermined citizenship lived in Estonia before 20 August 1991 and whose other parent is a national of another country (it concerns about 1500 children). If the minor has a possibility to apply for the citizenship of another country, he or she must renounce the citizenship of the other country. According to the current regulation both parents need to have undetermined citizenship for the child to acquire Estonian citizenship by naturalisation. In January 2020, the Parliament adopted the amendments to the Citizenship Act, expanding the opportunities for non-citizen children to acquire Estonian citizenship and act came into force in 17 February 2020.
- In September 2019, the first reading of the Bill on Amendments to the Citizenship Act and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act was held in the Parliament. According to the bill, basic school final exams will no longer be taken to graduate basic school. At the same time the amendments foresee solutions to ensure that the graduates of basic school will continue to smoothly meet the requirements for applying for Estonian citizenship. In order to ensure that the graduates of basic school can continue to meet the requirements for citizenship during their basic school studies, the following exams can be taken at basic schools:
 - a. an Estonian language examination or an examination of the Estonian language as a second language, upon passing of which an Estonian language proficiency examination certificate shall be issued;
 - b. a state test, which assesses the knowledge of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the principles of public order and the functioning of society, and the rights and obligations of citizens.

8 BORDERS, VISA AND SCHENGEN

8.1 VISAS IN NUMBERS

Compared to the last year there was an increase in the number of short-term (type C) visas issued by Estonia. In 2019 the number of issued C-visas was 144 682 (+14 %). Also, the number of long-term (type D) visas continued to grow significantly, in 2019 25 672 D-visas were issued, which is 25% more than in 2018. The increase in type D visas was mainly caused by growing numbers of short-term employments as during the previous year.

Since 2019 it's possible to apply for D-visas based on short-term employment, earlier all employment-related applications were categorized as business trips.

In recent years a trend has been witnessed whereby foreigners entering Estonia based on the principles of visa-freedom apply for a long-term visa in Estonia instead of applying for it in an embassy. While in 2018, 39% of all long-term visa applications were submitted in the offices of the PBGB, the proportion of these applications in 2019 was already 51%.

D-visa and registration of short-term employment continued to be an alternative to the temporary residence permit for employment, as the application process of D-visas is not affected by immigration quota or permission from the Unemployment Insurance Fund and processing of the applications is quicker than processing of a residence permit.

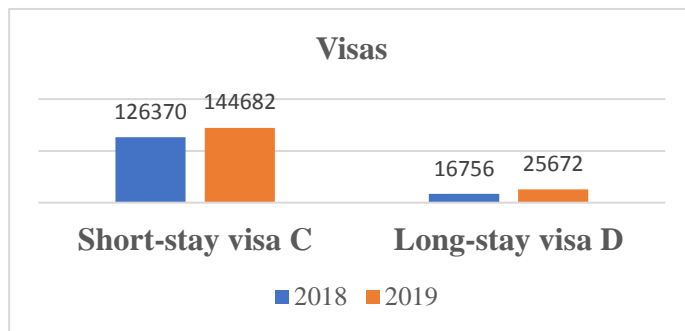


Figure 19. Visas issued by Estonia in the period of 2018-2019

Source: The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and the PBGB

8.2 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING THE VISAS AND CONSTRUCTION OF EASTERN BORDER

Some changes were made concerning D-visa.

On 28 February 2019, amendments of an order of the Minister of the Interior entered into force. The purpose of the changes was to make the application process of long-term visa (D-visa) more comfortable and faster. A new application form has been introduced that is shorter, available in three languages and it can be completed online. In addition, a long-term visa application can now be filled in in the pre-filled-in online environment that can be found on the following address: <https://eelviisataotlus.vm.ee>.

In addition, the number of documents required when applying for a D-visa has been decreased. A document for proving that the applicant has sufficient financial resources for the stay in Estonia is not required any more, neither are the documents proving financial means for accommodation and costs of stay. The applicant fills in an application and confirms by signing the document that they are in possession of sufficient financial resources to cover the costs of accommodation and stay in Estonia and for return to the country of origin or any other country where they can enter on legal grounds.

As for planned changes an amendment to the Aliens Act was developed, which introduces a new digital nomad visa. A digital visa can be both short-term or long-term. The amendment is expected to take effect from the mid-2021.

Some other developments

The automatic border control (ABC) project was launched in 2019. The first stage of the project will only concern the border crossing points in Tallinn, but the project is under process.

In autumn 2019, the PBGB organized a largescale exercise “HotSpot 2019”, where mass intake of thousands of the irregular immigrants or asylum seekers (from Russia, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine) was rehearsed at the border checkpoint located in South-Eastern part of Estonia. The aim of this exercise was to practice the performance of initial procedural acts – first screening of health problems, security checks, identification of persons, fingerprinting, photographing etc carried out upon the reception of incoming migrants. Nearly 400 PBGB officials took part of this exercise. Additionally, partner organisations as the Social Insurance Board, the Health Board, the Estonian Railway, the Tax and Customs Board, the Veterinary and Food Board, the Estonian Internal Security Service, translators, related ministries and other organizations, were participating. In addition to local experts the training was also evaluated by partners from Finland and Frontex.

The construction of the Eastern and South-Eastern border of Estonia continues.

Development of the Eastern border – in 2019, 3 new surveillance positions on river Narva (radar-towers equipped with cameras) were purchased to the Eastern boarder for the section of Vasknarva and Permiküla. Surveillance makes it easier to react to potential events on the body of water of the Estonian-Russian border. According to the plans the whole river Narva area will be equipped with monitoring and surveillance equipment that requires adding 15 additional radar positions to the border.

Development of the South-Eastern border – on 31 January 2019, the PBGB announced the public procurement for the construction of the first stage of the South-Eastern border. Construction works include a new patrol road and access points, animal barrier and sand strip, power supply, data communication and sewage (without monitoring- and surveillance equipment).

The 23,4-kilometre section of the border will be constructed upwards from the tripoint of Estonian, Latvian and Russian Federation borders to Luhamaa border-crossing point. According to risk assessments this is the most problematic part of the Estonian border with the biggest number of incidents. The border before the reconstruction https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=25&v=dAAMEZCVCfA&feature=emb_title and planned changes after https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=kOliby0BOYg&feature=emb_title.

8.3 COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION

8.3.1 Cooperation by PBGB

The PBGB in cooperation with IOM Estonian office prepared materials in the framework of the project “Improving cooperation with third countries on the return of persons”.⁴⁷ Materials highlight the key information on the most common types of legal migration, and legal basis for third-country nationals to arrive and stay in Estonia. The document outlines also what might happen, if a person is unable or unwilling to stay legally in Estonia. Materials are prepared mainly for embassies and are therefore translated into English and Russian.

8.3.2 Development cooperation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

⁴⁷ Project is co-financed by AMIF and the Ministry of the Interior.

According to the provisional data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonia spent 37,8 million euros (0.13% of its Gross National Product) on development cooperation and humanitarian aid in 2019. Expenses of bilateral cooperation amounted 12,98 million and multilateral cooperation expenses were 24,82 euros.⁴⁸

Estonia cooperates on bilateral basis mainly with countries to whom it is capable of offering added value based on its experience. As in previous years, the main partners of Estonia were Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Belorussia and Afghanistan. Estonia's input to cooperation projects with these countries in 2019 was 4,4 million euros.

The priority areas of Estonian development cooperation are supporting education and developing health care, supporting peace and stability, development of democracy and economy and supporting environmentally friendly development. Based on its own experience, Estonia seeks to support e-governance issues and digital solutions in all the named areas.

Through cooperation with organisations of development and humanitarian aid, Estonia has been able to offer relief to countries with high poverty levels as this would be complicated within bilateral cooperation. Bilateral projects are carried out mainly by Estonian NGOs as Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation and Estonian Refugee Council.

Estonia provided humanitarian aid for a total of 3,1 million euros in 2019. The biggest part of these financial means (1 million euros) was earmarked as a support to Ukraine. In sending humanitarian aid Estonia proceeds from specific needs and based on the needs the fastest and most efficient way of sending the aid is selected.

For example, the Estonian Refugee Council provides humanitarian aid actively to Ukraine as well as to Jordan and Lebanon. Together with partners a makeathon was organized in Ukraine in order to encourage Ukrainian women to become entrepreneurs. An entrepreneurship training was offered for women who were influenced by the military conflict in Ukraine and the five best ideas were financially supported for starting up their own business. School materials were sent to most vulnerable kids in Donetsk and Luhansk areas and in the end of the 2019 families living in the vicinity of the front line were supported financially in order to help them prepare for the winter. Syrian refugees in Jordan were also supported and advised on how to start up a small business and in Lebanon a social company MasterPeace producing unique clothes and wooden furniture continued its business.

NGO Mondo together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports a project that opened a center in Georgia for women to support victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a major problem in Georgia. Development work of supporting women's health education in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan continues. A long-term humanitarian aid project to support war refugees and to alleviate the situation of conflict victims in Ukraine was finalized in 2019.

⁴⁸ As of April 2020

9 IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

9.1 IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN NUMBERS

2019 saw a 27% increase in the number of persons being involved in irregular migration (1410 persons in 2019 compared to 1110 in 2018). In 1022 cases the entry was refused already at the border crossing point (in 2018 in 732 cases). The majority of those persons were Ukrainian citizens, followed by citizens of the Russian Federation and Georgia. The main purpose of their travels was illegal employment. The increase of irregular immigration of Ukrainians was closely linked to the opening of the direct flight from Kiev in 2018. The opening of the flight to Kutaisi in 2019 has had a similar impact, as the number of illegal immigration cases by Georgian citizens increased.

The pressure on Estonia's external border increased mainly due to Ukrainians coming to work in Estonia. The main modus of irregular immigration was the violation of the entry conditions, which increased 40%. Nearly 80% of the entry violations were made by Ukrainians, but also Georgian and Moldovan citizens. Mainly they were violating the conditions of visa-free movement. Right to the visa-free stay has led to the situation, where migrants have an understanding that there is no longer any need to justify the purpose of their trip or to prove sufficient financial resources during they stay.

9.2 ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT

The number of violations made by the employer who has employed a foreigner in Estonia raised from 111 in 2018 to 130 in 2019. At the same time working in Estonia without a legal basis, as well as the number of violations of the conditions of employment in Estonia, decreased – respectively from 282 in 2018 to 213 in 2019 and violation of conditions from 185 in 2018 to 122 in 2019. Less fines were imposed on individuals who were found working illegally. At the same time, 30% more fines were imposed on legal persons.

The main reason for this approach is to raise the awareness of companies about registration of short-term employment, as an application for short-term working can only be submitted by an employer, not the foreign worker.

In 2019, almost 400 migration inspection missions were carried out by the PBGB, the number of inspections remained in the same level as in 2018. One of the main achievements in 2019 was raising the awareness of companies regarding the importance of registration of short-term employment.

Type of violation	2018	2019
Enabling the employment of a TCN who is staying in Estonia without a legal basis	20	18
Enabling the violation of employment conditions of a TCN in Estonia	85	111
Payment of remuneration less than the wage rate specified by law	3	0
Total	108	129

Table 20. Violations of employers by type, 2018-2019
Source: Ministry of the Interior

The PBGB, the Estonian Tax and Customs Board and The Labour Inspectorate organized several information days for universities, employers and embassies in 2019. They shared information on legal entrance and stay/study/work in Estonia. In the end of 2018 the PBGB published an informative leaflet, where possibilities of legal employment are explained. These leaflets are being shared at the airports, embassies and the PBGB offices.

9.3 FALSIFIED DOCUMENTS

In 2019 121 falsified documents cases were registered by the PBGB and a total of 159 falsified documents were detected (in 2018 there were 224 cases). These documents were predominantly related to the vehicles (vehicle insurances etc). A total number of 31 cases (48 documents) of false travel documents, visas and residence permits were detected at the border. The highest number of detected false travel documents were held by persons from Nigeria (9), Russia (8) and Congo (6).

Trends in the use of false visas and residence permits in 2019 remained at the level of 2017. In 2018, the number of foreigners using falsified travel documents was significantly higher than in 2019 due to the FIFA WC games, when a significant number of FIFA fan card holders from Africa and Asia attempted to reach Europe from Russia via Estonia using false travel documents.

9.4 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING THE IRREGULAR MIGRATION

In 2019, there were no significant legislative changes with regard to irregular migration. In order to prevent and tackle illegal employment and tax evasion more efficiently, a new document [The Illegal employment prevention and prohibiting Action Plan](#) was approved by the Government in 2018.⁴⁹ In 10 October 2019 the Action Plan was renewed by the Government.

Planned changes for 2020

Ministry of the Interior is in process of finalizing the amendments to Aliens Act as well as Income Tax Act and Taxation Act. The aim of the amendments is to stop possible violation of the regulations of working in Estonia and avoiding payment of income tax. Shortage of qualified labour and professionals has increased the need for foreign labour. In turn, this has led to violations of requirements of Aliens Act by employers where working conditions and salary requirements have been defined. Employers might misuse different possibilities of recruiting foreigners to avoid protection mechanisms (first and foremost salary criteria) of the Estonian market.

9.5 OTHER DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING PREVENTION OF ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT

Planned changes for unifying the foreign workers' registration system are in development. Currently, the PBGB, Labour Inspectorate and Estonian Tax and Customs Board are collecting their data separately.

9.6 DEVELOPMENTS IN AREA OF DEVELOPING THE NEW DATABASES

The Ministry of the Interior has a large-scale plan to create a new database. The concept of the database is in development process since 2018. According to the concept, Estonia will create a massive database of all Estonian residents' fingerprints and if needed of other biometric data. Compared to the current personal identification, the automatic biometric identification system (ABIS) helps to ensure a significantly more secure and reliable identity checking level. It also makes

⁴⁹Ministry of Interior webpage, The Illegal employment prevention and prohibiting Action Plan: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/eesmark-tegevused/kodakondsus-ja-ranne/tegevuskava-ebaseadusliku-tootamise-ennetamiseks>. The document is not for public use.

document fraud and false identity usage practically impossible. This will ensure an authentic identity in different procedures, security on the border, prevent illegal immigration, and helps fight against serious crime and terrorism.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Newsletter Postimees 07.08.2018 <https://tehnika.postimees.ee/6030394/revolutsioon-isikutuvastuses-eeesti-asub-looma-sormejalgedehiigelandmebaasi>

10 TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

10.1 TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN NUMBERS

In 2019, there were 55 third-country nationals who are presumed to be victims of trafficking, according to information of the Social Insurance Board.

10.2 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING THE TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

New guide to identifying and referring victims of human trafficking to services was finalised in 2019. Guide has two versions, one is with restricted access and meant for officials, the other one is publicly [available](#).

The helpline of NGO Living for Tomorrow's for preventing trafficking in human beings and supporting its victims was merged with the national Victim Support Service and from spring 2019 is a part of the national service.

10.3 OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

In the HOF-BSR cooperation project with CBSS transnational referral system was established and it can be found here: <https://bsr-trm.com>. Also, study visits took place and as Ukraine is one of the countries with whom all the CBSS countries have contacts regarding THB, then also one visit took place in Ukraine and contacts established on this visit have been highly usable and important for the recent work with victims from Ukraine.

Joint training event was organised in September 2019 for all police officers, including criminal investigators, migration supervisors, prosecutors, customs officers, labour inspectors and victim support staff responsible for tackling human trafficking and/or supporting victims, to introduce the guide and promote cooperation. During the training, the topic of proving criminal offences related to human trafficking was discussed and the participants shared cooperation experiences and practical knowledge as well. In addition, they were educated on working with clients with mental disorders, as the daily work of specialists shows that mental health disorders are prevalent and today's employees do not have enough skills to handle them.

Cooperation with the private sector and the Hotel Association in Estonia was strengthened and already two years in a row, cooperation seminars have been organized. First year seminar focused on raising awareness on THB and increasing identification of victims of human trafficking, including all forms of violence against children in the hotels and restaurants sector and during the second year the theme was corporate social responsibility, including subcontracting chains and paying fair salaries.

Study video was prepared for the united training of stakeholders working with THB and is available in here: <https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/inimkaubandus/mis-inimkaubandus>, <https://youtu.be/kAC2Zg4b20k>

Estonia participates in the EU campaign paying attention to the victims' rights, which started on 17 October 2019. The materials in English are available here: <https://eucpn.org/preventhumantrafficking> and Estonian versions here: <https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/kriminaalpoliitika/kriminaalpoliitika>. Estonia uses these materials in the victim support services.

10.4 EXPLOITATION OF FOREIGN WORKERS

According to the Labour Inspectorate and non-profit organisation Living for Tomorrow, cases of exploitation by employers have become more and more frequent. A similar trend was noticed as in

previous years - most of the clients were foreign workers, mostly men working in the construction sector, Russian-speaking Ukrainians, Moldovans, Tajiks etc. The main problems were unpaid wages, longer workdays than previously agreed on and general violations of employment conditions by the employers.

Several governmental institutions have decided to strengthen control of TCNs working in Estonia as rented workforce. For example, the Minister of Finance has asked the Tax and Customs Board to send the majority of its controlling resources to execute checks on rental labour. The Ministry of the Interior has prepared an amendment to Aliens Act to stop violations of the rules of working in Estonia. The aim is to introduce additional measures to suspend the abuse of regulations and the practice of avoiding payments of income tax.

11 RETURN AND READMISSION

11.1 RETURN IN NUMBERS

In 2019, the PBGB continued its practice with regard to return decisions, by allowing a period for voluntary departure rather than opting immediately for forced return. In 2019, the PBGB issued 1121 return decisions, which is 37% more than in 2018. 79% of these (82% in last year), were voluntary return decisions. All decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and forced return is applied mainly when there is risk of absconding.

In 2019 the number of assisted voluntary returns increased threefold compared to previous year, 132 persons returned taking part of an assisted voluntary programme. Among them were also some individuals who had major health issues or other vulnerabilities.

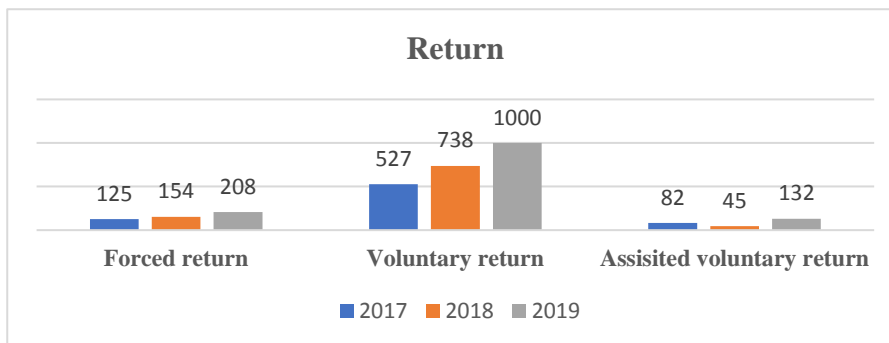


Figure 21. Number of persons ordered to leave and returned in the period of 2017-2019
Source: PBGB

	2017	2018	2019
Forced return	1. Russian Federation 2. Vietnam 3. Ukraine	1. Russian Federation 2. Ukraine 3. Georgia	1. Ukraine 2. Russian Federation 3. Moldova
Voluntary return	1. Russian Federation 2. Ukraine 3. Belarus	1. Ukraine 2. Russian Federation 3. Belarus	1. Ukraine 2. Russian Federation 3. Moldova
Assisted voluntary return	1. Ukraine 2. Armenia 3. Russian Federation	1. Ukraine 2. Azerbaijan 3. India	1. Ukraine 2. Georgia 3. Moldova

Figure 22. Return decisions by top 3 citizenships in the period of 2017-2019
Source. PBGB and IOM Estonia

The most frequent recipients of return decisions and returned persons are still citizens of Russian Federation and citizens of Ukraine.

11.2 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING THE RETURN MIGRATION

There were also some legal and practice changes in field of return migration.

On 1 July 2019 a new amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure and to the Obligation to Leave and Prohibition on Entry Act came into force. The new provisions enable to make an agreement with the suspect, accused or a sentenced third-country national on the obligation to depart from the Estonia to a host country together with prohibition on entry. At the request of the Prosecutor's office or prison the PBGB shall give a personal assessment concerning the possibility of returning the TCN who wishes to leave Estonia to the receiving state. When assessing individual cases, the PBGB proceeds from the following criteria: 1) the foreign citizen is holding a travel document that makes it possible to leave Estonia and enter the receiving country 2) the foreigner has as submitted an application to the PBGB for annulling the permit of stay 3) the foreigner has signed a written agreement to take an obligation leave Estonia with a ban to entry during five to ten years. It is not possible to sign an agreement on obligation to leave as a part of agreement procedure with individuals who are accused of serious crimes or who are not in line with other requirements of agreement procedure. The aim of the amendment of the Obligation to Leave and Prohibition on Entry Act was to find additional measures for more effective application of return procedure and one of the possibilities for this is to support voluntary return of foreign criminals.

With the same amendment to the Obligation to Leave and Prohibition on Entry Act, a new ground for risk of absconding was added, according to which risk of escape occurs also when the obligation to leave to a TCN has been enforced by a court judgment.

As of September 2019, the PBGB has started to make three-in-one decisions in case of negative asylum decisions. It means that if a person receives a negative decision on their asylum application, a return decision and a decision to impose a prohibition to entry is issued at the same time. The return decision and decision to impose an entry ban will be suspended until the final asylum decision has been made and the final asylum decision will take effect.

On 15 March 2019 the new amendments to national regulation no 93 on the Statutes of the national register of the Schengen Information System entered into force.

In 2019, the number of counsellors for asylum seekers and returnees increased to 3 (previously 2) persons (two female and one male). One of the counsellor is working in the detention center, one in accommodation centers and one the needs based location.

Planned changes for 2020

Estonia has planned to submit the amendments of the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens as well as to the Obligation to Leave and Prohibition on Entry Act initiated in 2018 to the Parliament in 2020. These amendments have been elaborated in order to transpose article 18 of the Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the Council that makes it possible to change the conditions of detaining foreigners in case a big number of illegal immigrants enter the country. In emergency situations the number of services provided to immigrants could be restricted. According to an assessment of the PBGB, a situation has escalated to an emergency in case 3000 or more immigrants arrive to Estonia during a short period of time.

Strengthening cooperation with third countries in return migration management

- Several readmission agreements have been initiated by Estonia (in cooperation with relevant authorities as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the PBGB). More specifically, there are draft cooperation proposals in return matters with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and a respective verbal note has been forwarded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- In 2018, a new action plan on cooperation with third countries was created by PBGB, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2019 the active cooperation continued. The main goal was to strengthen collaboration between authorities, share good practices especially in the field of return with third countries.

- There were information days organized in Estonia in February 2019 and in April in Helsinki, Minsk and Warsaw. A total of 19 representatives from third countries took part. The aim of the information days was to introduce more precisely the legal pathways to work/study in Estonia, but also what steps will be taken if a person has no longer a legal basis for stay and in which cases the person will be detained and deported.
- In May the PBGB organized a training for border officers working at Minsk airport and Bell Avia employees, to share knowledge on how to recognize falsified travel documents and to clarify the meaning of liability of the carrier/liability of the airline.

11.3 DEVELOPMENTS ON ESTABLISHMENT OF DATABASE OF FOREIGNERS STAYING OR HAVING STAYED IN ESTONIA ILLEGALLY

In 2019 one of the main goals was to finish the development of the “Database of Foreigners Staying or Having Stayed in Estonia Illegally”, a data system that supports the return procedure. The system will bring better interoperability with other databases and improve the capacity to perform statistical inquiries. The new system should become operational in the mid-2020.
