

LATVIA

EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

2019

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION, INCLUDING LATEST STATISTICS



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

At the end of 2019, [legislation was amended](#)¹ to facilitate the attraction of foreign labour. The minimum period for applying for a vacancy with the State Employment Agency (SEA) was shortened from 30 to 10 working days. The requirement to publish a vacancy in the SEA was abolished in cases where a third-country national has been employed in Latvia for two years, or employed by a particular employer who then wishes to employ them in another speciality (profession).

STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

Amendments to the [Regulations](#) mentioned above were adopted, abolishing the requirement to advertise a vacancy if the third-country national in question was employed during their studies and wishes to continue working with the same employer after their graduation.

INFORMATION ON ROUTES TO AND CONDITIONS OF LEGAL MIGRATION

Information on the application procedure for visas was regularly updated on the websites of the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), Latvian missions abroad, external service providers, on the information stands of the representations, and on the website of the [Office of](#)

¹ Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 637 of 10 December 2019, 'Amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 55, Regulations regarding employment of foreigners'.

KEY POINTS



The government of the Republic of Latvia continued to define migration policy as a matter of national competence.



Recruitment of labour migrants from third countries was facilitated.



The amounts of fines for violation of border crossing rules and violations by foreigners increased. Liability of the sponsor for eligibility of third-country nationals' purpose of residence was determined.

[Citizenship and Migration Affairs](#), together with changes to the procedure for issuing documents allowing entry.



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM

Information resources on different aspects of life in Latvia were improved and the digitisation of asylum seekers' case files was launched.

COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Migration experts participated in a number of migration forums and projects with third countries in order to share and gain experience.

At the beginning of 2019, several activities took place in Kosovo (Pristina) under the European Union (EU) Twinning Project, 'Strengthening of Kosovo institutions in effective management of migration'. In one activity, the experts of the State Border Guard provided assistance in updating the manual of border control procedures. The manual focused on organising mixed migration flows, i.e. irregular migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking in human beings, unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups.



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

[Amendments to the Law on the protection of children's rights](#) were adopted on 12 December 2019. These amendments related to the procedure and extent of municipal expenses for the accommodation of an unaccompanied minor² who is not an asylum seeker or who has not been granted refugee status or an alternative status.



INTEGRATION

INTEGRATION OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS

Third-country nationals could receive information on life in Latvia through participation in integration and Latvian language courses, as well as in the 'information centre for arrivals', where third-country nationals work as volunteers. The Ministry of Culture implemented a new method for acquiring and strengthening Latvian language skills - language clubs - with several [projects](#) implemented by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) in 2019.

Beneficiaries of international protection availed of mentoring services.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

² Unaccompanied minor - a third-country national or a stateless person who is less than 18 years of age and has arrived or resided in the Republic of Latvia without being accompanied by a person responsible for them in accordance with the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia in the field of family law (father, mother, guardian) until such time as the responsible person resumes the fulfilment of their obligations in relation to the minor.

³ According to the Law on the status of former USSR citizens who do not have Latvian or other citizenship, non-citizens are those citizens of the former USSR who reside in the Republic of Latvia, as well as those who are temporarily absent and who meet the following conditions:

2019 saw the launch of the second thematic year of the information campaign '[Openness is a Value](#)', raising public awareness of discrimination, tolerance and inequality. It was dedicated to people of different ethnic backgrounds and origins and featured different activities for employers, young people and other audiences in Latvia.

PROMOTING INTEGRATION AT LOCAL LEVEL

In September 2019, the Latvian Red Cross, in cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), organised five regional training sessions on '[Working for the integration of refugees and immigrants: intercultural communication, examples of good practice and experience](#)' in five Latvian cities. 100 people attended the training.

AWARENESS-RAISING ON MIGRATION

In October 2019, the campaign, '[On Humanity](#)' was organised in cooperation with a number of partners. The campaign included 42 events across Latvia - documentary screenings, discussions, thematic workshops, and meetings with decision makers.



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP

At the end of 2019, a law was passed stating that newborns of non-citizens in Latvia will no longer be granted non-citizen status³ as of 1 January 2020. [The Law on the termination of the granting of non-citizen status to children](#) provides for the automatic granting of Latvian citizenship to children born after 1 January 2020, except where the parents of the child agree to accept the citizenship of another country for the child.⁴



BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

BORDER MANAGEMENT

1) On 1 July 1992 they were registered on the territory of Latvia, irrespective of the status of the dwelling indicated in the record, or their last registered place of residence was in the Republic of Latvia before 1 July 1992, or it is determined pursuant to a court ruling that they have lived in the territory of Latvia for at least 10 years in a row;

2) They are not citizens of Latvia;

3) They are not and have not been citizens of another country.

⁴ This Law applies to children of non-citizens of Latvia.

In 2019, the first round of modernisation of two Latvian-Belarus border crossing points was completed, with an improvement of the perimeter guard system, the introduction of a video surveillance system, electronic traffic organisation informative panels, forced stopping of vehicles, as well as a single solution for traffic organisation, improving movement and making border crossing work more efficient.

[Amendments to the Law on the state border of the Republic of Latvia](#) provide for stricter punishment for violation of the rules on border crossing.⁵

VISA POLICY

Cooperation with external service providers in Turkey and Uzbekistan on long-stay visas was extended in 2019.

SCHENGEN GOVERNANCE

On 17 December 2019, [the Republic of Latvia State Border Integrated Management Plan 2019-2020 was approved](#). It defines the vision, mission and strategic goal of an integrated border management for the country, establishing a framework for the safe and efficient crossing of the external border of persons, vehicles and goods, and management of migration flows, preventing possible threats to border security and facilitating return.



IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

MISUSE OF LEGAL MIGRATION CHANNELS

On 1 July 2019, [amendments to the Immigration Law](#)⁶ entered into force, which include new fines and increase the existing fines' limits for the violation of immigration rules.

Latvian embassies in third countries reinforced selection criteria and Latvian universities began to closely monitor the selection, progress and attendance of third-country students, in response to increasing numbers of 'false students'. In October 2019, to reduce misuse of the legal migration channels, Riga Technical University opened representative offices in India, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan, to select students on-site and assess their knowledge against the university's requirements.

⁵ Law on the state border of the Republic of Latvia – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 189, 2 December 2019 (entered into force on 16 December 2019).

MIGRANT SMUGGLING AND PREVENTION OF IRREGULAR STAY

On 1 July 2019, [amendments to the Immigration Law](#) entered into force. As well as fines, they include an increased ceiling for immigration offences by foreigners and designate competent authorities to deal with administrative offences.



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

In March 2019, the Ombudsman's Office, in cooperation with the State Border Guard, launched a multi-year project, 'Effective monitoring and expulsion procedure (phase 1)'. The project seeks to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation to identify victims of trafficking in human beings before expulsion and to safeguard their rights.

A glossary was published on '[Trafficking in human beings](#)', explaining the terms and concepts related to trafficking in human beings.



RETURN AND READMISSION

RETURN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

At the beginning of 2019, the representation of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Latvia launched the AMIF project, 'Providing voluntary return and reintegration assistance in Latvia, 2019-2022'.

COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Agreements on cooperation in the fight against irregular migration were concluded between the border guard authorities and Belarus, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

In 2019, the State Border Guard started to use the electronic system for the management of readmission files, which facilitates and expedites the fulfilment of the terms of the Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation.

⁶ Law on amendments of Immigration Law' - *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 123, 19 June 2019 (entered into force on 1 July 2019).



MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS

No significant developments in 2019.

STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Statistical Annex was prepared by the European Commission's Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography (KCMD). It provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Latvia on aspects of migration and international protection (2016-2019), including legal residence, asylum, unaccompanied minors, integration, irregular migration, return and visas. Where the statistics were not available at the time of publication, this is indicated in the Annex as 'N/A'.

A How to Read guide, describing each chart and reporting the sources, is available [here](#).



GENERAL NOTES

This four-page statistical annex complements the Country Factsheet with relevant migration-related data organised in nine thematic sections. The dashboard-like layout of the annex allows comparability across countries as well as simultaneous visualisation of different indicators.

Whenever data is not available, the relative chart is left blank or indicated with 'N/A'. Data are provided for the latest available year or the latest available four-year period.

The sum of percentages or of individual values might not add up to 100 or to the total value. This is due to rounding and confidence intervals in the original data. A How to Read guide, describing each chart and reporting the sources, is available on the EMN website.

COLOUR LEGEND

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

■ data relative to Latvia

■ data relative to EU

LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

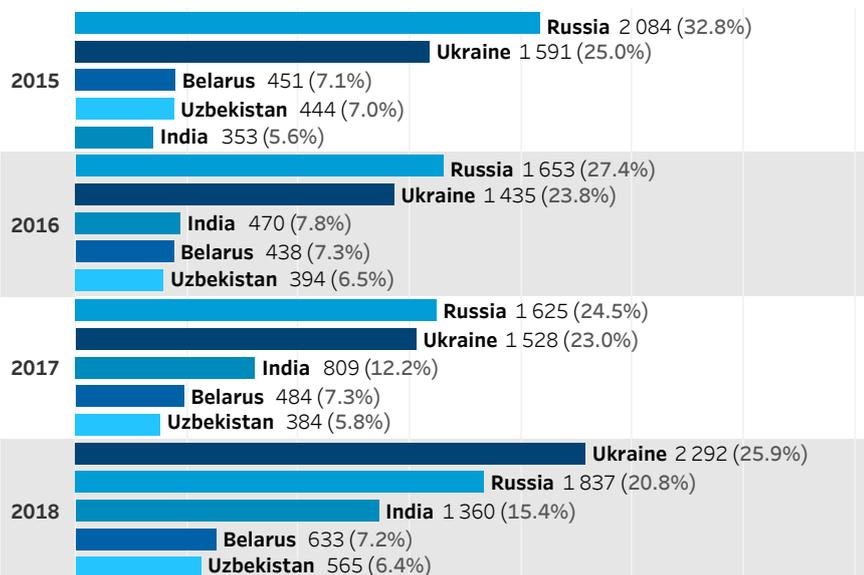
Third-Country Nationals (TCNs)* as % of total population (in the country and in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)



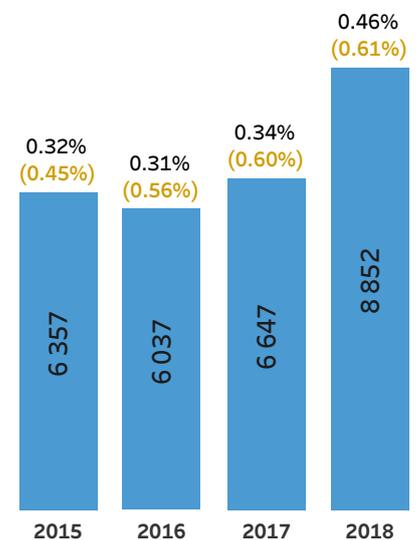
Top 5 nationalities of number of first residence permits annually issued: number of permits and % of total annual permits

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



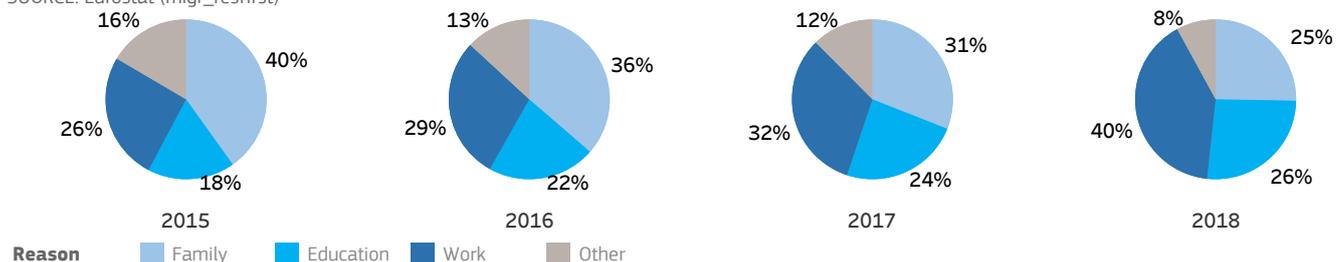
First residence permits annually issued: tot. num. and % of tot. pop. in the country (and EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



First residence permits annually issued by reason

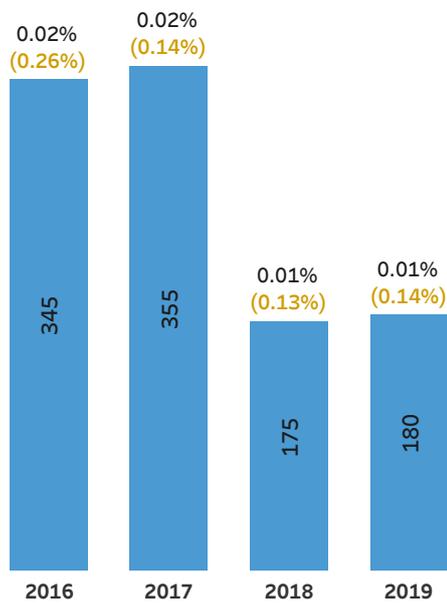
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

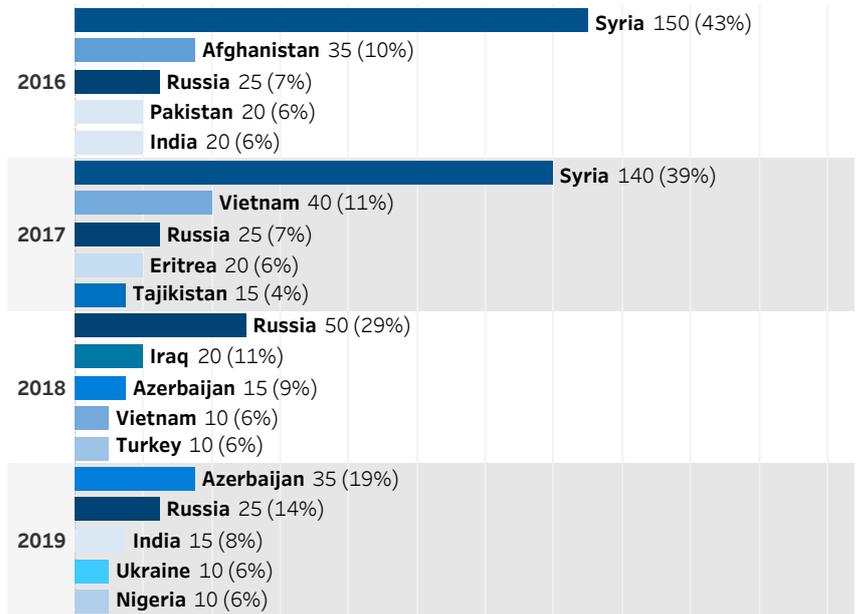
First-time asylum applications: total num. and as % of population in the country (and in EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza, migr_pop1ctz)



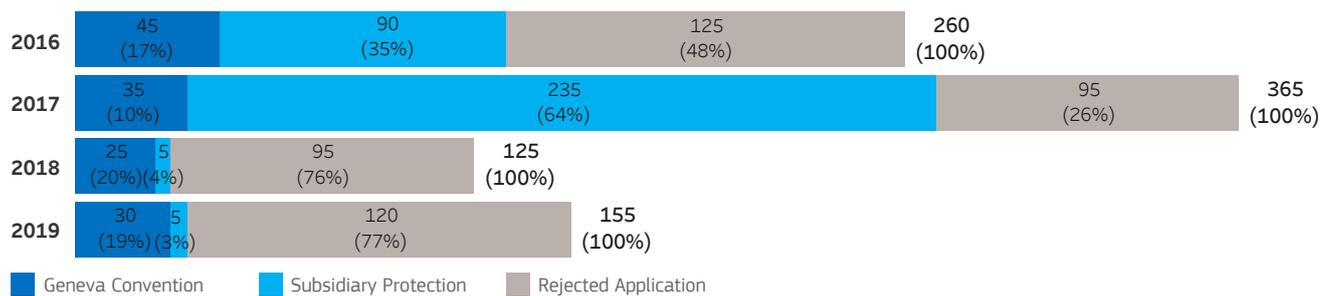
Top 5 nationalities of annual number of first-time asylum applications: number of applications and % of total first-time annual applications

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza)



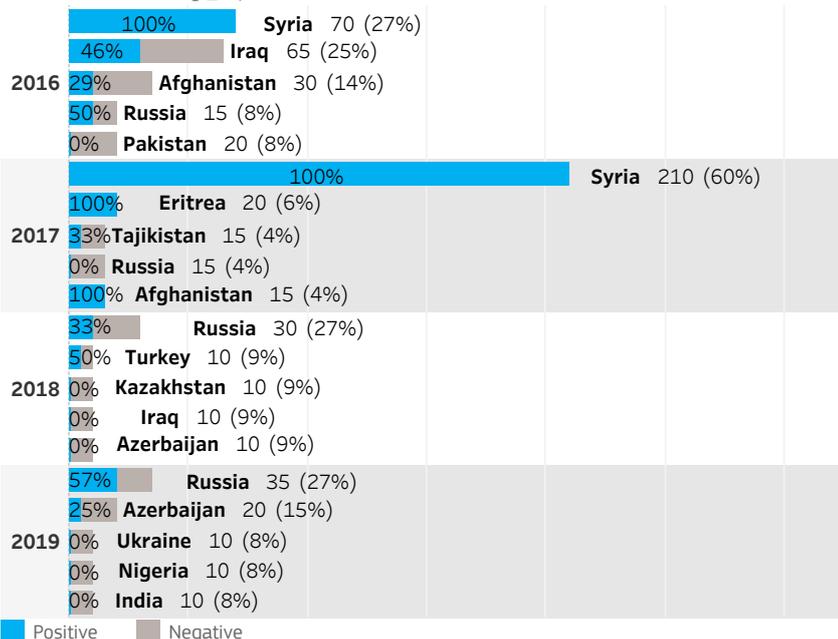
Number of first-instance asylum decisions by outcome (% of total decisions)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)



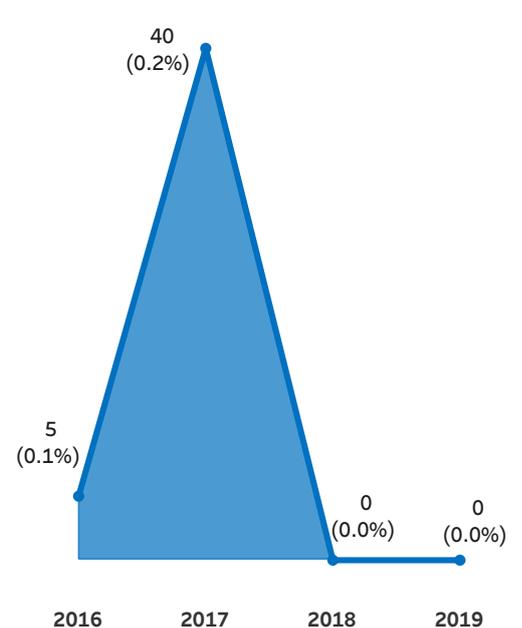
Top 5 nationalities of annual number of first-instance decisions: number of decisions (% of total decisions in the country) and % of positive outcome

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)



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

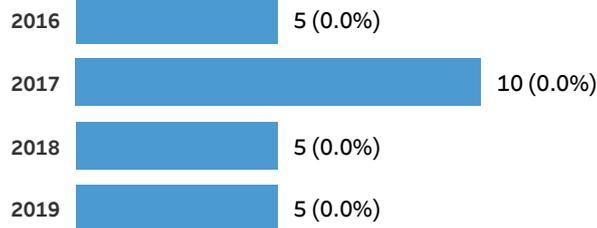
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyresa)



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

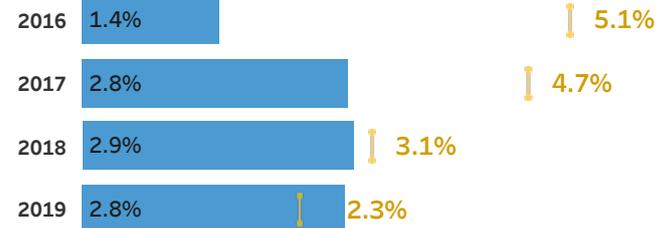
Unaccompanied Minors applying for asylum in the country (and % of total applications from Unaccompanied Minors in EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa)



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

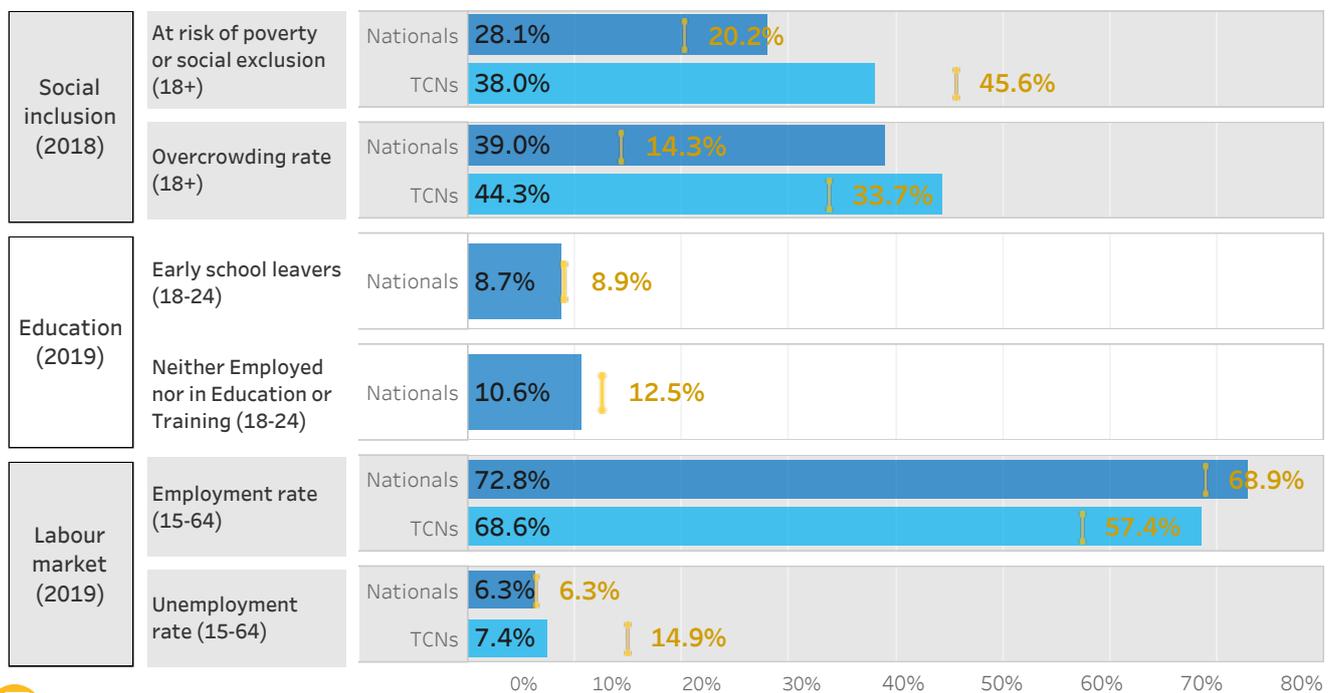
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa)



INTEGRATION

Integration indicators for nationals of the country (blue) and Third-Country Nationals (TCNs - light blue)* in the country (when available). The same indicator is provided in yellow for EU. Data are relative to the last year available.

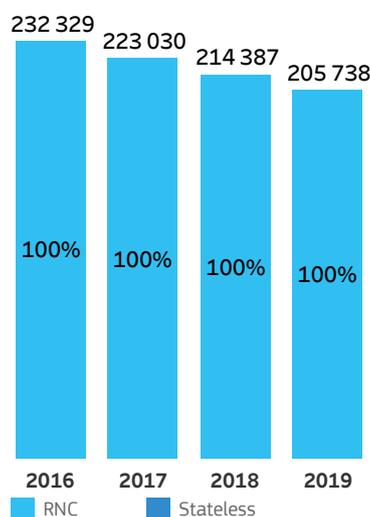
SOURCE: Eurostat (ilc_peps05, ilc_lvho15, edat_lfse_01, edat_lfse_23, lfesa_ergan, lfesa_urgan)



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

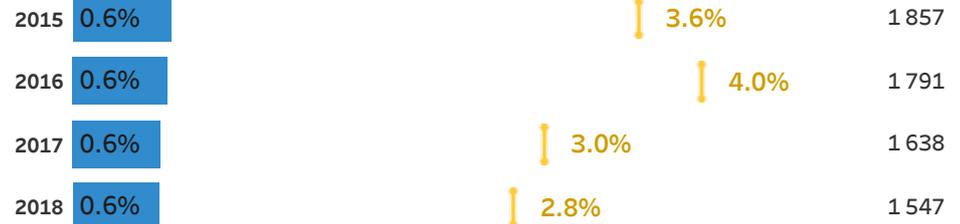
Stateless, Recogn. Non-Citizens (RNC) and Unknown Citizens

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctza)



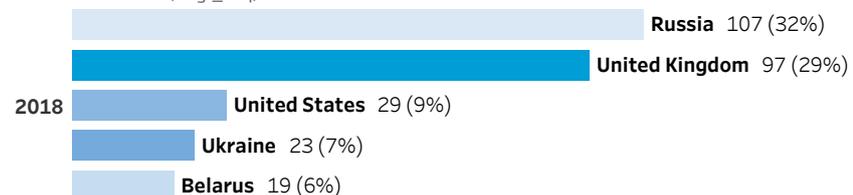
Third-Country Nationals who have acquired citizenship as a share of total Third-Country Nationals (in the country and in the EU) and in absolute number

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acqs, migr_acq)



Top 5 nationalities by number of citizenship acquisition in 2018: absolute number and % of total acquisitions in the country by Third-Country Nationals

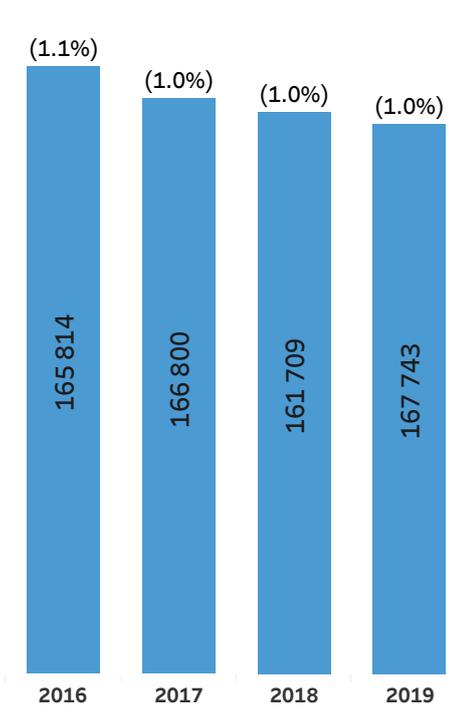
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acq)



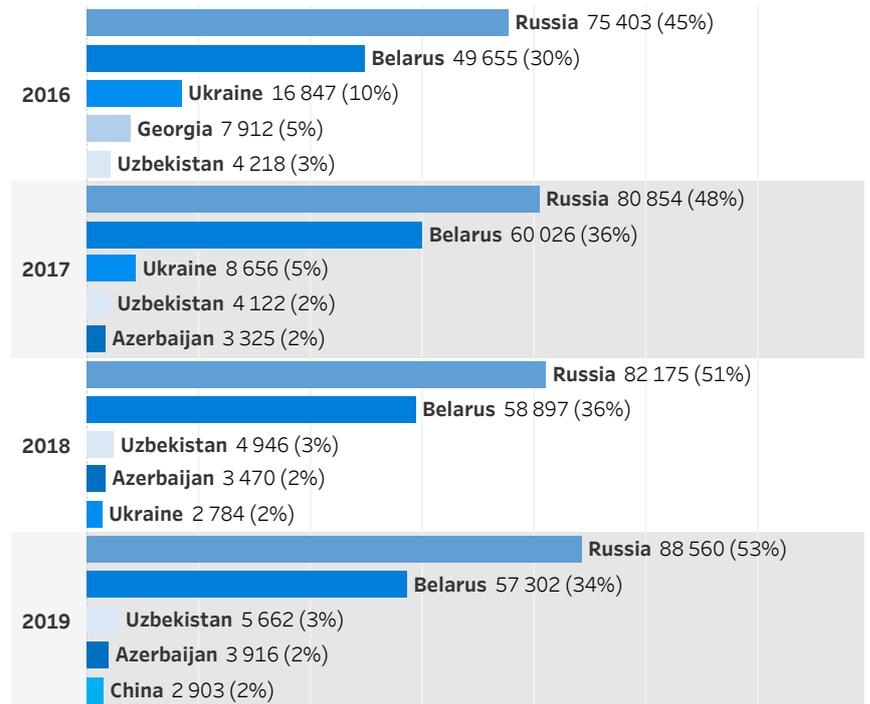
BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs (complete statistics on short-stay visas applications to Schengen States)

Lodged short-term Visa app. (% of Schengen)

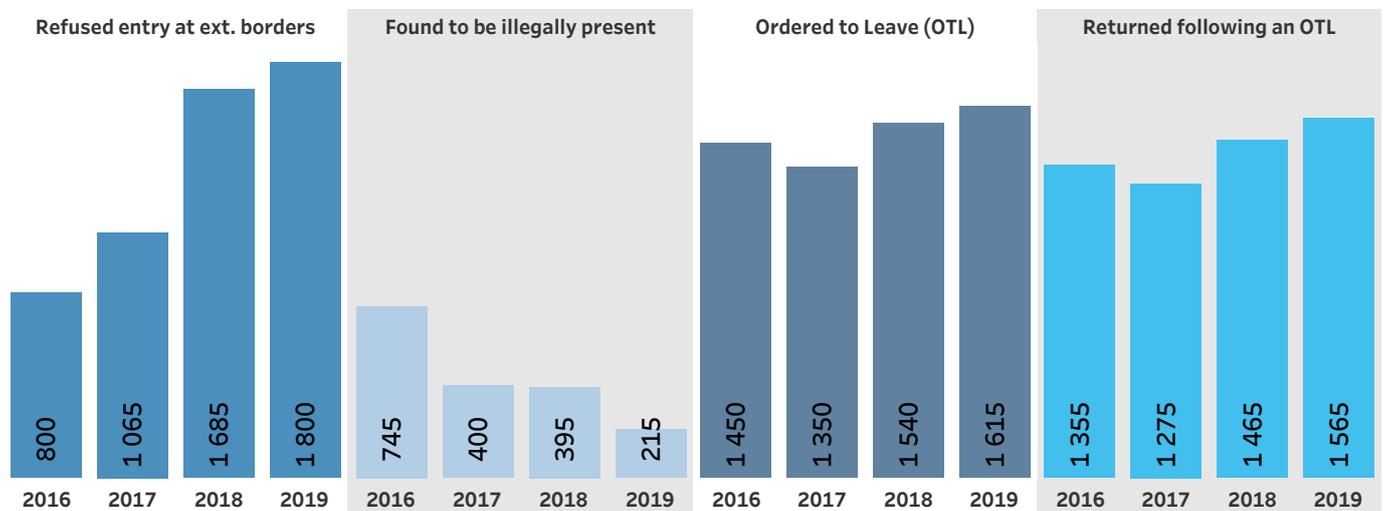


Lodged short-term Visa applications in top 5 consulate countries (% of total app.s)



IRREGULAR MIGRATION

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



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Number of residence permits issued to victims of Trafficking in Human Beings

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resoth)

0 or not available

RETURN AND READMISSION

Number of Third-Country Nationals who left the territory by type of return

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirt_vol)

