



LATVIA 2021

Main developments in migration
and international protection,
including latest statistics

EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

August 2022



OVERARCHING CHANGES

On 3 June 2021, the Saeima appointed four new ministers - the Minister of the Economy (Jānis Vitenbergs, National Alliance), the Minister of the Interior (Marija Golubeva, Development/For!), the Minister of Education and Science (Anita Muižniece, New Conservative Party) and the Minister of Welfare (Gatis Eglītis, New Conservative Party).



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

On 6 July 2021, amendments to the [COVID-19 Infection Management Law](#) extended the validity of a repeated temporary residence permit or registration decision to third-country investors.

INFORMATION ON ROUTES TO AND CONDITIONS OF LEGAL MIGRATION

Experts from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA) participated in a podcast series on migration issues on the Latvijas Vēstnesis portal.

OTHER MEASURES

[Amendments to the Personal Identification Documents Law](#) of 17 June 2021 provided for the issuance of a new third-country national identity card, or an eID card for those registered on the Register of Natural Persons.

KEY POINTS



Amendments to the Immigration Law of 2 September 2021 determined asylum seekers' right to work if they have not received a decision on their international protection status within three months of submission of an application.



The Law on the Construction of the External Land Border Infrastructure of 12 November 2021 entered into force, harmonising border development decisions and improving cooperation between public authorities.



Amendments to the Personal Identification Documents Law of 17 June 2021 provided for the issuance of a new third-country national identity card, or an eID card if registered on the Register of Natural Persons.



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

On 2 September 2021, [amendments to the Immigration Law](#) provided that asylum seekers are entitled to work if they have not received a decision from the OCMA granting or refusing to grant refugee or alternative status within three months (previously six months) of their

submission of an application for such status. That right remains until the final decision to grant/refuse refugee or alternative status becomes undisputed.

RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT¹

On 10 September 2021, internal rules of the Ministry of the Interior No. 1–10/11 ‘Procedures for Cooperation Between the Institutions Subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior Involved in the Asylum Procedure and the Procedures for the Implementation of the Relocation and Resettlement of Persons’ entered into force.



MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

From 1 July 2021, the amount of the allowance to guardians for the maintenance of a child under their custody increased to €215 per month for a child under seven years of age and €258 for a child over seven years of age.



INTEGRATION

NATIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY

On 5 February 2021, [the Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Active Civil Society for 2021–2027](#) were approved and the [Plan for the Development of a Cohesive and Active Civil Society for 2021–2023](#) was adopted. Integration measures included target inclusion of third-country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection (refugees, persons with alternative status and asylum seekers) in Latvian society.

INVOLVEMENT OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In the context of the Plan for the Development of a Cohesive and Active Civil Society for 2021–2023, an interinstitutional working group was set up, including representatives of ministries, other state institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with third-country nationals, and third-country nationals themselves.

BASIC SERVICES

On 16 December 2021, [amendments to the Law on Overcoming COVID-19 Infection Consequences](#) provided that families with an alternative status should receive a one-time sum of €500 for each child. It also granted a one-off allowance of €200 to persons with an alternative status with a disability or of retirement age. The amendments sought to eliminate unequal treatment and to support those granted an alternative status between 1 March and 7 April 2021.



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

No significant developments in 2021.



BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

BORDER MANAGEMENT

The [Law on the Construction of the External Land Border Infrastructure](#) was adopted on 12 November 2021. It introduced the division of responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, other ministries, State institutions and capital companies in the preparation, design, construction and supervision of the construction of the border. It promoted the harmonisation of decisions related to the development of the border in all public administrations, as well as greater involvement and cooperation between public authorities.

Visa policy

The project ‘Use and development of the National Visa Information System (NVIS)’, which was part of the programme of the Internal Security Fund 2014–2020, was completed at the end of 2021. The project aimed to improve the quality of information technologies used in visa processing, to provide users with an appropriate working environment, and to train them on the advice and topical issues of the EU visa application processing procedure.

Schengen governance

On 23 September 2021, the Saeima adopted amendments to [the Law on the Functioning of the Schengen Information System \(SIS\)](#), which streamlined the SIS by extending the possibility of adding categories of people and objects in international search.



IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

PREVENTING AND TACKLING IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN LEGAL MIGRATION CHANNELS

[Amendments to the Immigration Law](#) were adopted on 2 September 2021 to prevent misuse of the reason for the purpose of entry and residence during studies. They imposed an obligation on an accredited educational institution to inform the State Border Guard in writing, within three working days, that a third-country national who has received a temporary residence permit to study: (i) has terminated or been excluded from study, or (ii) has not participated in their study for 14 days, without justifiable reason and without making contact.

¹ (Includes Humanitarian Admission Programmes)

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

In light of the rapid increase in numbers of irregular crossings of the border with Belarus, [Cabinet Order No. 518 of 10 August 2021 on the Announcement of an Emergency Situation](#) introduced an emergency situation from 11 August to 10 November 2021 in certain administrative areas close to the Belarusian border. The emergency was extended until [10 August 2022](#).



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

NATIONAL STRATEGIC POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

On 28 September 2021, the Cabinet approved a new [Anti-Trafficking of Human Beings Plan for 2021-2023](#) to ensure continuous and sequential national policies for preventing trafficking in human beings. The plan set out four strands of action: prevention, protection, prosecution of perpetrators, and partnership.

IDENTIFICATION AND INFORMATION PROVISION TO VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The ‘[Strengthening law enforcement cooperation and training to prevent trafficking in human beings](#)’ (ELECT THB) project launched in September 2021, led by Finland, with Estonia and Latvia as partners. According to the Ministry of the Interior, the project will develop a special training programme on recognition of sexual and labour exploitation victims of human trafficking.



RETURN AND READMISSION

MAIN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

On 2 November 2021, the Cabinet approved [Regulation No. 728, Regulations regarding the Temporary Holding Premises of the State Border Guard and a Specially Equipped Vehicle](#), improving accommodation conditions for temporarily detained people and the requirements for fit-out/equipment of those premises.

Cooperation with third countries

On 29 October 2021, the protocol of [the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Armenia on the implementation of the Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Armenia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation](#) entered into force.



MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

On 14 April 2021, the [Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027](#) were approved. They noted that Latvia’s development cooperation policy was implemented in coordination with security, migration and trade policies, with synergies also sought with external economic and environmental policy instruments. The Guidelines set out the aim of best practice coordinated action by the parties involved in implementing Latvia’s development cooperation policy.



STATISTICAL ANNEX

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

STATISTICAL ANNEX

! GENERAL NOTES

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

COLOUR LEGEND

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

Data relative to Latvia

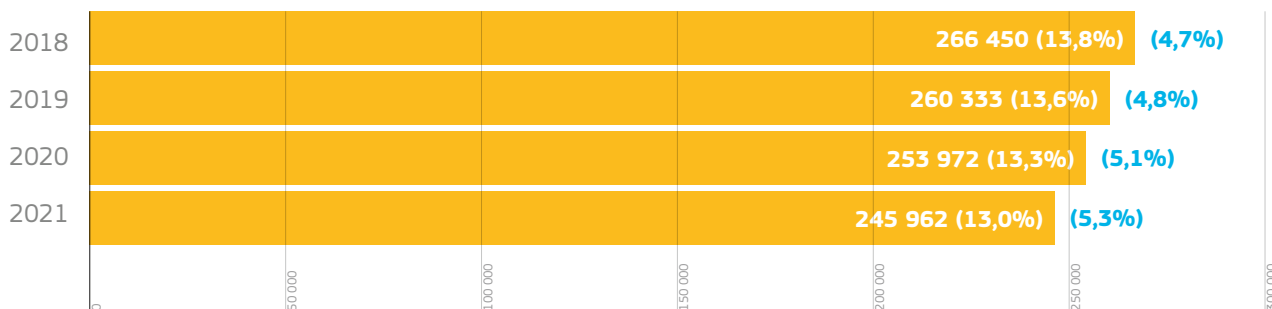
Data relative to EU



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

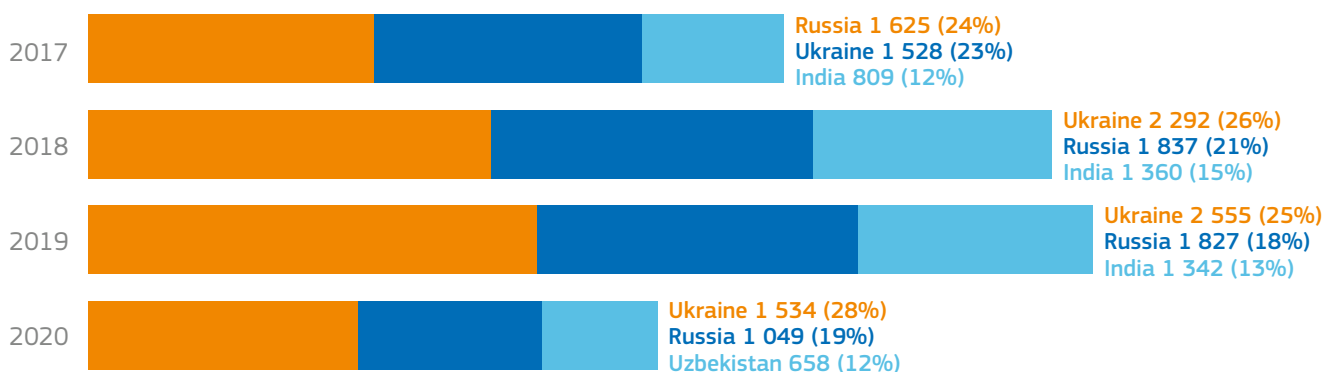
Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) as % of total population in the country (and in the EU) and in absolute numbers.¹

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)



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

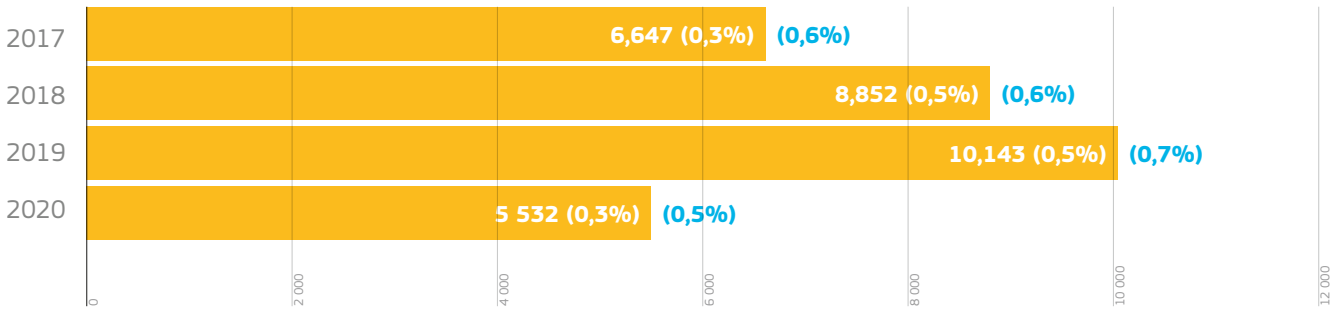
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



¹ Including recognised non-citizens.

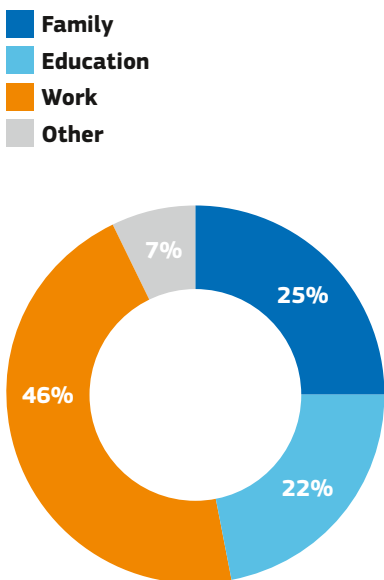
First residence permits annually issued: total number and % of total population in the country (and in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst, migr_pop1ctz)



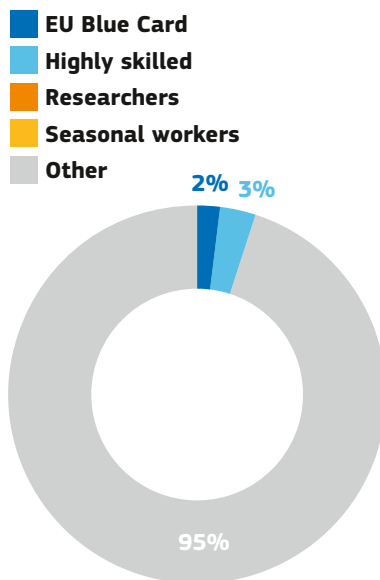
First residence permits annually issued by reason in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



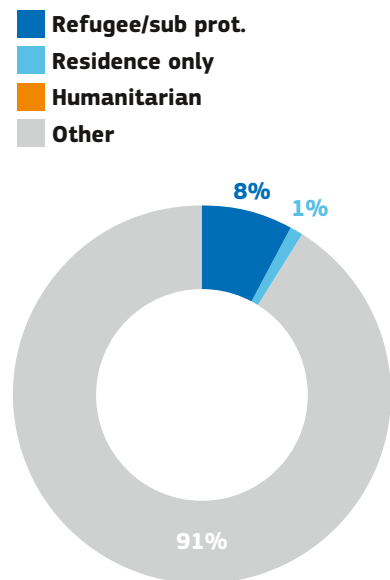
First residence permits annually issued for work reasons in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resocc)



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

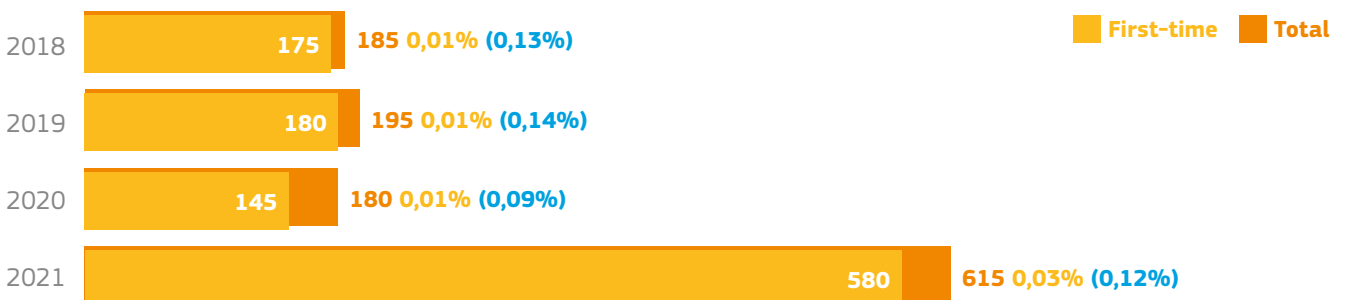
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resoth)



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza, migr_pop1ctz)



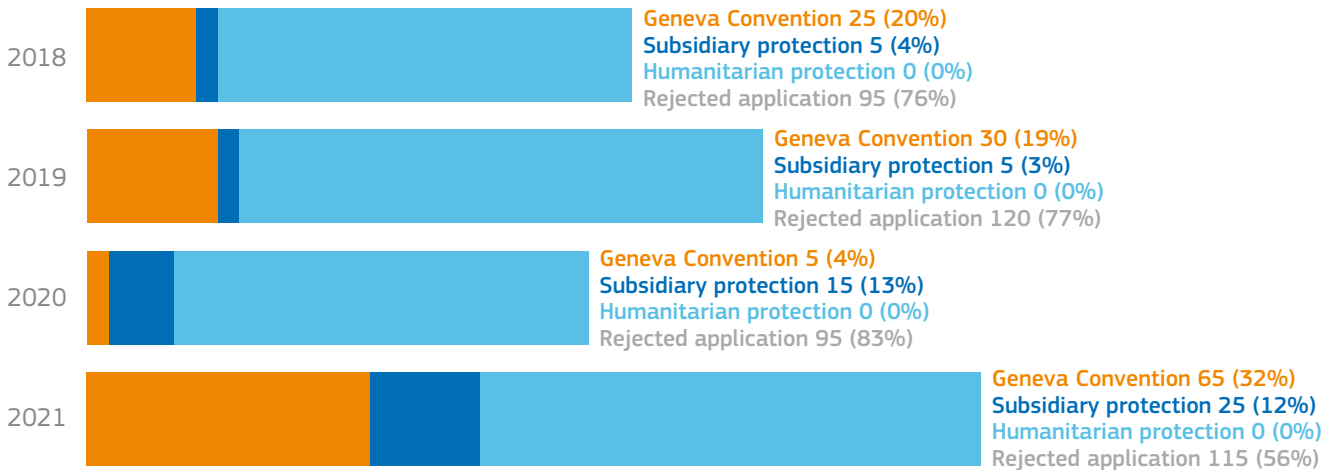
Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-time asylum applications: number of applications and % of total first-time annual applications

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza)



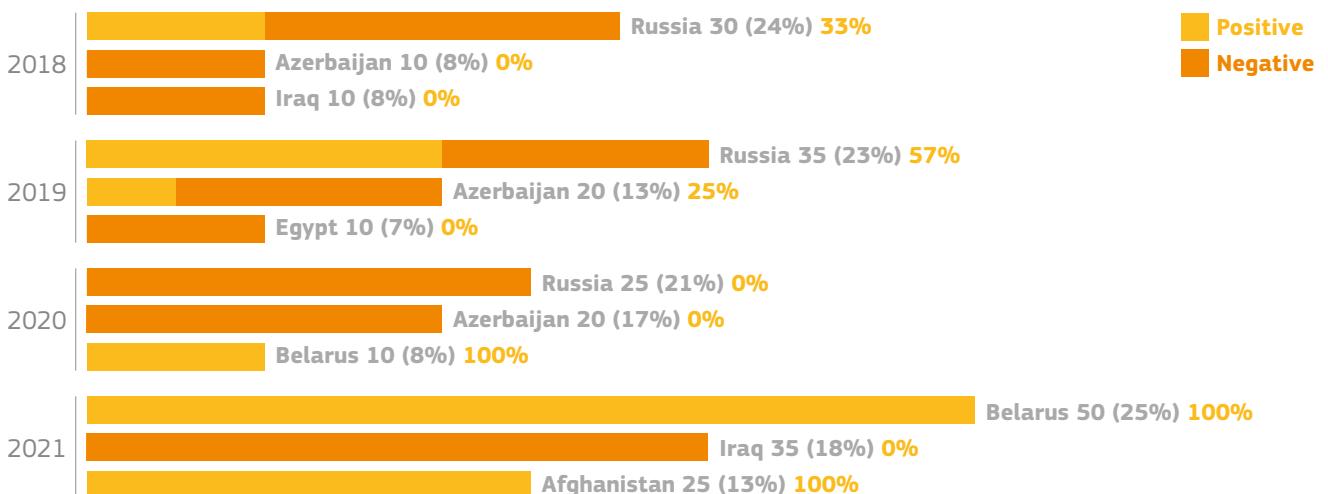
Number of first-instance asylum decisions by outcome (% of total decisions)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)



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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)



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

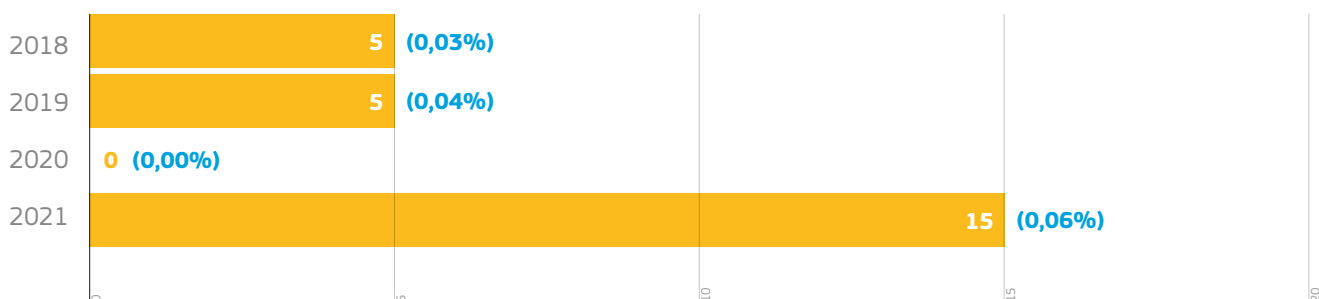
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyresa)



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa)



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

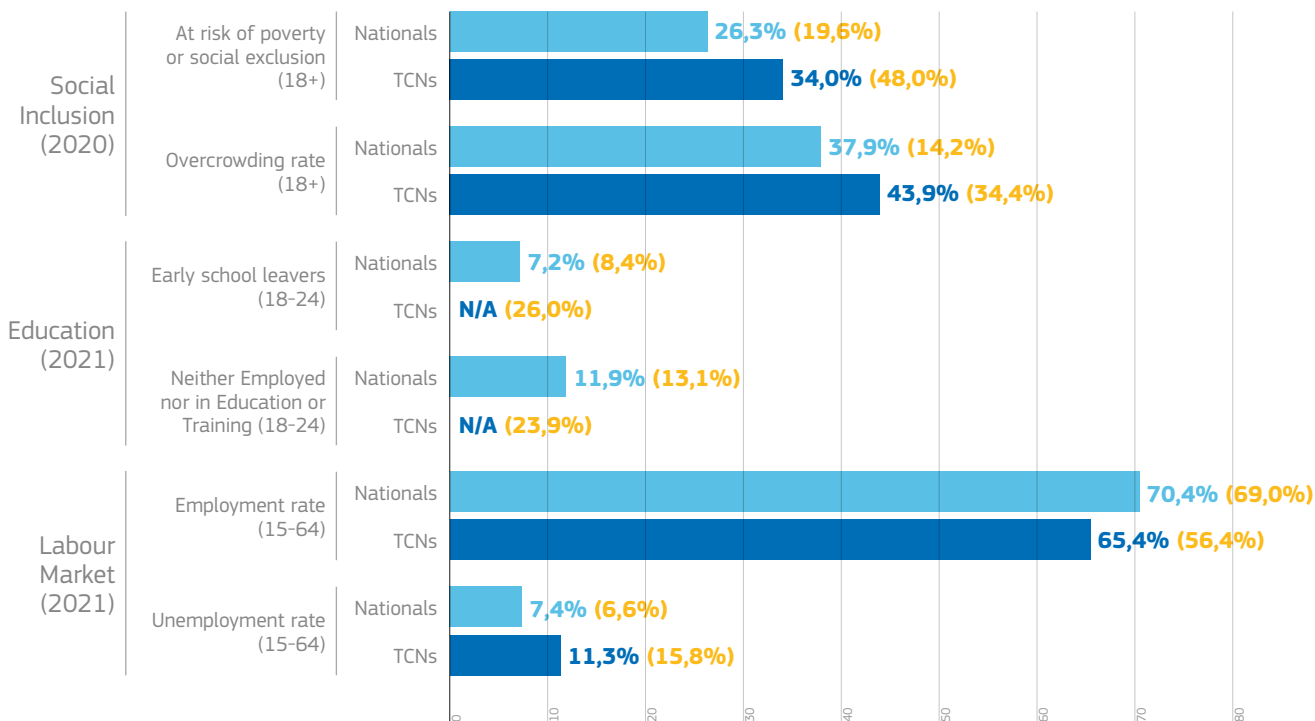
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa, migr_asyappctza)



INTEGRATION

Integration indicators for nationals (light blue) and Third-Country Nationals (dark blue) in the country (when available). The same indicator is provided in yellow for the EU.²

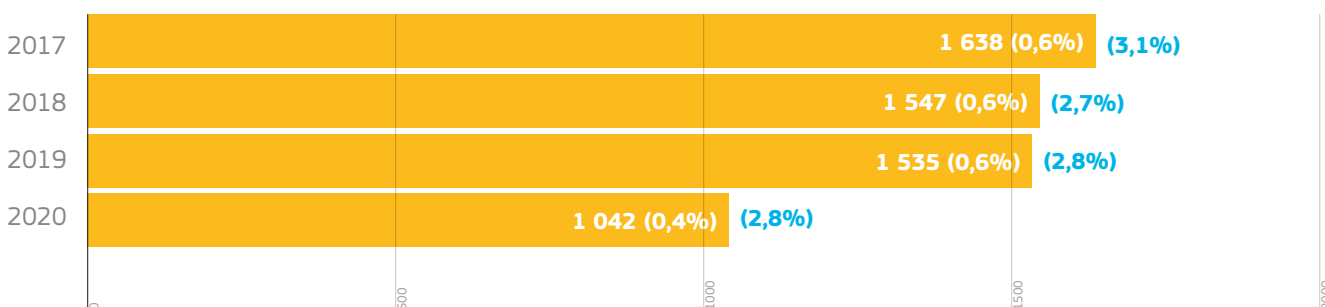
SOURCE: Eurostat (ilc_peps05, ilc_lwho15, edat_lfse_01, edat_lfse_23, lfsa_ergan, lfsa_urgan)



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

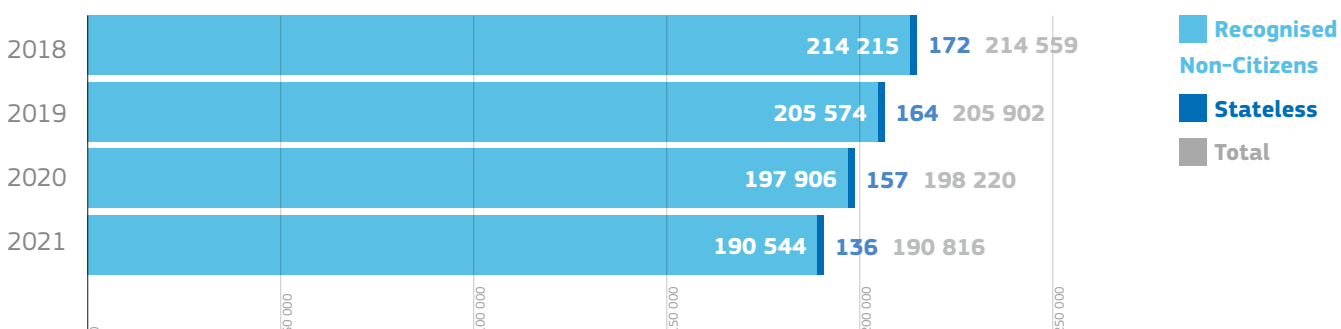
Third-Country Nationals who have acquired citizenship as a share of total Third-Country Nationals (in the country and in the EU) and in absolute numbers

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acqs, migr_acq)



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

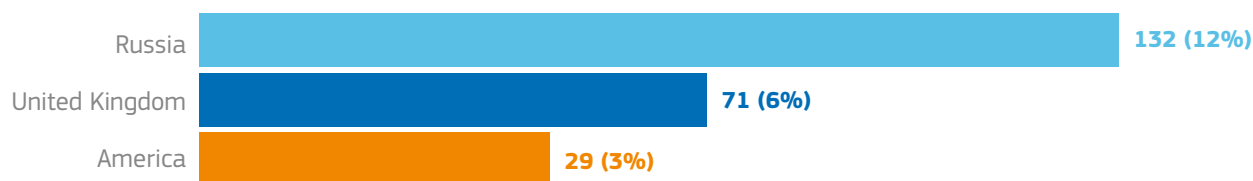
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctza)



² Including recognised non-citizens.

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

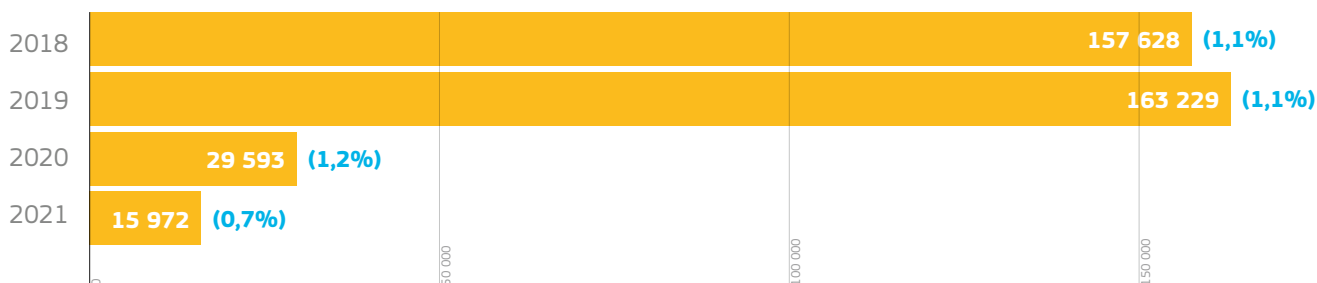
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acq)



BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

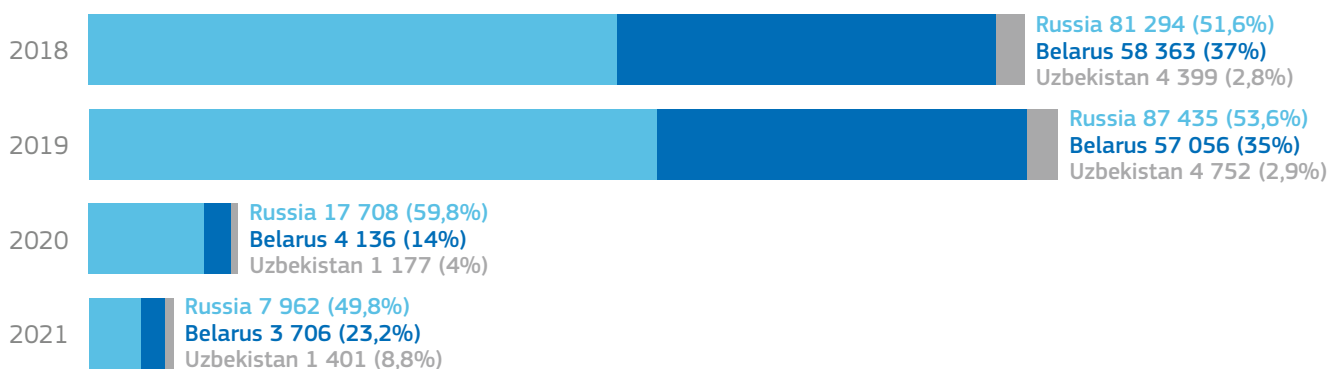
Short-term visa issued (% of Schengen)

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



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

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



IRREGULAR MIGRATION

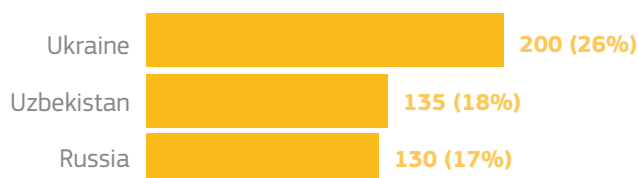
Top 3 nationalities ordered to leave the country in 2021, in absolute number and as a share of all nationalities ordered to leave in the country

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eiord)



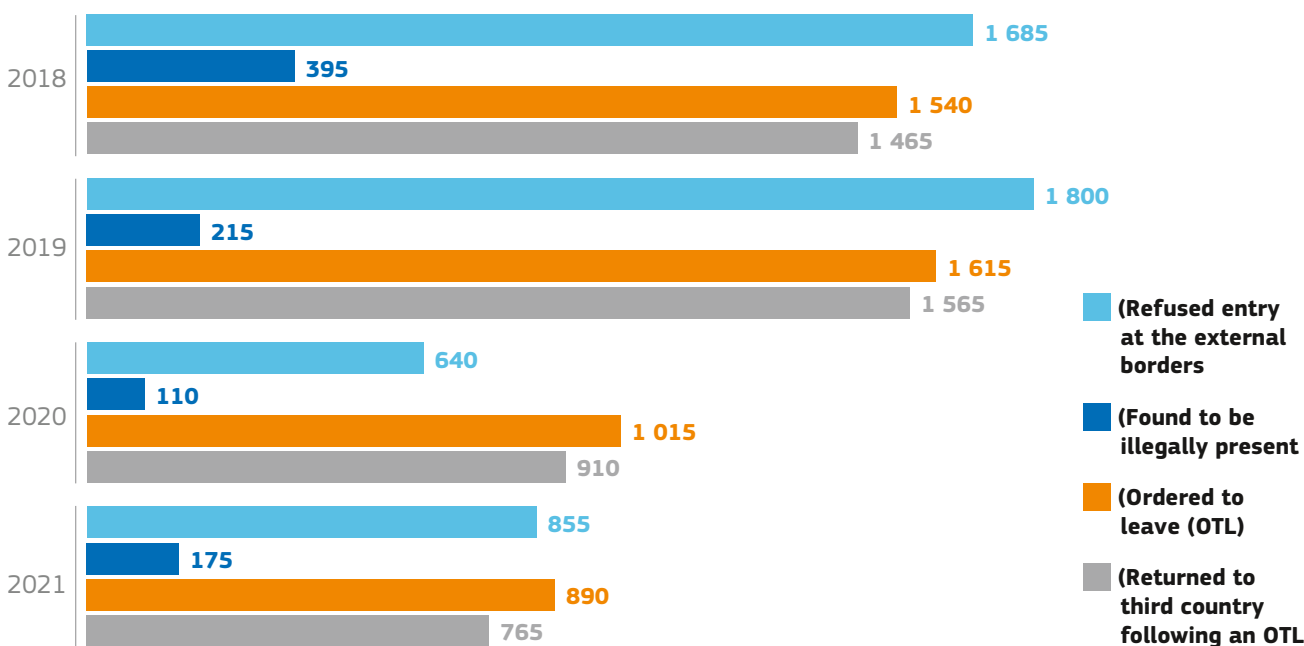
Top 3 nationalities returned to third country in 2021, in absolute number and as a share of all nationalities ordered to leave in the country

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirtn)



General statistics on irregular migration

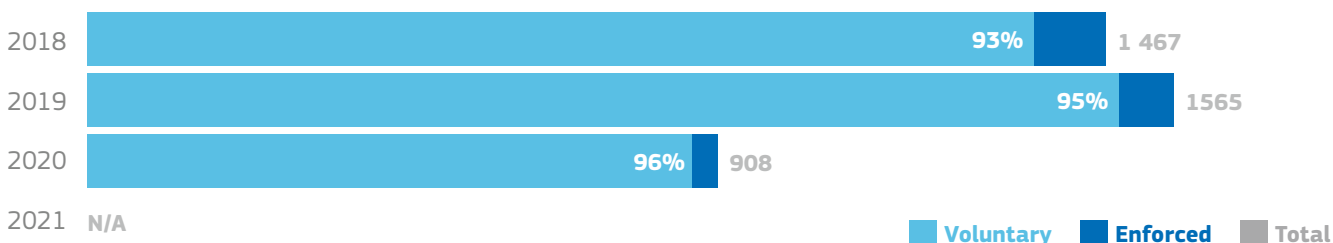
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirfs, migr_eipre, migr_eiord, migr_eirtn)



RETURN AND READMISSION

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirt_vol)



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resoth)

