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Europska migracijska mreža



# **Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Republic of Croatia 2024**

**National report**

## **LIST OF LISTS**

AMIF - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union  
EMAS - Emergency Aid Grant Scheme  
EMN - European Migration Network  
EMN NCP HR - National Contact Point for EMN for the Republic of Croatia  
EUAA - European Union Agency for Asylum  
Europol - European Police Office  
FRONTEX - European Border and Coast Guard Agency  
HCK - Croatian Red Cross  
HPC - Croatian Legal Centre  
CES - Croatian Employment Service  
IOM - International Organisation for Migration  
MDM - Médecins du Monde - Doctors of the World  
MUP -Ministry of the Interior  
PGP - Civil Rights Project  
UNHCR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund  
UASC - unaccompanied and separated children

## Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	5
1.1. Methodology .....	5
2. CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT OF ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY.....	7
3. APPROPRIATE PROTECTION .....	9
3.1. Extension of time protection.....	9
3.2. Accommodation of persons under temporary protection.....	11
3.3. Education of people displaced from Ukraine .....	11
3.4. Employment assistance.....	15
3.4.1. Learning Croatian Language .....	16
3.5. UNHCR Annual Participatory Assessment Exercise on Refugees from Ukraine.....	16
3.6. Participation of Croatia in the work of the Council of Europe Consultative Group on Children from Ukraine.....	17
3.7. Adoption of a Decision granting consent for the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children .....	18
4. LEGAL MIGRATION .....	19
4.1. Changes to the legal framework .....	19
4.2. Labour migration .....	21
5. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION .....	26
5.1. Number of applicants for international protection and persons granted protection .....	26
5.1.1. Number of applicants for international protection.....	26
5.1.2. International protection granted .....	33
5.1.3. Dublin procedure.....	36
5.2. Projects in the field of international protection.....	37
5.2.1. Project '6P – Support in the provision of healthcare to applicants for international protection .....	37
5.2.2. Project "Social services and psychosocial support for applicants for international protection" .....	38
5.2.3. Project " Renovation of the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb" .....	39
5.2.4. Projects started in 2024 .....	40
5.2.5. Activities under the project "Access to the territory and asylum system in Croatia – legal support and capacity building" .....	41
5.2.6. Complementary Pathways for Access to International Protection in South East Europe - COMP4SEE .....	46
5.2.7. Activities within the framework of cooperation with the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) related to the so-called Asylum Information Database project .....	47
5.2.8. UNHCR education on refugee status determination .....	48

6.	UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS .....	49
6.1.	Minor applicants for international protection .....	49
6.1.1.	Number and structure of unaccompanied applicants for international protection .....	49
6.1.2.	UNHCR activities in relation to unaccompanied minors .....	50
6.1.3.	Study on care arrangements for unaccompanied children in Croatia .....	51
6.2.	Involvement of students in the educational system .....	51
6.2.1.	Learning Croatian in Primary Schools.....	52
6.2.2.	Engaging in High Schools .....	53
6.2.3.	Educational assistance for persons under temporary protection.....	55
6.3.	Summer and psychosocial support for children of Ukrainian defenders and children from war-affected areas.....	57
7.	INTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH GRANTED INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION.....	59
7.1.	SINERGY project - Ensuring a synergistic approach to the integration of third-country nationals .....	59
7.1.1.	Key project activities and objectives .....	59
7.1.2.	Active participation of third-country nationals and people with a migrant background ...	59
7.1.3.	Strengthening local capacities.....	60
7.1.4.	Establish local coordination for integration .....	61
7.1.5.	Cooperation with the civil sector .....	61
7.1.6.	Translator base to support access to basic services.....	62
7.2.	Education of consultants of the Croatian Employment Service.....	62
7.3.	Improving communication on the inclusion of refugees .....	63
7.4.	Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) projects .....	63
7.4.1.	Integration through culture and sport .....	63
7.4.2.	Supporting labour market integration .....	64
7.4.3.	Support for inclusion in education .....	64
7.4.4.	Collaboration with local parishes .....	64
7.5.	Festival of Tolerance.....	65
7.6.	Activities of the City of Zagreb in the field of integration .....	65
7.6.1.	Welcome Center Opened .....	65
7.6.2.	Cooperation with civil society organisations.....	66
7.6.3.	Croatian language courses .....	66
7.6.4.	Aid for the education of secondary school pupils and students .....	67
7.7.	Integration measures of the Croatian diaspora .....	67
7.7.1.	Institutional changes .....	67
7.7.2.	Working on normative solutions.....	68

7.7.3. Status regulation .....	68
7.7.4. Integration into the labour market .....	69
7.7.5. Tax credits .....	70
7.7.6. International cooperation .....	71
7.7.7. Cooperation with diplomatic missions/consular offices .....	71
7.7.8. Learning Croatian .....	71
7.7.9. Other measures .....	72
8. CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS.....	75
9. BORDERS, VISA AND SCHENGEN .....	76
9.1. Strategic and legislative framework.....	76
9.1.1. Integrated Border Management Strategy of the Republic of Croatia 2024-2028 .....	76
9.1.2. Amendment of subordinate legislation.....	77
9.2. Schengen evaluation .....	78
9.3. Preparations for the implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) .....	78
10. IRREGULAR MIGRATION .....	80
10.1. Irregular border crossings in 2024 .....	81
10.2. Cooperation Agreement for the implementation of an independent monitoring mechanism for the protection of fundamental rights .....	85
11. TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS .....	87
11.1. National strategic policy development .....	87
11.2. Detecting and identifying victims .....	88
11.3. Protection of victims .....	88
11.4. Cooperation with third countries .....	88
11.5. Gender-based violence (GBV) .....	90
11.6. Peacekeeping.....	90
12. RETURN AND READMISSION .....	91
12.1. Voluntary Return .....	91
12.1.1. Participation in the EU Reintegration Programme (EU RP).....	91
12.1.2. Project "Capacity building for return and reintegration counselling through civil society organisations" .....	91
12.2. Readmission .....	92
12.3. Monitoring of forced removals .....	93
Statistical annex.....	95

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This is the ninth Annual Report on Migration and Asylum prepared by the National Contact Point for the European Migration Network in the Republic of Croatia. The European Migration Network (hereinafter: EMN) is a network of migration and asylum experts coordinated by the European Commission. The EMN covers all members of the European Union (except Denmark) and observer countries Norway, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia, Serbia and North Macedonia. It consists of National Contact Points (NCPs). NCP are usually ministries, specific institutions or organisations in each member state of the Network. In the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of the Interior is the National Contact Point for the Republic of Croatia. National contact points provide information on migration and asylum policies and strategies, coordinate EMN activities and publish various publications.

With the publication of the National Annual Report on Migration and Asylum, EMN NCP aims to provide an overview of the most significant policies and developments of asylum and migration legislation in the Republic of Croatia. The report shall cover the following topics: temporary protection, legal migration, international protection, unaccompanied children and other vulnerable groups, integration, citizenship and statelessness, borders, Schengen and visas, return and readmission, irregular migration and the fight against trafficking in human beings. The report shall cover the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024.

### **1.1. Methodology**

The 2024 Annual Report on Migration and Asylum was prepared by EMN NCP HR team members on the basis of common specifications developed by EMN, to facilitate comparability between reports from all Member States. At the same time, the format remained, to some extent, flexible to allow for the production of a report targeting a national audience. The annual report provides an overview of policy developments, the legislative framework and practices in 2024. The information presented in the report was provided by members of the National Migration Network from relevant sectors, primarily government bodies, academia and research organisations, as well as non-governmental and international organisations, and part of the information was collected

from publicly published sources. The report also contains the most significant statistics, according to individual thematic areas.

## **2. CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT OF ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY**

In 2024, Croatia continued its activities to improve migration legislation and adapt to changes in EU legislation. Activities were carried out with the aim of amending the Law on Foreigners and the Law on International and Temporary Protection. The national debate on migration was primarily shaped by labour market needs, with growing demand for foreign workers and a focus on ensuring adequate integration measures.

Temporary protection of displaced persons from Ukraine continued, while national and local authorities worked to ensure their access to healthcare, housing and education.

In the Republic of Croatia, the drafting of the Draft Act amending the Foreigners Act was undertaken in 2024, both for the purpose of transposing the Directive regulating the status of highly qualified third-country nationals, and because it was observed in practice that the existing model of issuing stay and work permits to a third-country national represented an administrative burden on all authorities involved in the procedure and employers and workers.

The law was adopted in the ordinary legislative procedure in two readings in the Croatian Parliament, and the first reading was conducted at the end of October 2024. The law was passed on February 21, 2025.<sup>1</sup>

In March 2024, the Strategy for Demographic Revitalization until 2033 was adopted.<sup>2</sup> This is a long-term act of strategic planning aimed at supporting the implementation of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030. The purpose of this document is to formulate strategic goals of demographic revitalization and define key areas of intervention for influencing the forecasted demographic development of the country.

The second strategic objective of the Strategy is related to migration, that is balanced mobility of the population.

The strategic guidelines in the area of population mobility are, inter alia, the following:

- Adopt a comprehensive migration policy

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<sup>1</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/Articles/official/2025\\_03\\_40\\_545.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/Articles/official/2025_03_40_545.html)

<sup>2</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/članci/sluzbeni/2024\\_03\\_36\\_580.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/članci/sluzbeni/2024_03_36_580.html)



- Establish an Office to coordinate and monitor the implementation of measures and the effects of migration and integration policies
- Improve the system of collecting migration statistics (population register)
- Enable successful integration and inclusion of all categories of migrants
- Encourage local self-governments to develop integration programmes in the local community
- Sensitise the public about migrants in order to prevent discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

### 3. APPROPRIATE PROTECTION

Croatia continued to apply the EU Temporary Protection Directive for displaced persons from Ukraine. Temporary protection means an exceptional procedure whereby, in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from third countries who are unable to return to their country of origin, immediate and temporary protection is provided for such persons, in particular where there is also a risk that the asylum system will not be able to address the influx without negative consequences for its successful operation, in the interests of the persons concerned and other persons seeking protection.<sup>3</sup>

#### 3.1. Extension of time protection

Temporary Protection was applied after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. On 4 March 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted an Implementing Decision establishing temporary protection due to the mass influx of persons fleeing Ukraine as a result of the war.<sup>4</sup>

On 19 October 2023, the Council of the European Union adopted Implementing Decision 2023/2409 extending temporary protection until 4 March 2025.<sup>5</sup> By Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836 of 25 June 2024, the temporary protection was extended for a further period of one year, until 4 March 2026.<sup>6</sup>

On 29 February 2024, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Decision on the extension of temporary protection until 4 March 2025,<sup>7</sup> based on the Council Implementing Decision of 19 October 2023.

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<sup>3</sup> Article 2(a) of Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0055>)

<sup>4</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022D0382>

<sup>5</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L\\_202302409](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202302409)

<sup>6</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L\\_202401836](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401836)

<sup>7</sup>

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fvlada.gov.hr%2FUserDocsImages%2F2016%2FSjednice%2F2024%2FVelja%25C4%258Da%2F289%2520sjednica%2520VRH%2F289%2520-%252020.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

National coordination mechanisms ensured the provision of healthcare, education, housing and material assistance for basic living needs to persons granted temporary protection. No new legislative amendments were adopted in this area, but preparations were underway for a possible extension of temporary protection.<sup>8</sup>

As with previous extensions, the temporary protection status in the Republic of Croatia was extended automatically, while beneficiaries should have personally come to the police administration/police station according to the place of residence to validate the extension of the foreigner's card under temporary protection. The extension shall be recorded in the existing card of the alien under temporary protection.

Persons who should not have come to the police administration/police station in person are:

- children under the age of 16 – for them, the child's card is certified by the parent/special guardian;
- persons with special needs who cannot move – their card could be certified by a family member or a competent person from the institution in which they are accommodated, based on a statement in which the relationship with the person for whom they validate the card and evidence of the impossibility of the person's arrival, e.g. documentation of accommodation in a special institution).<sup>9</sup>

Persons who applied for the renewal of the card after the expiry of the validity of the card did not lose their temporary protection status, but could renew subsequently and continue to have the rights and obligations arising from the temporary protection status. With a certified card, beneficiaries of temporary protection prove that they have a valid status in front of other state and public administration bodies in the Republic of Croatia and other countries.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Article 6 of the Act amending the International and Temporary Protection Act (NN No 161/2025) amended the provisions laying down the duration and extension of temporary protection ([https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/Articles/official/2025\\_02\\_17\\_161.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/Articles/official/2025_02_17_161.html))

<sup>9</sup> <https://hrvatskazukrajinu.gov.hr/informacije/status-privremene-zaštite/152>

<sup>10</sup> <https://hrvatskazukrajinu.gov.hr/information/status-temporary-protection/152>

### **3.2. Accommodation of persons under temporary protection**

At its session held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted a Decision amending the Decision on financing the costs of housing for displaced persons from Ukraine in individual accommodation.<sup>11</sup> Namely, on the basis of the previous Decision on financing the costs of housing for displaced persons from Ukraine in individual accommodation adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia at its session on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, the Ministry of the Interior - Civil Protection Directorate, as a tenant, concluded contracts for the rental of housing units for a period of six months with owners who have ceded their real estate to the use of displaced persons from Ukraine, with the possibility of extension for a maximum of one year. The decision was amended in 2023 to allow housing rental contracts to be extended up to 4 March 2024, in line with the extended temporary protection status of displaced persons from Ukraine. Since the temporary protection status was extended by the Government Decision of 29 February 2024 until 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025, the Decision on financing the costs of housing displaced persons from Ukraine was also extended until 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

### **3.3. Education of people displaced from Ukraine**

It is the responsibility of all stakeholders and institutions to ensure that persons granted temporary protection can equally participate in the economic, social and cultural development of their new environment and enable access to education by integrating them into the educational system of the Republic of Croatia.

In order to facilitate this process for every refugee child from Ukraine entering the education system, it is necessary to:

- enable participation in preparatory classes of the Croatian language without prior testing,
- enable simultaneous inclusion in mainstream teaching in all subjects, according to their abilities and capabilities.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth sent a notice to all primary and secondary schools entitled 'Inclusion of children and pupils of refugees from Ukraine

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<sup>11</sup> [https://sredisnjikatalogrh.gov.hr/wh/sdurdd-pprh/narodne-novine.nn.hr/članci/službeni/full/2024\\_04\\_40\\_721.html](https://sredisnjikatalogrh.gov.hr/wh/sdurdd-pprh/narodne-novine.nn.hr/članci/službeni/full/2024_04_40_721.html)

in the education system of the Republic of Croatia', informing the school principals that, in accordance with the European Union Directive on temporary protection, the Republic of Croatia has undertaken the obligation to receive and integrate refugees from Ukraine.

Parents and students from Ukraine should contact the desired educational institution, where they will receive all the necessary information related to enrolment. Students from Ukraine join Croatian schools and other educational institutions through a very simple and fast procedure, even without the necessary documentation. In the case that they do not have documentation on previous education, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth has informed all institutions of the procedure applied in such situations. Schools have prepared forms in Ukrainian and Croatian language that parents/guardians need to sign. As a rule, students are enrolled in classes within three days of the delivery of the documentation required for enrolment. After the school has been informed of their arrival, the child/student has already been assigned to the appropriate class, and other students and teachers are preparing for their arrival (learn basic expressions in Ukrainian, prepare textbooks and school supplies, and small welcome gifts, etc.). Enrolment in the first grade of secondary school is carried out on the basis of a special decision (special quotas and deadlines for students from Ukraine).

In the 2024/2025 school year, a total of 1,613 students under temporary protection were included in mainstream classes: 1,156 primary school pupils and 457 secondary school pupils. Students are enrolled in primary and secondary schools throughout the Republic of Croatia, and the largest number attend classes in the City of Zagreb and in the Split-Dalmatia, Primorje-Gorski Kotar, Zagreb, Lika-Senj, Istria, Osijek-Baranja, Varaždin and Zadar counties.

On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, based on the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the introduction of temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia for displaced persons from Ukraine, adopts the

Decision on co-financing the programme to provide additional support to primary and secondary school pupils displaced from Ukraine in the school year 2024/2025.<sup>12</sup>

This Decision provides for the co-financing of extracurricular activities up to a maximum of EUR 70.00 per day per student, the participation of parents in the costs of an extended stay programme for primary school pupils, the participation of parents in the economic costs of accommodation and food in student dormitories for secondary school students, teaching and didactic materials and equipment, teaching materials for teachers working in preparatory Croatian language classes and other programmes aimed at implementing student integration activities.

On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth also adopted a Decision on co-financing extracurricular classes for primary and secondary school pupils displaced from Ukraine in the 2024/2025 school year, according to which extracurricular classes for students from Ukraine are co-financed up to a maximum of EUR 70 per student.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to attending classes together with Croatian children, the child is included in the Croatian language learning program immediately upon arrival, for a period of 2 hours per day, or 10 hours per week, for a period of 7 weeks. This learning process can be repeated once more, after which the learning of the Croatian language is continued for 2 hours per week (with an additional 4/5 hours per week spent in classes together with Croatian children).

Examples of good practices recognised by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth regarding the adaptation of children displaced from Ukraine included in the education system of the Republic of Croatia:

- rapid inclusion of children in the teaching process and extracurricular activities,
- ensuring the learning of the Croatian language and the opening of schools to the content of Ukrainian culture (events, cooperation with associations of the Ukrainian community, etc.),

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<sup>12</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluke-23-9-2024/odluka-o-kriterijima-za-sufinanciranje-programa-za-pruzanje-dodatne-potpore-učenicima-osnovnih-i-srednjih-škola-raseljenima-iz-ukrajine-2024-2025.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluke-23-9-2024/odluka-o-kriterijima-o-sufinanciranju-izvanucionice-nastave-za-učenike-osnovnih-i-srednjih-škola-raseljene-iz-ukrajine-u-školskoj-godini-2024-2025.pdf>

- provision of psychological support with regular monitoring by the professional services of the school.

Pursuant to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia to extend temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia for displaced persons from Ukraine until 4 March 2025 (adopted on 29 February 2024), the Minister of Science, Education and Youth adopted a Decision on financing textbooks for secondary schools and other educational materials for primary and secondary schools to pupils displaced from Ukraine for the 2024/2025 school year.<sup>14</sup> According to the Decision, for the 2024/2025 school year, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth provided textbooks for secondary school pupils and other educational materials for primary and secondary school pupils displaced from Ukraine who are under temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia and have left Ukraine since 24 February 2022. This right could be exercised for all mandatory textbooks for teaching subjects for a particular class from the decision on the selection of textbooks for secondary school, class and department that the student attends and that is adopted by each individual school, according to the selection from the Catalogue of approved textbooks published by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth on its website.

Also, on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth adopted the Decision on the criteria for co-financing accommodation and food in student dormitories for pupils displaced from Ukraine in the 2024/2025 school year<sup>15</sup> and the Decision on co-financing the parental share of the price of the extended stay and food programme in the extended stay for primary school pupils displaced from Ukraine in the 2024/2025 school year.<sup>16</sup>

The City of Zagreb has published a public call for financial support for the education of secondary school students and students with approved international or temporary

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<sup>14</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/vijesti/odluka-o-financiranju-udžbenika-za-srednje-skole-i-drugih-obrazovnih-materijala-za-osnovne-i-srednje-skole-učenicima-raseljenima-iz-ukrajine-za-školsku-godinu-2024-2025/6363>

<sup>15</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluke-23-9-2024/odluka-o-kriterijima-za-sufinanciranje-smještaja-i-prehrane-u-učeničkim-domovima-za-učenike-raseljene-iz-ukrajine-2024-2025.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluke-23-9-2024/odluka-o-kriterijima-za-sufinanciranje-roditeljskog-udjela-u-cijeni-programa-produženog-boravka-i-prehrane-u-produženom-boravku-učenicima-osnovnih-škola-raseljenima-iz-ukrajine.pdf>

protection for 2024.<sup>17</sup> 75 grants of EUR 2 000.00 per pupil/student are planned. The aid is paid on a one-off basis from the Budget of the City of Zagreb for 2024.

The Decision sets out the conditions for granting financial support to education:

for students:

- have been granted international or temporary protection in accordance with the law governing international and temporary protection;
- that they have the status of a regular high school student in the City of Zagreb or the Rudolf Perešina Aviation Technical School in Velika Gorica.

for students:

- have been granted international or temporary protection in accordance with the law governing international and temporary protection;
- to have the status of full-time student of university or professional undergraduate, graduate and integrated studies or full-time student of short-cycle professional studies, undergraduate professional studies and specialist graduate professional studies in the City of Zagreb or at any component of the University of Zagreb;
- their rights and obligations are not suspended in the year for which the financial support is granted.

### **3.4. Employment assistance**

The Minister of Science and Education adopted a Decision on financing the implementation of basic adult education and training for simpler jobs in occupations in 2024.<sup>18</sup> Pursuant to this Decision, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth finances primary adult education programmes in accordance with the Curriculum and the primary adult education programme (NN No 136/2003) and training programmes for simpler jobs in the professions in regular, correspondent-consultative and consultative-instructive teaching. In addition to Croatian citizens and citizens of

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<sup>17</sup> <https://integracija.zagreb.hr/javni-poziv-za-dodjelu-novčane-potpore-obrazovanju-učenika-srednjih-škola-i-studenata-s-odobrenom-medjunarodnom-ili-privremenom-zaštitom-za-2024-godinu/134725>

<sup>18</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/vijesti/odluka-o-financiranju-provedbe-osnovnog-obrazovanja-odraslih-i-osposobljavanja-za-jednostavnije-poslove-u-zanimanjima-u-2024-godini/5977>



Member States of the European Economic Area residing in the Republic of Croatia between the ages of 14 and 65, this Decision also entitles asylum seekers, foreigners under subsidiary protection and foreigners under temporary protection, in accordance with the provisions of the regulations dealing with the issue of international and temporary protection.

#### ***3.4.1. Learning Croatian Language***

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy of the Republic of Croatia has developed a new programme for providing education in the Croatian language. This initiative includes short educational courses specifically tailored to key economic sectors, including construction and architecture, tourism and hospitality, trade and services, and the manufacturing and food industries.

The language programme is included in the educational voucher system, under the National Operational Programme for Human Resources. The Croatian Employment Service monitors the programme, ensuring its alignment with existing strategies for employed and unemployed people who want to improve their skills.

Support to participants started in the first quarter of 2024 and is provided by the Career Information and Counselling Centres (CISOK). These centres, which operate through 17 regional offices, provide career guidance and counselling to maximise the benefits of language programmes for participants. By integrating this programme into the existing voucher system, access to education is simplified for the employed and unemployed, reflecting a comprehensive approach to education and career development.

### **3.5. UNHCR Annual Participatory Assessment Exercise on Refugees from Ukraine**

From 4<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November, UNHCR organised its annual Participatory Assessment exercise with 77 refugees from Ukraine, through six focus groups organised across the country, to better understand their protection situation in terms of inclusion, in particular their autonomy, employment, healthcare, education, community information and support needs, and perspectives for the future. The main problems identified include

the lack of free Croatian language courses and the lack of language courses resulting in certification, which prevents further integration, as well as the lengthy and too expensive process of recognition of diplomas, resulting in an uncertain economic situation of refugees.

### **3.6. Participation of Croatia in the work of the Council of Europe Consultative Group on Children from Ukraine**

The Council of Europe established a Consultative Group on Children from Ukraine, to ensure the practical implementation of the 2023 Reykjavík Declaration, and to facilitate dialogue and the exchange of information, in a multilateral environment, on applicable legal standards and policies regarding Ukrainian children residing in Council of Europe member states, in order to harmonise treatment and effectively protect the rights of Ukrainian children who have been forced to leave their homeland. The group is composed of national experts responsible for decision-making and coordinating issues related to the children of Ukraine, as well as experts from the European Union and other key international organisations, as well as European and Ukrainian NGOs.

By the end of 2023, two online meetings of the VE Advisory Group on Children of Ukraine (CGU) were held on the topic, custody and understanding of the risks of trafficking of children of Ukraine for sexual and labour exploitation. The third meeting took place in Strasbourg on 1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024, where the Consultative Group identified examples of practice and developed country guidance to harmonise the treatment and protection of children's rights from Ukraine. Reception, registration and care of unaccompanied and separated children in Member States, including from alternative care facilities, as well as psychosocial support and trauma-related interventions provided to children affected by war and/or war victims were discussed.

The Advisory Group sent questionnaires to Member States to harmonise procedures and practices related to guardianship, psychosocial support and trauma protection and international procedures and cooperation related to the protection of children from all forms of trafficking. In the part of recognizing the need for specific psychosocial support, experts from Croatia with experience in working with children during the Homeland War were asked to be included in the work of a subset.

### **3.7. Adoption of a Decision granting consent for the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children**

In June 2024, the Government adopted a Decision granting consent for the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children<sup>19</sup>.

By joining the International Coalition, the Republic of Croatia participates in addressing the challenges related to illegal deportation and forced displacement of children and joins the joint efforts for the safe return of Ukrainian displaced children. By joining the Coalition, Member States commit to regularly participate in the Coalition's meetings and make proposals to address the issue of displaced children.

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy is the competent authority in charge of coordinating, in cooperation with other competent state administration bodies, the implementation of activities arising from membership in the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children.

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[https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fvlada.gov.hr%2FUserDocsImages%2F%2F2016%2FSjednice%2F2024%2FLipanj%2F6\\_sjednica\\_VRH%2F%2F6%2520-%25204.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fvlada.gov.hr%2FUserDocsImages%2F%2F2016%2FSjednice%2F2024%2FLipanj%2F6_sjednica_VRH%2F%2F6%2520-%25204.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

## 4. LEGAL MIGRATION

### 4.1. Changes to the legal framework

In 2024, work was carried out to prepare amendments to the Law on Foreigners to align it with Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment.<sup>20</sup> The first reading of the Proposal for the Law on Amendments to the Law on Foreigners was conducted at the end of October 2024.<sup>21</sup>

Amendments to the Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia Act were adopted in order to:

- alignment with the new Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment, and repealing Council Directive 2009/50/EC;
- Reducing the administrative burden for employers, foreign workers and public authorities to meet the labour needs of the economy in sectors of the economy where there is a lack of domestic labour, with a view to a more efficient and flexible system of employment of foreign workers;
- better regulation of employment conditions for foreign workers and better protection of foreign workers;
- and for the purpose of maintaining a highly qualified workforce that has completed schooling in the Republic of Croatia and a long-term employed workforce, family members of Croatian citizens and Croatian emigrants and their descendants.

The proposal for an Act amending the Foreigners Act passed its first reading in the Croatian Parliament in October 2024.<sup>22</sup> This Act proposes the following changes:

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<sup>20</sup> <https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/predstavljene-izmjene-zakona-o-strancima/42032>

<sup>21</sup> The Act amending the Foreigners Act was adopted by the Croatian Parliament at its session on 21 February 2025 and published in the Official Gazette no. 40/2025 ([https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/articles/official/2025\\_03\\_40\\_545.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/articles/official/2025_03_40_545.html)).

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.sabor.hr/hr/sjednice-sabora/prijedlog-zakona-o-izmjenama-i-dopunama-zakona-o-strancima-prvo-citanje-pze-br-63>

- In order to align with the EU Blue Card Directive, which aims to attract a highly skilled workforce, an amended procedure as well as the conditions for its issuance were proposed (e.g. extending the validity of the blue abbreviation from 24 to 48 months). The Blue Card can also be awarded to persons who do not have an educational qualification, but who have skills and only in the IT sector, as evidenced by work experience to be assessed by a Commission appointed by the Minister responsible for labour.

- Reducing the administrative burden for all stakeholders in the process, by allowing stay and work permits to be issued for a period of up to three years (and not up to one year), depending on the duration of the work contract, and stay and work permits for seasonal work for up to nine months (instead of six months). It has been suggested that a change of occupation with the same employer and a change of employer does not necessarily lead to the need to issue a new stay and work permit and carry out the entire administrative procedure, but that within the validity of the stay and work permit, this should be made possible without additional administrative burden. In the event of termination of employment, the stay and work permit would not be revoked, but it would allow the third-country national to remain in the Republic of Croatia and seek a new employer during the period of permissible unemployment, which would protect foreign workers and enable employers to employ foreign workers already residing in the Republic of Croatia.

- Enabling more favourable acquisition of permanent stay for students who have been continuously granted temporary stay in the Republic of Croatia for five years, of which at least three years for the purpose of studying, if they have obtained a qualification of higher education level in the Republic of Croatia and are employed in the Republic of Croatia.

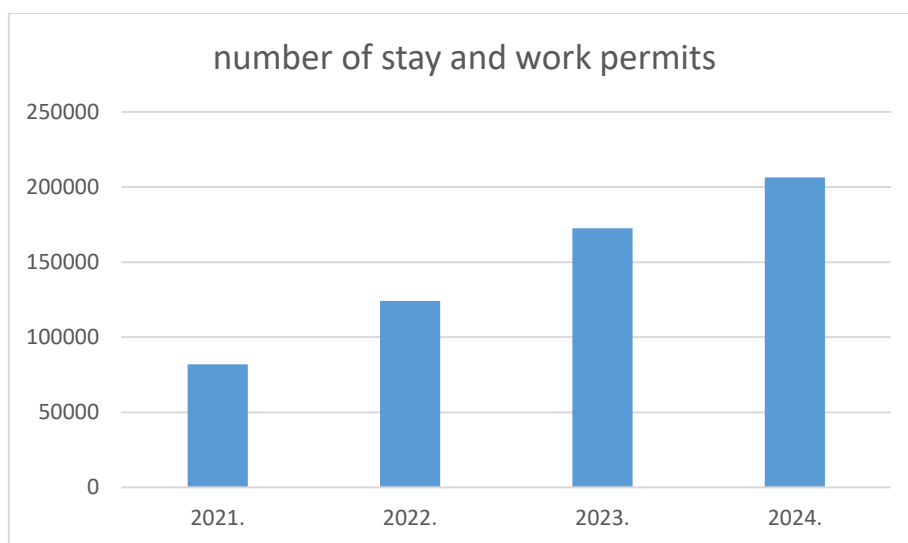
- Enabling regulation of temporary stay for the purpose of immigration and return of Croatian emigrants. In order to retain highly educated third-country nationals who have studied and obtained a higher education qualification and employment in the Republic of Croatia, more favourable provisions for the acquisition of permanent stay have been proposed.

- In order to address the challenges faced by family members of persons who have been granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia (financial,

administrative or logistical reasons), the amendments propose that a person who has been granted international protection in the competent police administration or police station submit an application for temporary stay for their family members who are located outside the Republic of Croatia.

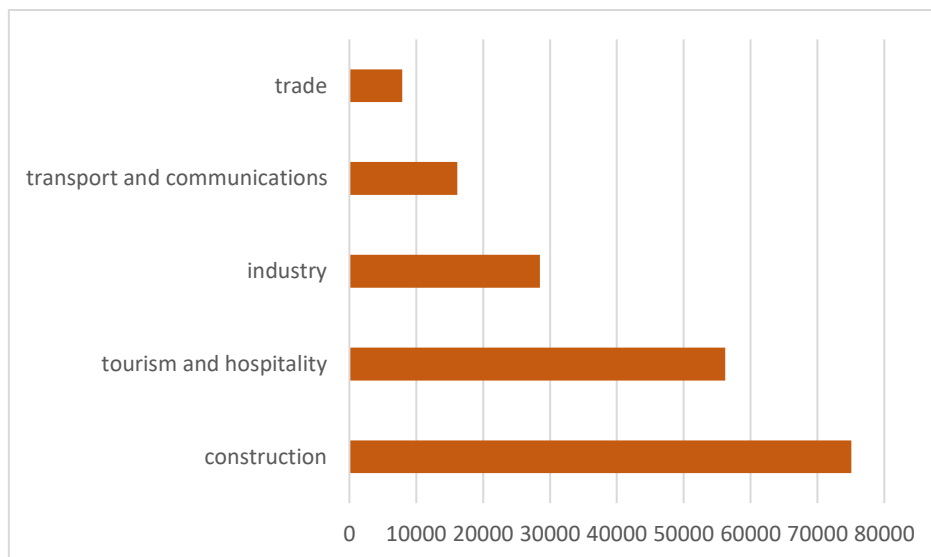
#### 4.2. Labour migration

In the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024, a **total of 206,529 stay and work permits were issued**. In 2023, 172,499 were issued, an increase of almost 20%.



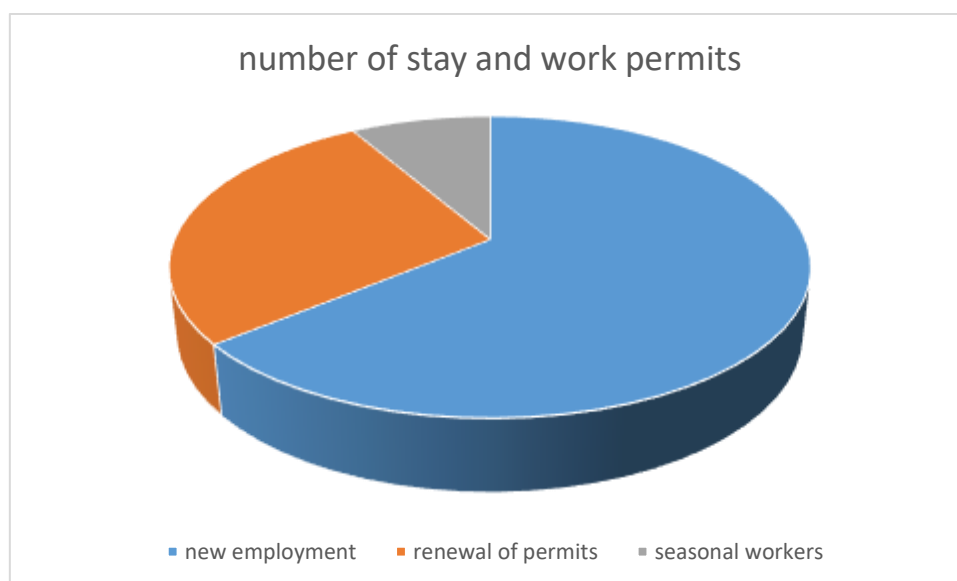
*Graph 1: Stay and work permits to by year*

The largest number of stay and work permits was issued in the activities of construction (75.071), tourism and hospitality, (56.228), industry, (28.486), transport and communications (16.149) and trade (7.925).



*Graph 2: Stay and work permits by activity*

Of the total number of stay and work permits issued, 132,208 were issued for new employment, 56,898 for the renewal of permits, and 17,423 for seasonal workers, most of them in tourism and hospitality (15,893).

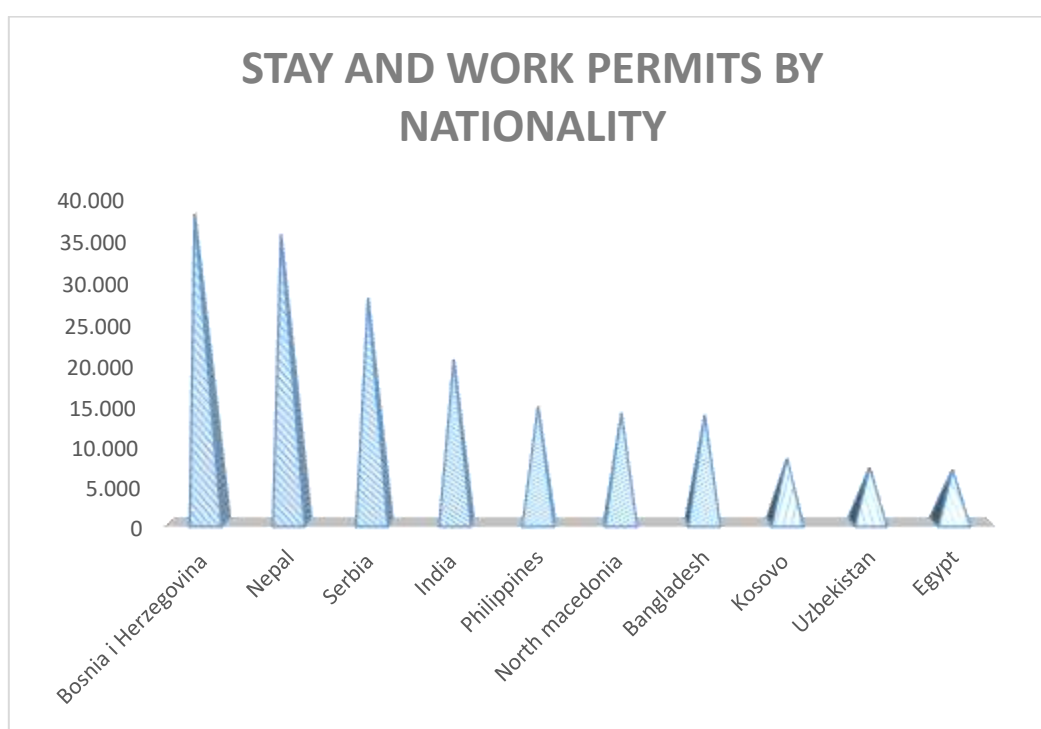


*Graph 3: Stay and work permits for new employment, renewal and seasonal employment*

The maximum number of stay and work permits until 31 December 2024 is issued to nationals of the following countries:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina -38,100

- Nepal – 35.635
- Serbia – 27.988
- India – 20.502
- Philippines – 14.680
- North Macedonia – 13.855
- Bangladesh – 13.630
- Kosovo – 8.139
- Uzbekistan - 6.959
- Egypt - 6.672



*Graph 4: Stay and work permits by nationality*

POLICE ADMINISTRATION	NEW EMPLOYMENT	EXTENSION	SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT	TOTAL
Bjelovarsko-bilogorska	1579	430	109	2118
Brodsko-posavska	3193	1890	16	5099
Dubrovačko-neretvanska	8604	3017	1370	12991
Istarska	19467	6361	2832	28660
Karlovačka	3173	1437	72	4682

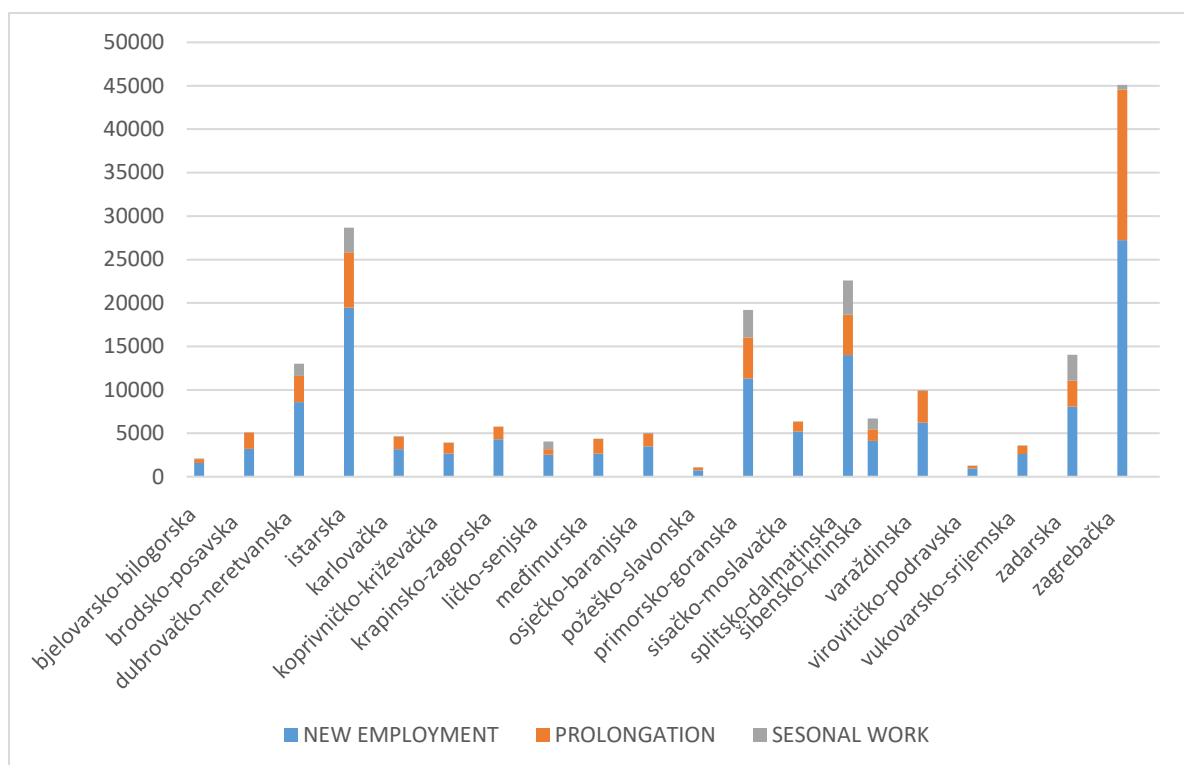


Koprivničko-križevačka	2670	1225	1	3896
Krapinsko-zagorska	4311	1427	19	5757
Ličko-senjska	2545	642	857	4044
Međimurska	2669	1696	22	4387
Osječko-baranjska	3497	1459	91	5047
Požeško-slavonska	728	324	1	1053
Primorsko-goranska	11328	4697	3155	19180
Sisačko-moslavačka	5209	1146	11	6366
Splitsko-dalmatinska	14013	4647	3924	22584
Šibensko-kninska	4124	1325	1268	6717
Varaždinska	6235	3654	44	9933
Virovitičko-podravska	967	278	6	1251
Vukovarsko-srijemska	2612	925	81	3618
Zadarska	8057	2986	2984	14027
Zagrebačka	27227	17332	560	45119
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132208</b>	<b>56898</b>	<b>17423</b>	<b>206529</b>

Table 1: Overview of stay and work permits issued in 2024 by police administration  
Source: Ministry of Interior<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>

<https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/statistika/2025/1/Mjese%C4%8Dne%20statistike%20prosinac%202024.pdf>



Graph 5: Stay and work permits by place of issue

## 5. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

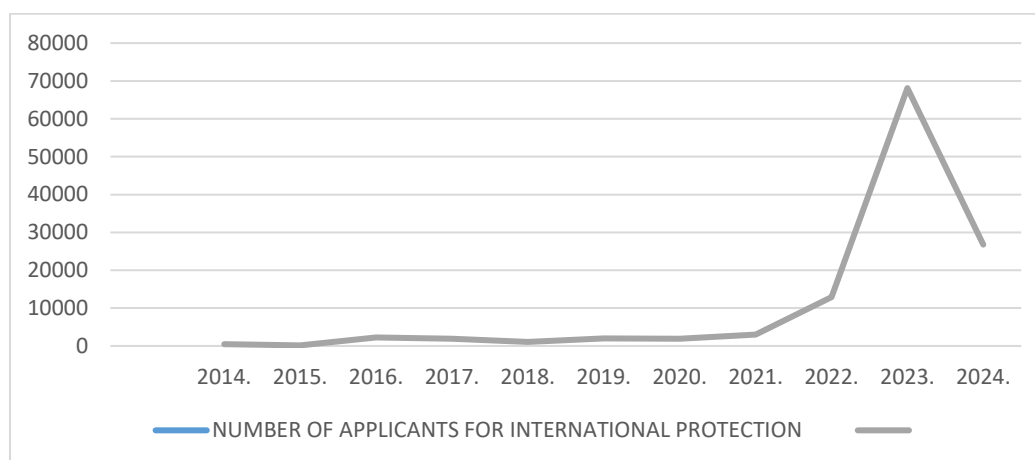
### 5.1. Number of applicants for international protection and persons granted protection

#### 5.1.1. Number of applicants for international protection

In 2024, 26,776 applications for international protection were made in the Republic of Croatia and 1,419 applications were lodged. Although this is a 60% decrease compared to 2023, when the number of applicants was at a record high (68.114), in 2024 the number of applicants for international protection remains high compared to the numbers until 2022.

Year	NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICANTS
2014.	453
2015.	152
2016.	2234
2017.	1887
2018.	1068
2019.	1986
2020.	1932
2021.	3039
2022.	12872
2023.	68114
2024.	26776

Table 2: Number of applicants for international protection by year (2014-2024)



Graph 6: Number of applicants for international protection by year

NUMBER OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN 2024 BY NATIONALITY, GENDER AND AGE						
GENDER / NATIONALITY	0-13	14-17	18-34	35-64	65 >	TOTAL
M	2.602	2.308	11.700	3.253	44	19.907
AFGHANISTAN	85	230	1.685	103		2.103
ALBANIA				1		1
ALGERIA		4	57	6		67
ARMENIA	1	2	4	3		10
AZERBAIJAN	10		10	23		43
BANGLADESH		4	486	166		656
BENIN	1		1			2
WITHOUT CITIZENSHIP	1					1
BELARUS	1		1			2
BOLIVIA	1			1		2
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA			1	2		3
BURKINA FASO			2			2
BURUNDI	5	2	26	8		41
DEMOC. REP. OF THE CONGO	11	1	15	7		34
EGYPT	4	466	315	43	1	829
ERITREA			3			3
ETHIOPIA			3			3
PHILIPPINES				1		1
GAMBIA			3	2		5
GHANA	1		14	2		17
GEORGIA			2	2		4
GUINEA			10	1		11
GUINEA-BISSAU			1			1
HAITI			1			1
INDIA	1		350	99		450
IRAQ	79	37	334	80	1	531

IRAN	7	15	126	73		221
YEMEN	4	1	5	1		11
JORDAN			2	1		3
SOUTH SUDAN				1		1
CAMEROON	1		22	10		33
KAZAKHSTAN	1		4	5		10
CHINA	26	4	100	126	1	257
KYRGYZSTAN			1	2		3
COLOMBIA	1		2	1		4
COMOROS			2	2		4
CONGO	17	7	37	23		84
CUBA	5		12	2		19
KUWAIT			4	1		5
LEBANON	4	1	9	10		24
LIBERIA			1	1		2
LIBYA			5			5
MALI			5	2		7
MOROCCO	3	30	591	82		706
MAURITANIA				1		1
MYANMAR			1			1
MOLDOVA			1	1		2
MONGOLIA	39	9	36	33		117
NEPAL			119	37		156
NIGERIA	1		13	8		22
IVORY COAST				3		3
PAKISTAN		9	623	108		740
PALESTINE, TER.	16	15	87	32	1	151
RWANDA				2		2
ROMANIA				1		1
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	657	170	873	538	25	2263
USA			1			1

SAUDI ARABIA			1			1
SENEGAL	1		14	1		16
SIERRA LEONE	2		35	4		41
SYRIA	805	984	3436	794	11	6030
NORTH MACEDONIA				1	1	2
SOMALIA	6	20	140	9		175
SERBIA	1		2	3		6
SUDAN	1		7	1		9
SPAIN				1		1
SRI LANKA			42	29		71
TAJIKISTAN			1			1
TOGOLESE REPUBLC				1		1
TUNISIA			18	4		22
TURKMENISTAN			1			1
TURKEY	796	297	1989	740	3	3825
UKRAINE	6		6	5		17
UZBEKISTAN			2	1		3
VENEZUELA	1			2		3
<b>F</b>	<b>2.104</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>2.589</b>	<b>1.646</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>6.869</b>
AFGHANISTAN	71	16	75	28		190
ALBANIA	1		1			2
ALGERIA			2			2
ARMENIA	2	2		4		8
AZERBAIJAN	5	3	5	7		20
BANGLADESH			3			3
BENIN			1			1
BELARUS				1		1
BOLIVIA				1		1
BURUNDI	3	1	13	3		20
DEMOC. REP. OF THE CONGO	11		17	7		35
EGYPT	1		2			3

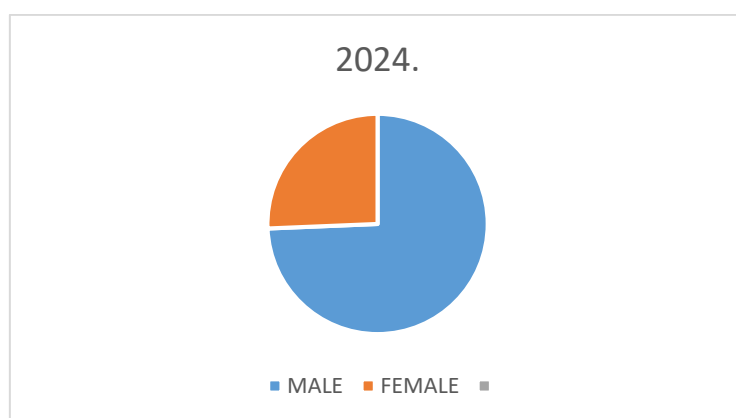
ERITREA			1			1
ETHIOPIA			3	1		4
PHILIPPINES			2			2
GHANA	2		8	1		11
GUINEA	1		2			3
INDIA			69	20		89
IRAQ	61	11	73	36		181
IRAN	6	7	14	14		41
YEMEN	2	1	4	1		8
CAMEROON			27	14		41
KAZAKHSTAN		1	1	1		3
CHINA	32	5	65	93	2	197
KYRGYZSTAN	2		3	1		6
COLOMBIA			1	1		2
COMOROS			2			2
CONGO	22	2	30	18		72
CUBA			9	4		13
LEBANON	6		4	6		16
LIBERIA		1	5			6
MOROCCO	2	1	18	6		27
MONGOLIA	27	8	33	25		93
NEPAL			171	40		211
NIGERIA			4	2		6
IVORY COAST	1		1			2
PAKISTAN	1		15	5		21
PALESTINE, TER.	10	1	15	11	2	39
ROMANIA				1		1
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	556	101	567	486	84	1794
SENEGAL			13	1		14
SIERRA LEONE	2		19	1		22
SYRIA	592	134	489	307	8	1530

SOMALIA	4	5	73	7	1	90
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC			1	1		2
SUDAN	2		2	3		7
SRI LANKA			16	53		69
TOGOLESE REPUBLIC			1			1
TUNISIA			2	1		3
TURKEY	673	123	698	431	9	1934
UGANDA			1			1
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	2					2
UKRAINE	1		5	1		7
UZBEKISTAN	2		1			3
GREAT BRITAIN				1		1
VENEZUELA	1		2	1	1	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4.706</b>	<b>2.731</b>	<b>14.289</b>	<b>4.899</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>26.776</b>

Table 3: Number of applicants for international protection in 2024 by nationality, gender and age

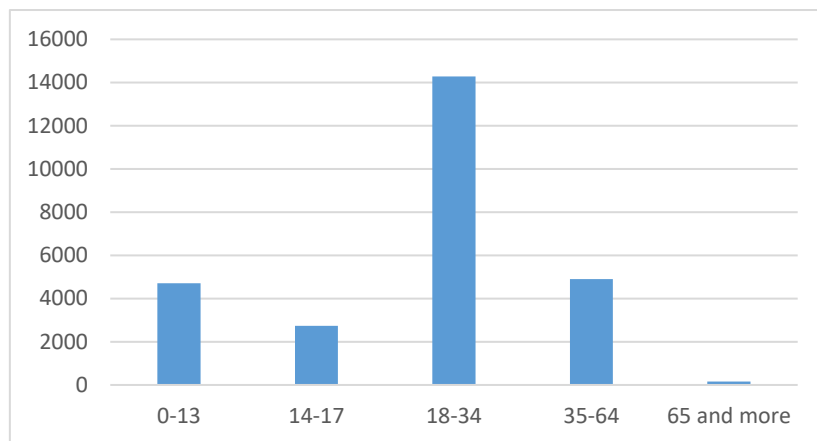
Source: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-tražitelji-medjunarodne-zaštite/283234>

Most of them are male (74.35 %), most often between the ages of 18 and 34.



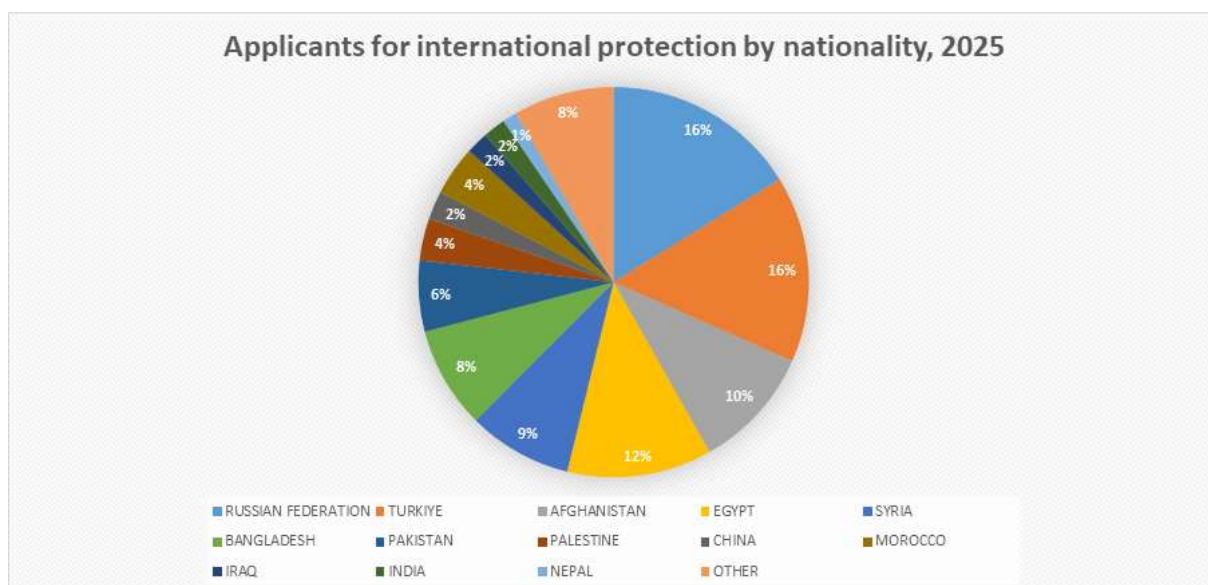
Graph 7: Applicants for international protection by gender





*Chart 8: Applicants for international protection by age*

According to the most common countries of origin of applicants for international protection, the situation has changed compared to the country of origin from which the most applicants for international protection come, and the most common citizenship of applicants for international protection is Syria (7,560, an increase of over 100% in 2023, when there were 3,752). Similar to 2023, the top 5 most common nationalities are Turkey (5,759), the Russian Federation (4,057) and Afghanistan (2,093), although in smaller absolute numbers than in 2023. Egypt (832 applicants), which was not in the top 10 countries of origin in 2023, ranks fifth.



*Graph 9: Applicants for international protection by nationality*

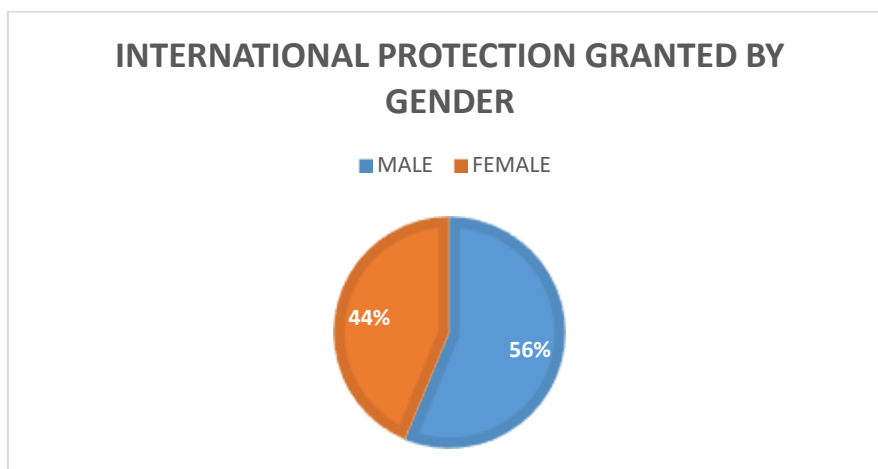
### 5.1.2. International protection granted

In 2024, 80 persons were granted international protection, 71 persons were granted asylum and 9 subsidiary protection. This represents an increase of 53.85% to 2023, when 52 applications for international protection were granted (in 50 cases asylum was granted and in two subsidiary protection cases).

PROTECTION/ CATEGORY	2023	2024
<b>Asylum</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>39</b>
	9	
14-17		4
18-34	8	17
35-64	10	2
65>		
<b>F</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>32</b>
0-13	8	17
14-17		2
18-34	7	9
35-64	8	4
65 >		
<b>Susubsiary protection</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
0-13		2
14-17		1
18-34		
35-64	2	3
<b>F</b>		<b>3</b>
0-13		1
14-17		
18-34		1
35-64		1

Table 4: Number of persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia in 2023 and 2024 by age, sex and type of protection

Source: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-tražitelji-medjunarodne-zaštite/283234>



Graph 10: International protection granted by gender

The gender structure of persons granted international protection is more uniform (56% of males and 44% of females) than for applicants for international protection, who are predominantly males (74.35%).

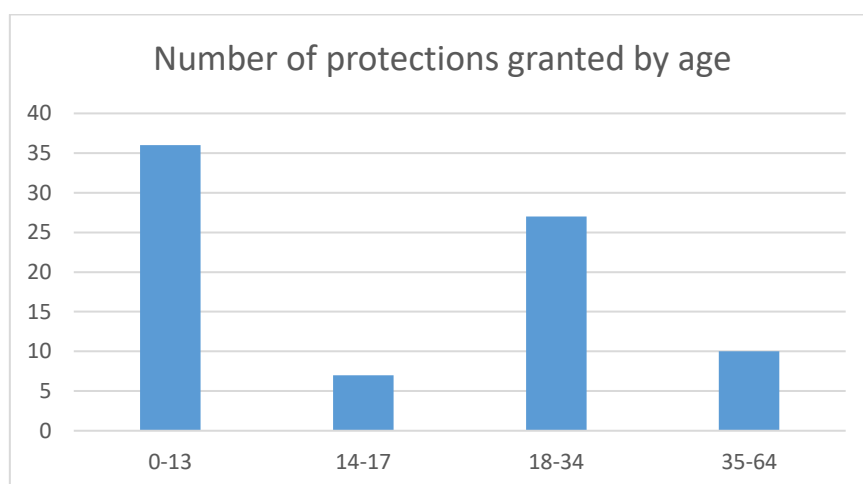


Chart 11: International protection granted by age

The age structure of persons granted protection differs significantly from that of persons seeking international protection. Among those granted international protection, the most numerous are children up to the age of 13. The reason for this is that the minor child of an asylum seeker and a foreigner under subsidiary protection who has not established his or her own family follows the legal status of a legal

representative who has been granted international protection, on which the Ministry issues a decision. Thus, children of persons under international protection born in Croatia are significantly represented in the number of international protections granted.

ZAŠTITA	2006.	2008.	2009.	2010.	2011.	2012.	2013.	2014.	2015.	2016.	2017.	2018.	2019.	2020.	2021.	2022.	2023.	2024.	Ukupni zbroj
Azil	1	3	11	5	9	21	7	15	35	83	184	244	158	36	68	21	50	71	1022
Supsidijarna zaštita	0	3	2	9	4	14	18	9	7	17	27	21	1	6	0	0	2	9	149
UKUPNO	1	6	13	14	13	35	25	24	42	100	211	265	159	42	68	21	52	80	1171

Table 5: Number of international protections granted per year

Source: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-tražitelji-medjunarodne-zaštite/283234>

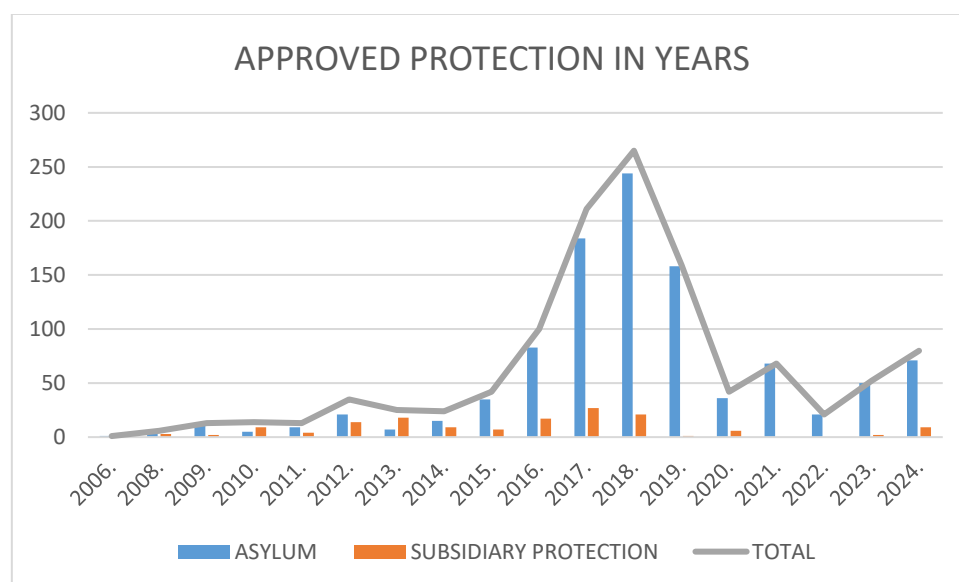


Chart 12: International protection granted by year and type of protection

Looking at the type of protection granted per year, the number of asylums granted is generally higher than the number of good subsidiary protections (with the exception of 2010 and 2013, when several subsidiary protections were granted), so 2024 is no different from previous years (71 persons were granted asylum and 9 subsidiary protections).

### 5.1.3. Dublin procedure

Incoming transfers were made from the following member states:	
COUNTRY	No. of persons
AUSTRIA	249
BELGIUM	90
CZECH REPUBLIC	7
DENMARK	8
FINLAND	18
FRANCE	215
GREECE	1
ICELAND	1
ITALY	1
LIECHTENSTEIN	1
LUXEMBOURG	12
HUNGARY	11
GERMANY	514
THE NETHERLANDS	106
NORWAY	42
POLAND	2
SLOVAKIA	4
SLOVENIA	57
SWEDEN	11
SWITZERLAND	348
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1698</b>

Number of outgoing transfers (from HR):	
COUNTRY	No. of persons

AUSTRIA	4
BELGIUM	1
BULGARIA	1
FRANCE	5
ITALY	1
GERMANY	3
NETHERLANDS	1
SPAIN	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>

Table 6: Number of incoming and outgoing Dublin transfers for the period 01.01.-31.12.2024

Source: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-tražitelji-medjunarodne-zaštite/283234>

## 5.2. Projects in the field of international protection

Currently, MDM Belgique and the Croatian Red Cross operate in the Reception Centres for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb and Kutina.

### 5.2.1. Project '6P – Support in the provision of healthcare to applicants for international protection

Currently, under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the project '6P – Support for the provision of healthcare to applicants for international protection' is being implemented in reception centres for applicants for international protection, and the project implementer is MDM Belgique.

The purpose of the project is to promote and protect health and prevent diseases in applicants for international protection by ensuring access to medical consultations at the level of primary protection.

Within the project, the following activities are carried out:

- Provide for the first medical examinations of newly arrived applicants for international protection;
- Provision of individual psychological and psychotherapeutic counselling and management of individual counselling
- Arranging specialist psychiatric examinations with the provision of transport and escort, arranging appointments for specialist-consiliar and diagnostic medical examinations on issued referrals of primary health care doctors of the competent health center
- Ensuring transport and escort for specialist-consiliar and diagnostic medical examinations
- Continuous provision of health consultations in reception centres for applicants for international protection
- Providing information on access to healthcare
- Providing information on hygiene and prevention of communicable diseases;
- Providing information on family planning
- Production of information leaflets and posters, production of a publication on the topic of physical and/or mental health of applicants for international protection
- Providing translators for health services.

### ***5.2.2. Project "Social services and psychosocial support for applicants for international protection"***

Based on the project 'Social services and psychosocial support to applicants for international protection' under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Croatian Red Cross is carrying out the following activities in reception centres:

- reception service and accommodation in coordination with the Service for Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection, which includes, among other things, the preparation of hygiene packages and bedding for newcomers and the regular distribution of hygiene packages, bedding, footwear and clothing according to an agreed schedule communicated to applicants in advance;
- acquainting the applicant with all segments of life in the shelters
- individual and group psychosocial support and counselling

- monitoring the situation of beneficiaries
- support in the exercise of rights and services
- education of life skills; Croatian language courses
- help in mastering school programs and familiarizing parents with the importance of further education, informing and going to parental meetings with parents and other activities related to the inclusion of child seekers in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia
- sports activities and excursions of the applicant
- intercultural learning
- creative workshops
- playrooms for preschool children
- prevention of trafficking in human beings and exploitation (workshops)
- activities with the local community to prevent discrimination and xenophobia
- procurement of supplies and supplies for the operation of the infirmary in the shelter
- procurement of didactic and other aids for vulnerable groups
- cover the costs of medical examinations and services, special foodstuffs and baby food (cough and adapted milk) and other activities related to the provision of acceptance guarantees.

### ***5.2.3. Project " Renovation of the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb"***

In 2024, the project 'Renovation of the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb' was completed, which, among other things, replaced the elevators in the building and created new outdoor lighting around the Reception Centre.

The purpose of the project was to renovate the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb and to improve reception and accommodation services and working conditions.



#### **5.2.4. Projects started in 2024**

In 2024, the following projects started to be implemented:

1. 'Provision of food for applicants for international protection accommodated in reception centres for applicants for international protection', with a total value of EUR 8 000 000.00, 75% of which is co-financed by the AMIF.

The purpose of the project is to improve the reception and accommodation conditions of applicants for international protection through the financing of costs in reception centres for applicants for international protection.

2. 'Supporting reception and accommodation conditions and the safety of applicants for international protection – SERVICE AND SECURITY (SAS)', with a total value of EUR 4 800.000,00, of which 100 % is co-financed by the AMIF.

The project includes support in financing costs related to the reception and accommodation of TMZ and maintenance and repair of infrastructure in reception centres for TMZ in the Republic of Croatia.

3. 'Translation in the field of international protection and reception and accommodation of applicants for international protection' EUR 700.000,00, 75% of which is co-financed by the AMIF.

The purpose of this project is to enable persons who have expressed their intention to submit an application for international protection to the Republic of Croatia in the procedure for granting international protection to be translated into a language they understand, in accordance with the legal regulations of the European Union and the Republic of Croatia.

In view of the obligations expected by the Republic of Croatia in the implementation of the Pact on Asylum and Migration, and in the context of reception issues, the provisions of Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May

2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, as well as other relevant regulations, are expected to be transposed in the forthcoming period.

#### **5.2.5. Activities under the project “Access to the territory and asylum system in Croatia – legal support and capacity building”**

In 2024, the Croatian Legal Centre (HPC), as an implementing partner and with the financial support of UNHCR, implemented the project *Access to the Territory and Asylum System in Croatia – Legal Support and Capacity Building*.<sup>24</sup> The aim of the project was to ensure access to basic rights of forcibly displaced persons – potential applicants for international protection, applicants for international protection, persons granted international protection status and foreigners under temporary protection, and to strengthen the capacity of national authorities to apply relevant international, European and national regulations in the field of asylum, migration and human rights protection.

In 2024, the following activities were carried out as part of the project:

1. Providing legal information and legal advice to targeted groups of beneficiaries (applicants for international protection, persons granted international protection and temporary protection). Consultations were held at the HPC office, and via phone, and e-mail.
2. National Asylum System Report 2023

In 2024, the National Asylum System Report 2023 was prepared. The report follows newspapers at EU level, as well as newspapers in legislation, public policies and challenges in the Croatian asylum system, legislation and practice in 2023. The report is based on publicly available data, as well as data provided to HPC by administrative courts, the High Administrative Court, the Croatian Employment Service, international organisations and civil society organisations, and data provided by ministries to UNHCR. The report is available in Croatian ([https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Croatian-Asylum-System-in-2023-CLC\\_HR.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Croatian-Asylum-System-in-2023-CLC_HR.pdf)) and English ([https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CroatianAsylumSystemReport\\_-2023.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CroatianAsylumSystemReport_-2023.pdf)).

3. Training of police officers

In cooperation with UNHCR and the Ministry of the Interior, in 2024. HPC organised three one-day workshops for police officers entitled "Access to the international protection system and protection of vulnerable groups".

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2025/01/10/pristup-teritoriju-republike-hrvatske-pravna-podrška-i-podizanje-kapaciteta/>

Workshops were held on 24 April,<sup>25</sup> 5 September<sup>26</sup> and 11 September 2024<sup>27</sup> at the Police Academy. The workshops included lectures and practical exercises on the topics of human rights of migrants, access to the international protection system, recognition and protection of vulnerable groups, techniques of communicating with migrants and responsibilities of police officers in the treatment of migrants, with special reference to the practice of the European Court of Human Rights.

#### 4. Seminar for Administrative Court Judges

A seminar for administrative court judges on restrictions on freedom of movement for applicants for international protection was held on 2 October 2024 in cooperation with the Judicial Academy and UNHCR.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of the seminar was to deepen the students' knowledge in the field of administrative judicial protection and treatment of applicants for international protection who have been restricted from the point of view of Croatian, European and international legislation and the practice of the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union. The seminar was attended by judges of the Administrative Courts in Zagreb, Rijeka and Osijek and representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, Sector for Foreigners and International Protection

#### 5. Lectures related to the asylum system at the Faculty of Political Science and the Faculty of Law in Zagreb

Long-term cooperation with the Faculty of Political Science and the Faculty of Law in Zagreb continued and the following lectures were held for students:

- 25 March lecture for 22 students of the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb as part of the *Media and Diversity* course,
- and two lectures (4th and 7th March) for 74 students of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb.

#### 6. Asylum coordination

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/05/04/održana-radionica-za-policijske-službenike-na-temu-pristup-sustavu-međunarodne-zaštite-i-zaštita-ranjivih-skupina/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/09/09/održana-radionica-za-policijske-službenike-i-sluzbenice/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/09/18/održana-posljednja-radionica-za-policijske-službenike-i-sluzbenice-u-2024-godini/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/10/03/održan-seminar-za-suce-upravnih-sudova/>

Three Asylum Coordination meetings took place in 2024: 20 March (on 'The right to work of applicants for international protection')<sup>29</sup>, 12 June (presenting the 2023 National Report on the Asylum System in the Republic of Croatia)<sup>30</sup> and 10 December 2024. (presenting the study "Care for unaccompanied children in the Republic of Croatia" prepared for UNHCR<sup>31</sup> by dr. sc. Drago Zuparić Ilić.

## 7. Celebrating Refugee Day

On the occasion of the World Refugee Day, HPC, with the organizational support of the Legal Clinic of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, organized a knowledge quiz on the topic of refugee and migration in the club SPUNK.<sup>32</sup>

## 8. Poster for applicants for international protection

A poster (<https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/16/izraden-plakat-for-applicants-international-protection-and-list-organisations-civil-society-providing-services-persons-in-use-protection/>) for applicants for international protection was created. The poster contains a QR code that, by simple scanning, leads to a list of organizations that provide services to people in need of protection. The posters were distributed to the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb and Kutina, *the Welcome Centre* (One Stop Shop), social welfare institutions (children's homes and community service centres), the Legal Clinic of the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb, and non-governmental organisations working in the asylum system.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/05/01/održan-prvi-sastanak-koordinacije-za-azil-u-2024-godini/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/06/13/održan-drugi-sastanak-koordinacije-za-azil-u-2024-godini/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/12/11/predstavljena-studija-unhcr-a-skrb-o-djeci-bez-pratnje-u-republici-hrvatskoj/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/06/18/kviz-znanja-povodom-svjetskog-dana-izbjeglica/>



Figure 1: HPC poster for applicants for international protection

Source: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/16/izraden-plakat-za-tražitelje-međunarodne-zaštite-i-popis-organizacija-civilnog-društva-koje-pružaju-usluge-osobama-u-potrebi-za-zaštitom/>

## 9. Flyers for applicants for international protection

In accordance with the legislative amendments, information leaflets were updated, which were made in cooperation with UNHCR, the Ministry of the

Interior of the Republic of Croatia and HPC, and which are intended for applicants for international protection. The leaflets provide key information on the procedure for applying for international protection in Croatia, including instructions on how to express an intention and apply for international protection, what the procedure for granting international protection looks like and which rights applicants for international protection exercise during the procedure.

In addition to Croatian,<sup>33</sup> the leaflets are translated Arabic<sup>34</sup>, English<sup>35</sup>, Farsi<sup>36</sup>, French<sup>37</sup>, Kurdish sorani<sup>38</sup>, Pashto<sup>39</sup>, Russian<sup>40</sup>, Somali<sup>41</sup>, Spanish<sup>42</sup>, Tigrinya<sup>43</sup>, Turkish<sup>44</sup>, Ukrainian<sup>45</sup> and Urdu<sup>46</sup>.

## **10. Leaflet for persons returned via the Dublin procedure**

In order to make it easier for applicants for international protection who have been returned to Croatia under the Dublin procedure to navigate their rights, a leaflet has been created in which applicants can find answers to questions about what the Dublin procedure is, who is implementing it, why they have been returned to Croatia, what their rights are and whether they have the right to be reunited with their family. It is available in the following languages: Croatian<sup>47</sup>, Arabic<sup>48</sup>, English<sup>49</sup>, Farsi<sup>50</sup>, French<sup>51</sup>, Russian<sup>52</sup>, Turkish<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet\\_croatia\\_asylum\\_A5\\_HR\\_web.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet_croatia_asylum_A5_HR_web.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Information-for-people-seeking-IP-in-the-RoC-ARABIC.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet\\_croatia\\_asylum\\_A5\\_web.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet_croatia_asylum_A5_web.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Information-for-people-seeking-IP-in-the-RoC-FARSI.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet\\_croatia\\_asylum\\_A5\\_FR\\_web.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet_croatia_asylum_A5_FR_web.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Information-for-people-seeking-IP-in-the-RoC-KURDISH-SORANI.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Information-for-people-seeking-IP-in-the-RoC-PASHTO.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet\\_croatia\\_asylum\\_A5\\_RU\\_web.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet_croatia_asylum_A5_RU_web.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Information-for-people-seeking-IP-in-the-RoC-SOMALI.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet\\_croatia\\_asylum\\_A5\\_ES\\_web.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet_croatia_asylum_A5_ES_web.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Information-for-people-seeking-IP-in-the-RoC-TIGRINYA.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet\\_croatia\\_asylum\\_A5\\_TR\\_web.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet_croatia_asylum_A5_TR_web.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet\\_croatia\\_asylum\\_A5\\_UA\\_web.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/leaflet_croatia_asylum_A5_UA_web.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Information-for-people-seeking-IP-in-the-RoC-URDU.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN\\_Hrvatski-Croatian.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN_Hrvatski-Croatian.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/DUBLIN\\_Arapski-Arabic-1.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/DUBLIN_Arapski-Arabic-1.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN\\_Engleski-English.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN_Engleski-English.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN\\_Farsi.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN_Farsi.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN\\_Francuski-French.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN_Francuski-French.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN\\_Ruski-Russian.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN_Ruski-Russian.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN\\_Turski-Turkish.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DUBLIN_Turski-Turkish.pdf)

## 11. Brochure on the right to work

In cooperation with the Croatian Employment Service (CES) and UNHCR, a brochure entitled 'The right to work of applicants for international protection, persons granted international protection and persons under temporary protection' was produced. The brochure contains key information on the right to employment and work, as well as on the protection of these rights. The brochure is available in Croatian<sup>54</sup>, English<sup>55</sup>, Ukrainian<sup>56</sup>, Russian<sup>57</sup>, Arabic<sup>58</sup>, French<sup>59</sup>, Turkish<sup>60</sup> and Farsi<sup>61</sup>.

The brochure was presented at a training session on the employment of refugees, organised by UNHCR and the CES<sup>62</sup>.

### **5.2.6. Complementary Pathways for Access to International Protection in South East Europe - COMP4SEE**

At the end of June 2024, the transnational project Complementary Pathways for Southeast Europe – COMP4SEE was completed. The project is funded by the AMIF Fund of the European Union and co-financed by the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The project leader was the Croatian Legal Centre, and the project partners were the Peace Institute (Slovenia), the Legal Centre for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (Slovenia) and the Access to Rights Foundation (Bulgaria).

The aim of the project was to contribute to the development of complementary pathways for refugees through the creation of new models of private sponsorship and through the development of recommendations for the improvement of national family reunification systems.

Project activities have resulted, inter alia, in the following:

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<sup>54</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HPC\\_Pravo-na-rad-HR\\_digital.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HPC_Pravo-na-rad-HR_digital.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HPC\\_Pravo-na-rad-EN\\_digital.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HPC_Pravo-na-rad-EN_digital.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HPC\\_Pravo-na-rad-UA\\_digital.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HPC_Pravo-na-rad-UA_digital.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HPC\\_Pravo-na-rad-RU\\_digital.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HPC_Pravo-na-rad-RU_digital.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HPC\\_Pravo-na-rad\\_arapski\\_web-2.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HPC_Pravo-na-rad_arapski_web-2.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Brošura-francuski.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Brošura-turski.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Brošura-farsi.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> more on: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/04/25/hpc-sudjelovao-na-edukacija-za-savjetnike-za-zapošljavanje-izbjeglica-hrvatskog-zavoda-za-zapošljavanje/>



1. National recommendations for the establishment of new models and private sponsorship programmes in all three partner countries (Bulgaria<sup>63</sup>, Croatia<sup>64</sup>, Slovenia<sup>65</sup>).
2. National recommendations for improving the national family reunification system in all three countries (Bulgaria<sup>66</sup>, Croatia<sup>67</sup>, Slovenia<sup>68</sup>).
3. Overview report of the survey on the perception of citizens of Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia on migration<sup>69</sup>.

The project supported family reunification procedures, i.e. helping persons granted international protection in three partner countries to reunite with their family members. The support programme included legal aid and other forms of support, such as assistance in meeting the necessary requirements, communication with the competent authorities, translation of the necessary documentation and covering certain costs incurred during the procedure.

In Croatia, assistance in family reunification was provided to 33 families, with a total of 89 family members, of which 23 arrived in Croatia. In Bulgaria, family reunification assistance was provided to 105 refugee families with a total of 327 family members, of which 115 arrived in Bulgaria, while in Slovenia, during the implementation of the project, assistance was provided to 21 families, with a total of 85 family members, and 24 family members arrived in Slovenia.

#### ***5.2.7. Activities within the framework of cooperation with the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) related to the so-called Asylum Information Database project***

Within the framework of long-standing cooperation with the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) regarding the so-called Asylum Information Database project, HPC has prepared a national report for 2023 containing information on the procedure for granting international protection, reception conditions, detention and the rights of persons granted international protection. The 2023 report is available at the following link: <https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/AIDA->

<sup>63</sup> <https://farbg.eu/en/publications/analysis-national-legal-and-institutional-frameworks-influence-possibility-introducing>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Preporuke-nacionalni-model-sponzorstva.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.mirovni-institut.si/comp4see-dopolnilne-poti-za-jugovzhodno-evropo-priporocila-za-uvodbo-programov-zasebnega-sponzorstva-v-sloveniji-in-priporocila-za-izboljsanje-slovenskega-sistema-za-zdruzeve-druzine/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.farbg.eu/en/publications/recommendations-improvement-bulgarian-family-reunification-system>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Preporuke-nacionalni-sustav-spajanja-obitelji.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.mirovni-institut.si/en/comp4see-complementary-pathways-for-southeast-europe-recommendations-for-the-introduction-of-private-sponsorship-schemes-in-slovenia-and-recommendations-for-improvement-of-the-slovenian-family-reun/>

<sup>69</sup> [https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Survey-report-perception-of-citizens-of-HR-SI\\_BG-about-migrations.pdf](https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Survey-report-perception-of-citizens-of-HR-SI_BG-about-migrations.pdf)



[HR 2023-Update.pdf](#). An annex containing information relating to temporary protection was prepared in addition to the main report: [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/AIDA-HR\\_Temporary-Protection\\_2023.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/AIDA-HR_Temporary-Protection_2023.pdf).

#### **5.2.8. UNHCR education on refugee status determination**

On 16 and 17 May 2024, UNHCR organised a two-day training course on refugee status determination for eighteen employees of the International Protection Service of the Ministry of the Interior. The workshop included effective interviewing techniques, with a particular focus on working with asylum seekers with special needs, in particular children and survivors of trafficking in human beings and gender-based violence. In addition, the training included an assessment of the credibility of the statements and guidelines for determining the fulfilment of the conditions for protection.

## 6. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

### 6.1. Minor applicants for international protection

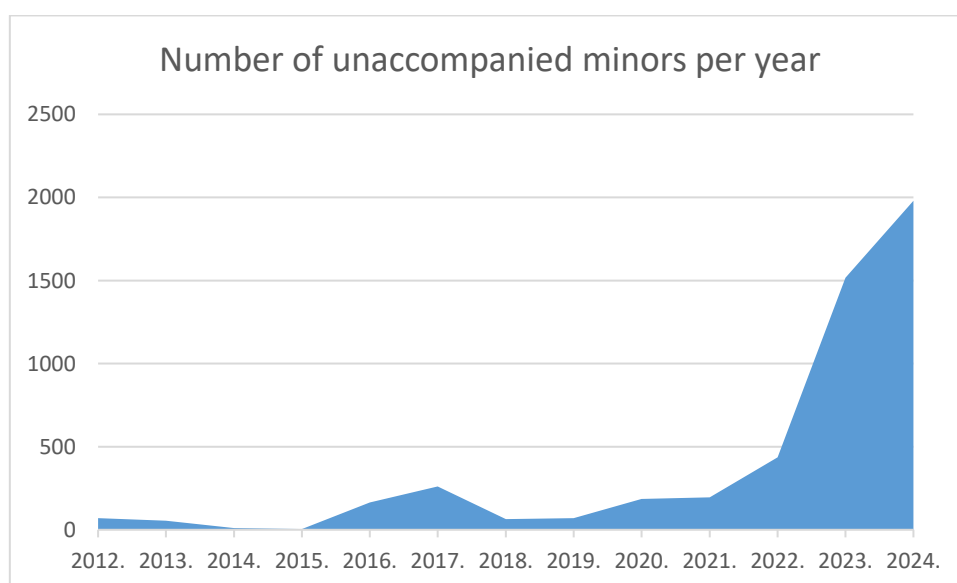
#### 6.1.1. Number and structure of unaccompanied applicants for international protection

Although there were fewer registered international protection marketers in 2024 than in 2023, the number of applicants for international protection, unaccompanied minors (1,980), increased by 30% in 2024 compared to 1,516 in 2023.

Statistički podaci o tražiteljima međunarodne zaštite maloljetnicima bez pratnje prema dobi i spolu zaključno do 31.12.2024. godine														
Spol / Godine	2012.	2013.	2014.	2015.	2016.	2017.	2018.	2019.	2020.	2021.	2022.	2023.	2024.	UKUPNO
M	69	54	10	5	163	251	59	65	169	174	337	1.458	1.914	4.981
0-13 bez pratnje				2	15	23	11	3	21	28	12	100	133	354
14-15 bez pratnje	11	8		1	47	62	13	12	30	40	74	273	295	894
16-17 bez pratnje	58	46	10	2	101	166	35	50	118	106	251	1.085	1.486	3.733
Ž	1	1			1	10	5	5	17	21	99	58	66	287
0-13 bez pratnje					1	4	2	1	7	6	17	12	13	63
14-15 bez pratnje						1		2	4	5	24	8	11	55
16-17 bez pratnje	1	1				5	3	2	6	10	58	38	42	169
UKUPNO	70	55	10	5	164	261	64	70	186	195	436	1.516	1.980	5.268

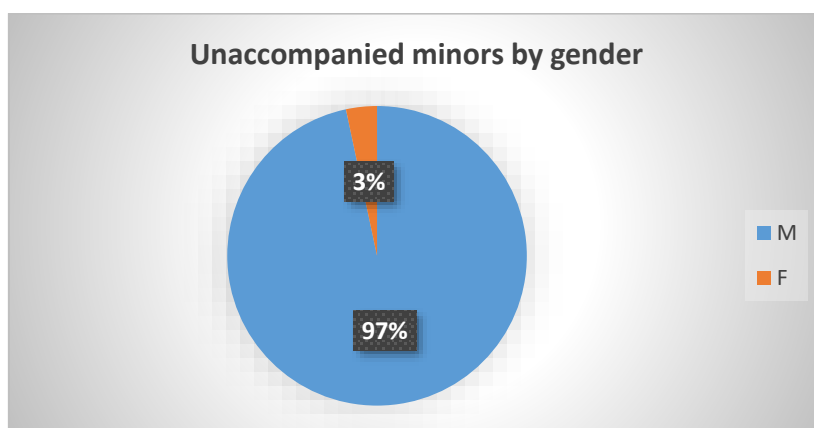
Table 7: Number of applicants for international protection of unaccompanied minors 2012-2024 by age and sex

Source: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-tražitelji-medjunarodne-zaštite/283234>



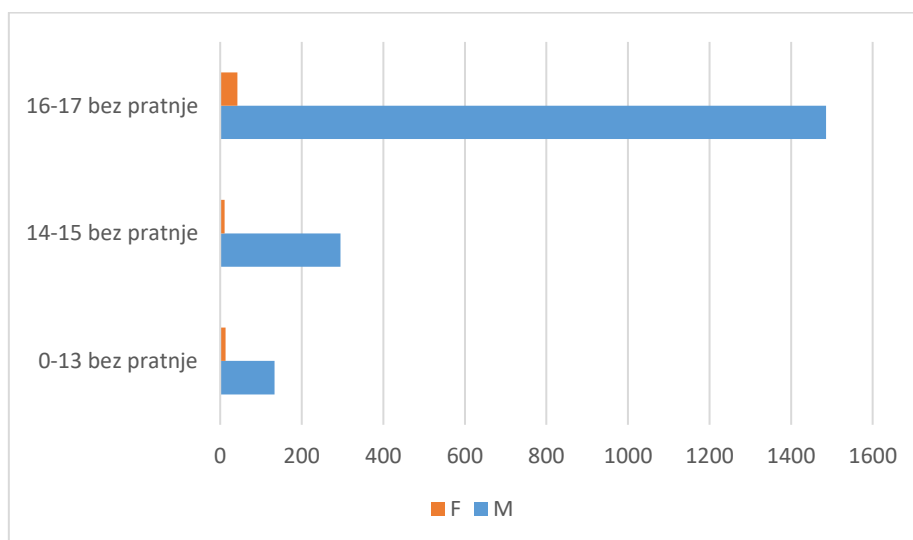
*Graph 13: Number of unaccompanied minors per year of applicants for international protection*

According to the sex structure, boys predominate (97%) compared to girls who are significantly less (3%), girls are 66 and boys are 1.914.



*Chart 14: Unaccompanied minors international protection applicants by gender*

The majority of unaccompanied minors applicants for international protection (78%), are aged between 16 and 17.



*Chart 15: Number of unaccompanied minors of applicants for international protection by age*

### **6.1.2. UNHCR activities in relation to unaccompanied minors**

In 2024, UNHCR and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children jointly visited two children's homes – in Ivanec and Slavonski Brod – where unaccompanied children are accommodated after being intercepted by the police. Despite the overall decline in the

number of registered asylum seekers, the increased arrival and rapid onward movement of unaccompanied children continued in 2024, raising concerns about their protection.

On 25 May UNHCR presented to the representatives of the judiciary the situation of protection of refugee and asylum-seeking children in Croatia, on the occasion of the beginning of the Council of Europe HELP course on refugee and migrant children, organized in cooperation with the Judicial Academy of the Republic of Croatia. In doing so, UNHCR highlighted the key challenge of ensuring adequate forms of family or shared care and stressed the importance of child-friendly procedures, the use of alternatives to detention and family reunification.

### **6.1.3. Study on care arrangements for unaccompanied children in Croatia**

In December, UNHCR published a study on care arrangements for unaccompanied children in Croatia<sup>70</sup>. The study was presented at the Asylum Coordination, which brings together representatives of state authorities, academia and civil society organisations. The presentation took place against the backdrop of an increase in the number of unaccompanied children registered as asylum seekers, which increased by almost 60% in 2024, making this topic particularly urgent. Based on research and interviews with a large number of stakeholders, the study highlights the experiences of children and carers and provides recommendations for improving existing forms of care, primarily through strengthening inclusive alternative forms of family and community-based care, such as foster families trained to receive unaccompanied children and supervised group housing for older children.

The study is available in Croatian and English.<sup>71</sup>

## **6.2. Involvement of students in the educational system**

With regard to the inclusion of students in the education system of primary school education, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth acts in accordance with *the Protocol of Conduct for the Integration of Persons with Whistleblowing, international*

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/hr/28675-unhcr-hrvatska-objavio-studiju-skrb-o-djeci-bez-pratnje-u-republici-hrvatskoj.html>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/hr/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2024/12/UNHCR-Skrb-o-djeci-bez-pratnje-u-RH.pdf>

*protection is ensured*, according to which the child is entitled to primary and secondary education, as well as the child who is a Croatian citizen, with the aim of as successful integration into the education system and Croatian society as possible.

In the school year 2024/2025, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, as part of the Call for Grants, financed two projects of associations in the field of non-institutional education of children and young people, which include activities aimed at supporting migrant children/pupils.

The projects were funded under a priority area related to Promoting social inclusion and preserving national and local identity: Education for personal and social development, solidarity, social inclusion and general human values, and Education for the rights and preservation of identity of national minorities, interculturalism and multiculturalism.

The total financial allocation is 31,188.00 euro.

### **6.2.1. Learning Croatian in Primary Schools**

The teaching of the Croatian language in primary schools is continuously ensured, i.e. consents for the preparation of Croatian language classes are prepared for a duration of 70 hours, which is carried out in accordance with *the Rules on the conduct of preparatory and supplementary classes for students who do not know or do not know the Croatian language and the teaching of the mother tongue and the culture of the country of origin of the students* for all children who start or develop education in the Republic of Croatia and do not know the Croatian language.

During the preparatory classes of the Croatian language, students are not evaluated, but only monitored in terms of socialization and language learning. During preparatory classes, students may attend less frequent classes at the school in which they are enrolled, namely those subjects in which a poorer knowledge of the Croatian language does not represent a significant obstacle to teaching (primarily educational subjects). The approved 70 hours of learning the Croatian language is to the greatest extent sufficient for students to meet the minimum requirements for inclusion in the regular education system.

If individual students have not sufficiently mastered the Croatian language after the approved 70 hours of preparatory instruction, they are allowed an additional 70 hours of re-entering preparatory Croatian language instruction or attending supplementary Croatian language instruction during one year, one or two hours per week.

After completing the cycle of preparatory and supplementary classes of the Croatian language, if necessary, students can also participate in supplementary classes of the Croatian language, which are organized in accordance with *the Curriculum for Primary School*.

For children in reception centres, in 2024, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth prepared 26 approvals for preparatory Croatian language classes that were conducted at Stjepan Kefelja Primary School, Kutina (for children from the Russian Federation, Congo and Turkey), Vladimir Vidrić Primary School, Kutina (for children from the Russian Federation and Turkey) and Gustav Krklec Primary School, Zagreb (for students from the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Congo). According to the available information from these school institutions, 11 students were supposed to start the program of preparatory classes of the Croatian language, but the classes were not realized because the students left the shelters.

### **6.2.2. Engaging in High Schools**

For migrant pupils who are enrolled in secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia in accordance with Article 43 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Law on Primary and Secondary Education<sup>72</sup> stipulates that special aid schools are obliged to provide to children who are entitled to education in the Republic of Croatia and do not know or have insufficient knowledge of the Croatian language.

Schools are also obliged to provide special assistance to children for whom education is compulsory under this Act and who have a stay in the territory of the Republic of Croatia, and are members of the family of a worker who is a citizen of a Member State

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<sup>72</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/odgoj-i-obrazovanje/zakon-o-odgoju-i-obrazovanju-u-osnovnoj-i-srednjoj-školi/595>

of the European Union and performs or has performed an independent activity, or who is or was employed in the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

In order to effectively integrate students who have insufficient knowledge of the Croatian language, the school organizes individual and group forms of direct educational work that enable these students to effectively master the Croatian language and compensate for insufficient knowledge in individual subjects.

Direct educational work is carried out in preparatory and supplementary classes.

Preparatory classes are intended for students with insufficient knowledge of the Croatian language and imply intensive learning of the Croatian language during a maximum of one school year.

Complementary classes are organised at a certain time when such assistance is needed by the students.

According to the Rules on the provision of supplementary Croatian language classes for students who do not know or do not know the Croatian language enough, all supplementary classes for primary and secondary school students are organized one or two hours a day for 70 hours. Also, additional teaching implies intensive learning of the Croatian language for a maximum of one school year.

If a student attends regular classes in addition to preparatory classes in the Croatian language, attendance will not be evaluated by a grade, but only by monitoring in terms of socialization and language learning. After completing additional Croatian language classes, the school's expert committee verifies the knowledge of the Croatian language in writing and orally. If the student does not pass the Croatian language exam after additional classes, the school will organize an additional 70 hours of Croatian language learning.

During the school year, the High School Education and Adult Education Sector of the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth receives data provided by the county administrative departments for education related to inclusion in the education system, i.e. the school in the county of applicants for international protection residing in the shelter. During the 2024 calendar year, data were obtained on the integration into secondary school of 15 pupils residing in a shelter for applicants for international protection.

Students under international protection are included in the 1st grade of Tin Ujević High School in Kutina, and one student is included in the 3rd grade of Rudolf Perešina Air Force School in Velika Gorica.

By gender, 13 boys and 2 girls are enrolled in high schools. All students for whom the school institution requests the learning of the Croatian language are provided with preparatory classes in the learning of the Croatian language.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth has issued 11 approvals for conducting preparatory classes for Croatian language learning for students under international protection.

In 2024, no consent was issued from the Ministry for the provision of additional Croatian language classes. Also, many students do not stay in the system for long because they migrate to other EU member states.

In accordance with Article 33 of the same Act, schools are obliged to organise supplementary classes for students in need of learning assistance in any subject, which also applies to migrant students.

### ***6.2.3. Educational assistance for persons under temporary protection***

Ministry of Science, Education and Youth based on the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia introducing temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia for displaced persons from Ukraine (CLASS: 022-03/22-04/77, ref. No: 50301-21/21-22-2 of 7 March 2022) adopts the Decision on co-financing the programme for providing additional support to primary and secondary school pupils displaced from Ukraine in the 2024/2025 school year. (Class: 016-01/24-01/00634, REFERENCE: 533-07-24-0001 of 11 September 2024).<sup>73</sup> This decision provides for the co-financing of extracurricular classes up to a maximum of EUR 70.00 per student per day, the parental share in the price of extended stay for primary school pupils, the parental share in the economic price of accommodation and food in the pupil's home for secondary school students, teaching and didactic materials and equipment, teaching

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<sup>73</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluka-23-9-2024/odluka-o-kriterijima-za-sufinanciranje-programa-za-pruzanje-dodatne-potpore-učenicima-osnovnih-i-srednjih-škola-raseljenima-iz-ukrajine-2024-2025.pdf>



materials for teachers working in preparatory Croatian language classes and other programmes for the implementation of student integration activities.

In addition to the above, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth has adopted a Decision on conducting preparatory classes of the Croatian language for displaced students of Ukraine (CLASS: 602-02/22-07/00669, REF. NO: 533-05-22-0002 of 1 April 2022)<sup>74</sup> and the Decision on financing textbooks for secondary schools and other educational materials for primary and secondary schools to pupils displaced from Ukraine for the 2024/2025 school year. (Class: 602-09/24-01/00073, REF. NO: 533-06-24-0001 of 2 July 2024).<sup>75</sup>

Textbooks are free for all elementary school students, including children from Ukraine. Two publications entitled Schools of Unity – a handbook for the integration of pupils from Ukraine into primary schools (Zagreb, September 2022) were created as part of a project implemented in cooperation between the Forum for Freedom of Education and the UNICEF Office in Croatia to support schools attended by children from Ukraine.

Adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia on 28 February 2022. Decision to set up an Interdepartmental Working Group on the implementation of activities for the reception and care of the refugee population from Ukraine<sup>76</sup>. As a member of the European Union, Croatia follows the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive, which ensures the right to work, housing, healthcare and education. Children and students displaced from Ukraine are included in the education system. Each refugee child enrolled in the education system shall be provided with: (a) participation in preparatory classes in the Croatian language without a knowledge test; (b) simultaneous involvement in educational work in classrooms in all subjects according to abilities and skills, and (c) final assessment and certificate at the end of the school year.

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<sup>74</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluka-o-provođenju-pripreme-nastave-za-raseljene-učenike-iz-Ukrajine-1-travnja-2022.PDF>

<sup>75</sup> <https://mzom.gov.hr/vijesti/odluka-o-financiranju-udžbenika-za-srednje-skole-i-drugih-obrazovnih-materijala-za-osnovne-i-srednje-skole-učenicima-raseljenima-iz-ukrajine-za-školsku-godinu-2024-2025/6363>

<sup>76</sup> [https://hrvatskazaukrajinu.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/HR/odluke/022-03-22-04-64\\_2-28-02.pdf](https://hrvatskazaukrajinu.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/HR/odluke/022-03-22-04-64_2-28-02.pdf)

The Ministry of Education, Science and Youth has adopted the Croatian Language, History and Culture Learning Programme for asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection for the purpose of integration into Croatian society.

Through the exchange of information with all stakeholders in the educational process, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth has identified several challenges related to the adaptation of children displaced from Ukraine:

1. Language barrier
2. Adaptation to the new school environment
3. Dealing with the psychological consequences of war.

Furthermore, examples of good practice identified by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth regarding the adaptation of children displaced from Ukraine included in the educational system in the Republic of Croatia:

1. Rapid inclusion of children in the teaching process and extracurricular activities
2. Ensuring learning of the Croatian language and opening schools to content from Ukrainian culture (manifestations, cooperation with associations of the Ukrainian community, etc.)
3. Provision of psychological assistance with regular monitoring by the professional service of the school.

### **6.3. Summer and psychosocial support for children of Ukrainian defenders and children from war-affected areas**

At the request of the Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine to ensure the rehabilitation, recreation and rest of children from war-affected areas in June 2024, cooperation was achieved to support Ukrainian children.

Through the 'Source of Friendship' project, vulnerable groups of children from Croatia, with children from Ukraine coming from war-affected areas, have been connected. The Croatian Children's Foundation, in cooperation with the 'Croatia Helps' Association, provided a joint workshop for children from the Selce Community Service Centre with children from Ukraine who spent their holidays in the resort of the town of Bjelovar in

Novi Vinodolski, with the aim of socialising children, accepting diversity and getting to know culture.

In addition to conducting a joint workshop, the Croatian Children's Foundation financed the costs of a translator and animator for children from Ukraine who stayed with children, as well as accommodation and stay of 18 children from Ukraine and their escorts, and a joint gathering, meal and tour of Zagreb on the return of children from vacation.

## **7. INTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH GRANTED INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

### **7.1. SINERGY project - Ensuring a synergistic approach to the integration of third-country nationals**

Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities (hereinafter: The Office) started in 2024 with the implementation of the *SINERGY project - Ensuring a synergistic approach to the integration of third-country nationals* co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union (hereinafter: SINERGY project).

#### **7.1.1. Key project activities and objectives**

In July 2024, an initial project conference was held at which project activities were presented<sup>77</sup>. The Sinergy project focuses on:

1. Reducing administrative barriers to accessing guaranteed rights and services by providing translation services into the languages most frequently used by persons granted international protection and other third-country nationals.
2. Strengthening the coordination capacities of the integration system by intensifying cooperation with local self-government units, third-country nationals and civil society organisations.
3. Increasing the awareness of the public and key stakeholders regarding legal migration and the contribution of third-country nationals to the development of society.
4. Improving strategic integration management including development, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of integration policies.

#### **7.1.2. Active participation of third-country nationals and people with a migrant background**

In June 2024, as part of the SINERGY project, an Advisory Group of third-country nationals and persons with a migrant background was established and ten members

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<sup>77</sup> <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/održana-početna-konferencija-projekta-sinergy-osiguravanje-sinergijskog-pristupa-integraciji-državljana-trećih-zemalja/1232>  
<https://eufondovi.mup.hr/vijesti/održana-početna-konferencija-projekta-sinergy-osiguravanje-sinergijskog-pristupa-integraciji-državljana-trećih-zemalja/684>

were appointed. The aim of establishing this group is to strengthen the perspective of third-country nationals and people with a migrant background in the political debate and contribution to the improvement of integration policies by making recommendations to decision-makers at all levels and involving them in the creation, implementation and evaluation of integration policies and strategies.

During the SINERGY project, a total of eight meetings are planned, divided into four thematic units:

1. work and employment
2. health care for foreigners
3. language learning and education
4. accommodation and housing.

After each topic covered, it is planned to produce a report on integration policies, which will contain recommendations and guidelines based on insights from the members of the Advisory Group.

Meetings on work and employment were held in October and November 2024<sup>78</sup> and the members of the Advisory Group presented their experiences and observations related to access to the labour market, employment, workplace discrimination and institutional support through structured templates.

### ***7.1.3. Strengthening local capacities***

In July 2024, the SINERGY project appointed Local Integration Coordinators. A total of ten coordinators have been appointed from the following cities: City of Gospić, City of Karlovac, City of Osijek, City of Pazin, City of Rijeka, City of Sisak, City of Split, City of Sveta Nedjelja, City of Varaždin and City of Zagreb. During the SINERGY project, five meetings of the Integration Coordinators at local level are planned with the aim of

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<sup>78</sup> <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/odrzan-prvi-sastanak-savjetodavne-skupine-drzavljana-trecih-zemalja-i-osoba-migrantskog-porijekla-3-listopada-2024-godine/1255>

exchanging experiences and empowering local self-government in the integration of persons granted international protection<sup>79</sup>.

#### **7.1.4. Establish local coordination for integration**

As part of the SINERGY project, the Office carried out activities aimed at formally establishing local coordination for integration in four cities: Karlovac, Osijek, Rijeka and Varaždin. For this purpose, cooperation agreements have been signed with the aforementioned cities, and activities are aimed at strengthening the professional and coordination capacities of local self-government units.

Local coordination for integration envisages the involvement of multiple sectors, including:

- mayor's offices,
- key city administrative departments (social welfare, health and other social activities)
- the founding public institutions (e.g. schools, health centres, libraries);
- state public institutions (e.g. Croatian Employment Service)
- associations that act as a link between the local population and migrants
- third-country nationals.

In the implementation of the activities, it is envisaged to involve experts with the aim of supporting cities in the process of establishing and operating coordination.

These activities are an example of a multi-stakeholder approach to integration, aimed at connecting different actors and strengthening systematic support for integration at local level.

#### **7.1.5. Cooperation with the civil sector**

In November 2024, the first meeting was held with representatives of civil society organizations and international organizations within the SINERGY project. During the project, a total of six meetings will be held with representatives of civil society organisations and international organisations, and the purpose is to exchange

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<sup>79</sup> <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/održan-prvi-sastanak-koordinatora-za-integraciju-na-lokalnoj-razini-27-rujna-2024-godine/1254>

information and experience regarding the implementation of international and domestic projects, initiatives and activities aimed at improving the standards of reception and integration of third-country nationals.

#### **7.1.6. *Translator base to support access to basic services***

In the second half of 2024, as part of the SINERGY project, the Office started preparations to set up a centralised electronic database of translators for the languages most commonly used by persons granted international protection and other third-country nationals. The database will provide easier access to quality translation services for all users in need of translation assistance. Users of the database will be state and public administration bodies, local and regional self-government units and other institutions and institutions providing services to persons granted international protection (doctors, school teachers, social workers).

The aim is to provide an infrastructural solution to influence access to basic services and quality information, necessary to achieve genuine social inclusion.

### **7.2. Education of consultants of the Croatian Employment Service**

On 30 January, UNHCR, in partnership with the Croatian Employment Service (CES), organized training for CES advisers for the employment of refugees.<sup>80</sup> The training included specific thematic units on cooperation with UNHCR and civil society organisations, communication with communities, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as identification and referral of survivors of gender-based violence and victims of trafficking in human beings.

On this occasion, a newly published joint brochure on the right to work of asylum seekers and refugees was also presented.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/hr/14263-unhcr-hrvatska-i-hrvatski-zavod-za-zapošljavanje-organizirali-trening-o-zapošljavanju-izbjeglica.html>

<sup>81</sup> [https://www.unhcr.org/hr/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2024/01/HPC\\_Pravo-na-rad-HR\\_digital.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/hr/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2024/01/HPC_Pravo-na-rad-HR_digital.pdf)

### **7.3. Improving communication on the inclusion of refugees**

On 13 February, UNHCR organised a one-day capacity-building workshop for more than twenty communication experts from state institutions and civil society organisations, with the aim of improving effective communication on the inclusion of refugees<sup>82</sup>. The training was jointly led by one of the leading Croatian journalists specialized in reporting on refugees, a consultant with refugee experience and UNHCR representatives.

The workshop focused on a better understanding of the current media environment and exploring the possibilities of strategic use of communications for the purpose of strengthening advocacy activities. UNHCR organised this training to support key stakeholders in their communication efforts, in the context of increased politicisation of refugee-related topics in 2024.

### **7.4. Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) projects**

In 2024, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Croatia carried out a series of integration activities aimed at supporting refugees and persons under international protection in the fields of education, culture, employment and inclusion in the community.

All activities carried out reflect JRS Croatia's continued commitment to promoting the sustainable integration of refugees through education, cultural participation, employment support and inclusion in the local community

#### ***7.4.1. Integration through culture and sport***

The Welcome Programme – A Better Future Through Music, implemented in cooperation with SO DO, enabled children from refugee families to participate in music workshops and orchestral activities, fostering social inclusion and personal development through music.<sup>83</sup> Cultural integration was further strengthened through the project Theatre Up Close, in which JRS beneficiaries participated in theatrical

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<sup>82</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/hr/14431-unhcr-odrżao-komunikacijsku-radionicu-za-partnere-posvećenu-integraciji-izbjeglica.html>

<sup>83</sup> <https://hrv.jrs.net/story/program-dobrodošlice-za-naše-korisnike-glazbom-prema-boljoj-budućnosti/>



performances and workshops, encouraging dialogue and a better understanding of Croatian society.

Community building activities were further strengthened through the Integration Football Cup, which through sport encouraged connection and mutual understanding between refugees and the local population.

#### ***7.4.2. Supporting labour market integration***

In order to support labour market integration, JRS implemented the Empowerment for Employment programme in partnership with UNHCR Croatia. The programme included<sup>84</sup> vocational orientation workshops for forcibly displaced persons, with topics such as work culture, curriculum vitae and preparation for the labour market. At the same time, JRS continued to cooperate with universities and secondary schools, providing students with practical experience of working with refugees and raising awareness of the importance of integration, solidarity and social responsibility.

#### ***7.4.3. Support for inclusion in education***

JRS also provided targeted support to refugee families in enrolling children in kindergartens and schools, including administrative assistance, provision of the necessary school supplies and additional hours of learning the Croatian language to facilitate inclusion in the education system.

#### ***7.4.4. Collaboration with local parishes***

Through the Solidarity Bridges initiative,<sup>85</sup> JRS, in cooperation with local parishes in Zagreb, organised meetings between refugees and parishioners, encouraging relationships based on mutual understanding, solidarity and mutual support.

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<sup>84</sup> <https://hrv.jrs.net/story/održan-okrugli-stol-u-organizaciji-jrs-a-i-unhcr-a/>  
<https://hrv.jrs.net/story/radionice-poslovne-orijentacije-u-partnerstvu-s-unhcr-hrvatska/>

<sup>85</sup> <https://hrv.jrs.net/story/mostovi-solidarnosti-u-suradnji-sa-zagrebackim-župama-povezujemo-lokalnu-zajednicu-s-izbjeglicama/>  
<https://hrv.jrs.net/story/mostovi-solidarnosti-jrs-i-zupa-presvetog-srca-isusova-u-rijeci-povezali-lokalnu-i-izbjegličku-djecu/>

## **7.5. Festival of Tolerance**

UNHCR supported two editions of the Festival of Tolerance – in Zagreb in January and in Zadar in September – which included film screenings on displacement and human rights, as well as talks and discussions with more than one hundred and seventy high school students and refugees. The aim of these events was to bridge divisions, foster empathy and humanize the experience of refugees.

In 2024, the Festival of Tolerance also organised 34 exhibitions, community activities and other public events, as well as civic education and media literacy programmes, covering 1,290 children.

## **7.6. Activities of the City of Zagreb in the field of integration**

### **7.6.1. Welcome Center Opened**

By signing the cooperation agreement between the City of Zagreb and UNHCR, Croatia has opened a Welcome Centre (One Stop Shop).<sup>86</sup> With the agreement signed by the Mayor of the City of Zagreb and the UNHCR representative in Croatia, the central point for informing refugees and migrants about their rights, obligations and services provided by the City of Zagreb has started to work in one place and in a language they understand.

In addition to City Administration officials, the Centre's work on a daily basis is supported by representatives of the partner organisation UNHCR, the Croatian Red Cross. The Centre is located in Petrinjska 31, and the office hours are Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 am to 4 pm and Tuesdays from 10 am to 6 pm. Also, at Petrinjska 73 there is a space for holding various workshops and courses of the Croatian language, conducted by associations financed for this purpose by the City of Zagreb.

On 12 March, UNHCR, together with the City of Zagreb, organised training for employees of Croatia's first 'one-stop shop' for asylum seekers, refugees and foreign workers<sup>87</sup>. In addition to the introduction to international refugee protection, more than

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<sup>86</sup> <https://www.zagreb.info/vijesti/u-zagrebu-otvoren-centar-dobrodošlice-za-izbjeglice-i-migrante/663266/>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/hr/14485-unhcr-i-grad-zagreb-organizirali-edukaciju-za-buduće-djelatnike-one-stop-shopa-za-izbjeglice-i-migrante.html>

30 representatives of local self-government and civil society organisations have improved their capacities to communicate with communities, identify and refer survivors of gender-based violence and victims of trafficking in human beings, as well as to empower refugees and asylum seekers to enter the labour market.

### **7.6.2.        *Cooperation with civil society organisations***

The City of Zagreb has co-financed 12 civil society organizations for the implementation of measures and activities from the Action Plan (translation services, cultural mediation, empowerment of women, holding workshops on getting acquainted with the culture and tradition of the Republic of Croatia, raising public awareness of the topic of integration and strengthening the competencies of officials of the City of Zagreb).

### **7.6.3.        *Croatian language courses***

The City of Zagreb, in cooperation with civil society organizations, conducts Croatian language courses for applicants for international protection, persons under international protection, temporary protection and foreign workers with a stay and work permit.

The Croatian language course is conducted by civil society organisations (associations) selected through the Public Call for expressions of interest of civil society organisations to participate in the implementation of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the implementation of<sup>88</sup> the Charter of Integrating Cities for 2023 and 2024, which met the criteria for the selection of expressed interests: years of experience in implementing integration projects; Experience of working directly with applicants for international protection, persons granted international or temporary protection and foreign workers; experience in implementing European Union projects and having sufficient organisational capacity to implement the measures and activities for which interest has been expressed.

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<sup>88</sup> <https://zagreb.hr/javni-poziv-za-iskaz-interesa-organizacija-civilno/195383>

Participants of the Croatian language course acquire the communication competences of the Croatian language at the initial level (A1, A2 and B1). For the purpose of issuing a certificate for the purpose of regulating the status or continuation of education, participants can take the exam at the School of Foreign Languages Suvag, which is owned by the City of Zagreb.

Participants who have a certain knowledge and want only to get a certificate without attending the course, can schedule a personalized appointment for the exam at the School of Foreign Languages Suvag, where Croatian language tests are also performed.

The Croatian language course is implemented as an activity of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities for 2023 and 2024 (17/23),<sup>89</sup> which is financed from the City of Zagreb Budget and is free of charge for the participants.

#### **7.6.4. *Aid for the education of secondary school pupils and students***

The City of Zagreb has published a public call for financial support for the education of secondary school pupils and students granted international or temporary protection for 2024.<sup>90</sup> 75 grants are foreseen in the amount of EUR 2,000.00 per student. The aid is paid on a one-off basis from the Budget of the City of Zagreb for 2024.

### **7.7. Integration measures of the Croatian diaspora**

#### **7.7.1. *Institutional changes***

With the entry into force of the Act on Amendments to the Act on the Organisation and Scope<sup>91</sup> of State Administration Bodies from May 2024, the newly established Ministry of Demography and Immigration took over some of the tasks from the scope of the Central State Office for Croats Abroad (SDUHIRH) related to the creation of conditions for the return and immigration of members of the Croatian emigrant population in the

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<sup>89</sup> <https://www1.zagreb.hr/sluzbeni-glasnik/#/app/akt?id=89f6480a-5ebf-4c6e-8f31-87b8fcf4ae07>

<sup>90</sup>

[https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.zagreb.hr%2FUserDocsImages%2F0%2FJavni%2520poziv%2520za%2520dodjelu%2520nov%25C4%258Dane%2520potpore%2520u%25C4%258Denicima%2520i%2520studentima%2520pod%2520me%25C4%2591un%2520ili%2520priv%2520za%25C5%25A1t%252024\\_25.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.zagreb.hr%2FUserDocsImages%2F0%2FJavni%2520poziv%2520za%2520dodjelu%2520nov%25C4%258Dane%2520potpore%2520u%25C4%258Denicima%2520i%2520studentima%2520pod%2520me%25C4%2591un%2520ili%2520priv%2520za%25C5%25A1t%252024_25.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

<sup>91</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024\\_05\\_57\\_982.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024_05_57_982.html)

Republic of Croatia and their inclusion in the economic and social life in the Republic of Croatia.

### **7.7.2. Working on normative solutions**

The Law on Foreigners, which provides for a new purpose for members of the Croatian diaspora and their descendants, entered into force on 15 March 2025, and representatives of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration are members of the Working Group at the Ministry of the Interior to monitor the implementation of the Law on Foreigners.

In 2024, representatives of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration actively participated in the drafting of the final draft of the Act on Amendments to the Act on Relations of the Republic of Croatia with Croats Abroad, which stipulates that the Ministry of Demography and Immigration is the holder of relations and cooperation on affairs and activities related to Croatian emigrants, together with the Central State Office for Croats Abroad, as well as with other competent bodies that have within their scope of activity tasks of interest to Croatian emigrants and their return to their homeland.

### **7.7.3. Status regulation**

As one of the priority areas of return and immigration of Croatian emigrants and descendants of Croatian emigrants to the Republic of Croatia, the creation of incentive conditions for easier arrival has been made, thus making additional improvements in the normative part.

In 2024, through the work of the Working Group on the drafting of the Proposal for the Law on Foreigners, a new purpose of temporary stay was<sup>92</sup> prescribed, which exclusively applies to members of the Croatian emigrant community and their descendants who do not yet have Croatian citizenship. With a certificate from the

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<sup>92</sup> The law was adopted on 21 February 2025 [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/articles/official/2025\\_03\\_40\\_545.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/articles/official/2025_03_40_545.html)

Ministry of Demography and Immigration,<sup>93</sup> they now regulate temporary stay for the purpose of 'immigration and return of Croatian immigration'.

Members of the Croatian diaspora, descendants of the Croatian diaspora as well as members of their family are granted temporary stay for the purpose of immigration and return for two (2) years under facilitated conditions (do not need to attach proof of health insurance and means of subsistence).

Upon approval of temporary stay, they can apply for admission to Croatian citizenship. Attached to the certificate of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration after 3 years of authorised stay under more favourable conditions, immigrants and returnees can regulate permanent residence in the Republic of Croatia.

Based on the approved temporary stay for the purpose of immigration and return of Croatian emigrants or permanent stay in the Republic of Croatia, they have the right to employment, self-employment, study, education programs, vocational training and study.

Since its establishment in May 2024, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration has issued 224 certificates for the purpose of regulating stays for immigrants and returnees from Croatian emigration with foreign citizenship. According to the official records of the Ministry of the Interior, on 31 December 2024 there were 375 valid stays of Croatian emigrants in the Republic of Croatia.

In connection with the admission to Croatian citizenship in accordance with the Law on Croatian Citizenship for members of the Croatian people, Croatian emigrants, descendants of Croatian emigrants as well as for members of their families, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration sent 40 prompts to the Ministry of the Interior to speed up the admission to Croatian citizenship.

#### ***7.7.4. Integration into the labour market***

For the purpose of registration with the Croatian Employment Service, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration issued 30 certificates, so that Croatian emigrants,

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<sup>93</sup> <https://mdu.gov.hr/useljenistvo/izdavanje-potvrde-za-hrvatske-iseljenike-za-reguliranje-boravka-u-rh/7257>

descendants of Croatian emigrants and their family members could access self-employment measures (measure BIRAM CROATIA<sup>94</sup>).

The measure BIRAM CROATIA on 31 December 2024 was used by 459 persons of Croatian citizens, returnees and immigrants to the Republic of Croatia, mostly from the Federal Republic of Germany 292, Austria 66, Ireland 23, the Swiss Confederation 15.

#### **7.7.5. Tax credits**

In order to provide for additional incentive measures for the return of Croatian emigrants in 2024, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration also participated in the drafting of the Income Tax Act<sup>95</sup>, which entered into force on 1 January 2025.

This regulation lays down incentive conditions aimed at returnees and immigrants who have resided abroad for at least two (2) years, as well as those who for the first time declare their residence in the Republic of Croatia, in such a way that upon their return to the Republic of Croatia they have the right to exemption from paying income tax for a period of 5 years.

Taking into account the arrival of immigrants and returnees from Croatian emigration who do not yet have Croatian citizenship, this provision applies as a further incentive for the return of immigrants and returnees from Croatian and emigration (overseas and European countries) to Croatian emigrants, descendants of Croatian emigrants as well as members of their family who regulate temporary stay for the purpose of immigration and return or permanent residence, accompanied by a certificate from the Ministry of Demography and Immigration.

An information leaflet was published on the website of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration in order to popularize the tax relief for Croatian emigrants, as an incentive to come to the Republic of Croatia, return families, faster inclusion in the labour market

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<sup>94</sup> <https://mdu.gov.hr/mjera-biram-hrvatsku-mjera-za-povratnike/7253>

<sup>95</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024\\_12\\_152\\_2505.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024_12_152_2505.html)

and their stay in the homeland as well as important demographic measures. The leaflet is available in Croatian<sup>96</sup> and English.<sup>97</sup>

#### **7.7.6. International cooperation**

With regard to the realisation of an enabling environment for the return/immigration of Croatian emigrants/diaspora to the Republic of Croatia, negotiations have started for the conclusion of intergovernmental agreements on social security with the two countries of South America, which should facilitate the transfer of social, pension and health rights, which would encourage the decision to return and immigrate to Croatia.

#### **7.7.7. Cooperation with diplomatic missions/consular offices**

The Ministry of Demography and Immigration has established contacts in diplomatic missions/consular offices of the Republic of Croatia in the countries where Croatian emigrants and descendants of Croatian emigrants live regarding regular reporting to the Ministry of Demography and Immigration on current affairs regarding Croatian emigration in the world and potential immigrants/returnees to the Republic of Croatia.

The importance of direct communication with diplomatic missions/consular offices is of utmost importance for the realization and implementation of activities of demographic development and population policy, with special emphasis on promoting and raising awareness and educating citizens about the importance of return and immigration of Croatian emigrants and descendants of Croatian emigrants.

#### **7.7.8. Learning Croatian**

The Ministry of Demography and Immigration, for the purpose of further encouraging the arrival and implementation of the integration measure for Croatian emigrants, descendants of Croatian emigrants as well as their family members, has awarded 500 scholarships for learning the Croatian language to 300 scholarship holders through the Public Call.

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[https://mvep.gov.hr/UserDocImages/2025/datoteke/Letak\\_za\\_povratniak\\_a5\\_HRVATSKI\\_tisak\\_1003\\_KOREKC\\_IJE3.pdf](https://mvep.gov.hr/UserDocImages/2025/datoteke/Letak_za_povratniak_a5_HRVATSKI_tisak_1003_KOREKC_IJE3.pdf)

<sup>97</sup>

[https://mvep.gov.hr/UserDocImages/2025/datoteke/Letak\\_za\\_povratniak\\_a5\\_ENGLESKI\\_tisak\\_1003\\_korekcije.pdf](https://mvep.gov.hr/UserDocImages/2025/datoteke/Letak_za_povratniak_a5_ENGLESKI_tisak_1003_korekcije.pdf)



The Croatian language learning programme is attended at faculties in six cities; Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, Osijek, Pula and Zadar, and the value of the Programme in 2024/2025 academic year is 917,500,00 EUR.

For the purpose of implementing additional integration measures, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration has signed Annex I of the Agreement on the Teaching of the Croatian Language and Culture in the Republic of Croatia for scholarship holders of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration.

With the said Annex I to the Agreement, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration provided additional financial support to faculties in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, Osijek, Pula and Zadar for the implementation of lifelong learning activities on Croatian cultural heritage with the aim of further learning about the Croatian language, the organization of field classes, educations and forums, the organization of conferences and round tables, the organization of excursions, visits to museums, theatres, cinema shows and similar activities and events of interest to scholarship holders from the Croatian diaspora and the descendants of the Croatian diaspora.

By learning Croatian, scholarship holders acquire extremely important language competences for successful inclusion in social and economic life in the Republic of Croatia and at the same time get acquainted with Croatian culture and strengthen identity and all-Croatian unity as well as strengthening ties with the emigrant community and our homeland. This programme also encourages their arrival in Croatia and empowers them to stay in their homeland, our young compatriots and young families who move to Croatia.

#### **7.7.9. Other measures**

To encourage additional support for return and integration, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration, by means of a public call, granted financial support for special needs and projects of interest to Croatian emigrants to institutions, associations and individuals dealing with integration tasks for returnees from Croatian emigrant communities in the amount of EUR 94 150.00<sup>98</sup>.

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[https://mdu.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/Ministarstvo%20demografije%20i%20useljenci%20C5%A1tva/Dokumenti/Od luka%20o%20dodjeli%20financijske%20potpore%20za%20posebne%20potrebe%20i%20projekte%20od%20interezasa%20za%20Hrvate%20izvan%20RH.pdf](https://mdu.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/Ministarstvo%20demografije%20i%20useljenci%20C5%A1tva/Dokumenti/Od%20luka%20o%20dodjeli%20financijske%20potpore%20za%20posebne%20potrebe%20i%20projekte%20od%20interezasa%20za%20Hrvate%20izvan%20RH.pdf)

In order to improve the existing administrative procedures for members of the Croatian emigration and their descendants in the Republic of Croatia, working meetings and interviews were held with representatives of other state administration bodies with the aim of improving communication and accessibility of all information, which will facilitate the integration of immigrants and returnees from the Croatian emigration.

Thus, in cooperation with the Ministry of Demography and Immigration, contact persons have been established in public authorities as well as in public institutions in order to accelerate the availability and provide personalized access to members of the Croatian diaspora, descendants of the Croatian diaspora, especially the 3rd and 4th generation of descendants of Croatian emigrants who return to the homeland of their ancestors and nurture their identity link with Croatia.

As further support in raising public awareness, exchanging experiences and providing information on the importance of returning Croatian emigrants and descendants of Croatian emigrants, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration accepted patronage and co-sponsorship for international conferences during 2024; The progress of women, the progress of the economy, Realize the potential<sup>99</sup> of both the Global Diaspora and the European Union – The Croatian Diaspora in a Global Perspective, as well as holding a traditional selection of the most popular Croatian emigrants in the categories of sport, music, acting and spectacle entitled: Homeland (Kroatischer Heimatspreis – Croatian Homeland Award).

In order to support entrepreneurs from the Croatian diaspora as well as entrepreneurs from the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Demography and Immigration participated in the MEETING G2 conference,<sup>100</sup> where examples of good investment practices of Croatian emigrants/diasporas in the Republic of Croatia were exchanged. Through participation in the panels, the representatives of the Ministry of Demography and Immigration presented the main steps related to further demographic measures, the regulation of status, admission to Croatian citizenship, the announcement of a new tax policy towards returnees and immigrants to the homeland, through the exemption of income tax payments.

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<sup>99</sup> <https://mvep.gov.hr/press/medjunarodna-konferencija-napredak-žena-napredak-ekonomije-ostvari-potencijal/253526>

<sup>100</sup> <https://matis.hr/novosti/započela-10-meeting-g2-konferencija/>

Creating conditions for the return and immigration of Croatian emigrants/diasporas to Croatia, creating a stimulating and stable environment, increasing budgetary resources enables faster and more efficient integration of Croatian emigrants and descendants of Croatian emigrants into economic and social life in Croatia, and also contributes to strengthening the unity of the Croatian people for the purpose of the overall development and progress of the Republic of Croatia for the benefit of all its citizens.

Encouraging immigration and the return of Croatian emigrants, especially the younger generation of descendants of Croatian emigrants through special measures, programs and projects in the fields of education, study, learning the Croatian language and employment influences the decisions of arrival in the Republic of Croatia, with the aim of faster integration and developing a sense of belonging to the Croatian people. These measures will continue to further inform and sensitize the public about all the benefits and potentials of the return and immigration of Croatian emigrants, descendants of Croatian emigrants as well as members of their families. Immigration and return of Croatian emigrants directly contributes to the demographic potential of the Republic of Croatia and the realization of the demographic revitalization plan.

## 8. CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

The acquisition of Croatian citizenship is regulated by the Croatian Citizenship Act (NN Nos 53/91, 28/92, 113/93, 130/11, 110/15, 102/19 and 138/2021).<sup>101</sup> In 2024, there were no activities related to the legal regulation of the acquisition of citizenship.

Regarding the topic of statelessness, the Croatian Citizenship Act does not have a prescribed legal procedure for determining statelessness, but statelessness is determined as a preliminary issue in procedures for acquiring Croatian citizenship. If a person meets all the prescribed conditions for admission to Croatian citizenship, he/she is admitted to Croatian citizenship as a person without citizenship or unknown / undetermined citizenship.

In order to strengthen advocacy and coordination on the issue of statelessness, UNHCR relaunched the Coordination of the statelessness forum in 2024. The Forum brings together key stakeholders from state institutions, civil society organizations, the legal profession, as well as the Ombudswoman and the Ombudswoman for Children of the Republic of Croatia.

The aim of the forum is to encourage the resolution of the problem of statelessness in the Republic of Croatia through regular exchange between stakeholders on the identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness, as well as on the protection of stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, including the exchange of good practices and discussion on possible solutions.

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<sup>101</sup> <https://sredisnjikatalogrh.gov.hr/središnji-katalog/pravni-propisi/detalji?query=Zakon%20o%20hrvatskom%20dr%C5%BEavljanstvu&cb=2&page=1&id=2601549>

## 9. BORDERS, VISA AND SCHENGEN

Despite the fact that, since the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the Schengen area, as of 1 January 2023, border checks at the land border with Slovenia and Hungary have ceased, on 21 October 2023, due to the terrorist threat in some European countries, Slovenia introduced a temporary border control measure at the border with the Republic of Croatia and Hungary.

This measure was in force on the Slovenian side throughout 2024, while the Croatian police did not carry out border checks at the border with the Republic of Slovenia, but only compensatory measures that reduce the risk of illegal cross-border activities.

### 9.1. Strategic and legislative framework

#### ***9.1.1. Integrated Border Management Strategy of the Republic of Croatia 2024-2028***

On 1 August 2024, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Integrated Border Management Strategy of the Republic of Croatia from 2024 to 2028.<sup>102</sup>

The integrated border management strategy follows the concept of integrated border management of the European Union, based on a four-pillar control model: border control, detecting and combating cross-border crime in coordination with all competent law enforcement authorities, inter-agency cooperation for border management (police, customs, security services and other relevant authorities) and international cooperation and coordination and coherence of action between Member States and the institutions and other bodies of the European Union.

The new Integrated Border Management concept is based on 15 elements:

- Border control
- Search and Rescue
- Risk analysis
- Cooperation with Member States and FRONTEX
- Inter-agency cooperation
- Cooperation between relevant Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies (not addressed in the national strategy)
- Cooperation with third countries
- Measures within the Schengen area

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<sup>102</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024\\_08\\_92\\_1697.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024_08_92_1697.html)

- Return
- Use of state-of-the-art technology, including large-scale information systems;
- Quality control mechanism
- Funding fundamental rights education and training research and innovation.

In addition to the Strategy, an Action Plan for the implementation of the Integrated Border Management Strategy of the Republic of Croatia was adopted from 2024 to 2028.

### **9.1.2. Amendment of subordinate legislation**

On 21 March 2024, the Rules amending the Rules on the method of data collection, technical data collection devices, the content and users of operational data collections kept by the border police and the retention periods (NN No 30/2024) entered into force.<sup>103</sup> These Rules lay down the manner of collecting the data contained in the operational data collections kept by the border police, the technical data collection devices, the content of the operational collections, their users and the retention periods for the collected data.

The need for amendments to the Rules is the result of events and situations in the last three years that have conditioned the new business processes of the border police and expressed needs of the State Inspectorate and the Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure.

We would like to highlight the substantive amendments to this Regulation relating to:

- the extension of the operational data collections kept by the border police referred to in Article 2 to means of transport in accordance with risk analysis for the purpose of preventing cross-border crime;
- the extension of the set of data which may be collected and stored by the border police referred to in Article 5; and
- Article 9, which prescribes the use of data contained in data collections.

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<sup>103</sup> <https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/eli/sluzbeni/2024/30/pdf>

## **9.2. Schengen evaluation**

A Schengen evaluation was carried out in the Republic of Croatia in the field of management of the external border between 29 January and 3 February 2024 and in the field of return between 19 and 23 February 2024.

## **9.3. Preparations for the implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES)**

In order to further improve the management of the external borders, and in particular to verify compliance with the provisions on the authorised period of stay on the territory of the Member States, to issue alerts to Member States on the expiry of the period of authorised stay and to record and store the date, time and place of refusal of entry to third-country nationals whose entry for a short stay has been refused, and to the authorities of the Member State which refused entry and the reasons for the refusal, the Republic of Croatia has expressed its readiness to fully implement the Entry/Exit System (EES).

The establishment of the EES replaces the obligation for third-country nationals to stamp passports, registers electronically the time and place of entry and exit of third-country nationals admitted for a short stay to the territory of the Member States and calculates the duration of their authorised stay. In addition to personal data and document data, the said system will also register four fingerprints and a facial image (photo) as well as data on decisions taken by the competent authorities of a Member State in accordance with national law resulting in the return, removal or voluntary departure of a third-country national who does not fulfil or no longer fulfils the conditions for entry to, or stay in, the territory of the Member States.

In order to train police officers in the implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES), the Ministry of the Interior has set up and put into operation the Schengen College, which also includes carrying out situational tests. Since January 2024, online training of police officers for border control and countering irregular migration has started, as well as managers responsible for these tasks at regional and local level. All officials were required to complete online training by April 20, 2024.

A six-week training of border police educators was also conducted in the area of the Entry/Exit System (EES). The training was held at the Accommodation and Training Centre of the Border Police in Spačva, and the seminar was successfully completed by a total of 109 police officers, of which 20 national and 89 regional trainers for this field of training.<sup>104</sup>

Information on the implementation and functioning of the EES system is published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> <https://policijska-akademija.gov.hr/vijesti/uspješno-provedena-edukacija-policijskih-službenika-granične-policije-o-primjeni-entry-exit-sustava/4957>

<sup>105</sup> <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/najcesca-pitanja-219/entry-exit-sustav-ees/294405>



## 10. IRREGULAR MIGRATION

According to Frontex data, in 2024, the European Union recorded just over 239,000 detections of irregular entries at the external border, the lowest number of irregular crossings since 2021, or 38% less than in 2023. The drop in total numbers was mainly driven by a 59% drop in arrivals on the Central Mediterranean route and a 78% drop in detections on the Western Balkans route, following strong efforts by countries in the region to stem flows. 21,520 irregular migrants entered the EU via the Western Balkans migration route.

However, not all routes showed the same trends, as movement patterns fluctuated across the continent. On the Central Mediterranean route, the number of crossings has decreased due to fewer departures from Tunisia and Libya. Despite a significant drop, this route still accounted for around 67,000 crossings, the second highest number among all routes.

The Eastern Mediterranean route saw a 14% increase in detections to 69,400, with migrants mainly coming from Syria, Afghanistan and Egypt.

The West African route (Canary Islands) saw arrivals increase by 18% to almost 47,000, the highest figure since Frontex started data collection in 2009. This increase was driven by departures from Mauritania, although flows from other starting points fell.

On the eastern border route, there has been a triple increase in crossings, mainly along the borders with Ukraine and Belarus.

There is also an increase in detected crossing attempts in the English Channel (9% compared to 2023).<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/irregular-border-crossings-into-eu-drop-sharply-in-2024-ogpweX>

### 10.1. Irregular border crossings in 2024

In 2024, there was a decrease in the number of non-congenital migrations in the Republic of Croatia. In 2024, the border police registered 29,294<sup>107</sup> cases of illegal border crossings, which is 58.0% less than in 2023, when 69,726 illegal crossings were recorded.

YEAR	NUMBER OF ILLEGAL MIGRANTS
2018	8.207
2019	20.278
2020	29.094
2021	17.404
2022	50.624
2023	69.726
2024	29.294

Table 8: Number of irregular migrants 2018-2024

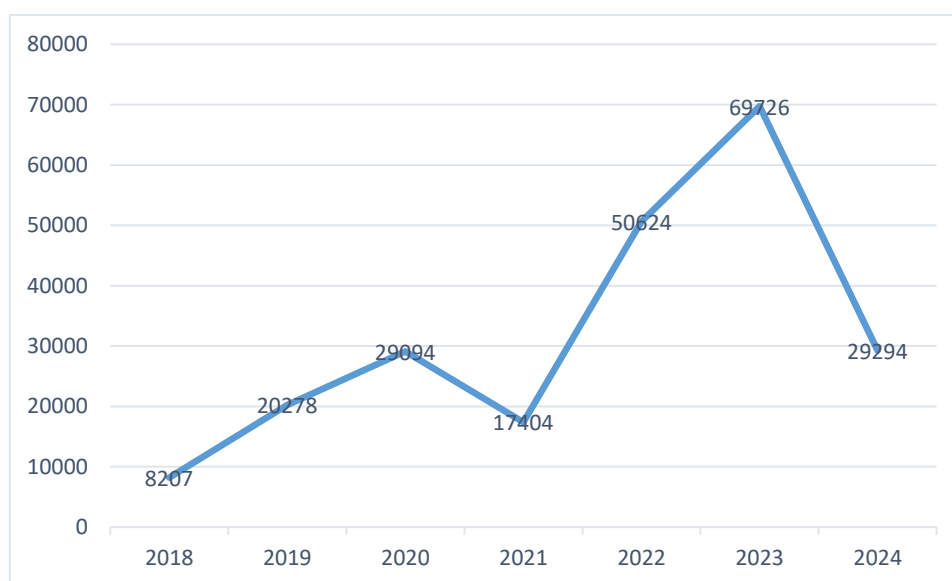


Chart 16: Number of irregular migrants 2018-2024

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[https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/statistika/2025/statistika%20za%202024%20hrv%20i%20eng/Statisticki\\_pregled\\_2024\\_web.pdf](https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/statistika/2025/statistika%20za%202024%20hrv%20i%20eng/Statisticki_pregled_2024_web.pdf)

The largest number were Syrians, with 8,947 registered and the highest increase compared to 2023 (increase of 128.1%, in 2023 there were 3,922), which is particularly significant when we take into account that in 2024 overall there was a significant decrease in the number of irregular migration.

In second place are Turkish citizens (8,559), 36% less than in 2023 (when there were 13,480). They were followed by nationals of Afghanistan (2,717, down 87.7% compared to 2023, with 22,100 in the first place), Iraq (901) and China (891).

In 2024, the number of citizens of Turkey, China and Russia legally arriving in the territory of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina increased, abusing the free visa regime there and continuing their illegal movement towards the Republic of Croatia.

CITIZENSHIP	The number of illegal crossings of the state border		
	I-XII 2023	I-XII 2024	+ - %
Afghanistan	22100	2717	-87,7
Bangladesh	2759	767	-72,2
Egypt	126	827	556,3
India	982	627	-36,2
Iraq	4095	901	-78,0
Iran	885	308	-65,2
China	1286	891	-30,7
Morocco	6248	807	-87,1
Mongolia	338	216	-36,1
Nepal	1203	363	-69,8
Pakistan	5286	874	-83,5
Palestine	228	203	-11,0
Syria	3922	8947	128,1
Somalia	129	257	99,2
Turkey	13480	8559	-36,5
The others	6659	2030	-69,5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69.726</b>	<b>29.294</b>	<b>-58,0</b>

*Table 9: Number of irregular migrants in 2013-2024 by nationality*

Source: Ministry of the Interior

If we look at the percentage, the increase is recorded only in the citizens of Egypt, Syria and Somalia. The highest percentage increase was recorded for Egyptian nationals, at 556.3% (at 126 in 2023 and at 126 in 2024). 827), with the largest drop in Afghan nationals (-87.7%). In absolute terms, the largest increase was recorded for Syrians (+5.025) and the largest decrease was recorded for Afghans (-19.383).

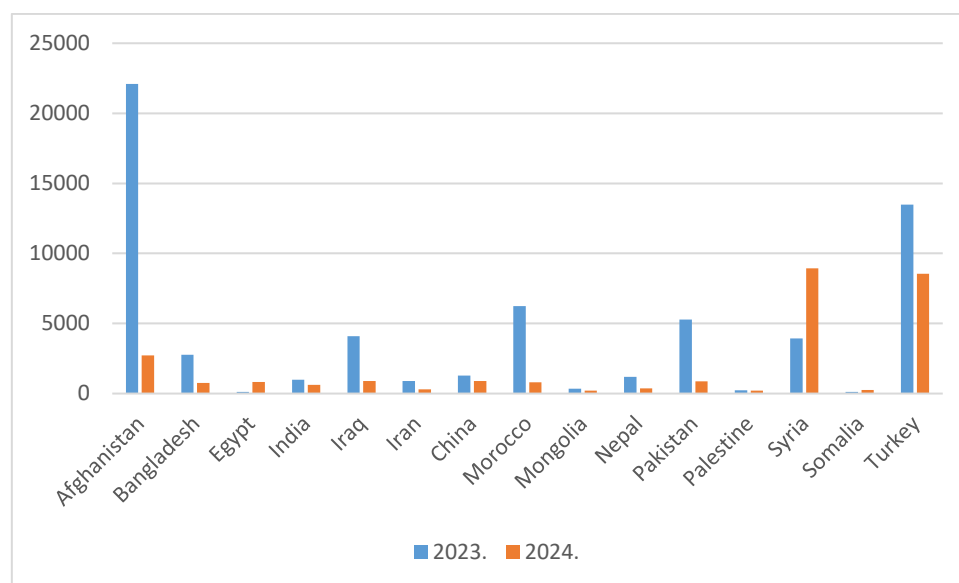


Chart 17: Number of irregular migrants 2023-2024 by nationality

The areas of the Police Directorates of Brodsko-Posavska, Karlovac and Sisak-Moslavina were under the greatest pressure, while the increased measures in these areas sometimes led to the movement of illegal migrants in the area of the Police Directorate of Split-Dalmatia.

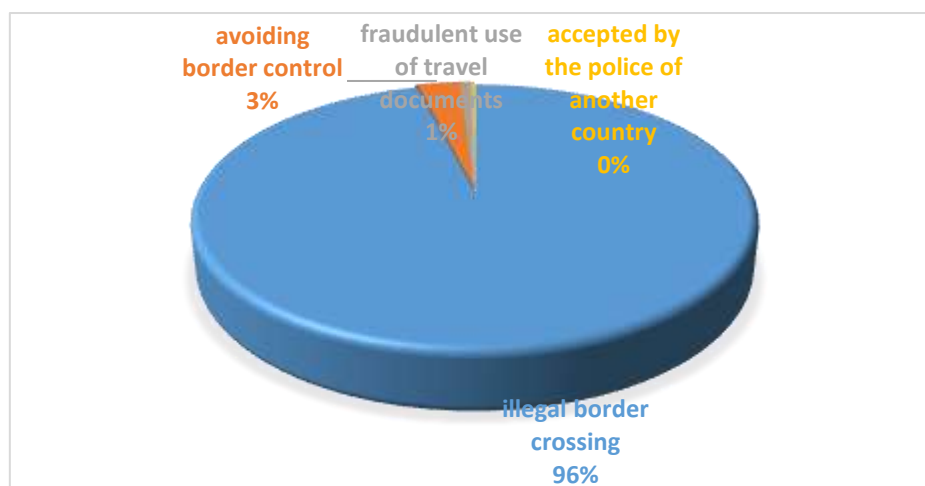
The most common ways of irregular border crossings in different counties include walking across the land border and avoiding border checks by hiding in freight vehicles and trains (Vukovarsko-Srijemska County), walking using navigation applications (Karlovačka and Sisak-Moslavina County) and crossing the Sava River by boats (Brodsko-Posavska County).

Police administration	Illegal border crossings (persons)		
	2023	2024	Trend %
Zagrebačka	13.431	<b>6.045</b>	-55,0
Splitsko-dalmatinska	1.308	<b>1.789</b>	+36,8
Primorsko-goranska	3.191	<b>569</b>	-82,2
Osječko-baranjska	194	<b>189</b>	-2,6%
Istarska	1.036	<b>164</b>	-84,2
Dubrovačko-neretvanska	1.074	<b>960</b>	-10,6
Karlovačka	23.363	<b>4.128</b>	-82,3
Sisačko-moslavačka	7.124	<b>3.960</b>	-44,4
Šibensko-kninska	295	<b>160</b>	-45,8
Vukovarsko-srijemska	2.067	<b>1.435</b>	-30,6
Zadarska	339	<b>92</b>	-72,9
Bjelovarsko-bilogorska	202	<b>70</b>	-65,3
Brodsko-posavska	10.178	<b>7.647</b>	-24,9
Koprivničko-križevačka	161	<b>43</b>	-73,3
Krapinsko-zagorska	763	<b>394</b>	-48,4
Ličko-senjska	4.610	<b>846</b>	-81,6
Međimurska	38	<b>295</b>	+676,3
Požeško-slavonska	1	<b>163</b>	+16200,0
Varaždinska	349	<b>240</b>	-31,2
Virovitičko-podravsko	2	<b>105</b>	+5.150,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>69.726</b>	<b>29.294</b>	-58,0

Table 10: Irregular crossings of the state border towards police administrations

Source: Ministry of the Interior

According to the way the state border is crossed, the largest number of them are irregular crossings of the border line (28,128), and a smaller number of them are avoidance of border checks (879), misuse of travel documents (216), while the smallest number of them are accepted by the police of another state (71).



*Chart 18: Ways to cross the state border of irregular migrants*

## **10.2. Cooperation Agreement for the implementation of an independent monitoring mechanism for the protection of fundamental rights**

On 4 November 2022, a new Cooperation Agreement was concluded for the implementation of an independent mechanism for monitoring the protection of fundamental rights in the conduct of police officers of the Ministry of the Interior in the field of border protection, illegal migration and international protection (hereinafter referred to as the Mechanism), as a follow-up to the project carried out under the Cooperation Agreement for the implementation of an independent mechanism for monitoring the conduct of police officers of the Ministry of the Interior in the field of illegal migration and international protection, which was concluded on 8 June 2021. The new Agreement was concluded for 24 months and funding was provided through an EU fund (Integrated Border Management Fund – Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy 2021-2030). 20-2027).

On 13.12.2024, the Third Supplement to the Agreement on Direct Grants was signed between the Ministry of the Interior and the Directorate for European Affairs, International Relations and European Union Funds, according to which the implementation of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism project was extended until 30.06.2026.

The mechanism follows the model foreseen in the draft Screening Regulation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The mechanism is implemented at the external border of the EU, i.e. at the border of the Republic of Croatia with the Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Montenegro, in police stations, at border crossing points, in reception centres for foreigners, at the green border and in reception centres for applicants for international protection.

In July 2024, the Mechanism published a semi-annual report, which is publicly available in Croatian and English.<sup>108</sup>

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[https://www.nmn.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Polugodi%C5%A1nje%20izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e\\_lektorirana%20verzija\\_19.12.2024.pdf?vel=2768733](https://www.nmn.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Polugodi%C5%A1nje%20izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e_lektorirana%20verzija_19.12.2024.pdf?vel=2768733)

## **11. TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS**

### **11.1. National strategic policy development**

At its session held on 31 October 2024, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Decision on the adoption of the National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period up to 2030 (hereinafter: National Plan) and the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period up to 2030, for the period from 2024 to 2026 (hereinafter: Action Plan), published on 4 November 2024 (NN No 127/2024).<sup>109</sup>

The national plan includes two specific objectives:

Prevention of trafficking in human beings and

- Improving the identification, assistance and protection systems for victims of trafficking in human beings, with 10 actions planned and key planned activities including:

- the adoption of legislative amendments relating to the non-processing of victims of trafficking in human beings,
- improving the compensation system for victims;
- establishing cooperation with the private sector to combat labour exploitation.

The Director of the Office is the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, and the Office also hosts the Secretariat of the National Anti-Trafficking Committee. The Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia chairs the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities is the coordinating body for drafting, implementing and reporting on the implementation of anti-trafficking in the Republic of Croatia.

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<sup>109</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/članci/sluzbeni/2024\\_11\\_127\\_2101.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/članci/sluzbeni/2024_11_127_2101.html)



## **11.2. Detecting and identifying victims**

In 2024, the Anti-Trafficking Operational Team, composed of representatives of relevant state administration bodies and civil society organisations, identified one victim of trafficking from Ghana.

## **11.3. Protection of victims**

In 2024, all identified victims of trafficking in human beings were provided with initial assistance and protection by competent institutions and representatives of mobile teams.

Of the specific services, it should be noted that six victims of trafficking received psychological assistance, four of whom were in shelters and received financial assistance. One victim who did not stay in the shelter was provided with free legal aid and one victim was provided with medical care.

Of the four victims who used shelter accommodation, one victim used education for employment, and one minor victim was provided with the service of continuing their regular education. Out of a total of four victims staying in shelters, three victims reported to the employment office register and were assigned a counsellor, and one victim was hired with the help of the Croatian Employment Service.

## **11.4. Cooperation with third countries**

The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, in cooperation with the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)*, the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden, the *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)*, and the *City of Dubrovnik*, organized an international conference on the topic of combating trafficking in human beings. A conference entitled 'Improving the reaction to trafficking for sexual exploitation - the way forward towards a whole-of-society response' was held on 8-9 May 2024 in Dubrovnik.<sup>110</sup>

The aim of this conference is to strengthen mutual cooperation between the countries of South East Europe in the fight against sexual exploitation, with an emphasis on the

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<sup>110</sup> <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/poboljšanje-reakcije-na-trgovanje-ljudima-radi-seksualnog-iskorištavanja-put-naprijed-prema-odgovoru-cijelog-društva/1227>

protection of women and girls, as well as to raise awareness of all relevant actors in the system about the challenges and specificities of this type of trafficking in human beings.

The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, in addition to the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb, the Academic Network for Cooperation in Southeast Europe, the Faculty of Security of the University of Belgrade and the Institute for National Affairs of Ljubljana, also organised the International Scientific Conference "National Minorities, Migration and Security" in Brijuni from 2 to 4 September 2024.<sup>111</sup> At the conference, within the panel dedicated to the issue of trafficking in human beings, the National Coordinator of the Republic of Croatia (Director of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities), a representative of UNODC and the former National Coordinator of the Republic of Serbia held a presentation for representatives of the academic community from the Republic of Slovenia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Republic of Croatia is an active member of the informal network of national coordinators of South East Europe. This network brings together national anti-trafficking coordinators from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia and Serbia. The Director of the Office participated in the network meeting held on 5-6 March 2024 in Moldova. The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities organised an informal network meeting in Zagreb on 7 June 2024.

At international level, the national coordinator is a member of the network of national rapporteurs *and equivalent mechanisms of the European Union (National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms - NREMS)* or the European network of national coordinators. This network operates within the European Commission and the Office of the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator of the European Union, building on Directive 2011/36/EU. The Director of the Office participated in the meeting of the NREMS network on 12 and 13 September 2024 in Vienna.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup><https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/28-medjunarodna-znanstvena-konferencija-nacionalne-manjine-migracije-i-sigurnost/1241>

<https://www.fpzg.unizg.hr/novosti/?@=2fg2k>

<sup>112</sup> <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/ravnatelj-ureda-na-sastanku-eu-mreže-nacionalnih-koordinatora-i-ekvivalentnih-mehanizama/1251>

#### **11.5. Gender-based violence (GBV)**

In 2024, the Coordination Group on Gender-Based Violence in Reception Centres held four meetings, co-chaired by the Ministry of the Interior and the UNHCR, with the aim of strengthening prevention and response to gender-based violence. Participants responded to reports of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, through targeted interventions and prevention campaigns.

#### **11.6. Peacekeeping**

In 2024, UNHCR held three training workshops for future peacekeepers from different countries as part of the 'UN Comprehensive Civilian Protection Course' conducted by the Croatian Armed Forces.

The UNHCR module covered the mandate and operations of the UNHCR in relation to refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons and other risk groups, the humanitarian cluster coordination system, as well as areas of cooperation between the Department of Peace Operations and the UNHCR.

## **12. RETURN AND READMISSION**

### **12.1. Voluntary Return**

#### ***12.1.1. Participation in the EU Reintegration Programme (EU RP)***

As part of the development of Assisted Voluntary Return, the Ministry of the Interior has been participating in Frontex's Joint Reintegration Services (JRS) programme since 1 April 2022. In 2024, this programme changed its name to the EU Reintegration Programme – EU RP.

Through the program, consultations are carried out, return is organized and reintegration assistance is provided.

All third-country nationals in the return procedure are provided with an information leaflet on the possibility of using the EU reintegration programme (EU RP). The leaflet has been translated into 22 languages. If a third-country national accepts the possibility of return via the EU RP, he/she shall be consulted on the return.

In 2023, a total of 202 persons were voluntarily returned to their countries of origin through this programme, and in 2024 402 persons, mostly citizens of Turkey, Albania, India and Nepal.

Frontex return experts deployed in the Republic of Croatia carry out consultations on return and on the possibility of using EU RP assistance. Consultations are carried out mainly in reception centres for foreigners and in reception centres for applicants for international protection and, where appropriate, in other places.

#### ***12.1.2. Project "Capacity building for return and reintegration counselling through civil society organisations"***

In 2024, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Croatia participated in the EU-funded project SRC (Strengthening Return and Reintegration Advisory Capacity through Civil Society Organisations), implemented under the EU-funded Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), led by Caritas International Belgium.

The project aims to improve the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in EU Member States and outside the EU to provide accurate and sustainable advice on return and reintegration. The project seeks to leverage the expertise of European Reintegration Support Organisations (ERSO) and pilot a systematic referral mechanism between CSOs and competent national authorities. The initiative also

encourages mutual learning and the exchange of best practices between participating countries: Belgium, Denmark, Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia.

Activities include strengthening the capacity of CSOs, establishing effective referral mechanisms (to be piloted in Croatia in the initial phase) and facilitating the exchange of experiences between participants. The trainings are carried out with the participation of ERSO, Frontex and RRF experts. The guidelines developed in cooperation with the University of Ghent will serve to improve the standards of consultation and will be disseminated across the EU.

## **12.2. Readmission**

In the field of readmission, the implementation of readmission agreements with Bosnia and Herzegovina and with Serbia is of particular importance.

In 2024, Croatia returned 3,069 persons to neighbouring countries for readmission (in 2023, 3,755 persons were returned) and 74 persons were accepted (in 2023 146 persons were accepted).

In 2024, 2,801 persons were readmitted to Bosnia and Herzegovina (2023: – 3.110) while 2 persons were admitted from BIH (2023 - 3).

In relation to readmission with Serbia, 231 persons were returned (2023. - 605), while one person was accepted (2023. - none);

Three persons were returned to Slovenia in 2024 (2023: – 1) and 38 persons were accepted (2023). 141).

Eight people were returned to Montenegro (2023). – 25 persons), no persons were admitted, as was the case in 2023.

Under the Treaty on the Reception of Persons at the Common State Border with Hungary, 25 persons were admitted (2023: - 0 ), while no persons were returned to Hungary between 2020 and 2024.

ACCEPT AND RETURN FOR I-XII.2023/2024						
State of Readmission	ACCEPT		+ - %	RETURNING		+ - %
	I-XII-2023	I-XII.2024		I-XII-2023	I-XII.2024	
BIH	3	2	-33,33	3110	2801	-9,94
Montenegro	0	0		25	8	-68,00
Hungary	0	25		0	0	
Slovenia	141	38	-73,05	1	3	200,00
Serbia	0	2		605	231	-61,82
Other countries	2	7	250,00	14	26	85,71
TOTAL	146	74	-49,32	3755	3069	-18,27

Table 11: Acceptance and return on the basis of readmission agreements towards states

STATEMENT	ACCEPT			RETURNING		
	I - XII 2023	I - XII 2024	+ - %	I-XII 2023	I - XII 2024	+ - %
Afghanistan	12	3	-75,00	812	241	-70,32
Bangladesh	7		-100,00	227	94	-58,59
India	3	1	-66,67	64	46	-28,13
Iraq	3	7	133,33	108	102	-5,56
China	16	2	-87,50	297	145	-51,18
Morocco		2		137	32	-76,64
Nepal	15	7	-53,33	122	21	-82,79
Pakistan	1		-100,00	278	65	-76,62
Syria	13	6	-53,85	318	1016	219,50
Turkey	24	8	-66,67	963	1130	17,34
Other	52	38	-26,92	429	177	-58,74

Table 12: Acceptance and return on the basis of readmission agreements according to nationality

### 12.3. Monitoring of forced removals

Monitoring of forced removals was not carried out in 2024 because there was no contracted contractor.

In 2022, a public tender was launched and conducted for the financing of civil society organisations for the implementation of the third project of monitoring forced removals, but no applications were received. Therefore, the Rules on the treatment of third-country nationals (NN 145/2023) were amended<sup>113</sup> and supplemented in 2023 (6.12.2023), adding the provision that a public tender for the monitoring of forced removals can be published only for civil society organisations and only for international organisations.

In 2024, a public tender was conducted for the selection of an international organisation to carry out the monitoring of forced removals, at which the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was selected.<sup>114</sup>

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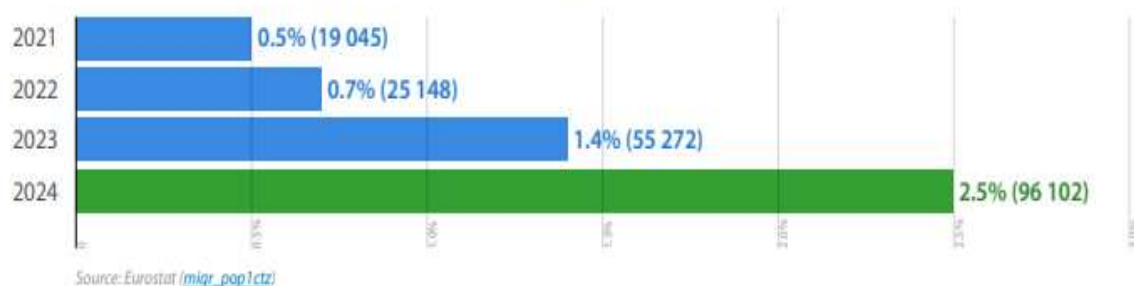
<sup>113</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023\\_12\\_145\\_2004.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_12_145_2004.html)

<sup>114</sup> An agreement between the Ministry of the Interior and the IOM on the monitoring of forced removals was concluded in 2025.

## Statistical annex

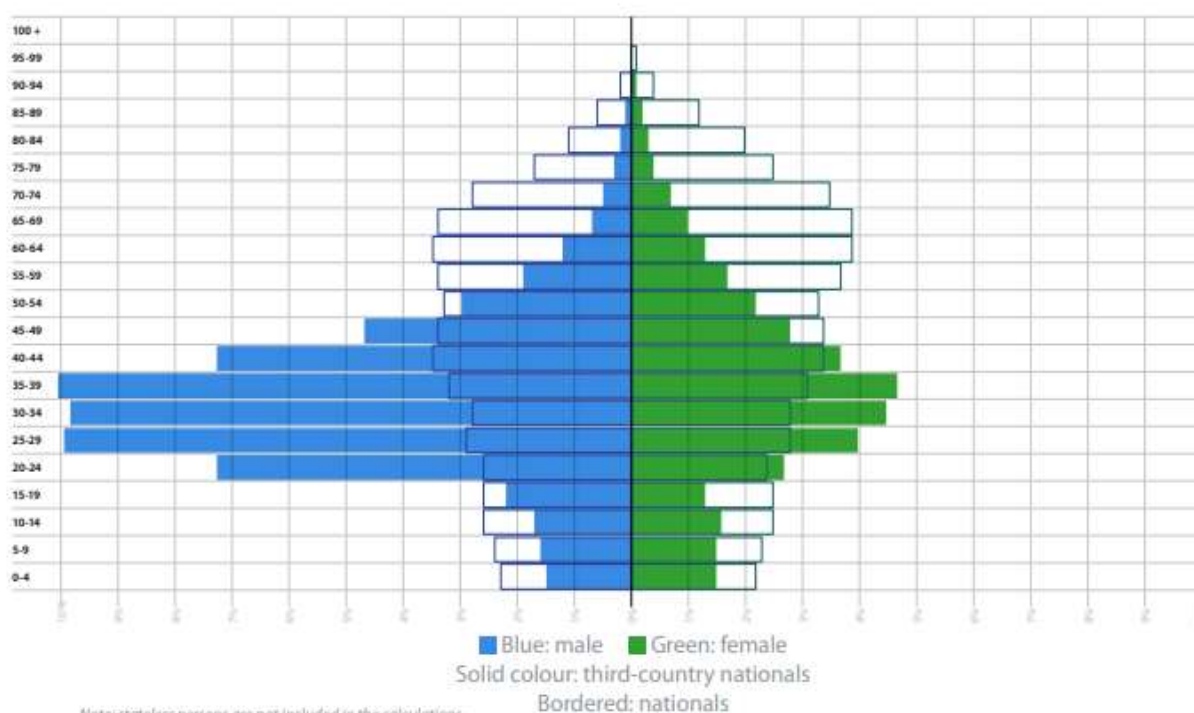
### Third-country nationals, 1 January 2021–2024

Share of the total population in % (and the absolute number)



### Age structure of nationals and third-country nationals, 1 January 2024

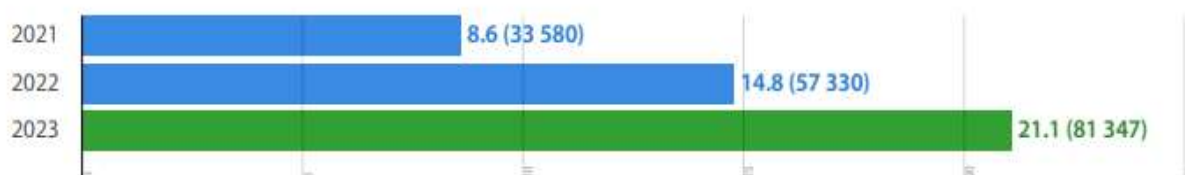
%





## First residence permits issued to third-country nationals, 2021–2023

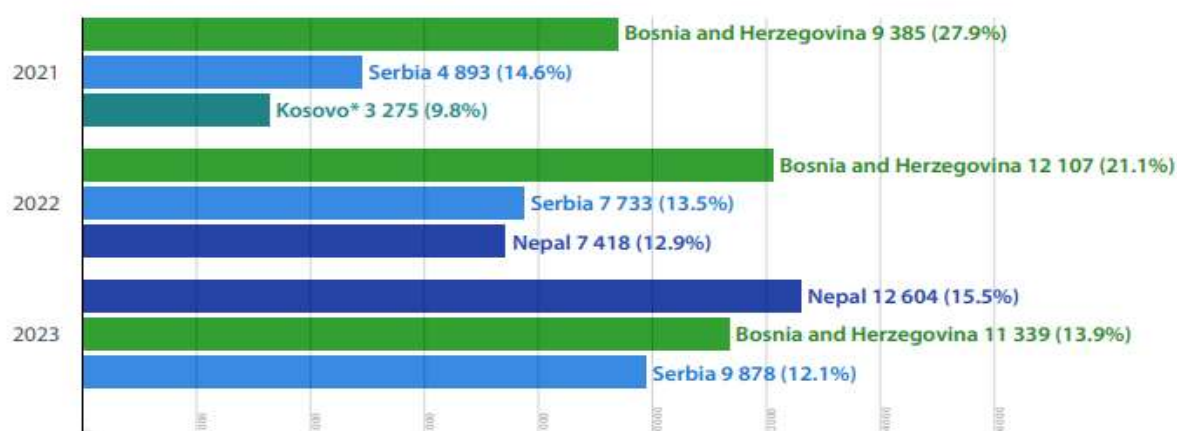
Number per 1 000 people (and the absolute number)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_resfirst\\_demo\\_gind](#) and [migr\\_respop](#))

## Top 3 countries whose citizens received first residence permits, 2021–2023

Absolute number (and the share in total number)

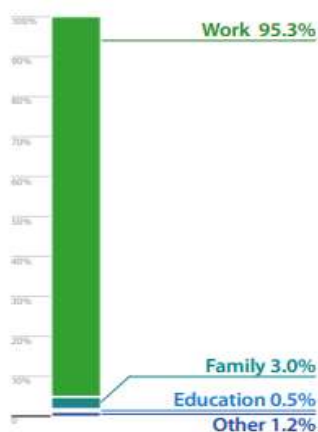


\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_resfirst](#))

## First residence permits issued, distribution by reason or type, 2023

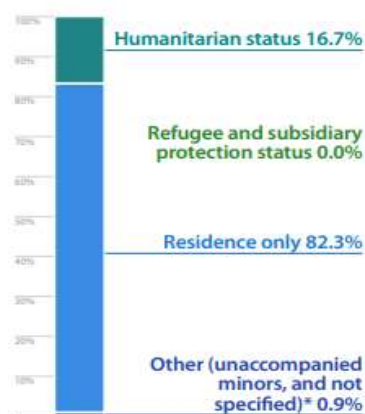
All permits,  
by reason



Work reason,  
by type



Other reason,  
by detailed reason

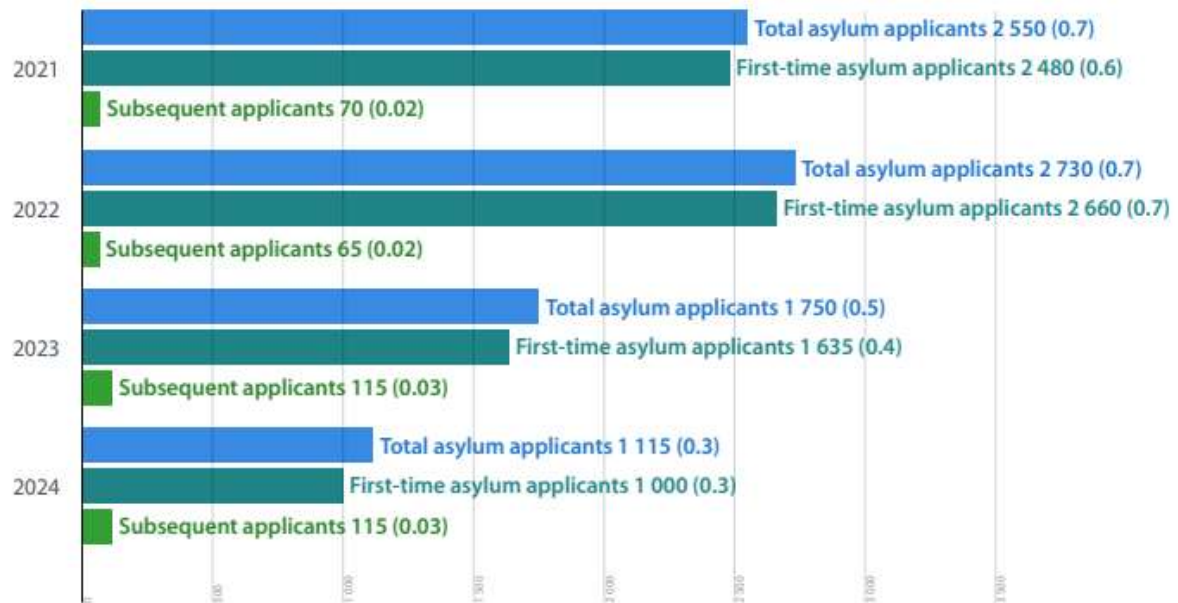


\* The list of categories covered may differ from country to country.

Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_resfirst](#), [migr\\_respec](#), [migr\\_resocc](#) and [migr\\_resoth](#))

### Asylum applicants by type of application, 2021–2024

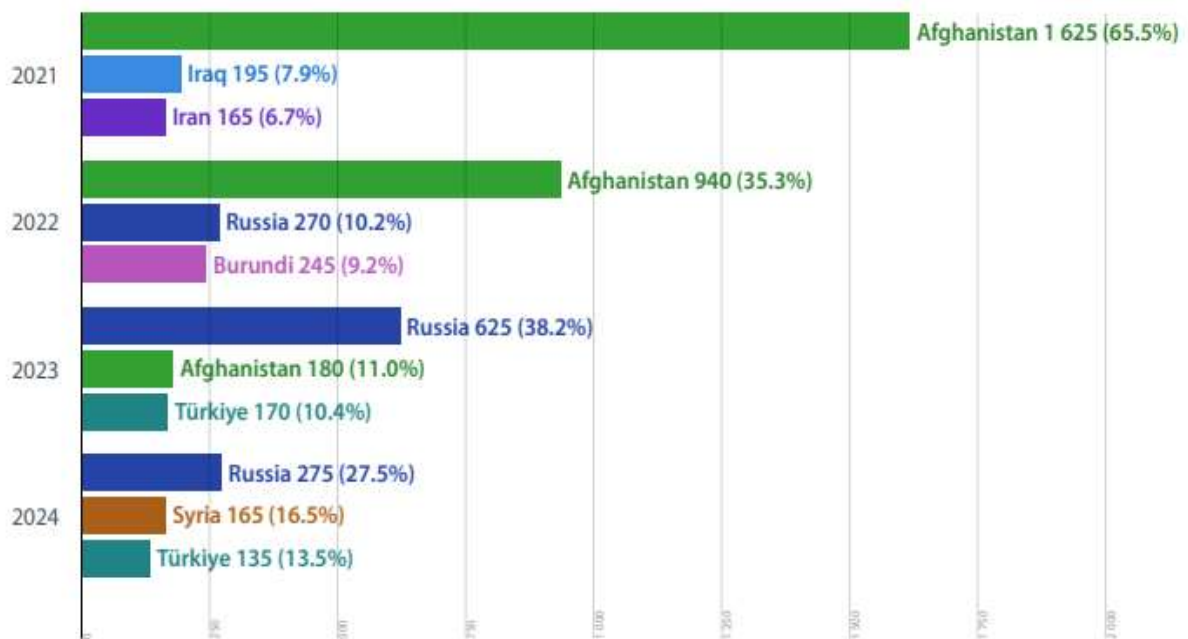
Absolute number (and the number per 1 000 people)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asyappctza](#), [demo\\_qind](#) and [migr\\_asyapp1mp](#))

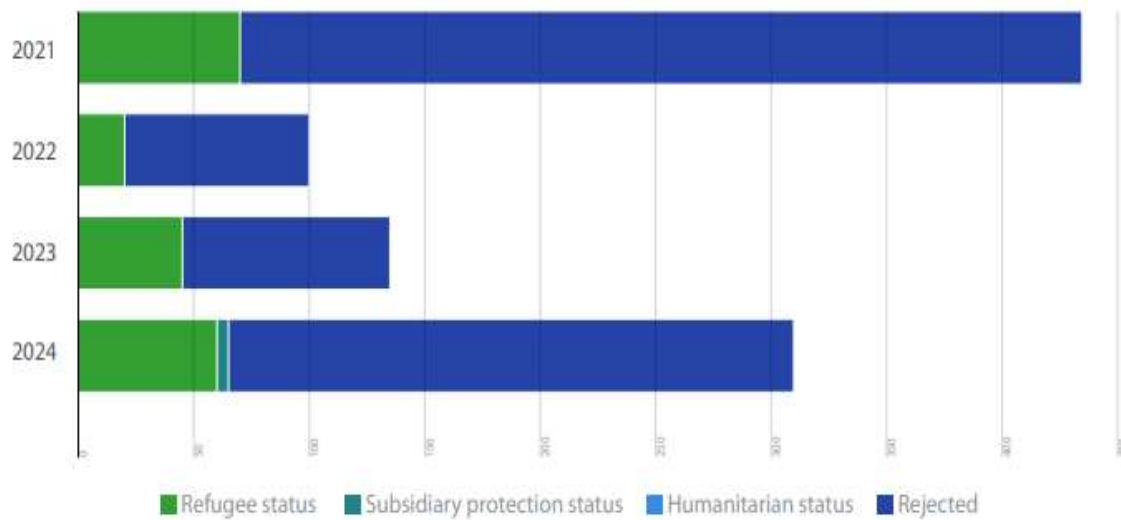
### Top 3 countries of citizenship – first-time asylum applicants, 2021–2024

Absolute number (and the share in total number of first-time applicants)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asyappctza](#))

## First instance asylum decisions by outcome, 2021-2024



Year	Refugee status number (share of total)	Subsidiary protection status number (share of total)	Humanitarian status number (share of total)	Rejected number (share of total)
2021	70 (15.6%)	0 (0.0%)	-	365 (84.4%)
2022	20 (20.8%)	0 (0.0%)	-	80 (79.2%)
2023	45 (31.9%)	0 (1.4%)	-	90 (66.7%)
2024	60 (19.5%)	5 (1.3%)	-	245 (79.2%)

Note: The shares are calculated using unrounded figures.  
Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asydcfst](#) and [migr\\_asydec1pc](#))

## Top 3 countries of citizenship granted positive asylum decisions at first instance by outcome, 2024

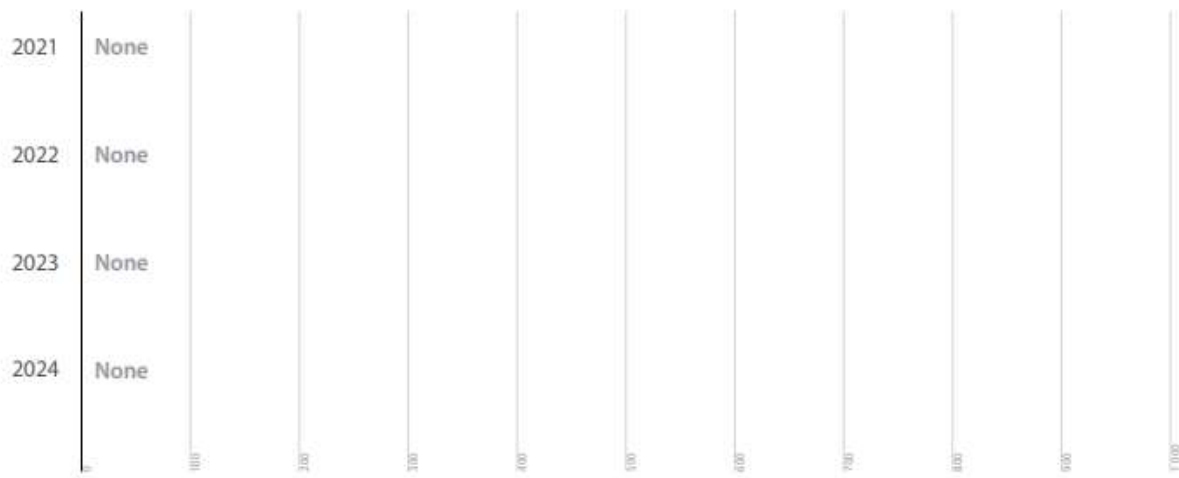
Absolute number (and the share in total positive decisions; and the recognition rate)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asydcfst](#))

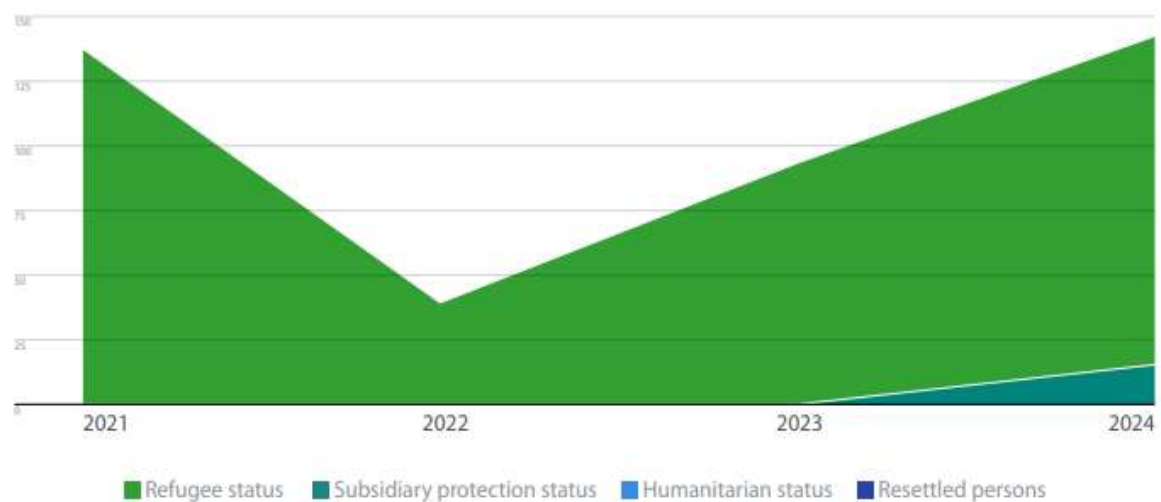
### Resettled third-country nationals by sex, 2021–2024

Absolute number (and the share of the total)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asyresg](#))

### Number of positive decisions for third-country nationals, by outcome, 2021–2024



Year	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection status	Humanitarian status	Resettled persons
2021	140	0	-	0
2022	40	0	-	0
2023	95	0	-	0
2024	130	15	-	0

Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asydcfstg](#), [migr\\_asydcfng](#) and [migr\\_asyresg](#))

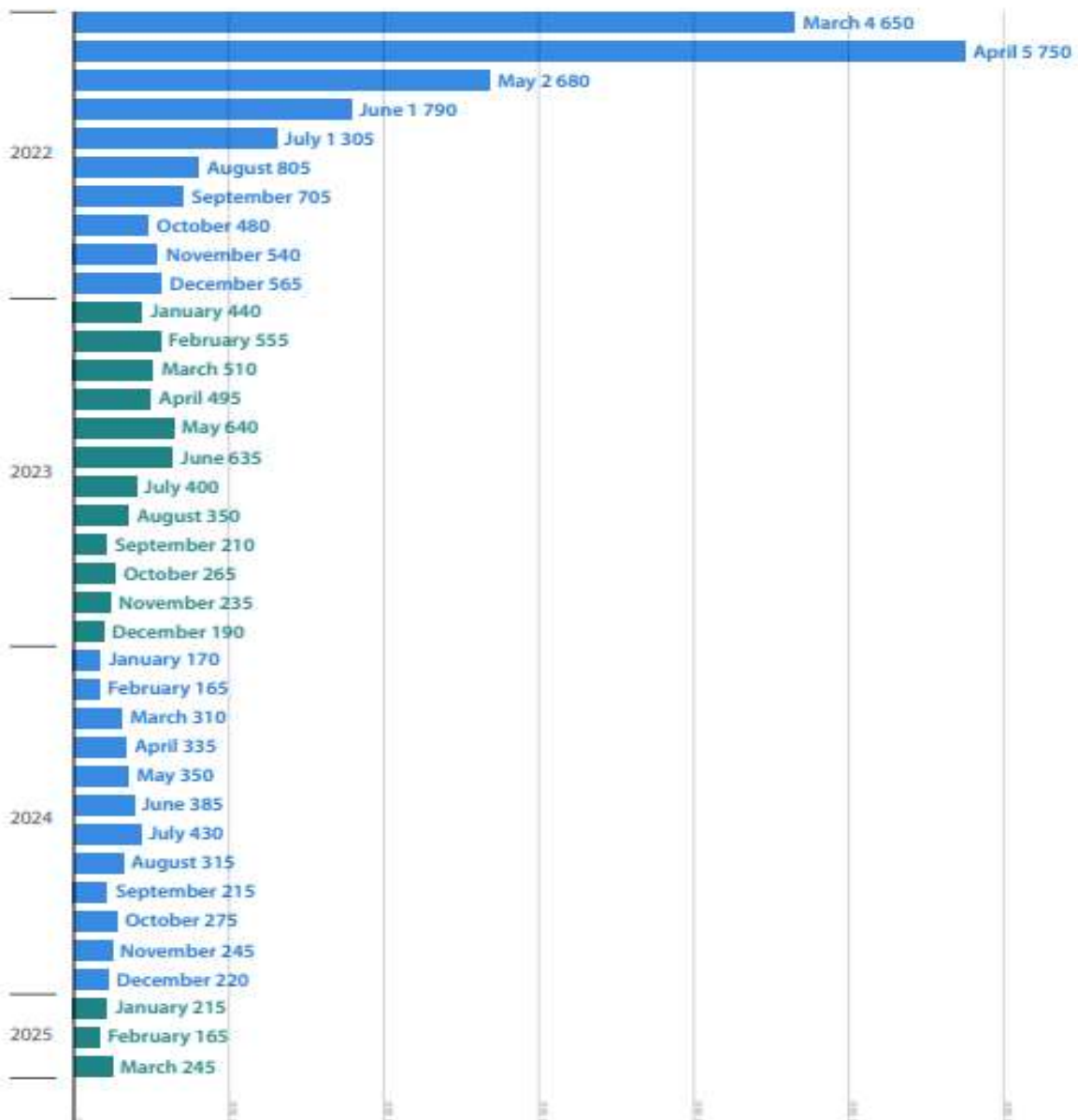
## Beneficiaries of temporary protection by age and sex at the end of March 2025

Absolute number (and the share of the total)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asytpsm](#))

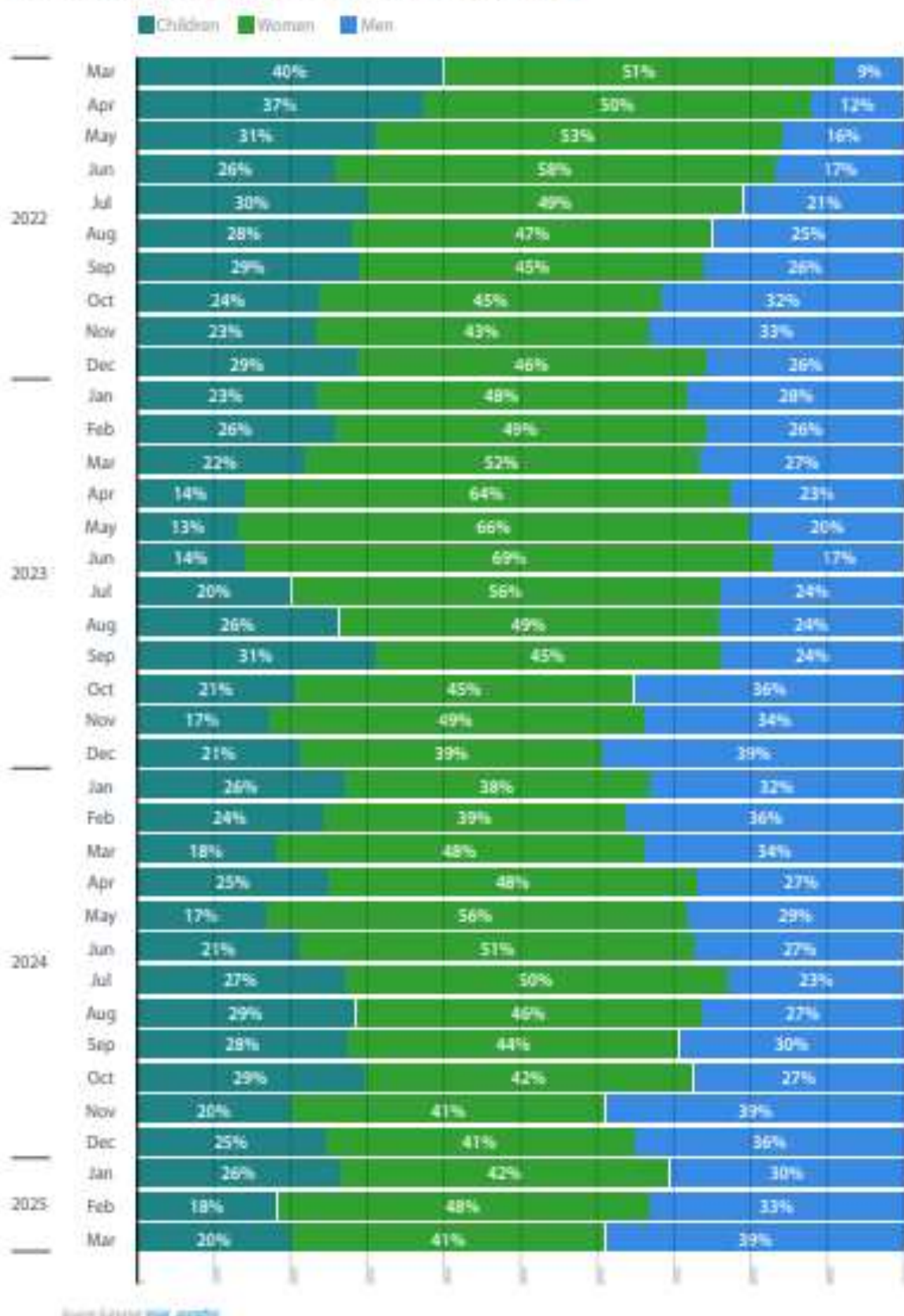
## Number of decisions providing temporary protection to people displaced from Ukraine due to Russia's invasion, March 2022–March 2025



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asytpsm](#))



Decisions providing temporary protection to people displaced from Ukraine due to Russia's invasion by main population groups, March 2022-March 2025



## Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum, 2021–2024

Number of first-time asylum applicants (and the share in total number of unaccompanied minors in the EU)



Share of all first-time asylum applicants



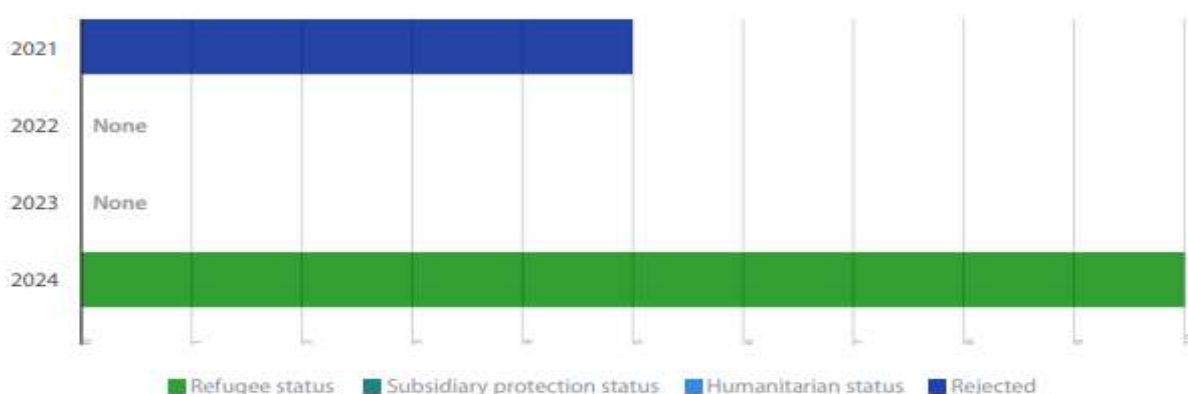
Share of all first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years



Note: The total number of unaccompanied minors in the EU used to calculate the share includes estimated 2024 data for Poland.  
Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asylumacta](#) and [migr\\_asyapactza](#))

## First instance asylum decisions on applications lodged by unaccompanied minors by outcome, 2021–2024

Absolute number (and the share of the total)



Year	Refugee status number (share of total)	Subsidiary protection status number (share of total)	Humanitarian status number (share of total)	Rejected number (share of total)
2021	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	-	5 (100%)
2022	0 (-)	0 (-)	-	0 (-)
2023	0 (-)	0 (-)	-	0 (-)
2024	10 (100%)	0 (0.0%)	-	0 (0.0%)

Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asylumdca](#))





### Third-country nationals who acquired citizenship, 2021–2023

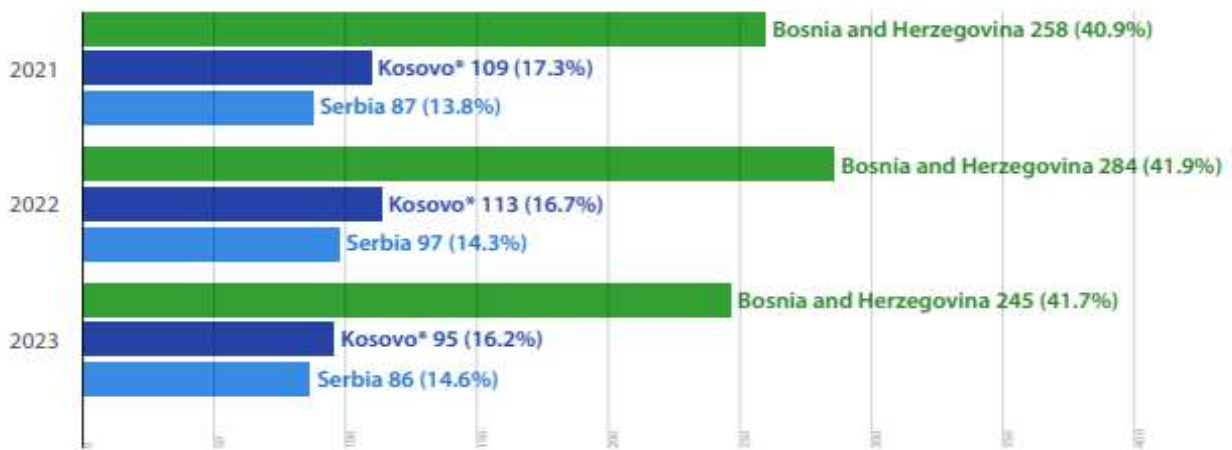
Absolute number (and share of total third-country nationals in the country)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_acq](#) and [migr\\_pop1ctz](#))

### Top 3 countries of non-EU citizens acquiring citizenship, 2021–2023

Absolute number (and the share of all acquisitions by third-country nationals)

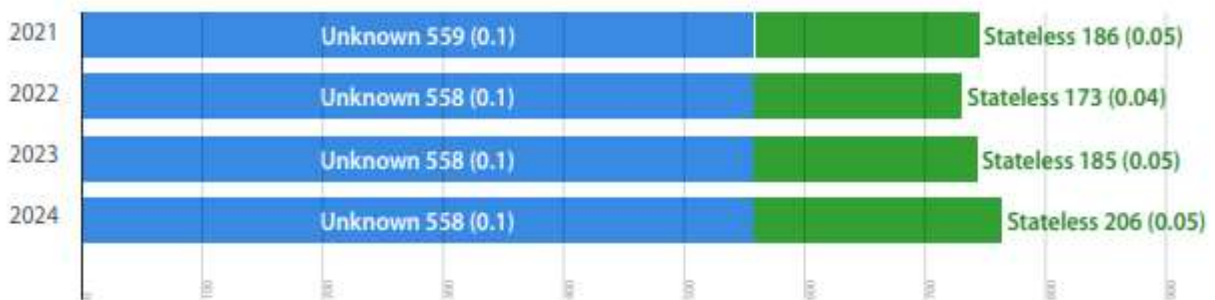


\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_acq](#))

### Stateless persons and persons with unknown citizenship, 2021–2024

Absolute number (and the number per 1 000 people)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_pop1ctz](#))

## Schengen uniform short-stay visas issued, 2021–2024

Absolute number (and the share of all uniform short-stay visas issued within the Schengen Area)



*Note: Uniform short-stay visas (C visas) entitle the holder to stay in the territories of all Schengen States for up to 90 days within a 180-day period. Such visas may be issued for the purpose of a single entry or multiple entries.*

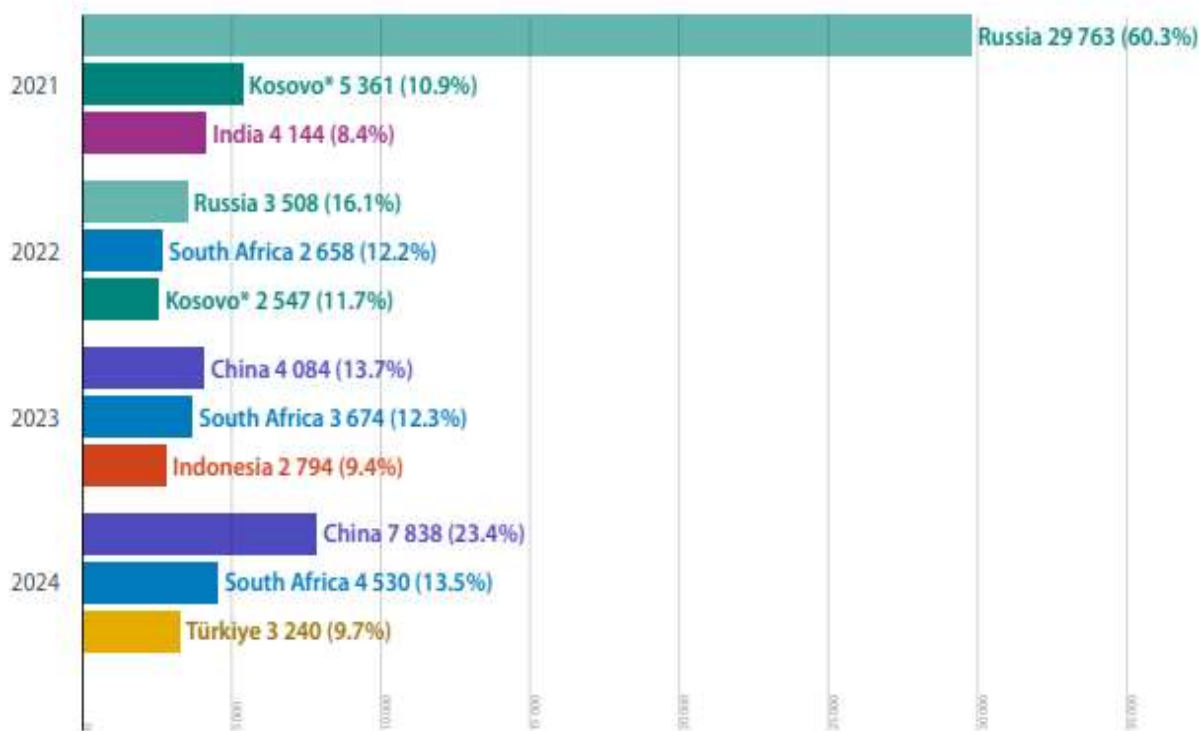
*Croatia was not part of the Schengen Area till 2022.*

*2021 and 2022, excluding visas issued at border crossings.*

*Source: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs*

## Top 3 consulate countries where the most Schengen uniform short-stay visas were issued, 2021–2024

Number of uniform short-stay visas issued (and the share of all uniform short-stay visas issued in consulate countries)



*\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.*

*Note: Croatia was not part of the Schengen Area till 2022. The consulate country might not be the same as the country of citizenship of the visa applicant.*

*Source: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs*

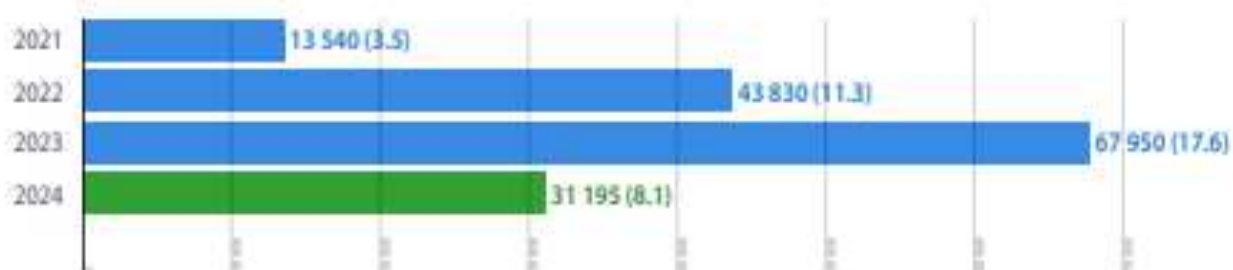
### Third-country nationals subject to immigration law enforcement, 2021–2024

Absolute number (and the number per 1 000 people)

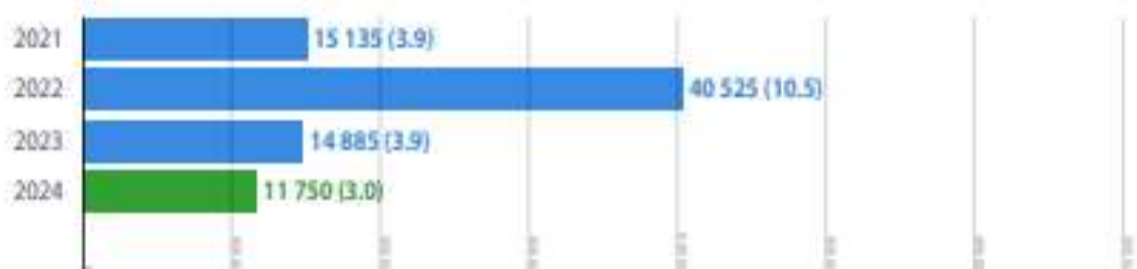
#### Persons refused entry



#### Persons found to be illegally present



#### Persons ordered to leave



#### Persons returned to a third country

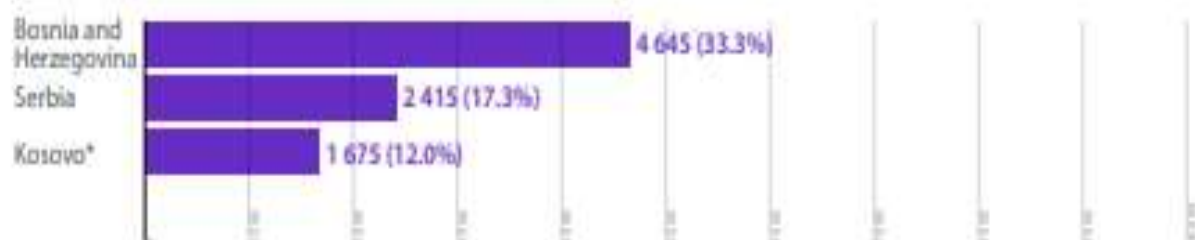


Source: [migr\\_ahh](#), [migr\\_alpe](#), [migr\\_ahnd](#), [migr\\_ahis](#), [migr\\_alisp](#) and [demo\\_ahh](#)

## Top 3 countries of citizenship of third-country nationals subject to immigration law enforcement, 2024

Absolute number (and the share in the respective total)

### Persons refused entry



### Persons found to be illegally present



### Persons ordered to leave



### Persons returned to a third country



\* Recent designation is without prejudice to positions on status and in line with UNSC 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

Source: Bundesagentur für Arbeit, Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit

### Number of third-country nationals victims of trafficking in human beings, 2021-2023



Source: Eurostat ([crim\\_thb\\_vctz](#))

### Number of first residence permits issued to victims of trafficking in human beings, 2021–2023



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_resoth](#))

### Third-country nationals who left the territory, by type of return, 2021–2024

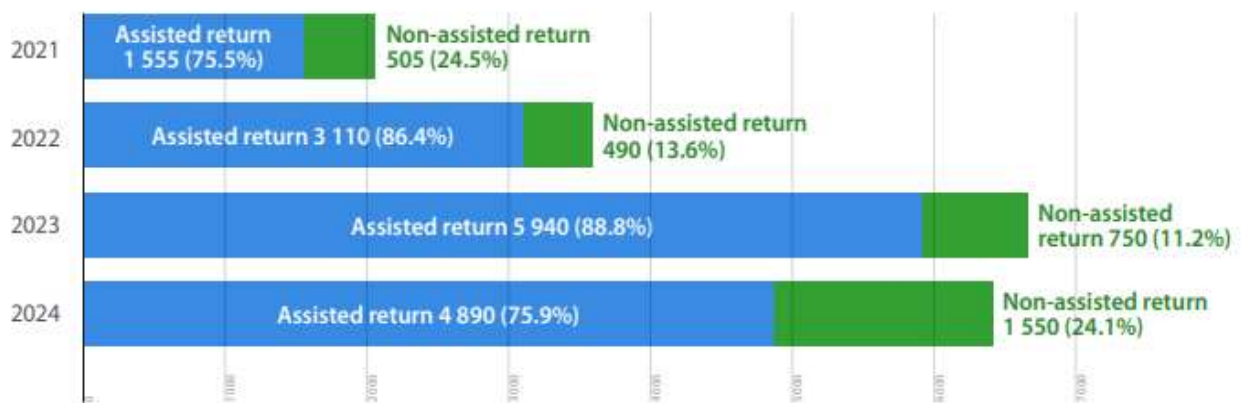
Absolute number (and the share of the total)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_eirtn1](#))

### Third-country nationals who left the territory, by type of assistance received, 2021–2024

Absolute number (and the share of the total)



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_eirtn1](#))