



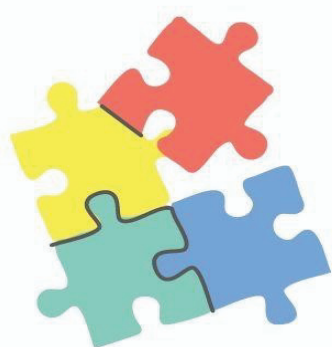
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EMN  
Europska migracijska mreža



# National report

## Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2021



**ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021 ON  
MIGRATION AND ASYLUM IN THE  
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**NATIONAL REPORT**

Zagreb  
September 2022

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AMIF - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union

EMAS - Emergency Solutions Grants Programme

EMN - European Migration Network

EMN NCP HR - National Contact Point for EMN in the Republic of Croatia

EUAA - European Union Agency for Asylum (formerly EASO - European Asylum Support Office)

Europol - European Police Office

FRONTEX - European Border and Coast Guard Agency

GDISC - General Directors of Immigration Services Conference

CRC - Croatian Red Cross

CLC - Croatian Law Centre

CES - Croatian Employment Service

IGC - Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees

INTERPOL - International Criminal Police Organisation

IOM - International Organisation for Migration

ISF - Internal Security Fund

JRS - Jesuit Refugee Service

MDM - Médecins du Monde - Doctors of the World

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the **seventh Annual Report on Migration and Asylum** produced by the National Contact Point for the European Migration Network in the Republic of Croatia. The European Migration Network (hereinafter referred to as EMN) is a network of experts for migration and asylum whose activities are coordinated by the European Commission. A National Contact Point has been established in each EMN Member State, and thus the Ministry of the Interior is the National Contact Point for the EMN in the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter referred to as EMN NCP HR).

The purpose of the Annual Report on Migration and Asylum is to provide an overview of the most significant policies and legislative developments related to asylum and migration in the Republic of Croatia, as well as an overview of political and public debates in the field of asylum and migration. The report covers the following topics: legal migration, international protection, unaccompanied children and other vulnerable groups, integration, citizenship and statelessness, borders, Schengen and visas, return and readmission, irregular migration including smuggling and the fight against trafficking in human beings. The report covers the **period from 1 January to 31 December 2021**.

### 1.1. Methodology

The 2021 Annual Report on Migration and Asylum was produced by the EMN NCP HR based on common specifications developed by the EMN, in order to facilitate comparability between the reports of all Member States. At the same time, the format has remained flexible to a certain extent to allow the production of reports that target the national audience. The Annual Report provides an overview of policy developments, legislative framework and practice, and the impact of COVID-19 on migration and asylum in the Republic of Croatia during 2021. The report also contains the most significant statistical data, according to individual thematic areas. The information presented in the report was provided by members of the National Migration Network from relevant sectors, primarily state administration bodies, the academic community and research organisations, as well as non-governmental and international organisations.

## 2. CONTEXT OF ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

At the beginning of 2021, **the new Aliens Act** entered into force (Official Gazette No. 133/20)<sup>1</sup>. The biggest innovation in the Act is **the new model of employment of third-country nationals** in which the Government of the Republic of Croatia no longer determines the annual quota for the employment of third-country nationals in the Republic of Croatia. According to the new model, for the purpose of searching for labour force, employers turn to the Croatian Employment Service (hereinafter referred to as the CES), which conducts a labour market test (finding labour force on the national labour market). The Act also prescribes the possibility of **regulating temporary residence for the so-called digital nomads**, foreigners who perform work digitally for foreign employers.

On 5 February 2021 the Croatian Parliament adopted **the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030** (Official Gazette No. 13/2021)<sup>2</sup>. The strategy in the field of social policy, as one of the implementation priorities, sets the improvement of equal availability and quality of comprehensive social care for particularly vulnerable groups, among others, victims of trafficking in human beings and asylum seekers. In the area of strengthening internal security, the Strategy points out that it is crucial to ensure orderly and regular migration flows by effective implementation of the migration policy and by strengthening the ability to respond to irregular migration challenges.

On 24 September 2021 the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia organised **the Conference on the Future of Europe**. The emphasis of the conference was on the new initiative of the European

Union called “Talent Partnerships”, which was proposed within the framework of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, then on strengthening the legislative framework in the context of the European Blue Card and other initiatives related to legal migration, such as the concept of “digital nomadism”.

The conference was an opportunity to exchange opinions on whether new EU initiatives and modern approaches to the labour market can be a solution to the current irregular migration challenges facing the European Union. The conference brought together a number of experts and encouraged dialogue on innovative approaches to migration.

As of September 2021, the Republic of Croatia has fulfilled all the necessary bilateral security agreements and the required B1/B2 visa rejection rate and has qualified for **entry into the US visa-free regime programme**. As of October 2021, Croatian citizens can travel to the United States of America for tourism or business without a visa, by obtaining approval through the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (hereinafter referred to as ESTA).

On 9 December 2021, the Council of the European Union unanimously adopted **Conclusions on the fulfilment of the necessary conditions for the full application of the Schengen acquis in Croatia**.

The Schengen evaluation of Croatia was carried out between 2016 and 2020. In October 2019, the European Commission considered that the Republic of Croatia had taken the measures needed to ensure the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2020\\_12\\_133\\_2520.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2020_12_133_2520.html)

<sup>2</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021\\_02\\_13\\_230.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_02_13_230.html)



necessary conditions for the full application of the Schengen acquis. In February 2021, the last action plan for the evaluated fields was completed.

The adoption of these Conclusions is without prejudice to the adoption of the Council Decision on the full application of the Schengen acquis.

### 3. LEGAL MIGRATION

#### 3.1. Statistical data

At the EU level, according to EUROSTAT data, in 2021 almost 3 million (2,952,300) first EU residence permits were issued to third-country nationals. This number increased by 31% (or +693,700) compared to 2020, reaching the pre-pandemic level recorded in 2019 (2,955,300).

Employment reasons accounted for 45% of all reasons for issuing residence permits in 2021, that is, 1.3 million permits. This represents an increase of 47% (+ 429,100) compared to 2020.

Residence permits issued for family reasons accounted for 24%, for educational reasons 12%, while other reasons, including international protection, accounted for 19%.

**According to EUROSTAT data, in 2021, the Republic of Croatia<sup>3</sup> has approved a total of 33,580 first residence permits, of which almost 89.5% were for the purpose of work (or a total of 30,056 first issued permits).**

**Residence permits issued for family reasons accounted for 8.47% (2,847) of the total number of real residence permits issued in the Republic of Croatia, for educational reasons 0.72% (244), while other reasons, including international protection, accounted for 1.28% (433).**

### 3.2 Aliens Act

#### 3.2.1 Labour market test

Aliens Act introduced a new system of employment for third-country nationals, introducing a labour market test and the opinion of the Croatian Employment Service as a prerequisite for issuing a residence and work permit for a certain category of third-country nationals.

Namely, the Government of the Republic of Croatia no longer determines the annual quota of permits for the employment of third-country nationals in the Republic of Croatia. The main reason for abolishing the quota system in the new Act is the challenge in terms of addressing the needs for labour force in certain work activities on the national labour market.

According to the new Aliens Act, in order to find a labour force, employers who need to hire new employees shall first contact the Croatian Employment Service, which conducts a labour market test. The labour market test of the Croatian Employment Service includes an overview of data in the records of unemployed persons and a mediation procedure with the aim of employing workers from the national labour market. **The aim of this legislative amendment was to adequately respond to the real labour requirements and to harmonize the employment of foreign workers with the state of the domestic labour market.**

Additionally, the new Aliens Act states that the labour market test will not be required in case of an extension of the residence and work permit for the same employer and the same third-country national, in case of shortage occupations (list of the Managing Board of the Croatian Employment Service), employment of a third-country national in agriculture, forestry, catering

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<sup>3</sup> In accordance with the EUROSTAT methodology

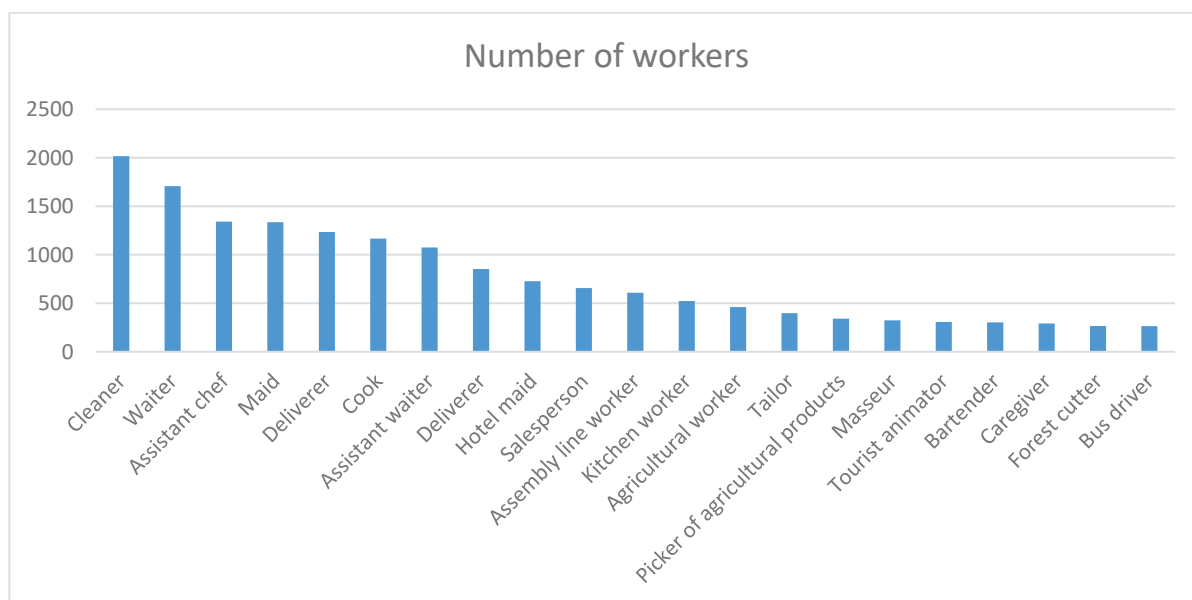
and tourism for up to 90 days during the calendar year and in the case of residence and work permits issued in accordance with Article 110 of the Act (key personnel in commercial companies, EU Blue Card, persons transferred within the company, etc).

A legal possibility has been introduced for the Managing Board of the Croatian Employment Service to decide on occupations for which the employer is not obliged to request a labour market test based on the state of the national, regional and local labour market. This aims to help especially those sectors that are facing labour force shortage. This legal possibility was used twice during 2021, and occupations with a shortage of workers were exempted from the labour market test, so the demand for them increased and remained constant on the Croatian labour market.

Updated information on occupations that are exempt from the labour market test is regularly published on the Croatian Employment Service websites<sup>4</sup>.

As for highly qualified workers, a highly qualified third-country national who meets the conditions for issuing an EU Blue Card, and in order to facilitate employment and attract highly qualified third-country nationals, the aforementioned category is exempt from conducting the labour market test and submitting the opinion of the Croatian Employment Service.

According to Croatian Employment Service data<sup>5</sup>, during 2021, 2,518 employers requested the implementation of the labour market test for 28,838 workers in 488 different occupations. After the labour market test, employers received a positive notification for the possibility of employing 22,872 foreign workers.

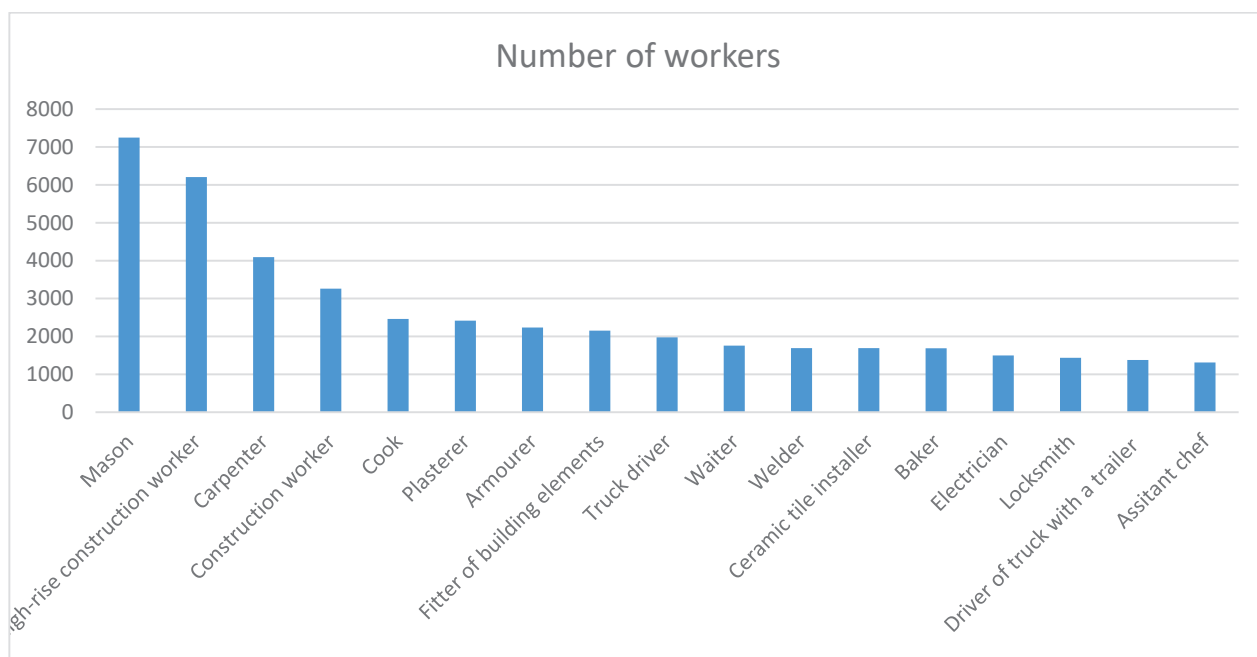


*Chart 1 - Occupations for which the most positive notifications were issued in the implementation of the labour market test*

*Source: Croatian Employment Service*

<sup>4</sup> (<https://www.hzz.hr/content/radne-dozvole/HZZ-TTR-Lista-zanimanja-Clanak-101-Iznimka-od-provedbe-TTR-260122.pdf>)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hzz.hr/statistika/statistika-test-trzista-rada-radne.dozvole/2021/>



*Chart 2 - The most sought-after occupations for which a favourable opinion has been issued by the Croatian Employment Service*

*Source: Croatian Employment Service*

Since the new Act also introduced the condition of a favourable opinion of the Croatian Employment Service for issuing a residence and work permit for a certain category of third-country nationals, and during which certain prerequisites on the part of the employer are checked, in the same period 66,917 requests for opinions were received and processed to the application for residence and work of foreign workers, of which 8,754 workers based on a previously conducted labour market test, and the rest of the requests related to occupations for which the Managing Board of the Croatian Employment Service made a decision that it is not necessary to conduct a labour market test because these are occupations that are permanently lacking in the Croatian labour market. The largest number of favourable opinions was issued for occupations in the sectors of Construction and Geodesy, Tourism and Hospitality, and Transport and Logistics.

Since the new Aliens Act introduced significant changes in the field of work, on 12 May 2021 an online workshop on the topic “Application of the Aliens Act” was held for members of the Croatian Employers' Association, in cooperation with representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Croatian Employment Service and the Ministry of the Interior. The aim of this online workshop was to present the procedure of testing the labour market and exceptions (a special overview of mediation and referral of potential candidates to work, agreement on accepting a job, issuing a residence and work permit) and presenting examples of using the application in the procedure of issuing residence and work permits.

### **3.2.2 Family reunification**

The new Aliens Act eases the conditions for family reunification for third-country nationals with residence and work permit (certain categories). According to new provisions, their families can join them after one year of stay in Croatia. The waiting time has therefore been shortened compared to the previous Aliens Act, which provided for a two-year waiting period.

### **3.2.3 Other amendments to the Aliens Act**

The Aliens Act expanded the possibility of obtaining permanent residence for family members of Croatian citizens who can obtain permanent residence after four years of temporary residence. This new category will enable family members of Croatian citizens to obtain permanent residence under a simplified procedure.

Likewise, the possibility of acquiring permanent residence was also introduced for members of the Croatian nation, who are third-country nationals, who can acquire permanent residence after 3 years of temporary residence. This category was introduced with the aim of enabling Croats without Croatian citizenship a simpler and faster way of obtaining permanent residence and all related rights.

In order to increase security, the new Act stipulates that all third-country nationals who come to the Republic of Croatia for the first time, along with applications for temporary residence, should also submit a certificate of no criminal record from their home country or the country where they resided for more than a year immediately before arrival to the Republic of Croatia.

### **3.3. Subordinate legislation**

#### **3.3.1. Rulebook on taking the Croatian language and Latin script exam in the procedure of approval of long-term residence**

In September 2021, the new Rulebook on taking the Croatian language and Latin script exam in the procedure of approval of long-term residence<sup>6</sup> (Official Gazette No. 100/21) entered into force, which prescribes the procedures and costs of taking the Croatian language and Latin script exam for the approval of long-term residence in the Republic of Croatia, as well as applications and withdrawals from the exam, the method of conducting the exam, exam deadlines and obligations related to the exam documentation management.

#### **3.3.2. Ordinance on amendments to the Ordinance on the entry and residence in the Republic of Croatia of citizens of the Member States of the European Economic Area and their family members**

In July 2021, the Ordinance on amendments to the Ordinance on the entry and residence in the Republic of Croatia of citizens of the Member States of the European Economic Area and their family members<sup>7</sup> was adopted (Official Gazette No. 86/21). This Ordinance ensures the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/1157 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on strengthening the security of identity cards of Union citizens and of residence documents issued to Union citizens and their family members exercising their right of free movement.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021\\_09\\_100\\_1800.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_09_100_1800.html)

<sup>7</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021\\_07\\_86\\_1596.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_07_86_1596.html)

### **3.3.3. Regulation on the manner of calculating and the amount of means of subsistence for third-country nationals in the Republic of Croatia**

On 11 February 2021 the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Regulation on the manner of calculating and the amount of means of subsistence for third-country nationals in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette No. 14/2021).<sup>8</sup> The goal was to harmonize the Regulation with the four Directives that oblige third-country nationals to prove that they have sustenance during their stay in the host country.

The Regulation prescribes the manner of calculating and the amount of minimum means of subsistence for third-country nationals in the procedure of approving:

- temporary residence,
- temporary residence for the purpose of secondary education,
- temporary residence for the purpose of studying, as well as funds for the student's return,
- temporary residence of a third-country national who is a long-term resident in another Member State of the European Economic Area and a member of their family,
- long-term residence.

For a third-country national, the amount of means for subsistence is determined according to the officially published data of the state administration body responsible for statistics, and refers to the average monthly net salary paid in the last year, per employee in legal entities in the Republic of Croatia.

### **3.4. Labour exploitation**

Decision on the adoption of the National Program for Suppression of Undeclared Work in the Republic of Croatia 2021–2024<sup>9</sup> and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Program<sup>10</sup> (Official Gazette No. 20/2021) was adopted in February 2021. The adoption of the document lays down the obligation to implement 14 measures, within the framework of which 27 activities are foreseen. Likewise, policies have been developed to come to grips with labour exploitation at the national level (including third-country nationals). It is considered to be a very important Decision because it is a multi-year national program that reflects Croatia's policy towards undeclared work, including third-country nationals who work in this way.

### **3.5. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Due to the specific nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, during 2021 the submission of applications for residence and work permits, temporary residence and registering permanent residence for citizens of Member States of the European Economic Area and their family members, as well as the issuance of biometric residence permits was adapted to epidemiological conditions.

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<sup>8</sup> [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021\\_02\\_14\\_273.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_02_14_273.html)

<sup>9</sup> [Decision on the adoption of the National Program for Suppression of Undeclared Work in the](#)

[Republic of Croatia 2021–2024 and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Program \(nn.hr\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [26 November Proposal for the Action Plan.pdf \(gov.hr\)](#)

### 3.6. Regularisation of digital nomads

During 2021, a **new category of residence permit for digital nomads** was introduced. This residence permit applies to a third-country national who is employed or performs tasks via communication technology for a company or his own company that is not registered in the Republic of Croatia, and does not perform tasks or provides services to employers in the Republic of Croatia.

Accordingly, in 2021, amendments were made to the Act on Mandatory Health Insurance and Health Care of Foreigners, which regulate the right of digital nomads to healthcare. These amendments allow digital nomads to exercise their right to healthcare. Digital nomads are not obliged to register for mandatory health insurance and are obliged to bear the costs of using healthcare in a healthcare facility, that is, with a healthcare professional in private practice or another healthcare provider in the Republic of Croatia.

Regarding changes to Croatian tax legislation related to digital nomads; income based on the acquired digital nomad status is exempt from taxes and tax reporting obligations in the Republic of Croatia.

the European Union and modern approaches to the labour market can be a solution to the current challenges faced by the European Union in relation to irregular migration.

### 3.7. Conference on the Future of Europe

On 24 September 2021 the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia organised **the Conference on the Future of Europe**. The aim of this conference was to focus on the **new Talent Partnership initiative**, proposed as part of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, as well as on strengthening the legislative framework on the **EU Blue Card and other initiatives related to legal migration (e.g. the concept of digital nomads)**. The conference was an opportunity to exchange opinions on whether the new initiatives of



## 4. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

### 4.1. Statistical data on international protection in 2021

Statistics on applicants and beneficiaries of international protection are continuously published on the websites of the Ministry of the Interior. Statistical indicators of applicants for international protection by nationality and gender for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021 show that a total of 3,039 applicants for international protection were registered in the Republic of Croatia in 2021. According to available data, the most represented countries of origin of applicants for international protection in the Republic of Croatia during 2021 are Afghanistan (1,849), Turkey (246), Iraq (225), Iran (190) and Pakistan (106).<sup>11</sup>

Compared to last year's data, it is evident that the number of applicants for international protection increased by 57.3% and that, in addition to significant changes in the total number of applications for international protection, there are also changes when it comes to countries of origin of applicants for international protection. An increasing trend in the number of applicants from Afghanistan recorded in 2020 continued during 2021, when the number doubled. The number of applicants from Turkey has more than doubled compared to 2020, making it the most common country of origin of applicants for international protection after Afghanistan. Moreover, it can be noted that the number of applicants from Iraq has halved, while the number of applicants from Iran has doubled compared to 2020.

During the period in question, a total of 68 applications for international protection

were approved, and asylum status was granted in all 68 cases.

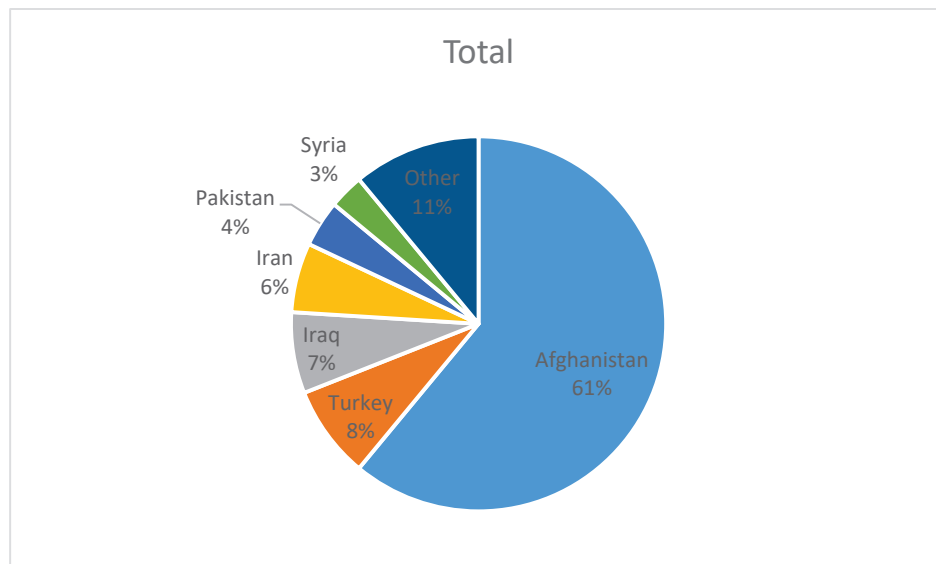
*Table 1 - Number of applicants for international protection in 2021*

Country of origin	M	F	TOTAL
AFGHANISTAN	1,010	839	1,849
TURKEY	203	43	246
IRAQ	122	103	225
IRAN	100	90	190
PAKISTAN	94	12	106
SYRIA	56	28	84
BANGLADESH	67	2	69
CUBA	29	27	56
MOROCCO	27	3	30
STATELESSNESS	15	12	27
TUNISIA	14	8	22
EGYPT	19		19
ALGERIA	11	4	15
INDIA	10	2	12
NEPAL	1	7	8
PALESTINE	5	3	8
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	5	3	8
CHINA	7		7
SERBIA	4	3	7
ALBANIA	6		6
ERITREA	3	3	6
THE GAMBIA	4	2	6
MONTENEGRO	2	2	4
USA	2	2	4
SOMALIA	1	3	4
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	2		2
GUINEA	1	1	2
KOSOVO	2		2
NIGERIA	2		2
BURUNDI	1		1
DR OF THE CONGO	1		1
ETHIOPIA	1		1
JORDAN		1	1
CAMEROON		1	1
KYRGYZSTAN		1	1
LEBANON	1		1
SLOVAKIA	1		1
SLOVENIA	1		1
SRI LANKA		1	1
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	1		1
UZBEKISTAN	1		1
VENEZUELA	1		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,833</b>	<b>1,206</b>	<b>3,039</b>

*Source: Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia*

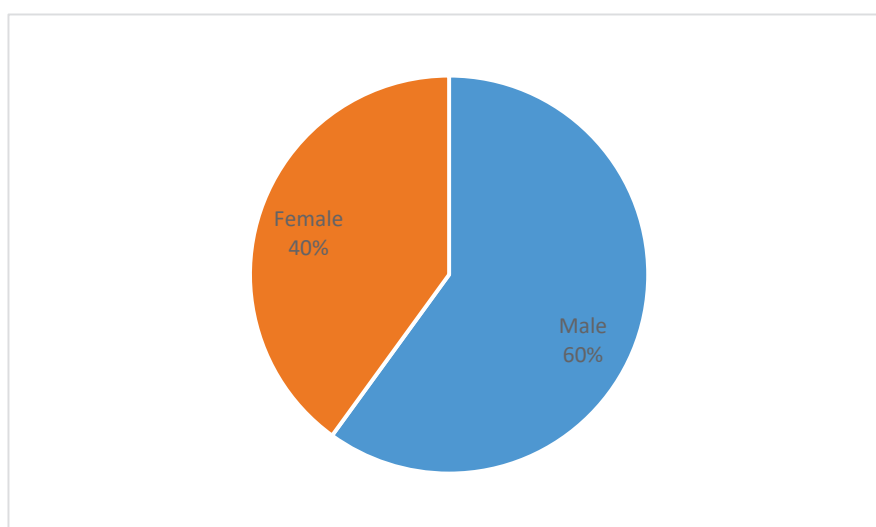
<sup>11</sup> [Microsoft Word - web statistics 2021 Q4.docx \(gov.hr\)](#)





*Chart 3 – Structure of applicants for international protection by nationality*

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*



*Chart 4 – Structure of applicants for international protection by gender*

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

#### **4.2. Legislative developments in the field of international protection in the Republic of Croatia**

During 2021, the process of making a draft proposal of the Act on amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection was initiated. Amendments to the Act were proposed in order to harmonize the provisions of the national legislative framework of international protection with the European legislative framework, and to simultaneously improve and simplify the application of the Act in practice. This is a significant development at the national level since the Act in question regulates international and temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia.

#### **4.3. Reception and accommodation of applicants for international protection in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2021**

The implementation of appropriate epidemiological measures aimed at preventing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, established during 2020, continued to be applied during 2021 in accordance with changes in epidemiological circumstances and recommendations. The protection of workers in reception centres and the prevention of the potential spread of the COVID-19 pandemic among applicants for international protection continued to be one of the priorities during 2021.

The Ministry of the Interior was among the first in Member States to offer the possibility of COVID-19 vaccination for all interested applicants for international protection in the Republic of Croatia. Vaccination began in July 2021, and two one-day vaccinations were organised at the reception centre in Zagreb. Moreover, as of August, the transport of applicants to public healthcare facilities and the assistance of

translators during vaccinations were organised as well.

Of the 3,039 people who expressed their intention to apply for international protection in 2021, 2,797 people underwent isolation or self-isolation at the reception centre in Zagreb.

At the end of 2021, International Organization for Migration (hereinafter referred to as IOM), in cooperation with experts in the field of epidemiology, organised training for police border guards on the topic of detecting infectious diseases in migrants, responding to their health needs and challenges during migration, including the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The IOM has started the production of informational materials about COVID-19 vaccination intended for migrants, which will be available to users in the Reception Centres for applicants for international protection and Reception Centres for foreigners in Ježevo, Trilj, Tovarnik in early 2022.

#### **4.4. Access to the procedure for international protection**

The COVID-19 outbreak had no impact on the exercise of the right to access the system of international protection in the Republic of Croatia, and the processing of applications for international protection took place continuously during 2021, in accordance with the epidemiological measures in force. This is evidenced by the total number of 3,039 intentions expressed in 2021, which is the highest number since the establishment of the asylum system in the Republic of Croatia.

#### **4.5. Dublin procedure**

There were no significant legislative changes in the area of the Dublin procedure, but the consequences of the

epidemiological measures affected the implementation of the Dublin procedure. Thus, Dublin transfers are suspended (incoming and outgoing) due to circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. From June 2021, incoming and outgoing transfers continued to be carried out again. However, the transfers were carried out in a limited form since the epidemiological situation and the expediency of the transfer in accordance with the health/epidemiological circumstances were taken into account when carrying out transfers.

Transfers were accepted for a maximum of three persons per day (or one family, regardless of the number of family members), persons in the transfer had to have a negative PCR test that was not older than 48 hours prior to the transfer (excluding children under seven years old), and the obligation of a 14-day quarantine upon arrival in the Republic of Croatia was applied.

The implementation of the aforementioned measures during 2021 was aimed at ensuring the enforcement of the Dublin procedure in safe conditions. In relation to family reunification, the practice of implementing transfers remained the same, that is, all family reunifications were prioritized, especially when it comes to unaccompanied minors.

As of 1 June 2021, when the suspension of Dublin transfers was lifted, a total of 54 people were transferred to the Republic of Croatia from: Austria (7), Belgium (1), Finland (1), Germany (28), Norway (1), Romania (1), Slovenia (1) and Switzerland (14).

Three persons were transferred from the Republic of Croatia to other Member States of the European Union; Belgium (1), Romania (1) and Slovenia (1).

#### **4.6. Access to information and provision of legal aid**

In 2021, the document Information for applicants for international protection on their rights, obligations and the procedure for international protection was updated, through which officials of the Ministry of the Interior, orally and in writing, inform applicants for international protection about all essential information, contact information, rights and obligations of the applicants during international protection procedure in the Republic of Croatia. The text and layout of the form called Subsequent application have also been updated.

It is important to point out that during 2021 leaflets were prepared for applicants for international protection. The leaflets contain information on the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 4 of the Dublin III Regulation, and leaflets with general information are planned to be prepared, as well as special leaflets intended for unaccompanied minors. The general leaflet contains information on the application of Regulation (EU) No 603/2013, that is, the purpose of processing the data of applicants for international protection through the EURODAC database. The purpose of the leaflets is to effectively provide information to all applicants for international protection, with a special emphasis on informing unaccompanied minors.

In addition to the aforementioned, for the sake of better communication, the process of creating a leaflet of the Reception Centre for the applicants for international protection in Zagreb has been launched with the aim of helping applicants find their way in daily life activities and respect the rules of behaviour in the facility. A digital presentation of important information has also been planned.

The project “Free legal aid in the procedure for international protection” has been implemented since 9 July 2020 and is

financed from the resources of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as AMIF).

In September 2021, a public tender procedure was launched for the financing of the project providing legal advice in the procedure for international protection, which is financed from the AMIF. The aim of the project is to provide free legal advice to applicants for international protection during the first-instance procedure for international protection, which protects the rights and interests of applicants for international protection and ensures fair conduct of the proceeding. Other project activities include the provision of legal advice to unaccompanied minors and their guardians in social welfare centres and institutions where unaccompanied minors are located, the printing of information materials and brochures about the ways and conditions of exercising the right to legal advice and the creation of a mobile application with basic information about conditions and ways of exercising rights in the international protection procedure.

Access to reception centres for foreigners was limited due to epidemiological measures, so IOM adapted information and consultation activities related to the voluntary return programme. A sufficient number of informative multilingual posters and leaflets are provided in the reception centre for applicants for international protection, which direct potential beneficiaries to the IOM in case they decide on a voluntary return. The website [www.avrr.hr](http://www.avrr.hr) with relevant information in eight languages is also available to potential beneficiaries.

#### **4.7. Improvement of reception conditions and accommodation of applicants for international protection**

The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia is systematically improving the system of international protection through reception and accommodation conditions, the strengthening of the network of translators and the quality of social services, as well as through equipping and educating officials.

During 2021, renovation projects and projects aimed at increasing the accommodation capacities of reception centres for applicants for international protection were implemented in Zagreb and Kutina.

From the beginning of October 2021, due to the start of construction works on the building from the project “Renovation of the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Kutina”, applicants for international protection are accommodated exclusively in the Reception centre for applicants for international protection in Zagreb, which temporarily reduced the total accommodation capacity by 100 seats.

The project “Renovation of the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb” is in the procedure of drawing up technical documentation. The implementation of the project “Help in Maintaining an Adequate Level of Accommodation in Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers” continued, which co-finances the overhead expenses of accommodation of asylum seekers in the facility.

In addition to the aforementioned projects, 2021 saw the beginning of the implementation of the project “Procurement of Equipment for the Needs of the Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection and the Service for International Protection –

NOP2". In addition to the purchase of equipment, this project also finances the costs of printing leaflets for applicants for international protection in 7 languages: Croatian, English, French, Arabic, Turkish, Farsi and Urdu. The leaflets contain more detailed information for applicants for international protection about what the Dublin procedure is, information for applicants for international protection that are already in the procedure, information for minors, information for CAT 2 and information for CAT 3.

"Increasing the Accommodation Capacity of the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb" is a project whose purpose is to equip the reception centres and improve the quality of life of applicants, as well as the working conditions of officials, and to ensure additional accommodation capacity of the Reception centre for applicants for international protection in Zagreb.

The project "RECORD - Development, Implementation and Maintenance of the Application for the Purpose of International Protection" is financed from the AMIF fund. The aim of the project is to develop and implement a new IT application that will enable an increase in quality of the collection, management, processing, monitoring and reporting of data in the field of international protection.

#### **4.8. Strengthening the capacity and international cooperation in the field of international protection**

In order to continuously strengthen administrative capacities, the officials of the Ministry of the Interior participated in a series of educations, workshops, missions, trainings, conferences, meetings and round tables.

Officials of the Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for

International Protection participated in the educational workshops "E-learning about the General Administrative Procedure Act", "Training Programme for the Prevention of Gender-Specific Violence for Male Refugees and Migrants as Part of the Programme FOMEN – Focus on Men: Gender Based Violence Prevention Work with Male Migrants", "Education, Empowerment, Integration – Inspiration!". Then on webinars organised by the EMN: "Digitalisation and artificial intelligence in migration management", "Young migrants in transition to adulthood", "Access to housing and education for children in migration: challenges and good practices", "Detecting and protecting vulnerable migrants", and webinars of the European Asylum Support Office – hereinafter referred to as EASO) – "Management in the context of reception", "Reception of vulnerable persons, identification of vulnerability and provision of initial support", "Remote personal interviews and innovation of the registration processes", "Train-the-trainer on the reception of vulnerable persons", "Information provision and communication with asylum seekers" and "Interpreting in the asylum context".

Officials also participated in the work of the online focus group "Drug Abuse and Other Intoxicating Agents Among Migrants", whose aim was to determine the situation regarding the issue of drug abuse, medication and other addictive agents among the migrant population, and one of the officials actively participated as a member of the EASO Working Group in the workshop "Info Provision Toolbox Reception". Despite the difficult circumstances caused by the pandemic, officials of the Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection participated as Member State experts in the EASO missions in Malta and Cyprus.

Under the Emergency Assistance Grant Scheme (hereinafter referred to as EMAS),



the project “Strengthening Border Control Activities on the Croatian Part of the External Border due to Increased Migratory Pressure”, training of multipliers was conducted on the topic “Taking Fingerprints at Eurodac workstations”. A total of 40 participants took part in the training. In this way, the continuous education of police officers on the application of Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 June 2013 on the establishment of “Eurodac” for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 has continued.

In November 2021, a workshop on the quality of first-instance decisions of the Ministry of the Interior was organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (hereinafter referred to as UNHCR). Representatives of UNHCR, representatives of the Croatian Law Centre (hereinafter referred to as CLC) and officials of the International Protection Service participated in the workshop. The aim of organising this workshop was to discuss the procedure and analysis of the decision-making process of the Ministry of the Interior in order to improve the quality of decision-making. UNHCR organised an online education “Interviewing Learning Programme” with the aim of improving interviewing techniques and skills. Fourteen officials participated in the education. Officials of the International Protection Service participated in numerous EASO webinars during 2021; “Sexual orientation, gender and gender identity”, “Joint Specialist Meeting of Iraq COI Specialist Network and Exclusion Network focusing on terrorism issues in Iraq”, “Current humanitarian and security situation and the Rafah border crossing”, “Country Guidance Network meeting on Country Guidance: Nigeria”, “EASO Module Management in the Asylum Context”, “Country Guidance Network meeting: Country Guidance: Afghanistan”,

“Thematic meeting on country of nationality verification”, “Query Portal Training Session for Asylum Processes Network NCPs”, “EASO's Certification and Accreditation Working Group meeting”, “EASO Module Identification on potential Exclusion cases” and others.

At the Police Academy, an education was held on the topic “Human rights of migrants and asylum seekers (international, European and domestic standards)”.

Within the International Protection Service, two national trainings were held as part of the EASO training curriculum during April and July 2021: “End of protection” and “COI”.

Representatives of the Ministry of the Interior participated in the conference Digital Innovation and Efficiency of Asylum Procedures, organised by EASO, GDISC and IGC in Valletta, Malta.

An internal document was created in the context of capacity building - Workflow for heads of international protection procedure, which encompasses all the procedures related to the management of the administrative procedure in international protection approval cases.

#### **4.9. Reception of Afghan refugees**

In 2021, the Republic of Croatia expressed solidarity and hosted a total of 41 Afghan citizens and their family members in the period from August to the end of December 2021.

All persons are provided with accommodation as well as assistance and material reception conditions during the international protection procedure. Upon approval of international protection, they were provided with individual assistance and support during the first and most important integration steps in order to make

them full members of society as quickly and successfully as possible. In cooperation with the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care and other relevant bodies, the evacuated Afghan citizens were very quickly accommodated in suitable housing units.

#### **4.10. Psychosocial support and healthcare of applicants for international protection**

In 2021, 591 people were provided with psychological support and counselling.

The programme of support for applicants for international protection continued based on the cooperation of the Croatian Red Cross with the Ministry of the Interior through the project "Social Services and Psychosocial Support to Applicants for International Protection", and the main areas of work in reception centres were providing psychosocial and practical support and assistance to applicants for international protection, identifying vulnerable groups and planning of the work adapted to their specific needs, assistance with access to health services and provision of specialist medical examinations as directed by the doctor. Support was provided for 1,179 applicants for international protection and access to health services was provided for 1,196 applicants for international protection. In addition, 1,603 medical consultations by general practitioners were carried out and a total of 588 transports or escorts were provided for 310 applicants to public health institutions for specialist consultation and diagnostic examinations. For the purpose of COVID-19 vaccination, transportation was provided 53 times, as well as escort for applicants to public health institutions.

The Croatian Red Cross (hereinafter referred to as CRC) cooperated in the field of healthcare with the organization "Médecins du Monde ASBL - Dokters van

de Wereld VZW" through the project "5P - Disease Prevention, Health Promotion, Psychological Support, Access and Assistance in Health Care for Applicants for International Protection". Thus, their cooperation in 2021 resulted in the care of 58 pregnant applicants for international protection. The MDM - BELGIQUE team, in cooperation with the Health Centre Zagreb - Centre, provided them with overall healthcare by escorting them to the Clinic for Female Reproductive System Diseases and Delivery of the University Hospital Centre Zagreb or to the "Sveti Duh" Clinical Hospital.

## **5. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS**

### **5.1. Statistical data on minor children in international protection procedure**

In 2021, there was a total of 1,310 minors who are applicants for international protection in the Republic of Croatia, and 195 were unaccompanied minors (among them 174 boys and 21 girls). In 2021, 36 minors who are applicants for international protection were granted international protection, of which two are unaccompanied minors.

### **5.2. Inter-departmental cooperation for the purpose of protecting unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups in the international protection procedure**

In order to improve practice and enhance the asylum and migration system during 2021, and related to the application of The Protocol on the Treatment of Unaccompanied Children, the Ministry of the Interior, through inter-departmental cooperation and exchange of information between the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, in August 2021, has adopted the Instruction on the Treatment of Unaccompanied Children. The goal was to operationally define the roles and responsibilities of all actors in accordance with the Protocol on the Treatment of Unaccompanied Children. The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, as the responsible authority for dealing with applicants for international protection, systematically communicates with all governmental and non-governmental organisations and resolves current challenges regarding unaccompanied minors on a daily basis.

Within the framework of intensive cooperation between the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and the Ministry of the Interior, centres for social welfare and police stations were sent common instructions on how to treat unaccompanied children, with an emphasis on treatment in case of doubt about the age of a child, the appointment of special guardians and the family reunification procedure when unaccompanied children and their parents came to the Republic of Croatia at different time periods. Likewise, the aforementioned instruction indicated that special attention should be paid to possible indicators of trafficking in human beings – children, in which case all participants in the process are obliged to inform the authorities responsible for trafficking in human beings.

In the context of the Dublin procedure in accordance with Regulation 604/2013, the procedure for reunification of unaccompanied minors - applicants for international protection with family members located on the territory of one of the EU countries is carried out. Emphasis was placed on cooperation with special guardians of unaccompanied minors who are applicants for international protection, and in addition to the adopted Standard Operating Procedure “Implementation of the Dublin procedure with unaccompanied children - applicants for international protection in cooperation with special guardians”, several working meetings were held with representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Pension system, Family and Social Policy. During 2021, several procedures have been initiated for the reunification of unaccompanied minors with family members in the EU Member States, and reunifications were successfully carried out in two cases.

In view of the new challenges in cooperation with Member States in the context of the implementation of the procedure for the reunification of unaccompanied minors - applicants for



international protection, active cooperation was achieved with other state administration bodies, associations and international organisations. Namely, during 2021, the implementation of DNA analysis was requested by the Member State to which a documented request for the family members' reunification was sent.

In addition, contacts with experts in the field of medical age assessment were established. However, during the year, not a single procedure of medical age assessment was carried out due to the arbitrary leaving of accommodation and the Republic of Croatia by minors who are applicants for international protection during the international protection procedure.

From April 2021, the Standard Operating Procedure in the case of sexual and gender-specific violence in reception centres for applicants for international protection is applied. The Standard Operating Procedure was developed in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, UNHCR, IOM, MDM, CLC, the Jesuit Refugee Service (hereinafter referred to as JRS) and the Society for Psychological Assistance. With the development and entry into force of the Standard Operating Procedure, a clear and effective referral system has been established to the national mechanism for women and men who survived sexual and gender-specific violence and who are accommodated in reception centres for applicants for international protection. The relevant standard operating procedure contains procedures, roles, and responsibilities of service providers involved in the prevention and protection against sexual and gender-specific violence, which will be used in accordance with existing national protocols while applying an approach that respects the individual circumstances of victims of violence.

### **5.3. Integration of minors who are applicants for international protection and minors who are granted international protection**

The provision of support to minor children in their integration into Croatian society continued through the ensured right to education, and despite the challenges of the pandemic and the short average stay in reception centres, 116 procedures were initiated for the inclusion of minor applicants in the education system, and 45 minors were included in the education system during 2021.

### **5.4. Access to information for minors who are applicants for international protection**

The right to information and legal advice is also ensured by the implementation of free legal aid and counselling projects during 2021, in which a special focus is placed on providing legal support to unaccompanied minors and their special guardians in the international protection procedure, and on locations where unaccompanied minors are accommodated.

## 6. INTEGRATION

### 6.1 Standing Committee for the Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society

The meeting of the Standing Committee for the Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society was held on 12 November 2021. At the meeting, the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee for the Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society were adopted. In accordance with current practice, key achievements and challenges were presented in the field of providing guaranteed services to persons granted international protection, as well as legislative, regulatory and project news related to the integration of third-country nationals. The Committee was presented with data on the dynamics of granting international protection during 2021, and following the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the data on the status of the implementation of solidarity programmes in which the Republic of Croatia participates, which concern the reception and integration of third-country nationals who meet the conditions for international protection.

Furthermore, the Draft National Programme of AMIF for the period from 2021 to 2027 and the Draft Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Applicants for International Protection and Persons Granted International Protection for the year 2022 were presented. The Draft Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for the period from 2021 to 2022 was prepared as part of the project **“Connection - CONNEcting Cities Towards Integration action”**, in which the City of Zagreb participates. Public

discussions about the document lasted until 15 July 2021.<sup>12</sup>

### 6.2. Integration projects and activities financed by AMIF

#### 6.2.1. INCLuDE – Interdepartmental cooperation in the empowerment of third-country nationals

The Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities created an informative video<sup>13</sup> with the purpose of raising awareness of the importance of the successful integration of persons granted international protection. The creation of the video is part of the project **“INCLuDE - Interdepartmental cooperation in the empowerment of third-country nationals”**, co-financed by AMIF, the aim of which is to strengthen the prerequisites for the social inclusion of third-country nationals with an emphasis on persons who have been granted international protection in Republic of Croatia. The goal of the video is to promote the acceptance and social inclusion of third-country nationals who are applicants for international protection and those who have been granted international protection, through an overview and summary of their rights and obligations and the challenges they face along the way.

In April 2021, within the framework of this project, members of the Advisory Group of Third-Country Nationals and Persons of Migrant Origin were appointed. The aim of establishing the aforementioned group is to empower third-country nationals through education on rights and obligations, to strengthen their perspective in contributing to the improvement of integration policies, and to involve them in the creation,

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<sup>12</sup> At the 7th session, on 27 January 2022, the Zagreb City Assembly has adopted the Action plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Applicants for

International Protection and Persons Granted International Protection for the year 2022.

<sup>13</sup> [https://youtu.be/qaYHJ\\_QCIOQ](https://youtu.be/qaYHJ_QCIOQ)

implementation and evaluation of integration policies and strategies.

On 8 December 2021, as part of the activities of the INclude Project - Interdepartmental Cooperation in the Empowerment of Third-Country Nationals and within the Human Rights Film Festival, a round table “**Social Inclusion of Refugee Women: Opportunities and Challenges**” was held with the aim of presenting the key challenges in the integration of women of migrant origin with an emphasis on women who have been granted international protection.

### 6.2.2. “Integration of Asylum Seekers and Foreigners under Subsidiary Protection into Croatian Society, Education and Preparation for Inclusion in the Labour Market”

In 2021, within the framework of the project “**Integration of Asylum Seekers and Foreigners under Subsidiary Protection into Croatian Society, Education and Preparation for Inclusion in the Labour Market**”, a total of seven Croatian language and culture courses were organized (five lasting 70 hours with a total of 40 registered users and two lasting 210 hours with a total of 42 users); a total of 12 certificates/diplomas were translated for 10 users; one user is included in the continuing education/training programme.

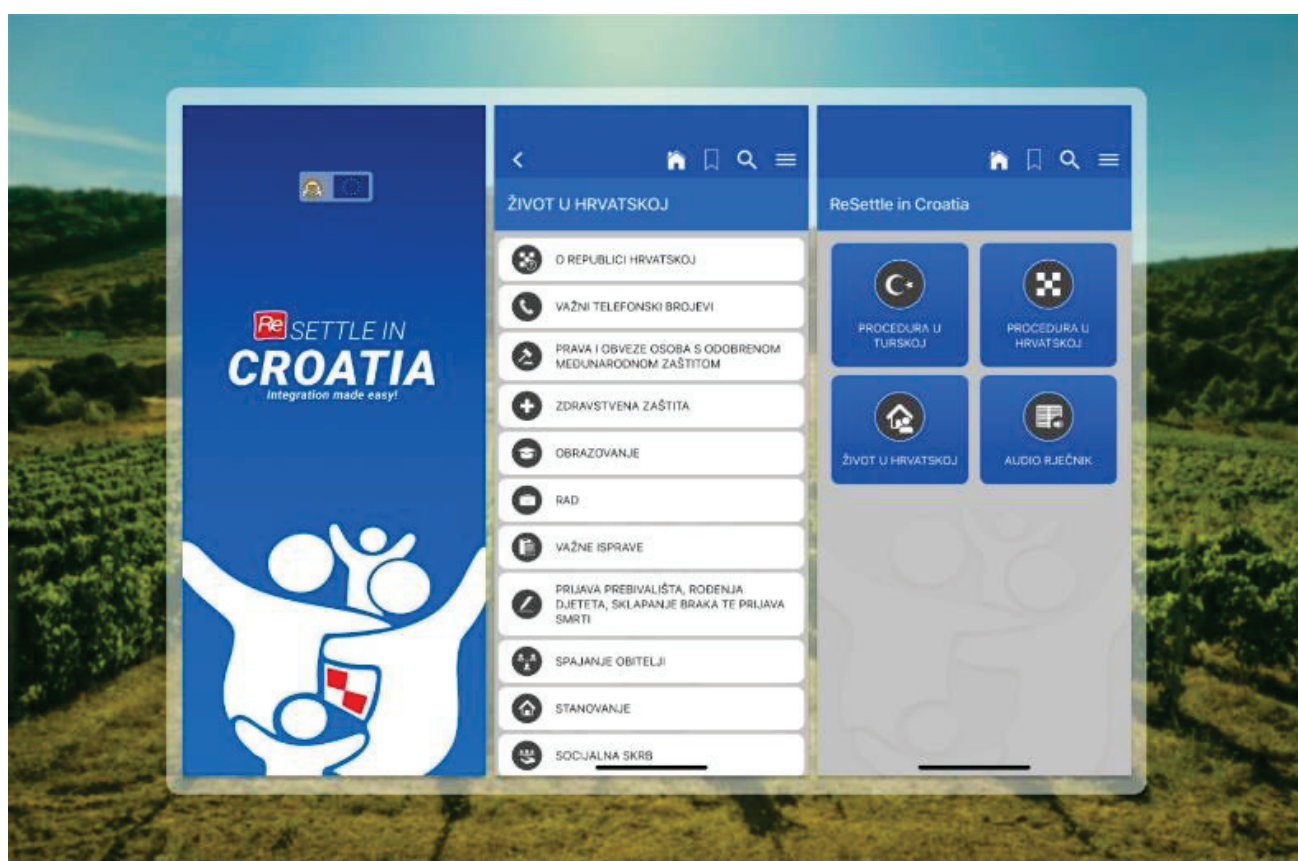


Figure 1 - ReSettle in Croatia mobile application

Source: Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia

Programme of Croatian Language, History and Culture for Asylum Seekers and Foreigners under Subsidiary Protection for Inclusion in Croatian Society<sup>14</sup> has been prepared for publication and is available on the website of the Ministry of Science and Education.

### 6.2.3. Mobile application “Re(Settle) in Croatia”

The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia has created a free mobile application “Re(Settle) in Croatia”, as part of the project “Establishment of a Resettlement Mechanism”, financed by AMIF. The application was created with the aim of ensuring faster and easier access to information and guidelines for persons who come to the Republic of Croatia under the resettlement programme and who are granted international protection.

The application contains useful information and ways of exercising certain rights established by the Act on International and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette, No. 70/15, 127/17), which are the same for all persons who have acquired the status of international protection in the Republic of

Croatia. Thus, all rights prescribed by law have been elaborated individually and the procedure for exercising them has been clarified, along with practical details, for example, important telephone numbers, the design of identity cards and contacts of healthcare institutions. Through the subsection called “Everyday Life”, patterns of behaviour in situations in which people can find themselves in their daily functioning are clarified, from public transport, driving a car, buying groceries, mobile telephony, sending of consignments and money transfers, currency converters and current affairs related to the coronavirus. Also, information is offered on all necessary steps for persons from the resettlement programme and on the rights that persons acquire when granted international protection, ways of exercising these rights and obligations in the Republic of Croatia.

A special feature of the application is the audio dictionary of the Croatian language for words or basic sentences typed in Arabic, Kurdish or English.

Figure 2 – Leaflets for persons granted international protection

Source: Centre for the Culture of Dialogue



<sup>14</sup><https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocImages//dokumenti/Obrazovanje/Azilanti/Program%20ucenja%20hrvatskog%20jezika%20povijesti%20i%20kulture%20>

[za%20azilante%20i%20strance%20-%20radi%20ukljudivanja%20u%20hrvatsko%20društvo.pdf](https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocImages//dokumenti/Obrazovanje/Azilanti/Program%20ucenja%20hrvatskog%20jezika%20povijesti%20i%20kulture%20)



#### **6.2.4. The project “New Neighbours - Inclusion of Persons under International Protection in Croatian Society”**

During 2021, the Centre for the Culture of Dialogue, as an implementing partner of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, continued the implementation of the project **New Neighbours - Inclusion of Persons with Granted International Protection in Croatian Society** (a project co-financed by AMIF). During 2021, the project regularly provided individual assistance to 126 persons granted international protection who were located in Zagreb, Sisak, Karlovac, Rijeka, Viškovo and Maruševac.

The Centre for the Culture of Dialogue printed leaflets for persons granted international protection in four languages: Croatian, English, Arabic and Farsi.

On the occasion of World Refugee Day on 17 June 2021, as part of the project “New Neighbours - Inclusion of Persons with Granted International Protection in Croatian Society”, the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia and the Centre for the Culture of Dialogue organised the New Neighbours Open Day, a place and time for meetings and dialogue between local residents and new neighbours.

In May 2021, the Centre for the Culture of Dialogue was part of a joint initiative in the employment programme for persons granted international protection in the IKEA business facility in Zagreb.

#### **6.2.5. The project “Empowering Experts for Successful Integration of Asylum Seekers”**

In the period from 9 August 2019 to 9 August 2021 the Croatian Association of Social Workers, in partnership with the Centre for Social Welfare Split and with the support of the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, implemented a project called

“**Empowering Experts for Successful Integration of Asylum Seekers**” financed by AMIF. As part of the project, the Croatian Association of Social Workers issued a manual for social workers, other experts and associates of social welfare centres: “The Role of Social Welfare in the Process of Integration of Persons with International Protection”, which contributes to strengthening the competencies of professional workers employed in social welfare centres for work with persons granted international protection. The general objective of the project was aimed at ensuring the successful integration of persons granted international protection into community life and equal access to rights and services in accordance with the Social Welfare Act and the Act on International and Temporary Protection and the highest European standards.

### **6.3. Social integration and labour market integration (projects and activities financed by the European Social Fund)**

#### **6.3.1. Projects within the Call: Expanding the network of social services in the community – phase 1**

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy of the Republic of Croatia has issued a Call: Expanding the network of social services in the community – phase 1, co-financed by the European Social Fund. During 2021, three projects focused on social integration were implemented within the framework of the aforementioned Call.

The project “**Integrative Support for Unaccompanied Children**” was implemented in May 2020 and lasted for two years. It is carried out by CRC in partnership with the city Red Cross societies of Sisak, Osijek, Split and Karlovac and CLC. The main goal of the project is to increase the social inclusion of

120 unaccompanied children through involvement in non-institutional activities, expanding their social network and peer support, as well as through strengthening the capacity of the local community and networking of all participants to provide support to unaccompanied children and establishing a system of easily accessible and specialized professional help to special guardians and experts in institutions where unaccompanied children are accommodated. Also, the project envisages the training of 130 experts to acquire adequate competences in their work. During 2021, the CRC mobile team was in constant contact with all social welfare institutions where unaccompanied children reside. As part of the visit, an initial assessment of needs and an individual work plan for unaccompanied children were made, and professional support was provided for professionals who work with unaccompanied children. 103 children were involved in the project and 65 experts were trained. In March 2021, a workshop was held in the Lipik Community Service Centre for experts, guardians and educators of the aforementioned institution. In July 2021, online education was held for experts in institutions where unaccompanied children are accommodated, in competent centres for social welfare, as well as city Red Cross societies that are involved in project activities. Also, in July of the same year, in the Reception Centre for applicants for international protection in Zagreb, training was held for experts of the Ministry of the Interior and the Croatian Red Cross who work with unaccompanied children on a daily basis.

The implementation of the project **“Building Systematic and Comprehensive Support for Persons Granted International Protection through the Development of Inclusive Social Services”** began in May 2020 for a period of two years, and is carried out by the CRC in partnership with the city Red Cross societies of Zadar, Slavonski Brod, Sisak

and Karlovac and the Croatian Employment Service. The project aims to increase social inclusion for at least 350 people granted international protection – families and single persons, in areas of Zagreb, Slavonski Brod, Zadar and other areas of the Republic of Croatia where the beneficiaries are located. Beneficiaries will be provided with psychosocial and counselling assistance, education for the acquisition of social and life skills and training for integration into the labour market. A large number of new services for the integration of beneficiaries will be developed, and 100 experts - employees and volunteers will be trained for the provision of such services, including a new volunteer programme to support integration. During 2021, the provision of support to persons granted international protection has continued. For all new beneficiaries, a needs assessment and development of an individual plan was carried out, as well as counselling and referral to an interview with the employer. Support was provided for beneficiaries as part of the integration programme, a group meeting was held with the employer, and group activities and workshops were conducted with children of primary school age. The activities of the project included 194 persons granted international protection, and 13 experts were trained as part of the project. In April 2021, a two-day educational workshop on the topic Migration and Integration of Persons Granted International Protection was held in CRC for volunteers and volunteering organisers – employees and volunteers of partner organisations and volunteering coordinators.

The implementation of the project **“Living with us”** began in April 2020, it lasts two years, and is carried out by DKolektiv – an organisation for social development in partnership with the City Red Cross Society of Osijek, Association for Creative Development – Slap, Information Legal Centre and the cities Osijek and Slavonski Brod. The purpose of the project is to create

conditions and prepare local communities for the integration of persons granted international protection by providing social support through volunteer programmes in Osijek, Slavonski Brod and the Reception Centre for applicants for international protection in Kutina, then by strengthening the role and capacity of the local community for planning and implementation of integration through empowerment and connecting experts from non-profit organisations/social service providers, and by sensitising citizens to the problems and needs of persons granted international protection, as well as their mutual acquaintance and connection as a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence and quality of life in the community. During 2021, preparatory activities for the implementation of social support for persons granted international protection in the area of Sisak-Moslavina County took place, as well as activities for designing a volunteer programme for support through the exchange of experiences between partner organisations, and activities for strengthening the role of the local community for local integration processes. 6 consultations and working meetings were held with different participants, that is, social service providers. The educations included 13 experts, and an inclusive camp was held in Požeški Markovac, which gathered persons granted international protection, representatives of the local community (citizens and volunteers) and participants from partner and collaborative organisations.

### **6.3.2. Project within the Call “Support for social inclusion and employment of marginalised groups”**

In October 2021, the two-year project **“Education for Better Integration of Asylum Seekers”** was completed. It was implemented by INITIATIVE - Centre for Education with partners JRS and Vocational Community College. The goal

of the project is to increase the employability of asylum seekers through the development and implementation of language and cultural integration programmes, individual coaching and the implementation of professional training programmes for elementary occupations in the tourism and hospitality sector, where there is a labour shortage. As part of the project, motivational workshops, English language learning programmes and professional training programmes for simple jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector were held. As part of the project, 29 asylum seekers took part in the training programmes, 33 individual plans for asylum seekers were created, and a programme of linguistic and cultural integration of asylum seekers was developed.

## **6.4. Reduction and prevention of social exclusion**

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy co-financed projects aimed at social inclusion of persons granted international protection from the state budget, from part of the revenue from games of chance. As part of the Call for submitting the projects aimed at reducing and preventing social exclusion and social inclusion and integration of socially vulnerable groups for 2019/2020, six projects were implemented, while in the programming period for 2021/2022, eight programmes were implemented.

### **6.4.1. Projects from the programming period for the year 2019/2020**

1. Organisation status M, project: **“Involved and Active!”** - The goal of the project is to provide information on the basic and legal framework of the Republic of Croatia in order to improve inclusion and exercise of rights of persons granted international protection. Through the series of workshops, knowledge and social skills

were improved and active participation in communities was encouraged. 22 workshops were held, in which a total of 184 beneficiaries, aged from 20 to 45, from Syria, Iran, Ivory Coast, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Senegal participated. At the workshops, they were introduced to the topics of gender, gender norms, gender-specific violence, women's rights and active participation in society, healthy lifestyles, refugee integration, the labour market, higher education and integration measures.

2. Civil rights project Sisak implemented the project **“Providing Support to Persons Granted International Protection for their Inclusion in the Life of the Local Community and the Labour Market”**. The goals of the project are to help families granted international protection in their integration into all segments of life of the local communities in Sisak and Karlovac, to prepare them for access to the labour market as well as to combat prejudices and achieve intercultural understanding. Permanent support was provided for 20 families and 84 direct beneficiaries who participated in four workshops with the aim of connecting and creating social ties in the community with the active participation of persons granted international protection. A brochure was designed for persons under international protection, which encompasses all important information about health insurance, education, employment, housing and other relevant information. The brochure is planned to be translated into Arabic, then printed and distributed in the field to beneficiaries.

3. Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma, project: **“I Live Emancipated Independently and Actively”**. The project aims to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life of women granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia through active participation in educational and social activities, increase the level of self-confidence and improve mental health, as well as sensitise local communities to issues of integration of

women granted international protection. The project included 25 women from Syria, Palestine and Iraq through participation in 10 intercultural workshops and other individual and group psychosocial support activities. Six beneficiaries of the project are employed at IKEA within the framework of the paid internship programme.

4. Citizens' initiative **“MY CITY SISAK”**, project: **“SuPER - Meetings of Support, Education and Work”**. The goals of the project are the organisation of social activities for persons granted international protection, their emotional empowerment and the building of a better and safer life in the present. The association conducted educational forums for the purpose of learning and informing as well as preventing stigmatisation and prejudice. 73 persons granted international protection participated in the forum. 10 webinars, thematic “chat rooms” were held with the aim of creating dialogue, social connections and relationships.

5. Centre for Women War Victims, project: **“Social Inclusion and Integration of Women Granted International Protection into the Community”**. The goals of the project are the reduction of social exclusion and the integration of women granted international protection into the community, the provision of support in the process of integration through cultural mediation, education about cultural mediation, familiarisation with culture, customs, rules and regulations and the development of communication and social skills as well as job-hunting skills. 60 different educations and workshops were held for women granted international protection. Contacts with institutions were mediated, practical help was provided through instructions, interpretation and translation were provided when communicating with various authorities and services responsible for the status of asylum seekers, as well as healthcare institutions. The project included 18 women granted



international protection and 10 representatives of civil society organisations that provide help and support to refugees and persons granted international protection.

6. Society for Psychological Assistance, project: **“Development of Psychosocial Support for Children and Families Granted International Protection”**. The aim of the project is to contribute to the creation of quality conditions necessary for the integration of persons granted international protection through the empowerment of experts who work with children granted international protection and the provision of psychological support to adults, especially parents, children and young people. The project included six beneficiaries, children and young people granted international protection, who were provided with psychosocial support through two-day education and counselling services within four planned hours of group supervision for mutual learning and sharing of experiences.

#### **6.4.2. Programmes from the programming period for 2021/2022**

1. Society for Psychological Assistance, programme: **“Let's Learn Together! - Support for Children and Families Granted International Protection in Their Integration into the Community”**. The programme is aimed at providing psychological support to persons granted international protection (children, young people, adults, families), support in learning and integration, empowerment and education of professional school staff, teachers and volunteers (future helping professionals) who work with children granted international protection through education about the specifics of working with children granted international protection.

2. Centre for Peace Studies programme: **Involve Me Locally,**

**contributes to the increase of social inclusion and integration into the life of the community of persons granted international protection.** The programme includes the implementation of educational workshops for citizens of the Republic of Croatia through the programme of Intercultural Mediators for participants in local communities, and educational workshops for persons with granted international protection through education on the development of communication skills and education on empowerment for the world of work. The programme includes the implementation of public events in Zagreb and Osijek, and encourages more public events in other local areas through the cooperation of project partners with members of the Coordination for Integration, in order to make the public aware of the importance of integration and to be more open to persons granted international protection.

3. The Civil Rights Project Sisak, programme: **TBP: “Tolerance Before prejudice”** whose main goal is to help and support persons granted international protection in the integration into all segments of life of local communities in Sisak, Kutina and Karlovac, to prepare persons granted international protection for access to the labour market, independent life in the community, as well as to contribute to connecting and creating positive social ties and combating prejudices.

4. Citizens' initiative “My City Sisak”, programme: **“AUT - all of us together”** strives to contribute to the increase of social inclusion and integration into community life of vulnerable socially sensitive groups, that is, to reduce and prevent social exclusion - of persons granted international protection, stateless persons and others in this category, through joint meetings with the general population for the purpose of getting to know each other, to free

themselves from mutual prejudices and live together in a quality and safe manner in the local community.

5. Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma, programme: **“NEW FACE OF THE COMMUNITY - Support for the Social and Work Inclusion of Asylum Seekers”**. The general goal of the programme is to support the social inclusion of persons granted international protection in the local community and Croatian society. The specific goals of strengthening the individual capacities and resources of persons granted international protection in order to create a more responsible attitude towards social and work inclusion are reinforced. Intercultural competences and respect for diversity among persons granted international protection and members of the local community are enhanced.

6. Centre for Women War Victims, programme: **Support for Social Inclusion and Integration of Women Granted International Protection into the Community**, which provides support to women granted international protection in the process of integration into the community through psycho-social, counselling, legal assistance and support, mediating with institutions, learning the Croatian language, getting to know Croatian culture, customs and regulations and improving communication and social skills, skills in writing applications and resumes, and through improving cooperation with organisations and institutions.

7. JRS programme: **“MIC - Migrants in the Community”**. The goal of the project is to contribute to quality social inclusion, capacity building and improvement of the socio-economic situation of persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia, as well as the socio-economic-

cultural development of society and the integration system in the Republic of Croatia.

8. Without Borders, programme: **“GET TOGETHER”** - inclusion of persons granted international protection in the community through mentorship and development of soft and life skills in a new environment. The goal of this project is to create a long-term programme of mentorship and informal learning of soft skills for young refugees in order to actively include them in the community, create an opportunity for independent living and to integrate them into the labour market more easily.

## **6.5. Handbook Integration of refugees into Croatian society**

As part of the project **“Legal Support in the Asylum System”** implemented by the CLC, the handbook “Integration of refugees into Croatian society: legislation and realization in practice” was created in Croatian<sup>15</sup> and English language.<sup>16</sup>

The handbook is intended for all those who provide direct assistance and support to persons granted international protection in Croatia, but also for all other actors in the field of integration of such persons, and contains six papers.

## **6.6. Newly opened integration houses**

On 1 October 2021, Žarko Katić, State Secretary for Immigration, Citizenship and Administrative Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, opened the **House of Hope of the Baptist Church Zagreb - Malešnica**. The House of Hope is a renovated and newly equipped building of the former police station in Gajnice, in order to become a place of

<sup>15</sup><https://emn.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/vijesti/Integracija-izbjeglica-u-hrvatsko-drustvo.pdf>

<sup>16</sup>[https://emn.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/vijesti/Integracija%20izbjeglica%20u%20hrvatsko%20dru%C5%A1tvo\\_ENG.pdf](https://emn.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/vijesti/Integracija%20izbjeglica%20u%20hrvatsko%20dru%C5%A1tvo_ENG.pdf)

meetings and cooperation, of providing help and support to marginalised and vulnerable social groups, children, young and elderly people. The House of Hope is an example of successful cooperation between the national authority, local community and a religious organisation.

**The Centre for the Integration of Foreigners** was opened in the city of Sisak in March 2021. The project promoter is the non-governmental organization Civil Rights Project Sisak, and the centre will provide ongoing assistance through unified legal, psychosocial and other services to stateless persons, applicants for international protection, persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia and others.

#### **6.7. Data overview of persons granted international protection at the Croatian Employment Service**

When entering the register of unemployed persons of the Croatian Employment Service, persons granted international protection are equal in their rights and obligations to Croatian citizens when seeking employment. In order to attain their successful integration into the labour market, employment counsellors, through intensive work with people, refer them to vacancies, include them in active employment policy measures and other activities.

Ignorance of the Croatian and/or English language and low motivation on the part of beneficiaries, both for learning the Croatian language and for inclusion in other programmes that can raise the level of employability, are the main obstacles to better integration into the labour market and society as a whole.

Despite the fact that 2021 was also marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to all statistical indicators, successful

employment of persons granted international protection was recorded.

As of 31 December 2021, in the register of unemployed persons of the Croatian Employment Service, there were 105 persons from the above categories (of which 51 were women), of which 88 persons with the status of asylum seekers (of which 41 were women), eight persons under subsidiary protection (of which three were women), seven family members of a person granted international protection (of which six were women) and two applicants for international protection with the right to work (of which one was a woman).

In the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021, 46 persons of the above-mentioned statuses were included in the activity of individual counselling, of which 40 persons with asylum status, four persons under subsidiary protection, one family member of a person granted international protection and one applicant for international protection.

Persons granted international protection are also included in active employment policy measures precisely with the aim of a more successful and faster integration into the labour market. During 2021, a total of six unemployed persons with the status of asylum seekers were included in the active employment policy measures.

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

##### **6.8.1. Integration measures abroad**

Communication language competence is one of the key competences for the transfer and acquisition of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and values and is the basis of education and successful adaptation. In order to enable members of the Croatian diaspora to receive basic language training even before arriving to

Croatia, the Central State Office for Croats Abroad, in cooperation with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb, provides free online courses in Croatian A1.HR and A2.HR. In 2021, 10,554 users accessed the courses, 7,292 participants accessed the A1 level E-course with the English interface, 2,261 participants accessed the course with the Spanish interface. The participants of the courses come from 116 countries on six continents, and the users in the USA, Brazil, Argentina, Canada and Australia were among the most represented users. The A2 level E-course with the English interface was accessed by 825 participants, 176 participants accessed the Spanish interface, and the participants are from 65 countries on five continents, with the largest number of visits from the USA, Australia, Brazil, Chile and Argentina.

When making a decision about returning or immigrating to the Republic of Croatia, it is important to have information about all areas of life interests and the expected desired goal, therefore, the Central State Office for Croats Abroad has for the first time ensured, through a new communication and information channel, the bilingual platform e-Citizens, the availability of information through a separate category/section CROATS ABROAD. Content for Croats abroad includes separate areas such as Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatian emigrants and their descendants, Croatian national minority in Europe, Economic integration and investment, and the Return to Croatia, where information is available regarding planning of return, information of interest in all areas of life in Croatia and information on advisory and individual support for returnees provided by the Welcome Office. As a new communication channel, the CROATS ABROAD section recorded slightly less than 100,000 visits in the first nine months of 2021.

The inclusion of all stakeholders in the creation of favourable conditions for the

return of Croatian emigrants and descendants of Croatian emigrants is an important activity of the Central State Office for Croats Abroad, which is defined by the Strategy on Relations between the Republic of Croatia and Croats Abroad and the Act on the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and Croats Abroad.

### **6.8.2. Integration measures in the Republic of Croatia**

In 2021, SDUHIRH [CSOCA] also successfully implemented integration programmes such as the Program for Learning the Croatian Language in the Republic of Croatia, the project - Special Enrolment Quota for Members of the Croatian National Minority and the Croatian Diaspora, the Scholarship Programme for Croatians Living Abroad, and the Integration Support Programme via Welcome Office.

Based on the Decision on awarding scholarships to students - Croats living abroad for the academic year 2020/2021, 500 scholarships were awarded to Croats living abroad, of which 100 scholarships were intended for students studying in the Republic of Croatia.

With the entry into force of the new Aliens Act on 1 January 2021, for the first time, provisions relating to the regularisation of Croats who have foreign citizenship have been established, and with the production of a Certificate from the Central State Office, it is possible to regulate temporary or permanent residence for humanitarian reasons. In the reporting period, the SDUHIRH issued 134 certificates to Croatian people with foreign citizenship and/or without citizenship for the purpose of regulating temporary residence in the Republic of Croatia. After approval of temporary residence, returnees from Croatian diaspora can enter the labour market without the need to obtain a

residence and work permit, which greatly contributes to improving their integration into Croatian society, and after approval of permanent residence, they realize the right to work and self-employment, professional training, education and student scholarships, social care, child allowance, tax benefits, access to the goods and services market.

In 2021, SDUHIRH signed a Cooperation Agreement with the Croatian Employers' Association, through which it expressed the willingness to cooperate on activities that contribute to the improvement of a stimulating social and economic environment with an emphasis on the importance of introducing emigrants to the labour market. Based on the analysis of inquiries, needs, and experiences in working with Croatian returnees/immigrants from the Croatian diaspora in cooperation with the Croatian Employment Service, returnees from the Croatian diaspora were also recognised in the measures of the active employment policy, and in 2021, three people used the training measure at workplace. For the purpose of employment/training through the Croatian Employment Service, the Welcome Office issues Certificates of Eligibility for the category of beneficiaries of targeted measure for Croatian returnees/immigrants from the Croatian diaspora.

SDUHRIH financially supported and provided the project "SIDRO - Support for Foreigners in Integration into Croatian Society", which was carried out in cooperation with the Jesuit Refugee Service. In addition, the project "From Arrival to Stay: Associations and Networking as a Form of Integration of Croats from Abroad into Croatian Society" was carried out in cooperation with the Faculty of Croatian Studies of the University of Zagreb, the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies and other institutions.

Due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, SDUHIRH carried out additional activities in cooperation with other institutions (Student Centre of the University of Zagreb, Department of Health of the City of Zagreb, School of Medicine Zagreb, Croatian Institute of Public Health) in order to ensure medical examinations, quarantine, vaccinations and vaccination certificates copies, as well as the issuance of an EU digital COVID certificate.



## **7. CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS**

### **7.1. Acquisition of citizenship - legislative changes**

In October 2021, the new Ordinance on the procedure and method of taking the solemn oath ("Official Gazette" No. 108/2021)<sup>17</sup> entered into force. The Ordinance prescribes the method and procedure for taking the solemn oath of a person who acquires Croatian citizenship by birth.

Furthermore, the Act on amendments to the Croatian Citizenship Act (Official Gazette, No. 138/21)<sup>18</sup> was adopted in December 2021, and entered into force on 1 January 2022.

### **7.2. Statelessness**

Representatives of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia also carried out activities related to statelessness in 2021. They participated in meetings with UNHCR representatives and working meetings with representatives of the non-governmental humanitarian organisation Civil Rights Project Sisak on the subject of statelessness.

In May 2021, an official of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia participated in an online seminar on statelessness in San Remo, and in September in a virtual event commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness from 1961. During the months of September, October and November 2021, officers from the Police Department of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, the Police Department of Istria County and the Police Department of Brod-Posavina County participated in the workshops on statelessness organized by UNHCR.

Representatives of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia participated in the virtual conference organized by the UNHCR on 29 November 2021, on the occasion of marking the 60th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Reduction of Stateless Persons from 1961 and the tenth anniversary of the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the aforementioned Convention.

The non-governmental organisation Civil Rights Project Sisak, as an implementation partner of UNHCR, continuously provides free legal assistance to stateless persons and those at risk of losing their citizenship throughout the Republic of Croatia through the association's main office in Sisak and its contact points.

As part of the provision of free legal assistance in 2021, 458 users received 877 legal advice in various legal fields.

The Civil Rights Project Sisak established a coordination group consisting of all relevant participants (UNHCR, Ministry of the Interior, Office of the Ombudsman, Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, Centres for Social Welfare, Red Cross, Croatian Employment Service, Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb, etc.).

In March 2021, the Statelessness Index was published<sup>19</sup>. The Civil Rights Project Sisak participated in the creation of this document in partnership with the Information Legal Centre Slavonski Brod. The Republic of Croatia is among the 24 countries for which the European Network on Statelessness created the Statelessness Index. The Statelessness Index shows how each country protects stateless persons and what it does to prevent and suppress new cases.

<sup>17</sup>[https://narodnenovine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021\\_10\\_108\\_1890.html](https://narodnenovine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_10_108_1890.html)

<sup>18</sup> [Act on amendments to the Croatian Citizenship Act \(nn.hr\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> <https://index.statelessness.eu/country/croatia>

## 8. BORDERS, VISAS AND SCHENGEN

### 8.1. Border surveillance – the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

In order to protect against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia also made several decisions during 2021 on the limiting movement across the border crossings of the Republic of Croatia, as well as amendments to the decisions.

When making decisions regarding the closure of external borders to third countries, the Republic of Croatia was guided by the documents of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union.

Throughout 2021, border control was carried out in accordance with the recommendations and instructions of the Croatian Institute for Public Health and the Decision on the temporary ban on crossing the state border at the border crossings of the Republic of Croatia.

In 2021, the use of the application<sup>20</sup> continued for the notification of entry into the Republic of Croatia, which was activated by the Ministry of the Interior in

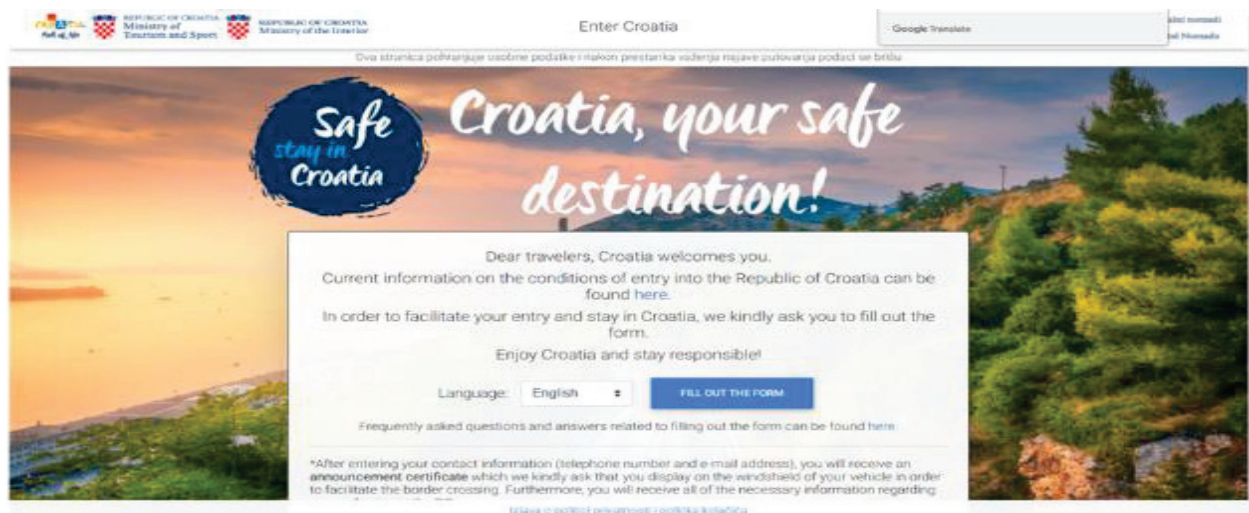
June 2020. The application is available in 12 languages of the countries from whose speaking areas tourists most often come to the Republic of Croatia.

In accordance with the application, during the tourist season, entry “EnterCroatia” traffic lanes were established at the border crossings of Plovanija, Rupa, Macelj, Bregana, in order to speed up the flow of those passengers who announced their arrival via the aforementioned application.

E-mail address [uzg.covid@mup.hr](mailto:uzg.covid@mup.hr), which was established on 10 May 2020, through which people could get relevant information and find out if they meet the conditions for entering the Republic of Croatia, in accordance with the Instructions of the Croatian Institute of Public Health and the Decision on the temporary ban on crossing the state border at the border crossings of the Republic of Croatia, it continued its work in 2021.

Figure 3 – Enter Croatia website

Source: Ministry of the Interior



<sup>20</sup> <https://entercroatia.mup.hr/>

## 8.2. Improving the effectiveness of external border control

In 2021, the Republic of Croatia continued to invest in the capacities of the border police, such as equipping border crossings, technical equipment, education, etc., in order to effectively control the external border. At the same time, in addition to national funds, AMIF and ISF funds are also used.

### 8.2.1. Strategic and legislative framework

Based on the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia 2020-2024, the Programme of the Ministry of the Interior for the period 2021-2024 was drawn up, in which the Border Administration defined its goals, namely:

- Implementation of all necessary activities related to the planned professional training within FRONTEX,
- Improving the technical equipment and IT capacity of the border police,
- Improvement of the infrastructure and accommodation conditions in the Reception centre for foreigners and the implementation of the removal procedure,
- Construction of new infrastructure facilities for the needs of the border police.

Border control is carried out on the basis of plans for enhanced border control and the Concept of Land Border Protection of the Republic of Croatia, a strategic document of the Croatian Border Police.

Both documents have been drafted in accordance with European standards for the purpose of timely planning and taking joint measures and actions to combat the smuggling of persons and irregular migration.

In April 2021, the Annual Risk Analysis was prepared, in which illegal border crossings, smuggling of persons and absconding border control were assessed as a “HIGH” risk, and analytical documents were prepared in accordance with the needs and safety conditions.

Due to the need to harmonise the national legislation with the EU acquis, but also due to the needs for effective monitoring of the state border, the following proposals were drawn up and the following regulations were adopted:

- Ordinance on the treatment of third-country nationals (Official Gazette, number 136/21) <sup>21</sup>entered into force on 11 December 2021,
- Ordinance on the free legal aid in the return procedure (Official Gazette, number 132/21) <sup>22</sup>entered into force on 12 December 2021,
- Ordinance on accommodation in the Reception Centre for Foreigners and the method of calculating the costs of forced removal (Official Gazette, number 145/21)<sup>23</sup> entered into force on 6 January 2022 and
- Ordinance on amendments to the Ordinance on the entry and residence in the Republic of Croatia of citizens of the Member States of the European Economic Area and their family members (Official

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<sup>21</sup> [Ordinance on the treatment of third-country nationals \(nn.hr\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Ordinance on the free legal aid in the return procedure](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Ordinance on accommodation in the Reception Centre for Foreigners and the method of calculating the costs of forced removal \(nn.hr\)](#)



Gazette, No. 86/21)<sup>24</sup> entered into force on 2 August 2021.

### 8.2.2. Technical equipping for external border control

The Svilaj border crossing point is equipped with IT and technical equipment (computers with monitors, document readers and cameras for reading license plates) through EMAS – emergency assistance.

In 2021, the following equipment for the protection of the state border was acquired: 505 manual tetra connections, 8 mobile thermal imaging cameras on a trailer with an off-road vehicle, 8 long-range stationary thermal imaging cameras, 70 specialized vehicles for difficult-to-access terrains and 1,000 short-range sensor cameras.



Figure 4 – Border control vehicle

Source: Ministry of the Interior



Figure 5 - Border control camera

Source: Ministry of the Interior

### 8.2.3. Strengthening the capacity of the border police

In 2021, 63 participants completed the border police course, while more than 800 police officers participated in other border police trainings.

Through additional professional trainings at the regional level, a total of 544 police officers were trained in the following modules: “EU and Schengen Law”, “Preventing the Misuse of Documents”, “Detection of Stolen Vehicles”, “Second Line of Border Control”, “Fundamental Human Rights”, “NB MIS Functionalities” (National Border Management Information System), “Tackling Trafficking in Human Beings” and “Risk analysis”.

It is especially valuable to highlight the training of police officers for off-road driving in real conditions. The training was conducted on Ford Ranger, Toyota Land Cruiser and Suzuki Vitara official vehicles, and a total of 95

<sup>24</sup> Ordinance on amendments to the Ordinance on the entry and residence in the Republic of Croatia

of citizens of the Member States of the European Economic Area and their family members (nn.hr)



*Figure 6 - Border control camera*

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

police officers of the border police attended the training. The training was conducted from 20 September to 25 September 2021, on the territory of the Police Administration of the Lika-Senj County – Lička Plješivica, and was financed through EMAS.

In addition to the above, trainings were conducted with the Customs Administration on the subject of inspection and search of persons and vehicles (17 police officers), and with authorised car service centres on the subject of inspection and search of hybrid and electric vehicles (11 police officers). With the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, training was conducted on the subject of “Official Control of Invasive Species” (35 police officers); and with Air Traffic Control on the subject of flight operations with unmanned aerial vehicle systems (45 police officers).

In addition to national trainings, FRONTEX also conducted trainings in which 25 trainees from the Republic of Croatia participated.

#### **8.2.4. Participation in FRONTEX joint operations**

During 2021, the Republic of Croatia participated in FRONTEX joint operations as a country of dispatch and as a host country. Thus, on the territory of the Republic of Croatia, a joint operation was implemented at the border crossing points of Bajakovo, Tovarnik, Karasovići, Stara Gradiška and Nova Sela.

The Republic of Croatia also participated in FRONTEX joint operations in Albania, Greece, Moldova, Spain, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Montenegro.

#### **8.2.5. Joining the EU systems for effective border control**

On 25 January 2019, the Decision on establishing the Working Group for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and the Council of 30 November 2017 on the establishment of an Entry/Exit Systems (EES) and the Decision on the establishment of the Working Group for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of the European Parliament and the Council of 12 September 2018 on the establishment of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) were adopted.

In relation to the establishment of the EES system, during 2021, adaptation of the National Information System for State Border Management (NISUDG) to the needs of the EES system was carried out. Likewise, the procurement of appropriate equipment for the implementation of this system at border crossings on the external land border, which is planned in stages, is being prepared.

The ETIAS system should be established at the level of the European Union during 2023.

### **8.2.6. Cooperation with third countries through mixed patrols**

Mixed patrols with Bosnia and Herzegovina are conducted in accordance with the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Cooperation in State Border Control and in accordance with the Protocol between the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, the General Police Directorate and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Border Police, on conducting mixed patrols along the common state border (about 1000 per year).

In 2021, 291 mixed patrols were conducted, 146 of which were on the territory of the Republic of Croatia and 145 on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **8.3. Visas**

### **8.3.1. Legal basis**

In August 2021, the Regulation on the Visa Regime entered into force (Official Gazette, No. 92/21)<sup>25</sup> which prescribes the visa regime of the Republic of Croatia and the funds needed by a third-country national for maintenance during a short-term stay in the Republic of Croatia and for return to the country he came from or for traveling to a third country.

This Regulation ensures the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and the Council of 14 November 2018 on the listing of third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (OJ L 303, 28 November 2018), as amended by Regulation (EU) 2019/592 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 April

2019 amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 on the listing of third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement, with regard to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union (OJ L 103I, 12 April 2019).

Ordinance on visas (Official Gazette, number 109/21)<sup>26</sup> which entered into force on 1 November 2021, among other things, regulated the long-term visa institute in more detail and introduced certain novelties in the procedure and conditions for issuing airport transit visas (visa A) and short-term visas (visa C) to third-country nationals in diplomatic missions/consular offices of the Republic of Croatia. In addition, the application forms for the issuance of visa A and visa C were amended and adapted, and the application form for the issuance of a long-term visa (visa D) was prescribed. The new Ordinance on visas ensures the implementation of Regulation (EC) no. 810/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 243, 15 September 2009), as last amended by Regulation (EU) 2019/1155 of the European Parliament and the Council of 20 June 2019 amending Regulation (EC) no. 810/2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 188, 12 July 2019). With the entry into force of the new Ordinance on visas, the previous Ordinance on visas ceased to be valid (Official Gazette, No. 7/13 and 5/18).

With the entry into force of the new Regulation on Administrative Fee Tariffs (Official Gazette, No. 92/21), in the part that refers to fees in the field of foreign affairs, the fees for airport transit visa (visa A) and short-term (visa C) visa have been further harmonised with the amount determined by Regulation (EC) no. 810/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a

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<sup>25</sup> [Regulation on the Visa Regime \(nn.hr\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Ordinance of Visas \(nn.hr\)](#)

Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) in the amount of 80 EUR, for which it was necessary to amend the Administrative Fee Tariffs. The amount of fees for the national visa (visa D) is determined by the same by-law.

### **8.3.2. Mechanism of reciprocity**

On 28 September 2021, US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas made a decision on joining the Republic of Croatia to the Visa Waiver Program, which was the last formal step towards a visa-free regime for Croatian citizens traveling to the United States of America.

Thereby, from 23 October 2021, Croatian citizens can travel to the United States without a visa, after obtaining the approval of the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) via Internet.

### **8.3.3. Issuance of visas and work of diplomatic missions and consular offices during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Republic of Croatia directly applies Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 on the listing of third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (codified text), which, among other things, determines the list of third countries whose citizens are required to obtain a visa when crossing the external borders of the Member States.

With the aim of combating and preventing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 16 March 2020 until the beginning of 2022, the receipt of requests for the issuance of Croatian short-term visas at diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Croatia was suspended. Initially, holders of diplomatic and official

passports and family members of Croatian citizens (spouse and child) were exempted from the aforementioned.

During 2021, the categories of persons who were exempted from the suspension of the receipt of requests for the issuance of a Croatian short-term visa were changed and supplemented on several occasions, in accordance with the decisions on the temporary ban and restriction on crossing the state border at the border crossings of the Republic of Croatia, which were adopted during the year 2021 by the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia (first adopted on 19 March 2020), that is, in accordance with the amendments to Recommendation (EU) 2020/912 on temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restrictions, which were adopted during 2021.

During 2021, the suspension of the receipt of visa applications was further expanded, that is, harmonised, with categories of passengers that were included in special lists (instructions) for passengers coming from countries for whom special epidemiological measures are applied when crossing the border upon arrival in the Republic of Croatia and which were adopted by the Croatian Health Insurance Fund during 2021. Thus, from 30 March 2021, special epidemiological measures were applied when crossing the border for all travellers coming directly from the Republic of South Africa, Brazil, Zanzibar (Tanzania) and India.

Additionally, on 26 November 2021, the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia issued a Decision on the security measure of a temporary ban on entry into the Republic of Croatia for persons coming from the Republic of South Africa, Botswana, the Kingdom of Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Hong Kong (Official Gazette, number 127/21), which underwent several subsequent changes. In accordance with the



aforementioned Decision, the receipt of requests from persons coming from the aforementioned third countries has been completely suspended. Exceptionally, Croatian citizens, as well as their family members and third-country nationals who are long-term residents were exempted from the application of the aforementioned Decision based on Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 on the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents and persons who have the right of residence based on other EU directives or national law in the Republic of Croatia or who have national long-term visas for the Republic of Croatia. Persons exempted from the application of the aforementioned Decision are subject to mandatory quarantine in the duration of 14 days from the day of entry into the Republic of Croatia and mandatory testing for the SARS-CoV-2 virus on the last day of quarantine.

On 14 January 2022, the Decision on the termination of the validity of the Decision on the security measure of a temporary ban on entry into the Republic of Croatia for persons coming from the Republic of South Africa, Botswana, the Kingdom of Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Zimbabwe and the Republic of Mozambique was adopted (Official Gazette, number 6/22) and the receipt of applications for persons coming from the aforementioned third countries from 15 January 2022 takes place in accordance with the general Decision on the temporary ban on crossing the state border at the border crossings of the Republic of Croatia.

Depending on the epidemiological situation during 2021, the diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Croatia have organised their work in the conditions of the global COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with the instructions of the

General Secretariat of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, and depending on the epidemiological situation and national/local measures, have temporarily limited the work with the parties to the extent that it was necessary. In the event of a serious worsening of the epidemiological situation in certain third countries, a temporary complete suspension of receipt of visa applications was possible, but even in that case, applications were received for the issuance of short-term Croatian visas for family members of Croatian citizens and family members of citizens of the EEA and the Swiss Confederation, that is, the United Kingdom.

Due to the complete or partial suspension of receipt of visa applications in the diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Member States of the European Union/Schengen, and depending on the epidemiological measures in certain third countries, there was a complete or partial closure of the visa centres of the company VFS Global with which the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has contracted cooperation in receiving requests for issuing short-term Croatian visas (in 29 third countries). Already at the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, the majority of VFS visa centres started working again, and it became possible to submit applications for the issuance of a short-term Croatian visa to all third-country nationals who fall into the category of so-called essential travels.

#### **8.3.4. The entry of the Republic of Croatia into the Schengen**

On 9 December 2021, the Council of Ministers of the European Union unanimously approved the Conclusions on the fulfilment of the necessary conditions for the full application of the Schengen acquis in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>27</sup>

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<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/S-T-14883-2021-INIT/hr/pdf>

## 9. IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS

### 9.1. Statistics

The trend of movement of persons who are trying or have already crossed the state border illegally depends largely on the economic, political and social situation in the world.

The increased pressure of irregular migrants throughout 2018 is evident, as 8,207 persons were recorded in that year.

At the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, that number was almost twice as high as in 2017. The pressure continued in 2019, when the number was almost three times higher (2019 - 20,278).

Despite a brief drop during the implementation of measures to combat COVID-19 (from March to May 2020), the pressure has continued in 2020 and 2021. In 2021, the Croatian Border Police registered 17,404 cases of treatment of persons who were found to have crossed the state border illegally, while in 2020 this number was 29,094.

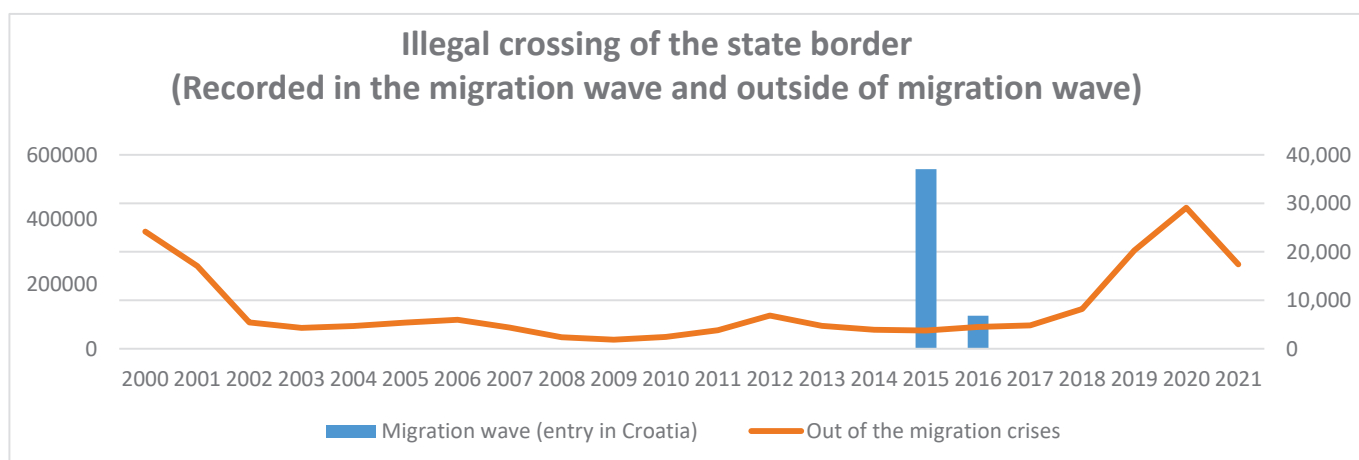


Chart 5 - Trend of irregular border crossings for the period 2000-2021

Source: Ministry of the Interior

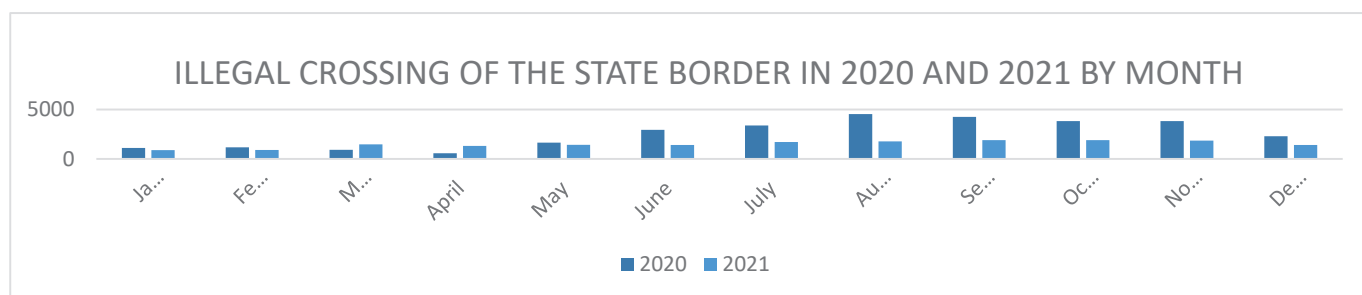


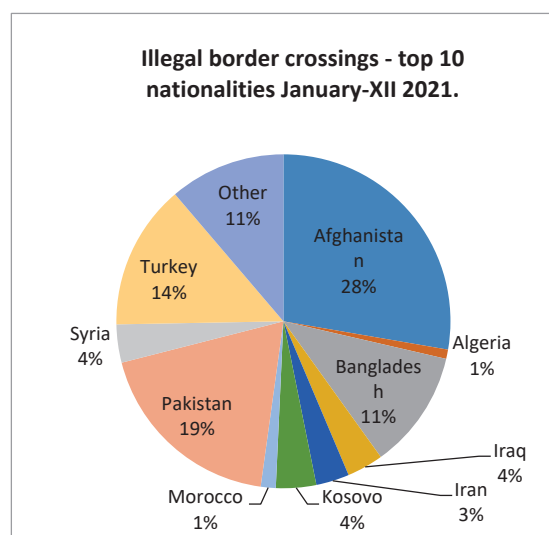
Chart 6 - Trend of illegal border crossings in 2020 and 2021 by months

Source: Ministry of the Interior



## 9.2. Illegal border crossings in 2021

During 2021, the border police registered 17,404 cases of treatment of persons who were found to have illegally crossed the state border, which is 40.2% less than in 2020 (I.-XII.2020; 29,094).



*Chart 7 - Presentation of registered migrants by citizenship*

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

The most numerous are Afghan citizens, of whom 4,824 were caught illegally crossing the state border in 2021, which makes 28% of all illegal border crossings, while in 2020, 8,505 illegal border crossings of Afghan citizens were recorded, which represents a decrease of 43.3%.

They are followed by 3,278 citizens of Pakistan, which is 44.7% less than in 2020 (2020 – 5,923).

The third most numerous were citizens of Turkey - 2,446, which is an increase of 148.6% compared to 2020 (2020 - 984).

During 2021, a total of 957 offences was recorded from Article 326 of the Criminal Code “Illegally entering, moving and staying in the Republic of Croatia, another Member State of the European Union or a

signatory to the Schengen Agreement”, and the number of offenders was 885.

*Table 2 - Number and citizenship of foreigners who illegally crossed the state border in 2020 and 2021*

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

Citizenship	Illegal border crossings		
	I-XII.2020	I-XII.2021	+ - %
Afghanistan	8,505	<b>4,824</b>	-43.3
Albania	310	<b>202</b>	-34.8
Algeria	753	<b>156</b>	-79.3
Bangladesh	2,915	<b>1,998</b>	-31.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	100	<b>124</b>	24.0
India	191	<b>165</b>	-13.6
Iraq	1,651	<b>614</b>	-62.8
Iran	1,005	<b>559</b>	-44.4
Kosovo	505	<b>678</b>	34.3
Morocco	2,366	<b>252</b>	-89.3
Pakistan	5,923	<b>3,278</b>	-44.7
Syria	1,842	<b>643</b>	-65.1
Serbia	62	<b>145</b>	133.9
Tunisia	127	<b>58</b>	-54.3
Turkey	984	<b>2,446</b>	148.6
Others	1,855	<b>1,262</b>	-32.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,094</b>	<b>17,404</b>	-40.2

During 2020, 698 criminal offences and 692 perpetrators were recorded. The number of criminal offences has increased by 37.1% in 2021 compared to 2020. The increase in detected criminal offences is a consequence of the lifting of measures introduced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the offenders are citizens of the Republic of Croatia, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Serbia, Ukraine and Romania.

	2019	2020	2021
Number of criminal offences	946	698	957
Number of offenders	983	692	885

*Table 3 - Number of criminal offences and offenders for the criminal offences referred to in Article 326 of the Criminal Code in 2019, 2020 and 2021*

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

## **10. ACTIVITIES TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS**

### **10.1. Activities aimed at improving the identification of third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings**

#### **10.1.1. National trainings**

The training of target groups is an important supporting part of the overall anti-trafficking strategy in the territory of the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, during 2021, several trainings were held for police officers, among others, for police officers of the border police, with a special emphasis on the border police courses.

On 30 September and 1 October 2021, the Police Academy in cooperation with the Judicial Academy organised a two-day seminar for judicial officials (deputy state attorneys and judges) and police officers on the topic of combating trafficking in human beings.

From 6 October to 8 October 2021, the Croatian Red Cross and the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia organised specialized training for licensing new members of mobile teams to help adult victims of trafficking in human beings.

On 30 June 2021, the Centre for support and development of civil society “Delfin” organised an interdepartmental training for professional associates of social welfare centres, the Family Centre, representatives of the courts, the state attorney's office, police officers and representatives of non-governmental organisations on the topic of combating trafficking in human beings.

#### **10.1.2. International cooperation**

During 2021, during the implementation of more significant criminal investigations, the Criminal Police Directorate carried out intensive international police cooperation with the Member States of the European Union and third countries, which was realised through organised operational meetings (including online meetings) and channels of international police cooperation, through Europol, INTERPOL and through police liaison officers.

### **10.2. Activities to prevent and raise awareness of trafficking in human beings**

During 2021, several campaigns, trainings, projects and other activities related to trafficking in human beings were carried out in the Republic of Croatia, with the aim of preventing and raising awareness of this issue. The World Day Against Trafficking in Human Beings and EU Anti-Trafficking Day were specially marked, and the action “Together” has continued.

Due to the estimated increased risk of sexual abuse and exploitation of children during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to sensitise the public, citizens, and victims themselves about the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, as well as other forms of violence against children and family members, the Ministry of the Interior has sent notification encouraging citizens to report information about child abuse and domestic violence, in addition to calling the number 192, through information and communication channels, primarily the Red Button online application.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <https://mup.gov.hr/online-prijave/online-prijava-zlostavljanja-djeteta-red-button/sigurnost-djece-i-obitelji-u-doba-koronavirusa/286139>

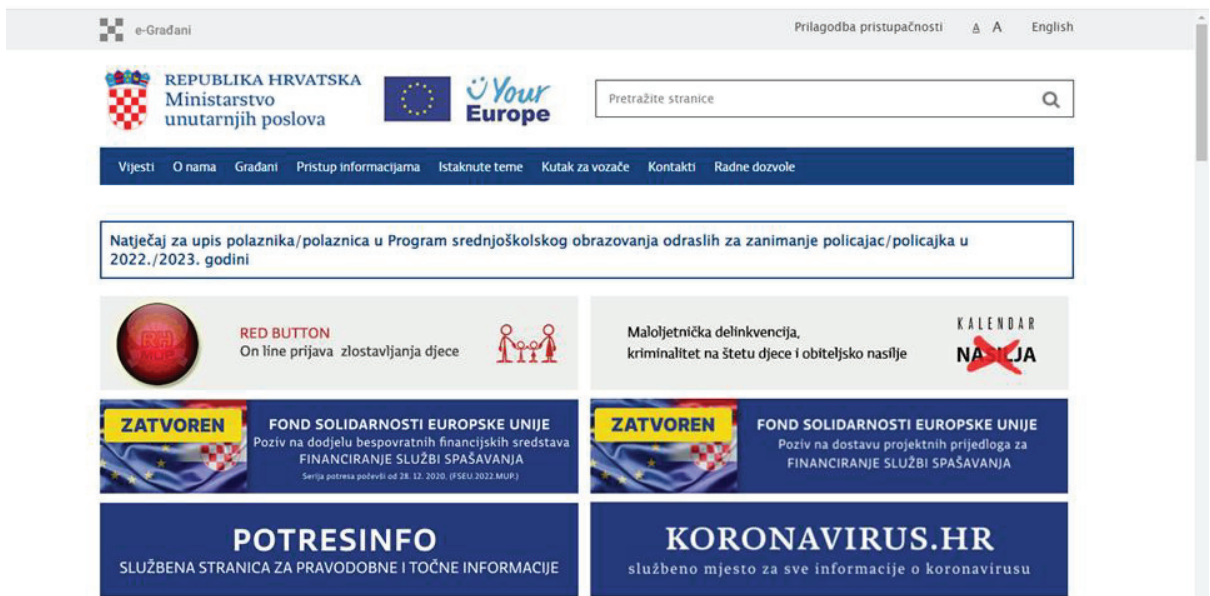


Figure 7 – Red Button online application

Source: Ministry of the Interior

## 11. RETURN AND READMISSION

### 11.1. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on return procedures

During 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, people were returning almost as they did before the pandemic, except, of course, that they complied with the requirements of the country to which they were returning, which was mainly related to testing for SARS-CoV-2.

Return procedures have been adapted to the new situation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of the Interior applied the instructions of the Croatian Health Insurance Fund and, when dealing with an irregular migrant, checked whether they had symptoms of the COVID-19 disease. In the event that the migrant had symptoms, the responsible epidemiologist was informed about it, taking further actions.

If the third-country national had no symptoms, the police continued with the procedure, issuing a decision related to the return in accordance with the applicable Act. In the event that a third-country national could not leave the Republic of Croatia due to travel restrictions, the deadline for return was extended, and/or a decision was made to postpone forced return.

### 11.2. Statistics

There was an increase in the number of forced returns in 2021. Namely, 1,495 foreigners were forcefully returned, while in 2020, 954 foreigners were forcefully returned.

The return of foreigners to their countries of origin is difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also due to the impossibility of establishing identity and obtaining travel documents.

Table 4 – Forced returns of foreigners

Citizenship	FORCED RETURNS OF FOREIGNERS		
	Total		
	Forced returns by year		
	2020	2021	+ -%
Afghanistan	40	<b>91</b>	+125.0
Albania	149	<b>95</b>	- 36.2
Algeria	6	<b>2</b>	-66.7
Bangladesh	25	<b>49</b>	+96.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	57	<b>43</b>	-24.6
India	1	<b>3</b>	+300.0
Iraq	35	<b>8</b>	-77.1
Iran	7	<b>17</b>	+142.9
Morocco	49	<b>5</b>	-89.8
Kosovo	253	<b>314</b>	+24.1
Pakistan	48	<b>148</b>	+208.3
Syria	13	<b>2</b>	-84.6
Serbia	30	<b>33</b>	+10.0
Tunisia	6	<b>3</b>	-50.0
Turkey	165	<b>589</b>	+257.0
Others	70	<b>93</b>	+32.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>1,495</b>	<b>+56.7</b>

Source: Eurostat (migr\_eirt\_vol), Ministry of the Interior

Table 6 – Reception and return according to the citizenship of foreigners

Citizenship	reception		+ -%	return		+ -%
	2020	2021		2020	2021	
Afghanistan	2,120	783	-63.07	35	70	100.00
Algeria	388	62	-84.02	6	2	-66.67
Bangladesh	1,402	692	-50.64	24	14	-41.67
Iraq	382	110	-71.20	40	7	-82.50
Iran	254	145	-42.91	7	16	128.57
Kosovo	108	137	26.85	5	2	-60.00
Morocco	1,327	114	-91.41	49	3	-93.88
Pakistan	2,994	1,007	-66.37	44	47	6.82
Syria	531	239	-54.99	14	2	-85.71
Tunisia	41	5	-87.80	4	4	0.00
Turkey	219	311	42.01	97	268	176.29
Other	668	395	-40.87	88	54	-38.64
Total	10,434	4,000	-61.66	413	489	18.40

Source: Ministry of the Interior

Table 7 – Reception and return based on readmission agreements

RECEPTION AND RETURN FOR 2020/2021						
Border towards	reception		+ -%	return		+ -%
	2020	2021		2020	2021	
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	25	7	-72.00	260	376	44.62
Montenegro	0	0		34	6	-82.35
Hungary	537	271	-49.53	0	0	
Slovenia	9,871	3,717	-62.34	60	9	-85.00
Serbia	1	5	400.00	59	98	66.10
TOTAL	10,434	4,000	-61.66	413	489	18.40

Source: Ministry of the Interior



On the basis of readmission agreements with neighbouring countries, a total of 4,000 third-country nationals were accepted in 2021, while 489 were returned.

The majority of accepted citizens were from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Morocco and Syria, which is in line with the representation of these national groups in illegal border crossings.

### **11.3. Independent monitoring mechanism**

On 8 June 2021, the Agreement on an independent mechanism for monitoring the actions of police officers of the Ministry of the Interior in the area of irregular migration and international protection was concluded. The Agreement was concluded for a period of one year with the possibility of extension, and it is financed with the funds of the European Union, which are paid into the state budget. The new independent monitoring mechanism should serve as a model for the establishment of monitoring in all Member States of the European Union, which is foreseen in the Screening Regulation draft from the new Pact on Migration and Asylum and is the first such monitoring in the European Union. The implementers of the new independent monitoring mechanism are: the Croatian Academy of Medical Sciences, the Croatian Academy of Legal Sciences, the Centre for the Culture of Dialogue, which is an association close to the Islamic community, and the Croatian Red Cross.

During 2021, the implementers carried out 8 observations and prepared the 1st semi-annual report.

### **11.4. Work of reception centres for foreigners**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, reception centres remained open, but efforts were

intensified to ensure adequate care for third-country nationals accommodated in the centres. Information leaflets on conscientious and responsible behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic have been placed in the reception centres, which were created and translated into 26 languages by the International Organisation for Migration. Leaflets, which have also been translated into languages used by third-country nationals, with instructions from the Croatian Health Insurance Fund on proper hand hygiene have also been placed in the centres. In the reception centres, additional measures have been taken with the aim of protection, such as ensuring the availability of hygiene items, dispensers with disinfectants, the availability of medical staff, temperature measurements, etc.

In 2021, prior to being placed in the centre, third-country nationals were examined and tested for SARS-CoV-2. The accommodation was possible only with a negative test.

### **11.5. Projects related to the return**

During 2021, several projects related to return to the Republic of Croatia were implemented. Projects were implemented by the Ministry of the Interior independently or in cooperation with certain international or non-governmental organisations based on contracts with the Ministry of the Interior. All projects are financed by AMIF.

In the Ježevu Reception Centre for Foreigners, the projects “Improving Accommodation and Work Conditions in the Reception Centre for Foreigners in Ježevu”, “Implementation of the Return Procedure of Third-Country Nationals” and “Help in Maintaining an Adequate Level of Accommodation in the Reception Centre for Foreigners” were carried out.

During 2021, the “Monitoring Forced Returns” project, which was implemented by the Croatian Law Centre on the basis of a contract with the Ministry of the Interior, continued to be implemented. In 2021, a total of 33 forced returns were observed.

The projects “Free Legal Aid in Return Procedure” and “Translating and Expanding the Network of Translators for the Return Procedure” are being implemented continuously.

An efficient system of registration of third-country nationals irregularly residing on the territory of the Republic of Croatia and maintenance of the EURODAC workstation system is the goal of the project Improvement of Functionality and Maintenance of Stationary and Portable Workstations for the Digital Extraction of Fingerprints - EURODAC.

The project Procurement of Equipment and the Creation of a New and Improved Existing IT Database for the Registration of Irregular Migrants in the Return Procedure aims to ensure a sufficient number of portable Eurodac workstations, flatbed scanners, cameras and scales with an altimeter for quality processing of foreigners irregularly staying in the Republic of Croatia, that is, taking effective measures to ensure the return of third-country nationals.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) implemented the project “Assisted Voluntary Return” in 2021. Within the framework of this project, during 2021, 38 third-country nationals returned to their country of origin.

## **11.6. Trainings**

In 2021, police officers working on return procedures have participated in several international and national trainings and workshops.

Thus, police officers have participated in the FRONTEX “Training Course for Escort Leaders in the Process of Forced Returns by Air” and the Schengen Evaluator Training for Return Procedures”.

In May 2021, EMN NCP HR and the Border Administration have organised a two-day training on the topic of return. The workshop was attended by police officers of the border police, in charge of irregular migration, from the border sector/services of police administrations and transit reception centres for foreigners, that carry out return and readmission proceedings for third-country nationals.

## **11.7. Cooperation with FRONTEX**

As part of FRONTEX operation Standing Corps Return Specialist Implementation, in Paris, Republic of France, in the period from 30 September 2021 to 27 January 2022, a police officer for readmission and deportation participated.

Organised by FRONTEX, on 25 January 2021, the police officer for readmission and deportation participated in a video conference on the topic of Identification via VC with Afghanistan in 2020 (Identification of citizens of IR Afghanistan in 2020 via the VCI project).

Representatives of the Directorate for Borders took part in regular FRONTEX meetings: Meeting of Direct Return Contact Points (DCP) and Pre-Return Activities Network (PRAN), as well as the High-Level Roundtable (for return procedures).

## STATISTICAL ANNEX

### Annex 1: Statistical indicators of persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia for the period until travellers 31 December 2021.

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

Kind of protection	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Asylum	1	3	11	5	9	21	7	15	35	83	184	244	158	36	68	880
M	0	3	6	4	5	15	4	11	31	50	133	156	91	22	39	570
0-13			3		1	3	2		3	7	33	43	31	8	15	149
14-17			1	1	1	3				5	4	14	8	1	8	46
18-34		3	1	3	1	4		8	21	29	81	67	26	10	8	262
35-64			1		2	5	2	3	7	9	15	32	26	3	7	112
65>															1	1
F	1	0	5	1	4	6	3	4	4	33	51	88	67	14	29	310
0-13			3		3	2	2	1	1	15	22	35	25	5	10	124
14-17						1				1	2	14	5		4	27
18-34	1			1	1	3		3	2	15	17	17	17	5	7	89
35-64			2				1		1	2	10	21	19	4	8	68
65>												1	1			2
Subsidiary protection	0	3	2	9	4	14	18	9	7	17	27	21	1	6	0	138
M	0	3	2	6	3	8	10	9	5	11	17	10	1	4	0	89
0-13				1		2	3			3	5	4		1		19
14-17				2	1	1	1	1		2	3	2	1			14
18-34		3	2	1	2	2	6	7	3	6	5			2		39
35-64				2		3		1	2		4	4		1		17
F	0	0	0	3	1	6	8	0	2	6	10	11	0	2	0	49
0-13				1		2	3		1	1	2	7		2		19
14-17							2				4					6
18-34				2	1	2	2			2	3	2				14
35-64						2	1		1	3	1	2				10

## Annex 2:

### Statistical indicators of applicants for international protection by nationality and gender for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

Country of origin	M	F	Total
Afghanistan	1,010	839	1,849
Turkey	203	43	246
Iraq	122	103	225
Iran	100	90	190
Pakistan	94	12	106
Syria	56	28	84
Bangladesh	67	2	69
Cuba	29	27	56
Morocco	27	3	30
Statelessness	15	12	27
Tunisia	14	8	22
Egypt	19		19
Algeria	11	4	15
India	10	2	12
Nepal	1	7	8
Palestine	5	3	8
Russian Federation	5	3	8
China	7		7
Serbia	4	3	7

Albania	6		6
Eritrea	3	3	6
The Gambia	4	2	6
Montenegro	2	2	4
USA	2	2	4
Somalia	1	3	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2		2
Guinea	1	1	2
Kosovo	2		2
Nigeria	2		2
Burundi	1		1
DR of the Congo	1		1
Ethiopia	1		1
Jordan		1	1
Cameroon		1	1
Kyrgyzstan		1	1
Lebanon	1		1
Slovakia	1		1
Slovenia	1		1
Sri Lanka		1	1
United Arab Emirates	1		1
Uzbekistan	1		1
Venezuela	1		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,833</b>	<b>1,206</b>	<b>3,039</b>



### Annex 3:

#### Statistical indicators of unaccompanied minor applicants for international protection by age and gender for the period until 31 December 2021

Sex/Age	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
<b>M</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>1.272</b>
0-13 unaccompanied	3		3				2	15	23	11	3	21	28	109
14-15 unaccompanied	4	6	18	11	8		1	47	62	13	12	30	40	252
16-17 unaccompanied	14	32	173	58	46	10	2	101	166	35	50	118	106	911
<b>F</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>64</b>
0-13 unaccompanied								1	4	2	1	7	6	21
14-15 unaccompanied									1		2	4	5	12
16-17 unaccompanied			3	1	1				5	3	2	6	10	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>1.336</b>

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

#### **Annex 4:**

#### **Statistical indicators of the application of the Dublin procedure for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021**

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

<b>Incoming transfers were made from the following Member States:</b>	
<b>STATE</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Romania</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>

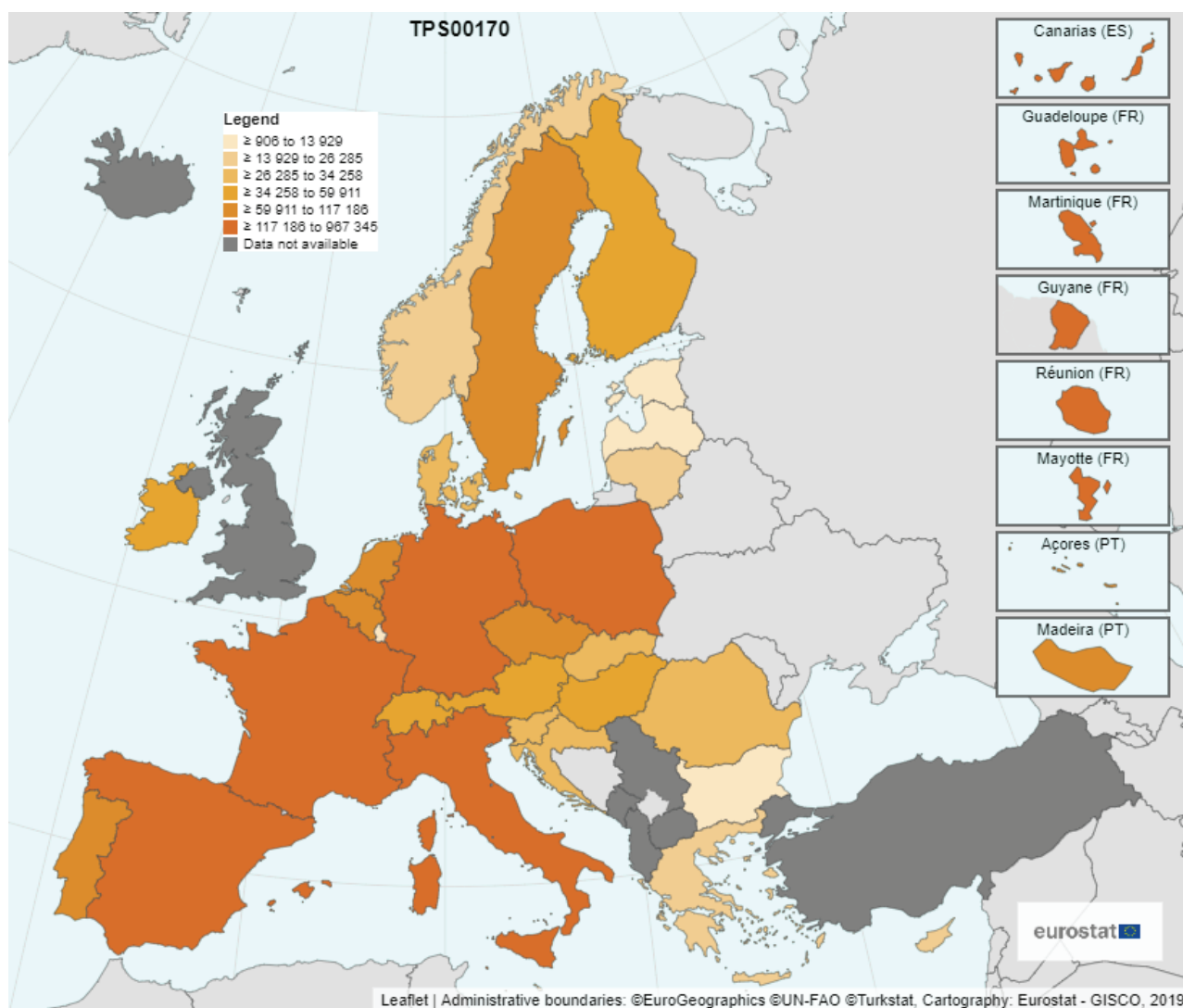
<b>Incoming transfers by nationality:</b>	
<b>CITIZENSHIP</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Afghanistan</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Algeria</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Ethiopia</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Iran</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Iraq</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Statelessness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Syria</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Turkey</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>

Number of outgoing transfers (from HR)	
STATE	2021
Belgium	1
Romania	1
Slovenia	1
Total	3

Number of outgoing transfers (from HR)	
CITIZENSHIP	2021
Afghanistan	1
Nigeria	1
Syria	1
Total	3

## Annex 5:

### First permits



Source: Eurostat, First permits by reason