

Annual report on migration and asylum - Croatia



2023.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMIF - European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

CERV - Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme

EMAS - Emergency Assistance Grant Program

EMN - European Migration Network

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

EUAA - European Union Agency for Asylum

Europol - European Police Office

FRONTEX - European Border and Coast Guard Agency

HCK – Croatian Red Cross

HPC – Croatian Law Center

CES - Croatian Employment Service

IOM – International Organization for Migration

MDM - Doctors long Monde – Doctors of the World

MUP – Ministry of the Interior

CPR – Civil Rights Project

UNHCR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

UASC - unaccompanied and separated children

CoE - Council of Europe

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1. INTRODUCTION

The European Migration Network (EMN) is a network of migration and asylum experts coordinated by the European Commission. A National Contact Point has been established in each EMN Member State, and the Ministry of the Interior is the National Contact Point for the EMN in the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: EMN HR).

The European Migration Network includes all members of the European Union (except Denmark) and observer countries Norway, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia, Serbia and North Macedonia. It consists of national contact points (National Contact Points - NCP), which consists of certain institutions or organizations in each country that is a member of the Network. In the Republic Croatia, since joining the EMN in 2013, this role was performed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while in 2015 it was taken over by the International Organization for Migration IOM). As of January 2019, the Ministry of Interior once again assumes the role of the National Contact Point for the Republic of Croatia. National

contact points provide comprehensive information on policies and strategies related to migration and asylum, coordinate EMN activities and publish various publications.

This is the ninth Annual Report on Migration and Asylum prepared by the National Contact Point for the European Migration Network in the Republic of Croatia. The purpose of the Annual Report on Migration and Asylum is to provide an overview of the most significant policies and developments in asylum and migration legislation 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: temporary protection, legal migration, international protection, unaccompanied children and other vulnerable groups, integration, 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 2023.

1.1. Methodology

The 2023 Annual Report on Migration and Asylum was prepared by the members of the EMN NCP HR team based on common guidelines developed by the EMN, in order to facilitate comparability between reports from all Member States. At the same time, the format remained flexible to a certain extent in order to enable the preparation of a report that is targeted at a national audience. The Annual Report provides an overview of the development of policies, legislative framework and practice, and the impact of the Russian aggression on Ukraine on the area of migration and asylum in the Republic of Croatia during 2023. The report also contains the most significant statistical data, by 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, academia and research organizations, non-governmental and international organizations as well as from public sources..

2. CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT OF ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY

On 17 March 2023, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette, No. 33/2023). The Act entered into force on 1 April 2023. By adopting this Act, the Republic of Croatia continues to improve the position of both applicants for international protection and persons with approved asylum or subsidiary protection status, as well as persons under temporary protection.

The Central State Office for Demography and Youth has begun developing a *Demographic Revitalization Strategy by 2033*, which is a long-term strategic planning act whose goal is to support the implementation of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2033. The purpose of this document is to shape the strategic goals of demographic revitalization and define the key ones areas of intervention to influence the country's forecasted demographic development.¹

¹The strategy was adopted on March 14 2024.

3. TEMPORARY PROTECTION

Temporary protection is protection of an urgent and temporary nature granted in an exceptional procedure in cases of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from third countries who cannot return to their country of origin, in particular if there is a risk that the procedure for granting international protection cannot be effectively carried out due to that influx, in order to protect the interests of displaced persons and other persons seeking protection.

The institution of temporary protection was applied after the Russian armed forces launched a massive invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, and a large number of the Ukrainian population was forced to leave their homes. For this reason, on 4 March 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted an Implementing Decision on the introduction of temporary protection due to the mass influx of persons fleeing Ukraine due to the war.

At the 106th session of the Government of the Republic of Croatia held on 7 March in 2022, the Decision on the introduction of temporary protection in

the Republic of Croatia for displaced persons from Ukraine was adopted ². This Decision introduced temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia for displaced persons from Ukraine in accordance with the Law on International and Temporary Protection and the Council Implementing Decision adopted on 4 March 2022.

On March 17, 2023, the Croatian Parliament passed the Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection, and it was published in the Official Gazette, No. 33/2023.

The aforementioned amendments entered into force on April 1, 2023. These amendments to the law, among other changes, also amended the provisions on temporary protection. The provisions on the rights and obligations of persons under temporary protection (displaced persons from Ukraine) were specified and were harmonized with the laws regulating social welfare activities, i.e. compulsory health insurance.

² https://hrvatskazaukrajinu.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/HR/odluke/022-03-22-04-77_3-07-03.pdf

3.1. Extension of temporary protection

In accordance with the Council Implementing Decision of 4 March 2022, the Temporary Protection Directive 2001/55/EC and the Law on International and Temporary Protection, temporary protection is granted for a period of one year and may be automatically extended for two periods of six months, up to a maximum of one year. In this regard, **the temporary protection status for displaced persons from Ukraine has been extended until 4 March 2024**.³

In the Republic of Croatia, the temporary protection status was automatically extended to each beneficiary, while beneficiaries were required to personally visit the police department/police station in their place of residence to verify the extension of the validity of their temporary protection alien card from 15 February to 30 April 2023. The extension is recorded in the existing temporary protection alien card.

People who did not need to come to the police department/police station in person are:

- children under the age of 16 – for them, the parent/special guardian submits the child's ID card for verification;
- persons with special needs who are unable to move - their ID card could be verified by a family member or a competent person from the institution where they are placed, based on a statement of their relationship to the person for whom the ID card is being verified and evidence of the person's inability to arrive, e.g. documentation of placement in a special institution).

Police departments/police stations in whose areas collective accommodation is organized, in agreement with the Civil Protection Directorate, organized the verification of ID cards for displaced persons accommodated in collective accommodation.

Persons who applied for an extension of their card after 30 April 2023 did not lose their temporary protection status, but could do so subsequently, and still have the rights and obligations arising from their temporary protection status. With a certified card, beneficiaries of temporary protection prove that they

³On 29 February 2024, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted a Decision on the extension of temporary protection until 4 March 2025, based on the Council Implementing Decision of 19 October 2023.

have a valid status before other state and public administration bodies in the Republic of Croatia and other countries.⁴

All information related to the extension of the temporary protection status, as well as other information related to the rights of persons under temporary protection (on social and legal assistance, for example, exercising the right to compensation, health care, employment and education) can be found on the bilingual website "Croatia for Ukraine", which provides important information for persons who have fled Ukraine on a daily basis and information for Croatian citizens who offer assistance to refugees. In addition, for the purposes of implementing activities aimed at the protection of displaced persons from Ukraine, a joint e-mail address has been established: ukrajina@mrosp.hr and a mobile phone number for the social welfare system: +385 99 399 7317, where information can be obtained regarding the actions of the competent authorities in order to exercise rights and social services for citizens of Ukraine who have the status

of persons under temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia.

The Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia has published a brochure entitled "The Rights of Persons Under International and Temporary Protection". The brochure contains information on the available mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights and the suppression of discrimination in the Republic of Croatia, especially in the context of international and temporary protection, and is published in twelve languages: Arabic, English, Farsi, Filipino, French, Hindi, Croatian, Nepali, Pashto, Spanish, Turkish and Ukrainian.

The aforementioned brochure was produced as part of the project "INCLuDE - Interdepartmental cooperation in the empowerment of citizens of third countries" co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union.⁵

⁴<https://hrvatskazaukrajinu.gov.hr/informacije/status-privremene-zastite/152>

⁵Source: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/vijesti/izdana-brosura-prava-osoba-pod-medjunarodnom-i-privremenom-zastitom/1149>



Figure 1: Brochure "The Rights of Persons Under International and Temporary Protection"

3.2. Accommodation of persons under temporary protection

Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette No. 70/15, 127/17, 33/23) also amended certain provisions related to temporary protection. Thus, it is legally prescribed that a foreigner under temporary protection is provided with appropriate accommodation.⁶

At its session held on 22 March 2023, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted a Decision amending the Decision on financing the costs of housing care for displaced persons from Ukraine in individual accommodation.⁷ Namely, based on the previously valid Decision on financing the costs of housing care for displaced persons from Ukraine in individual accommodation, which the

Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted at its session on 23 March 2022, the Ministry of the Interior - Civil Protection Directorate, as the lessee, concluded lease agreements for housing units with the owners who ceded their real estate for use to displaced persons from Ukraine who left Ukraine as of 24 February 2022 and came to the territory of the Republic of Croatia for a period of six months with the possibility of extension for up to one year. The aforementioned amendment enables the lease agreements for housing units to be extended until 4 March 2024 at the latest, in accordance with the extended status of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine.

3.3. Social protection

Amendments to the Social Welfare Act (Official Gazette, No. 18/22, 46/22, 119/22, 71/23, 156/23) from 2022⁸ enable foreigners under temporary protection and their family members who are legally residing in the Republic of Croatia to receive benefits and services in the social welfare system under the conditions prescribed by the

⁶Legal provisions prior to the amendments stipulated that a foreigner under temporary protection should be provided with appropriate accommodation only if he or she did not have his or her own financial resources.

⁷https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024_04_40_721.html

⁸https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_04_46_576.html

Social Welfare Act, the laws regulating protection against trafficking in human beings, and the law regulating the status, rights and obligations of persons granted international protection.

Also, in 2023, the Act on International and Temporary Protection was amended ("Official Gazette" no. 70/15, 127/17, 33/23) and it was stipulated that a foreigner under temporary protection has the right to social welfare in accordance with the regulations governing the area of social welfare in the Republic of Croatia.⁹

3.4. Health care for persons under temporary protection

Health care for foreigners in the Republic of Croatia is regulated by the Act on Compulsory Health Insurance and Health Care for Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia ("Official Gazette", No.: 80/13, 15/18, 26/21 and 46/22 - hereinafter: the Act on Health Care for Foreigners). On 16 April 2022, the Act on Amendments to the Act on Compulsory Health Insurance and Health Care for Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia ("Official Gazette", No.: 46/22) entered into force,¹⁰ which stipulates that persons under temporary

protection exercise the right to health care (but not the right to financial benefits) to the same extent as insured persons under compulsory health insurance.

Accordingly, in 2023, the Act on International and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette No. 70/15, 127/17, 33/23) was amended, which also stipulates that a foreigner under temporary protection and family members of a foreigner under temporary protection exercise the right to health care to the same extent as an insured person under compulsory health insurance.

3.5. Education of persons displaced from Ukraine

Ukrainian students integrate into Croatian schools and other educational institutions through a very easy and simple procedure, even without documentation (in which case parents provide a written statement). They usually start classes the next day after the first contact with the school administration.

Informed of their arrival, the school assigns the child/student to a specific class, and other children and teachers

⁹The previous legal provision only referred to basic means of livelihood.

¹⁰ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_04_46_575.html

prepare to welcome them (learning basic phrases in Ukrainian, preparing books and school supplies, as well as small welcome gifts, etc.). In order to help all educators in informing children and young people about the new situation, the war in Ukraine, the Education Agency has developed guidelines for teachers and professional associates for empowering children, young people and parents in crisis situations.

Enrollment in the 1st grade of secondary school is carried out according to a special decision (special quotas and deadlines for Ukrainian students).¹¹

In addition to attending classes with Croatian children, the child is immediately enrolled in a Croatian language learning program upon arrival, 2 hours a day, 10 hours a week, for 7 weeks. This learning process can be repeated once more, and then continues with learning Croatian for 2 hours a week (in addition to 4/5 hours a

week in classes with Croatian children).¹²

Textbooks for all primary and secondary school students, as well as other educational materials, have been provided for the 2023 school year. The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth also provides extracurricular activities, extended stay, accommodation in a student dormitory, and teaching aids and equipment.

All information regarding the inclusion of Ukrainian children in the educational system in the Republic of Croatia can be found on the website of the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth under the section Inclusion of students from Ukraine in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia.¹³

Persons from Ukraine with the status of persons under temporary protection have guaranteed access to higher education and adult education, just like Croatian citizens. They should contact the desired institution that implements adult education programs or a higher

¹¹ <https://mzom.gov.hr/vijesti/odluka-o-upisu-ucenika-raseljenih-iz-ukrajine-u-i-razred-srednje-skole-u-skolskoj-godini-2023-2024/5495>

¹² Preparatory classes in the Croatian language are organized based on the Decision on the implementation of preparatory classes in the Croatian language for displaced students from Ukraine of April 1, 2022 (CLASS: 602-02/22-07/00669, REGISTRATION NUMBER: 533-05-22-0001)
<https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluka-o-provodenju-pripremne-nastave-za-raseljene-ucenike-iz-Ukrajine-1-travnja-2022.PDF>

¹³ <https://mzom.gov.hr/vijesti/ukljucivanje-djece-i-ucenika-izbjeglica-iz-ukrajine-u-odgojno-obrazovni-sustav-republike-hrvatske-4826/4826>

education institution, where they will receive all necessary information regarding the enrollment procedure or continuation of studies.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education (Croatian ENIC/NARIC Center) has established an accelerated procedure for the recognition of higher education qualifications from Ukraine. Detailed instructions are available at: <https://www.azvo.hr/en/enic-naric-office/ukrajina>.

The number of Ukrainian students enrolled in higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia in the academic year 2023/2024 was 190.

3.6. Recognition and evaluation of foreign educational qualifications

The Act on the Recognition and Evaluation of Foreign Educational Qualifications (Official Gazette, 69/2022) prescribes the procedure, among others, for persons under temporary protection and their family members who do not possess the documents necessary for the assessment of educational qualifications for the purpose of accessing the labor market. The right to recognition and evaluation of foreign educational qualifications is granted to Croatian citizens, foreign citizens,

stateless persons, asylum seekers, aliens under subsidiary protection and aliens under temporary protection, and family members of an asylum seeker or alien under subsidiary protection and aliens under temporary protection who are legally residing in the Republic of Croatia.

According to this Act, the competent authority may not refuse the application for the evaluation of a foreign educational qualification to the above-mentioned persons solely on the grounds that the applicant does not possess official documents proving the foreign educational qualification or if he does not possess official documents from the country of origin proving his citizenship. The authority competent for the evaluation of a foreign educational qualification shall assess the data available to it and issue an information document on the foreign educational qualification.

An information document on a foreign educational qualification is a non-administrative act issued by the competent agency based on the request of an asylum seeker, an alien under subsidiary protection and an alien under temporary protection who is unable to provide documentation proving a foreign educational

qualification. The mandatory parts of an information document on a foreign educational qualification are information on the educational institution or higher education institution that issued the qualification, information on the profile, level and estimated scope of the qualification.

3.7. Activities of the Croatian Employment Service

By December 31, 2023, a total of 476 persons under temporary protection were registered in the unemployment records of the Croatian Employment Service (CES).

By December 31, 2023, a total of 556 people from Ukraine with temporary protection status were employed through the mediation of the Croatian Employment Service.

Ukrainian citizens are mostly employed in the food and beverage preparation and serving industries (catering and tourism), maintenance of business (tourism) facilities, sales, manufacturing activities, and administration.

Most of the people employed through the mediation of the CES are in the following occupations:

- cleaner
- valet/maid

- worker on the production line
- assistant waiter/waitress
- assistant chef/cook
- kitchen worker
- waiter/waitress
- chef
- salesperson

In 2023, a total of 89 persons with the status of foreigners under temporary protection were included in the measures of the active employment policy; of which 6 people through the measure Public works, 8 people through the measure Education for the acquisition of competences necessary for work through vouchers, 41 people through the measure On-the-job training, 1 person through the measure Self-employment subsidies, 1 person through the measure Green/digital self-employment subsidies, 26 people through the measure Employment subsidies, 1 person through the measure Green/digital employment subsidies, 5 people through the Permanent measure seasonal. The largest number of persons involved in the measures of the active employment policy were in the area of: PS Osijek, PU Čakovec, PS Rijeka, PU Kutina and PS Zagreb.

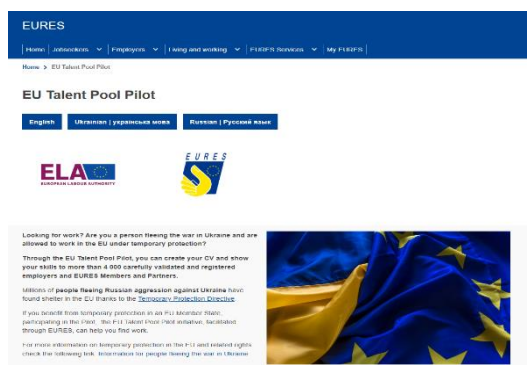


Figure 2: EU Talent Database website

EU Talent Pool

The Croatian Employment Service joined the pilot project "EU Talent Pool", initiated by the European Commission, which serves as an additional tool for national employment services when mediating on the labor market. The pilot project helps in identifying and mapping the skills of persons under temporary protection and facilitates their matching with employers in the EU.

3.8. Free legal aid from Croatian Law Center

As part of the project Legal Assistance and Capacity Building for Access to Territory and Asylum in Croatia, with the support of UNHCR, the Croatian Law Center (HPC) provided legal assistance to persons displaced from Ukraine, and consultations were conducted in the field, in collective accommodations, and

through individual consultations held via telephone, e-mail, and social networks.

3.9. UNHCR research "Intentions and perspectives of refugees from Ukraine in Croatia"

In 2023, UNHCR, in partnership with IPSOS, conducted research with Ukrainian refugees and published a report entitled 'Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees from Ukraine in Croatia', which aims to ensure that the voices and perspectives of refugees remain at the center of discussions about their future.

The report found that more than half of the refugees surveyed hoped to return to Ukraine one day, although more than a third were undecided about returning to Ukraine.

Less than a tenth said they had no hope of returning to Ukraine.

Most refugees report that their school-age children (6-15 years old) attended school in Croatia, although more than a quarter also attended online school following the Ukrainian curriculum, and close to a quarter attended only the Ukrainian online school.

78% of respondents have a university degree, of which 40% have a master's degree or higher. Compared to refugees hosted in other European

countries not in Ukraine's immediate neighbourhood, refugees from Ukraine in Croatia are more likely to have worked (50% vs. 40% regionally). Wages and salaries were the most common sources of income reported by refugees, followed by savings and pensions from Ukraine. Only a third reported that their household income was sufficient to cover most or all of their basic needs. Compared to refugees hosted in other European countries not in Ukraine's neighbourhood, Ukrainian refugees in Croatia were more likely to report that they had not been able to cover their basic needs in the last three months (39% in Croatia vs. 33% regionally). 53% of respondents cited lack of knowledge of the Croatian language as the most important obstacle to accessing employment, followed by a lack of employment opportunities that match their skills (33%).

3.10. Strengthening the capacity of organizations providing assistance to refugees from Ukraine

On 16 June 2023, UNHCR held an online training on gender-based

violence and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) with 16 Croatian Red Cross staff and four volunteer networks working directly with refugees from Ukraine.

3.11. Persons under temporary protection in the area of the City of Zagreb

At the beginning of 2023, it was recorded that there were 5,265 displaced persons from Ukraine in the area of the City of Zagreb, and at the end of 2023, the number rose to 5,638 people.

There are 103 people in collective accommodation in the City of Zagreb.

The City of Zagreb monitors housing units offered for the care of displaced persons from Ukraine and issues certificates of their monitoring. As of 31 December 2023, out of 503 received Accommodation Offers for Displaced Persons from Ukraine, a total of 482 housing units offered for the care of displaced persons from Ukraine were checked or were being checked.

4. LEGAL MIGRATION

4.1. Labor migration

In accordance with the Aliens Act, in the period from January 1 to December 31, 2023, **a total of 172,499 residence and work permits** were issued , of which the largest number were in the construction (68,912), tourism and hospitality (45,868), industry (24,034), transport and communications (11,497) and trade (5,126).

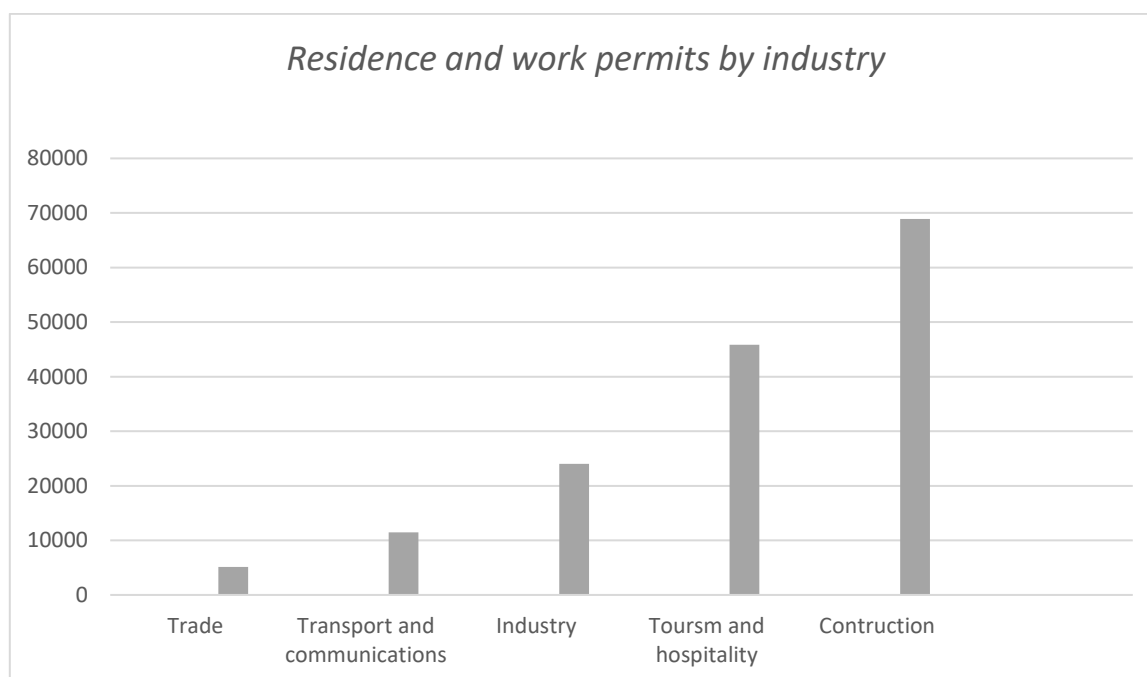


Chart 1: Residence and work permits by industry

Of the total number of residence and work permits issued **for new employment** , **112,981 permits** were issued, **40,660 for extension of permits**, and **18,858 for seasonal workers**, most of which were in the tourism and hospitality industry (16,882).

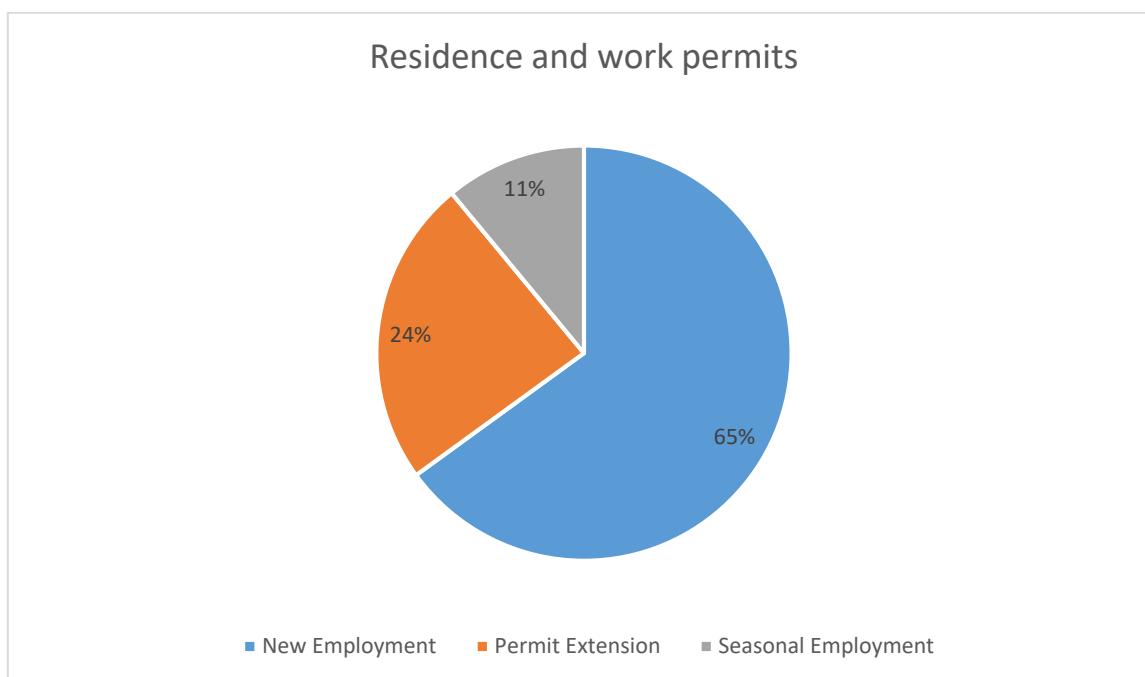


Chart 2: Residence and work permits for new employment, extension and seasonal employment

The largest number of residence and work permits until 31 December 2023 were issued to citizens of the following countries:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina – 38,236
- Serbia – 24,028
- Nepal – 23,493
- India – 15,627
- North Macedonia - 13,412
- Philippines - 10,999
- Kosovo - 9,922
- Bangladesh – 8,749
- Turkey – 5,067
- Albania – 4,244

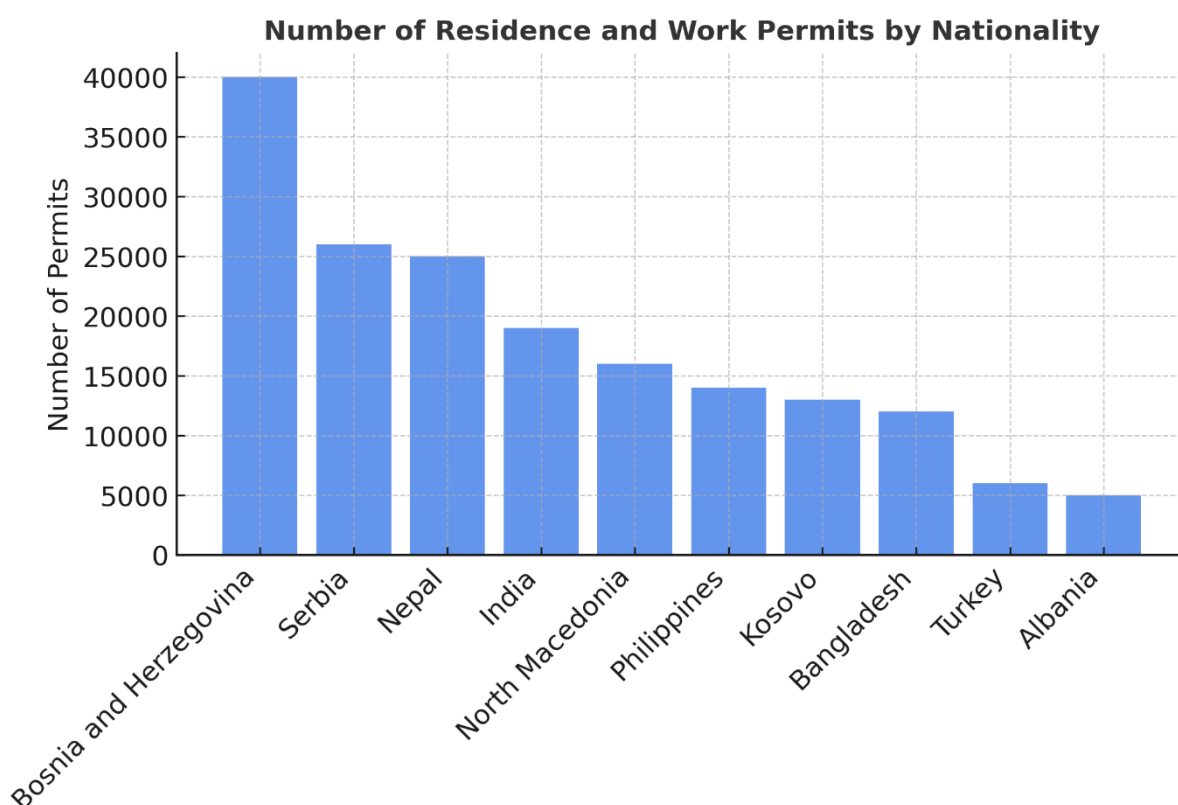


Chart 3: Residence and work permits according to citizenship

| POLICE DIRECTORATE | NEW EMPLOYMENT | EXTENSION | SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT | TOTAL |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------|---------------------|--------|
| Bjelovar-Bilogora Region | 898 | 212 | 62 | 1,172 |
| Brod-Posavina | 3,123 | 1,273 | 9 | 4,405 |
| Dubrovnik-Neretva Region | 6,514 | 2,065 | 1,726 | 10,305 |
| Istrian | 16,279 | 4,523 | 3,538 | 24,340 |
| Karlovac | 2,510 | 1,065 | 73 | 3,648 |
| Koprivnica-Križevci | 2,815 | 932 | 153 | 3,900 |
| Krapina-Zagorje | 2,503 | 966 | 78 | 3,547 |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | | | |
| Lika-Senj Region | 1,807 | 444 | 915 | 3,166 |
| Međimurje | 3,555 | 1,428 | 27 | 5,010 |
| Osijek-Baranja | 3,190 | 1,006 | 114 | 4,310 |
| Požega - Slavonia | 529 | 217 | | 746 |
| Primorje-Gorski Kotar County | 9,147 | 3,406 | 2,959 | 15,512 |
| Sisak-Moslavina | 4,182 | 833 | 17 | 5,032 |
| Split-Dalmatia | 10,246 | 2,912 | 4,772 | 17,930 |
| Šibenik-Knin County | 3,041 | 990 | 1,448 | 5,479 |
| Varaždinska | 5,893 | 2,203 | 1 | 8,097 |
| Virovitica-Podravina | 608 | 207 | 1 | 816 |
| Vukovar-Srijem | 1,768 | 663 | 59 | 2,490 |
| Zadar | 5,523 | 2,080 | 2,450 | 10,053 |
| Zagreb | 28,850 | 13,235 | 456 | 42,541 |
| TOTAL | 112,981 | 40,660 | 18,858 | 172,499 |

Table 1: Presentation of issued residence and work permits in 2023 by police administration

Source: Ministry of the Interior¹⁴

¹⁴ <https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/statistika/2024/1/Mjesecne%20statistike%20prosinac%202023.pdf>

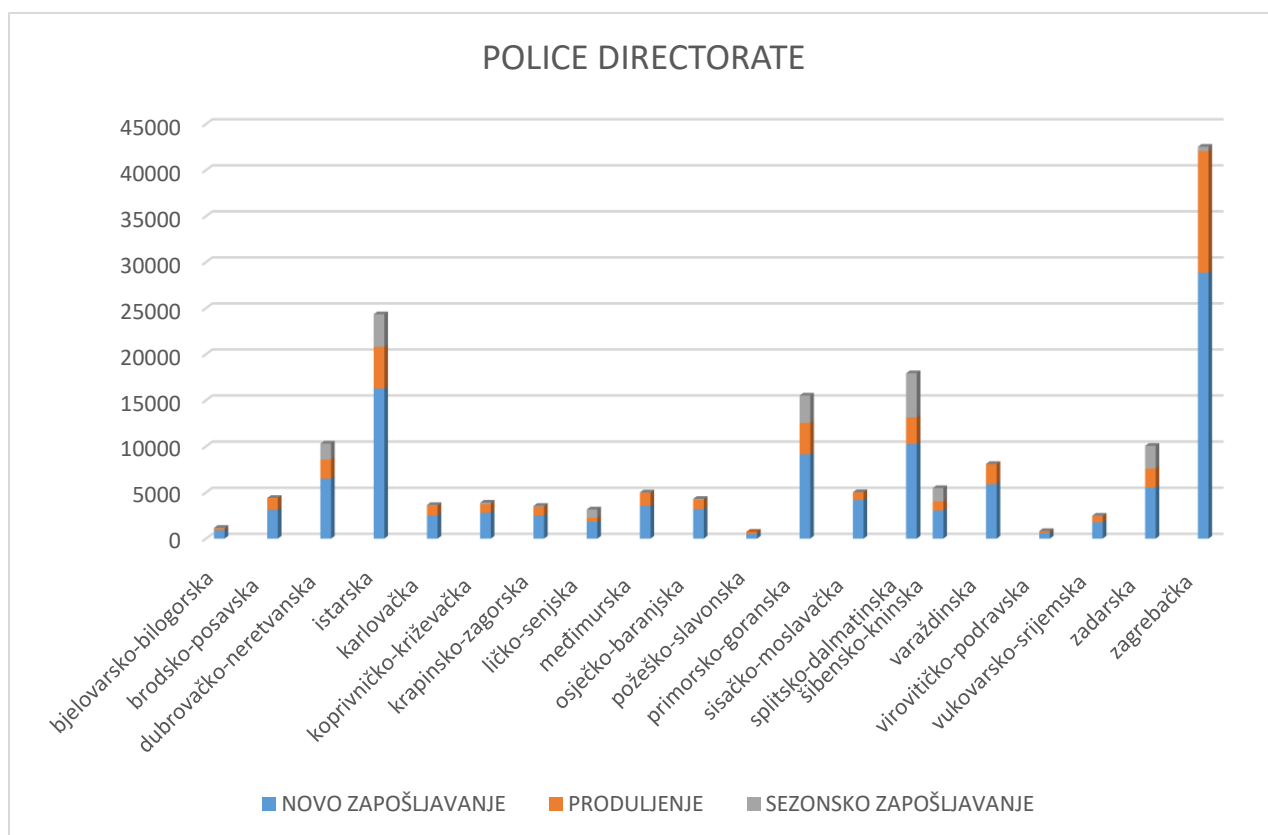


Chart 4: Residence and work permits by place of issue

The Governing Board of the Croatian Employment Service, at its session held on 22 March 2023, adopted a decision to supplement the list of occupations for which employers are not required to request a labor market test when employing third-country nationals. ¹⁵The decision entered into force on the date of its adoption (22.3.2023), and the list was supplemented with the following occupations:

- salesperson for the Istrian County and the Dubrovnik-Neretva County for the period from 01.05.2023. to 30.09.2023.
- maid, cleaner, assistant cook and assistant waiter for Zadar County, Šibenik-Knin County, Split-Dalmatia County, Karlovac County, City of Zagreb and Zagreb County
- bus driver for the City of Zagreb, Zagreb County, Istria County, Varaždin County, Brod-Posavina County, Dubrovnik-Neretva County, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County and Sisak-Moslavina County

¹⁵ <https://www.hzz.hr/dopunjena-lista-zanimanja-za-koje-poslodavac-nije-duzan-zatraziti-provedbu-testa-trzista-rada/>

- tailor for Vukovar-Srijem County, Međimurje County, Sisak-Moslavina County, Krapina-Zagorje County and Varaždin County
- installer of steel ropes for cranes and elevators for all counties.

4.2. Students and researchers

The Minister of Science and Education, with the prior consent of the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, on January 16, 2023, adopted the Ordinance on the procedure and conditions for hosting researchers who are third-country nationals.¹⁶

This Ordinance prescribes the procedure and conditions for hosting researchers who are third-country nationals at research organizations for a period longer than three months for the purpose of conducting research at research organizations.

¹⁶ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_01_8_177.html

5. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

5.1. Legislative framework in the field of international protection

On 17 March 2023, the Croatian Parliament passed the Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection (OG 33/2023)¹⁷. The amendments entered into force on 1 April 2023.

By adopting this Act, the Republic of Croatia continues to improve the position of both applicants for international protection, as well as persons with approved asylum or subsidiary protection status, and persons under temporary protection.

The amended legal provisions have strengthened the role of the special guardian in the care of unaccompanied minors. The amended Act stipulates that the guardian will, as soon as possible after the application is submitted, take all necessary actions to locate family members and reunite the child with the family, if this is in the child's best interests.

It is prescribed that during the international protection procedure, the

child provides access to recreational activities (including play), appropriate to the child's age, and outdoor activities.

The law also stipulates that asylum seekers placed in the Reception Center will be provided with a suitable space for meetings and communication with family members and relatives.

Compared to the previous legal solution that prescribed the possibility of including applicants for international protection in the labor market after the expiration of a period of 9 months from the date of submission of the application, taking into account the needs of applicants for integration into Croatian society, as well as the large number of work permits issued during 2022 in the Republic of Croatia, these amendments enable the inclusion of applicants in the labor market after the expiration of a period of 3 months from the date of submission of the application.

Furthermore, persons who have already been granted international protection have until now had the prescribed right to accommodation for a maximum of 2 years, provided that they do not have financial resources or assets to ensure their maintenance.

¹⁷ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_03_33_581.html

These amendments enable persons with granted international protection to be granted temporary use of a housing unit owned by the Republic of Croatia for a maximum of 2 years.

If persons granted international protection have financial resources or assets that could contribute to the payment of accommodation costs, they are obliged to contribute to the payment of accommodation costs.

5.2. Number of applicants for international protection and granted protection in 2023

In 2023, the Republic of Croatia recorded a record increase in the number of applicants for international protection. Thus, the total number of applicants in 2023 (68,114 expressed

intentions for international protection) was 429% higher than the total number of applicants in 2022 (12,872 intentions).

The majority of them are male (79.6%). In addition to the total number of international protection seekers, changes are also visible in the most represented countries of origin. The most represented countries of origin of international protection seekers in the Republic of Croatia in 2023 were Afghanistan (19,295), Turkey (11,199), the Russian Federation (8,507), Morocco (5,839) and Pakistan (4,658).

Statistical indicators of applicants for international protection by citizenship and gender for the period 01.01.-31.12.2023.

| Earth origin | M | F | TOTAL |
|--------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Afghanistan | 18,281 | 1,014 | 19,295 |
| Turkey | 7,372 | 3,827 | 11,199 |
| Russian Federation | 4,943 | 3,564 | 8,507 |
| Morocco | 5,757 | 82 | 5,839 |
| Pakistan | 4,320 | 338 | 4,658 |
| Iraq | 2,743 | 1,140 | 3,883 |
| Syria | 2,599 | 1,153 | 3,752 |
| Bangladesh | 2,440 | 32 | 2,472 |
| Cuba | 726 | 620 | 1,346 |
| Nepal | 492 | 600 | 1,092 |
| India | 729 | 108 | 837 |
| Iran | 574 | 157 | 731 |
| DR Congo | 308 | 187 | 495 |
| China | 319 | 170 | 489 |
| Sierra Leone | 268 | 104 | 372 |
| Algeria | 353 | 5 | 358 |
| Congo | 240 | 114 | 354 |
| Sri Lanka | 148 | 198 | 346 |
| Mongolia | 174 | 160 | 334 |
| Palestine | 196 | 25 | 221 |
| Burundi | 134 | 64 | 198 |
| Cameroon | 136 | 45 | 181 |
| Somalia | 89 | 41 | 130 |
| Sudan | 100 | 3 | 103 |
| Guinea | 67 | 12 | 79 |
| Tunisia | 65 | 7 | 72 |
| Egypt | 64 | 1 | 65 |
| Ghana | 48 | 12 | 60 |
| Azerbaijan | 39 | 14 | 53 |
| Eritrea | 48 | 5 | 53 |
| Nigeria | 42 | 3 | 45 |
| Togo | 34 | 7 | 41 |
| Coast ivory | 27 | 11 | 38 |
| Bolivia | 20 | 15 | 35 |
| Senegal | 27 | 7 | 34 |
| Gambia | 27 | 1 | 28 |
| Kosovo | 18 | 8 | 26 |
| Libya | 26 | | 26 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|
| Jordan | 20 | 5 | 25 |
| Kazakhstan | 15 | 8 | 23 |
| Uganda | 12 | 11 | 23 |
| Small | 13 | 4 | 17 |
| Burkina Faso | 9 | 3 | 12 |
| Lebanon | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| Angola | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| Ukraine | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| Comoros | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Yemen | 8 | | 8 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Armenia | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| DPRK Korea | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Ecuador | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Georgia | 6 | | 6 |
| Guinea Bissau | 5 | | 5 |
| Colombia | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Singapore | 5 | | 5 |
| Belarus | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Ethiopia | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Serbia | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Tanzania | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Uzbekistan | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Albania | 3 | | 3 |
| Haiti | 3 | | 3 |
| Jamaica | 3 | | 3 |
| South Sudan | 3 | | 3 |
| Papua New Guinea | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| USA | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Western Sahara | 3 | | 3 |
| Benin | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 2 | | 2 |
| Chad | 2 | | 2 |
| Kenya | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Moldova | 2 | | 2 |
| Northern Macedonia | 2 | | 2 |
| Central African Republic | 2 | | 2 |
| Without citizenship | | 1 | 1 |
| Brazil | | 1 | 1 |
| Butane | 1 | | 1 |
| Montenegro | 1 | | 1 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Dominican Republic | 1 | | 1 |
| Gabon | | 1 | 1 |
| Liberia | 1 | | 1 |
| Mauritania | 1 | | 1 |
| Mozambique | 1 | | 1 |
| Rwanda | 1 | | 1 |
| Romania | 1 | | 1 |
| Turkmenistan | 1 | | 1 |
| Zimbabwe | | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 54,185 | 13,929 | 68,114 |

Table 2: Applicants for international protection by citizenship¹⁸

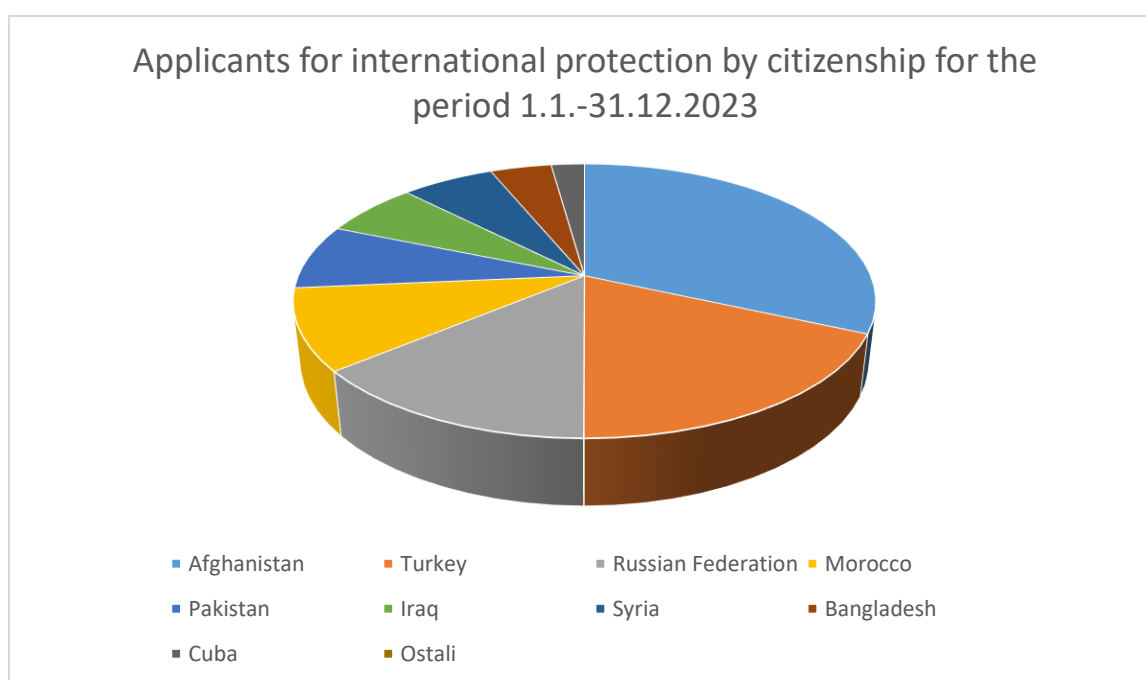


Chart 5: Applicants for international protection by citizenship

¹⁸ <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234>

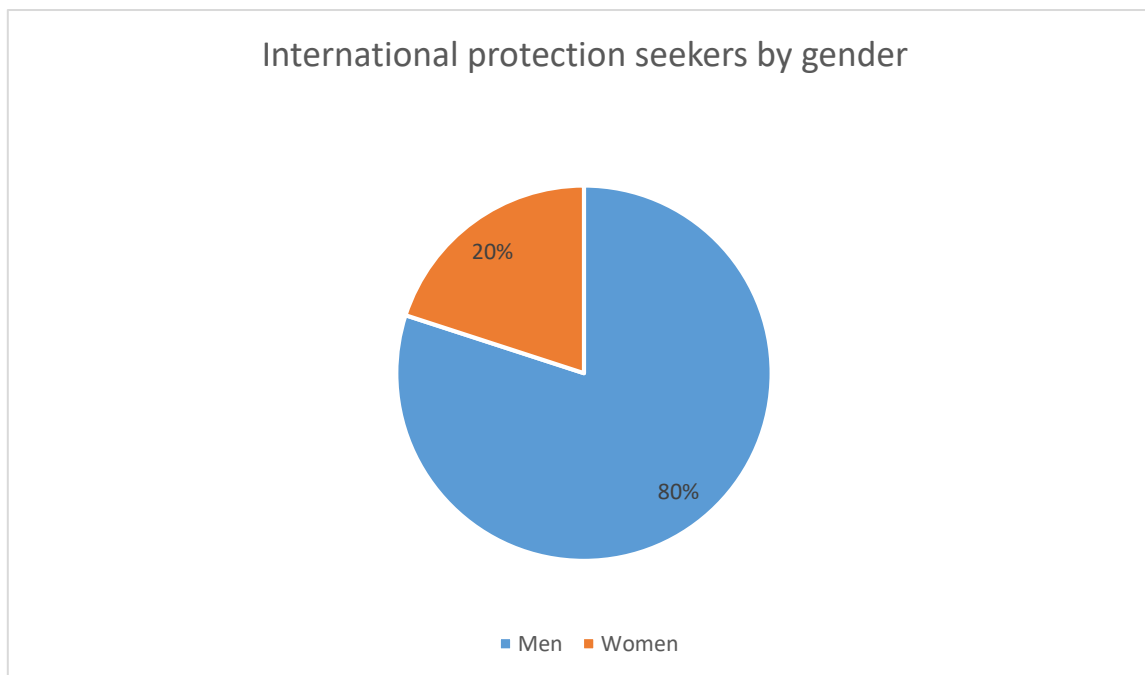


Chart 6: International protection seekers by gender

On the other hand, in 2023, a decrease of 35% was recorded in the number of applications for international protection submitted compared to the previous year. The reason for this is that applicants for international protection stayed very briefly on the territory of the Republic of Croatia and continued their journey to their final destinations before submitting their application.

In 2023, 52 applications for international protection were approved, and asylum was granted in 50 cases, and subsidiary protection in two.

| PROTECTION/TYPE | 2022. | 2023. |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Asylum | 21 | 50 |
| M | 11 | 27 |
| 0-13 | 8 | 9 |
| 14-17 | | |
| 18-34 | 3 | |
| 35-64 | | |
| 65> | | |
| F | 10 | 23 |
| 0-13 | 8 | 8 |
| 14-17 | 1 | |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| 18-34 | 1 | 7 |
| 35-64 | | 8 |
| 65> | | |
| Subsidiary protection | 0 | 2 |
| M | 0 | 2 |
| 0-13 | | |
| 14-17 | | |
| 18-34 | | |
| 35-64 | | 2 |
| F | 0 | |
| 0-13 | | |
| 14-17 | | |
| 18-34 | | |
| 35-64 | | |

Table 3: Number of persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia 2022 - 2023.¹⁹

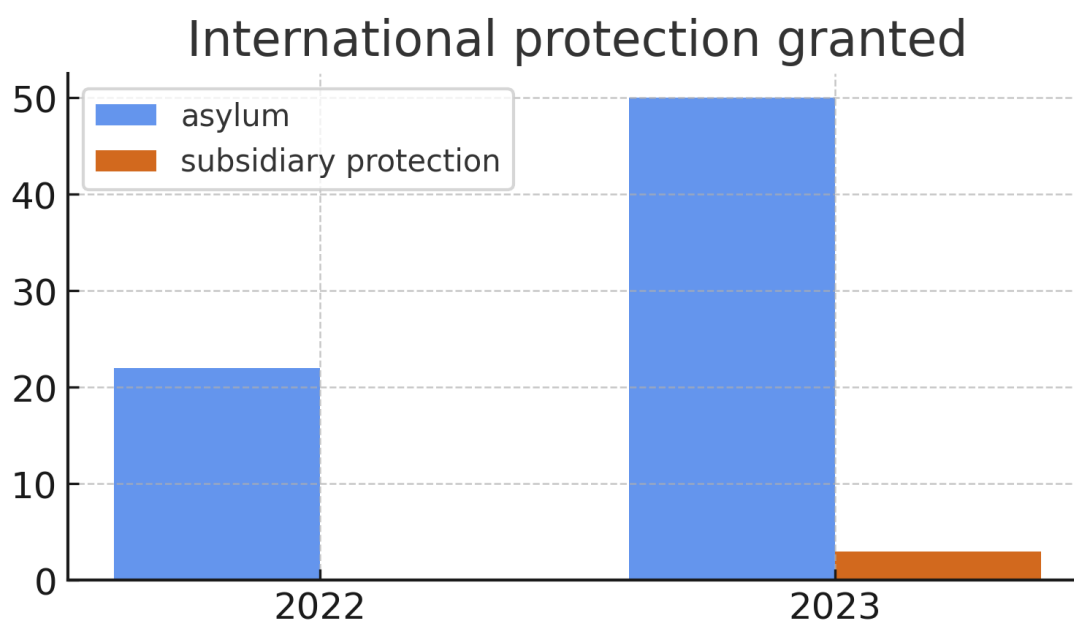


Chart 7: International protections granted in 2022 and 2023

¹⁹ <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234>

5.3. Reception and accommodation of applicants for international protection

Due to the increase in the number of applicants, the accommodation capacity of the Reception Center for international protection seekers in Kutina has been increased, so that part of the applicants are housed in residential containers that are placed outside the Reception Centre. This increased the accommodation capacity from the previous 140 to 300 places.

Also, the Ministry of the Interior has hired additional officers to work on the reception and accommodation of international protection seekers, and officers have also continued to attend numerous training courses to ensure better conditions for the stay of seekers in Reception Centers.

5.4. Dublin procedure

| Incoming transfers were made from the following Member States: | |
|--|------------|
| State | 2023. |
| Austria | 193 |
| Belgium | 87 |
| Bulgaria | 1 |
| Denmark | 1 |
| Finland | 8 |
| France | 117 |
| Luxembourg | 2 |
| Germany | 278 |
| Netherlands | 10 |
| Norway | 9 |
| Poland | 3 |
| Slovakia | 6 |
| Slovenia | 9 |
| Sweden | 14 |
| Switzerland | 159 |
| Total | 897 |

| Number outgoing transfers (from HR): | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| State | 2023. |
| Bulgaria | 4 |
| Germany | 3 |
| Netherlands | 1 |
| Poland | 1 |
| Slovenia | 1 |
| Switzerland | 2 |
| Total | 12 |

Table 4: Number of inbound and outbound Dublin transfers for period 01.01.-31.12.2023.²⁰

5.5. Access to information and provision of legal assistance

The project "Free legal aid in the procedure for granting international protection" was implemented continuously during 2023 and was co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. During 2023, a project proposal was developed for the new project "Free legal aid in the procedure for granting international protection", which began to be implemented on 28.3.2024.

From 19.02.2022. to 31.03.2023. the project "Legal Counseling in the Procedure for Granting International Protection 2021" was also implemented, also co-financed by the national program of the Asylum,

Migration and Integration Fund. During 2023, a mobile application was developed on the main features of the procedure for granting international protection in the Republic of Croatia and the ways of exercising the rights of applicants for international protection in practice. During 2023, a project proposal was developed for the new project "Legal Counseling in the Procedure for Granting International Protection".

5.6. Capacity building and international cooperation in the field of international protection

In order to continuously strengthen administrative capacities, officials of the Ministry of the Interior participated in a series of training courses, workshops and meetings.

²⁰ <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234>

Officials of the International Protection Service, Department for International Protection Procedure participated in training courses as part of the curriculum of the European Union Agency for Asylum: " Evidence assessment ", "EUAA pre-deployment induction training .

The increase in the number of applicants for international protection, which is a result of increased migration pressures, has resulted in the hiring of new employees of the Service in order to adequately respond to the increased administrative burden.

On November 3, 2023, UNHCR held a workshop with sixteen heads of border police stations and representatives of the Border Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior to share their observations from border monitoring missions/visits.

Participants discussed challenges related to access to asylum, including the provision of information, registration of asylum seekers, and entry systems that are sensitive to protection needs.

5.6.1. Activities within the project "Access to the territory and the asylum system in Croatia - legal support and capacity building"

In 2023, the Croatian Law Center (HPC), as an implementing partner and

with financial support from UNHCR, implemented the project "Access to the Territory and the Asylum System in Croatia - Legal Support and Capacity Building". Among the activities within the aforementioned project, we highlight the following:

1. Providing legal assistance

During 2023, HPC provided legal assistance to persons displaced from Ukraine, and consultations were conducted in the field, in collective accommodation, and through individual consultations held via telephone, e-mail, and social networks. Legal information was also provided and legal consultations were held with applicants for international protection and persons granted international protection.

2. National Report on the Asylum System for 2022

In 2023, the National Report on the Asylum System in 2022 was prepared. The report monitors developments at the European Union level, as well as developments in legislation, public policies, and challenges in the Croatian asylum system in practice during 2022. The report was prepared based on data from the Ministry of the Interior, administrative courts, the High Administrative Court, the Croatian

Employment Service, international organizations, civil society organizations, and other publicly available data.

3. Education of police officers

In cooperation with UNHCR and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, two training courses for police officers were held on the topic "Access to the international protection system and protection of vulnerable groups", the first on 7 June 2023, and the second workshop on 12 September 2023, both at the premises of the Police Academy. The workshops covered the following topics relevant to access to the international protection system: human rights of migrants and access to the international protection system, protection and identification of vulnerable groups, interviewing techniques for vulnerable groups, and the responsibility of police officers, which were also accompanied by practical exercises.

4. Lectures for students regarding the asylum system

The long-standing cooperation with the Faculty of Political Science and the Faculty of Law in Zagreb continued, and the following lectures for students were held:

- On January 19th, a lecture was held for 19 students of the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb;
- On March 1st and 2nd, a lecture was held for 76 students of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, as part of the Department of Administrative Law;
- On April 13, a lecture was held for 4 students from the Law Clinic of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb;
- On December 6, a lecture was held for 17 social work students at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb.

Also on April 20, 2023, a lecture was held for 19 students of the Polytechnic of Criminology and Public Safety.

5. Asylum Coordination

During 2023, three meetings of the Asylum Coordination were held:

The first meeting of the Asylum Coordination was held on 1 June 2023, and the National Report on the Asylum System in the Republic of Croatia for 2022 was presented at the coordination meeting, as well as the recommendations developed in the project "Complementary Pathways for Access to International Protection in South-Eastern Europe - COMP4SEE" (see more under heading 5.8. Complementary Pathways of Arrival). A

total of 14 participants participated in the meeting.

The second meeting of the Asylum Coordination was held on 25 October. The topic of the meeting was the novelties in the Act on International and Temporary Protection and the exchange of information on the asylum system. A total of 24 participants attended the meeting.

The third meeting of the Asylum Coordination on the topic of the protection of unaccompanied children from the recent practice of actors in the asylum system was held on November 29, 2023. A total of 21 participants attended the meeting.

6. Celebrating Refugee Day

On the occasion of World Refugee Day on June 20, HPC organized and held a pub quiz on the topic of refugees and migration at the SPUNK club. The quiz was organized with the support of students from the Law Clinic of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb.

7. Seminar for judges of administrative courts

In cooperation with the Judicial Academy and UNHCR, a seminar for administrative court judges on the topic of gender-based violence in

international protection procedures was held on 22 November 2023 in Zagreb, at the premises of the Judicial Academy. The purpose of the seminar was to deepen the knowledge of the participants in the field of administrative court protection and the treatment of international protection seekers and persons with international protection who have been exposed to gender-based violence from the aspect of Croatian positive law, European and international legislation and the practice of the European Court of Human Rights. The seminar was attended by 10 judges.

8. Workshop for lawyers and legal aid providers

A workshop for lawyers and legal aid providers from associations registered to provide primary legal aid on the topic of Challenges in Legal Practice in the Field of Asylum Law was held on December 1, 2023.

9. Interdisciplinary group of experts

The Croatian Legal Center, with the support of UNHCR, gathered and formed an interdisciplinary group of experts with the aim of establishing a structured dialogue between experts, state bodies, civil society organizations, and other actors in the field of asylum

and migration. The group is intended as a platform for discussion and advocacy that provides guidance, prepares opinions and recommendations, and responds to public policies and legislative proposals with an emphasis on the protection of refugee rights. An initial meeting was held in 2023.

10. Brochure on the right to work

In cooperation with the Croatian Employment Service (CES), a brochure entitled "The Right to Work of International Protection Seekers, Persons with Granted International Protection and Persons Under Temporary Protection" was produced. The brochure contains key information on the right to employment and work, as well as the protection of these rights. It is available in Croatian, and has so far been translated into English, Ukrainian and Russian.²¹

5.6.2. Activities within the framework of cooperation with the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) regarding the so-called Asylum Information Database project

As part of the long-standing cooperation with the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) regarding the so-called Asylum Information Database project, a national report for 2022 has been prepared,²² which contains information on the procedure for granting international protection, the rights and obligations of applicants for international protection, reception conditions, detention and integration, and the rights of persons granted international protection.

Also, for the first time, a report was prepared regarding the temporary protection system in Croatia.²³

5.7. Relocation and relocation

On 28 July 2022, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Decision on the relocation of third-country nationals or stateless persons who meet the conditions for granting

²¹ <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/02/05/izradena-brosura-pravo-na-rad-traziteljja-medunarodne-zastite-osoba-s-odobrenom-medunarodnom-zastitom-i-osoba-pod-privremenom-zastitom/>

²² The 2022 report is available at the following link: <https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA-HR-2022-Update.pdf>.

²³ https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA_HR_Temporary-Protection_2022.pdf

international protection (Official Gazette, No. 88/22)²⁴. According to this Decision, the Republic of Croatia will, in accordance with the principle of voluntariness and solidarity, based on the Declaration on the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism, participate in the relocation of third-country nationals or stateless persons who meet the conditions for granting international protection from the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Cyprus, the Italian Republic, the Republic of Malta and the Kingdom of Spain (so-called MED 5). This is a contribution in the form of relocation of persons who meet the conditions for granting international protection (giving priority to vulnerable groups). In accordance with the aforementioned Decision, on 28 July 2022, 29 applicants for international protection were relocated from the Republic of Italy to the Republic of Croatia.

5.8. Complementary pathways of arrival - project "Complementary pathways for access to international protection in South-Eastern Europe - Comp4see"

The project is co-financed by the European Union Asylum, Migration and

Integration Fund and the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The main objective of the project is to contribute to the development of complementary pathways in Croatia, Slovenia and Bulgaria by creating new models of private/community sponsorship and to provide recommendations for improving national family reunification systems. The project partners are the Peace Institute (Slovenia), the Legal Centre for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (Slovenia) and the Access to Rights Foundation (Bulgaria).

In 2023, within the second year of the project, we highlight the following activities:

- Providing legal assistance and assisting in family reunification procedures with persons under international protection.
- In 2023, Recommendations for the development of a national model of private sponsorship/community sponsorship²⁵ and Recommendations for improving the national family reunification system in Croatia were prepared²⁶.

²⁴ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_07_88_1366.html

²⁵ <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Preporuke-nacionalni-model-sponzorstva.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Preporuke-nacionalni-sustav-spajanja-obitelji.pdf>

➤ The above recommendations were presented at a roundtable held on 28 June 2023 in Zagreb. The roundtable aimed to raise awareness of the potential of complementary pathways as a means of enabling safe and legal opportunities for refugees to arrive in the EU, especially in countries that have not had such programs so far, and to raise awareness of the possibilities of establishing private sponsorship schemes, as well as to raise awareness of the challenges that arise in family reunification procedures and advocate for improvements to the existing family reunification system in Croatia.

➤ A survey was conducted on the attitudes of citizens of Croatia, Slovenia and Bulgaria towards migration, and the report is available on the website of the Croatian Law Center.²⁷

On November 23, 2023, an international conference "New Legal Pathways for Access to Protection and Integration of Refugees in Europe - Opportunities and Challenges".²⁸ The conference gathered experts and

relevant actors from the three partner countries, but also from the countries of Southeast and Central Europe that are members of the EU, and countries that are in the process of joining the EU. The main goal of the conference was to promote complementary arrival routes as a way of legal arrival, acceptance and integration of the refugee population.

At the conference, knowledge and experiences from this field were shared, among others²⁹:

- 1) insight into the concept of complementary pathways in UNHCR strategic documents and in European Union policy;
- 2) the experiences of Canada, which was the first to introduce the model of private sponsorship of refugees, Germany with the successful sponsorship program NesT - Neustart im Team, as well as the best practices and conclusions of the programs implemented so far, presented by the SHARE network;

²⁷ https://www.hpc.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Survey-report-perception-of-citizens-of-HR-SI_BG-about-migrations.pdf

²⁸ https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/event/new-legal-pathways-access-protection-and-integration-refugees-europe-opportunities-and_en

²⁹ The materials developed as part of the project are available here:

<https://www.hpc.hr/2023/07/06/comp4see-komplementarni-putovi-za-pristup-medunarodnoj-zastiti-u-jugoistocnoj-europa/>

3) presentation of research on the perception of citizens of Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia about refugees, their needs and position in society;

4) national recommendations developed within the project, including those relating to the improvement of national family reunification systems and those on the private sponsorship model that would be most appropriate for a given national context. The recommendations are based on the project's research activities, which include an analysis of legislative and institutional frameworks, empirical research, a survey of the experiences and perceptions of a wider range of stakeholders, and insights gained through the provision of legal support in family reunification procedures.

In addition, during 2023, video materials were produced on complementary pathways, private sponsorship, and the family reunification system.³⁰

³⁰ <https://www.hpc.hr/2023/12/22/video-materijali-komplementarni-putovi-dolaska-u-europu-modeli-sponzorstva-i-postupci-spajanja-obitelji/>

6. MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

6.1. Unaccompanied and separated children

In 2023, there was a large increase in the number of unaccompanied minors seeking international protection, 1,516, which is 347% more than in 2022, when there were 436.

| Statistical data on unaccompanied minors seeking international protection by age and gender from 2011 to 2023 inclusive | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Gender / Age | 2011. | 2012 | 2013 | 2014. | 2015 | 2016 | 2017. | 2018. | 2019. | 2020. | 2021. | 2022. | 2023. | TOTAL |
| M | 194 | 69 | 54 | 10 | 5 | 163 | 251 | 59 | 65 | 169 | 174 | 337 | 1,458 | 3,008 |
| 0-13 unaccompanied | 3 | | | | 2 | 15 | 23 | 11 | 3 | 21 | 28 | 12 | 100 | 218 |
| 14-15 unaccompanied | 18 | 11 | 8 | | 1 | 47 | 62 | 13 | 12 | 30 | 40 | 74 | 273 | 589 |
| 16-17 unaccompanied | 173 | 58 | 46 | 10 | 2 | 101 | 166 | 35 | 50 | 118 | 106 | 251 | 1,085 | 2,201 |
| F | 3 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 17 | 21 | 99 | 58 | 221 |
| 0-13 unaccompanied | | | | | | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 17 | 12 | 50 |
| 14-15 unaccompanied | | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | 4 | 5 | 24 | 8 | 44 |
| 16-17 unaccompanied | 3 | 1 | 1 | | | | 5 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 58 | 38 | 127 |
| TOTAL | 197 | 70 | 55 | 10 | 5 | 164 | 261 | 64 | 70 | 186 | 195 | 436 | 1,516 | 3,229 |

Table 5: Number of applicants for international protection - unaccompanied minors³¹

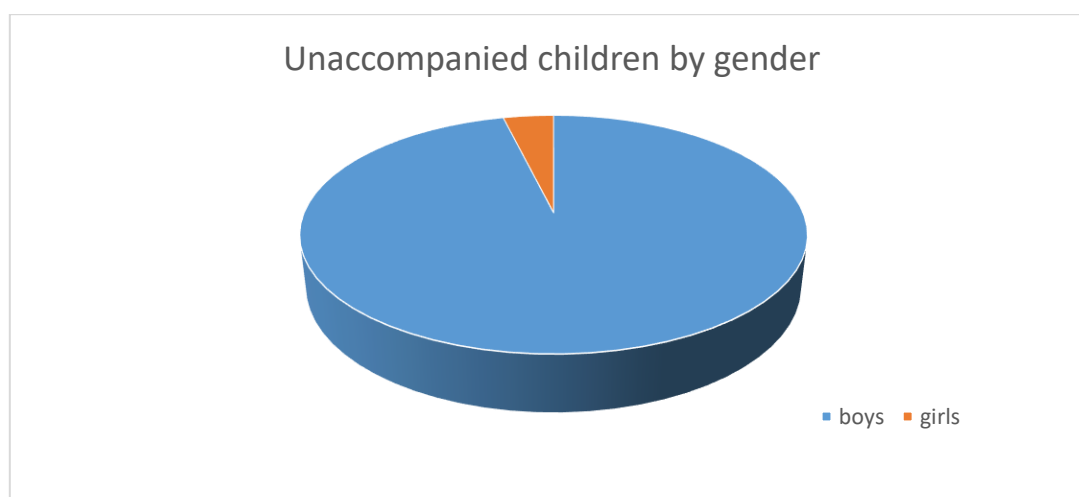


Chart 8: Unaccompanied children – applicants for international protection by gender

³¹ [web statistics 2023 Q4.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

Although there are significantly fewer women than men in the total number of international protection seekers (20% women), among unaccompanied minors, the share of girls is even lower. According to the gender structure, boys predominate (96.2%) compared to girls (3.8%).

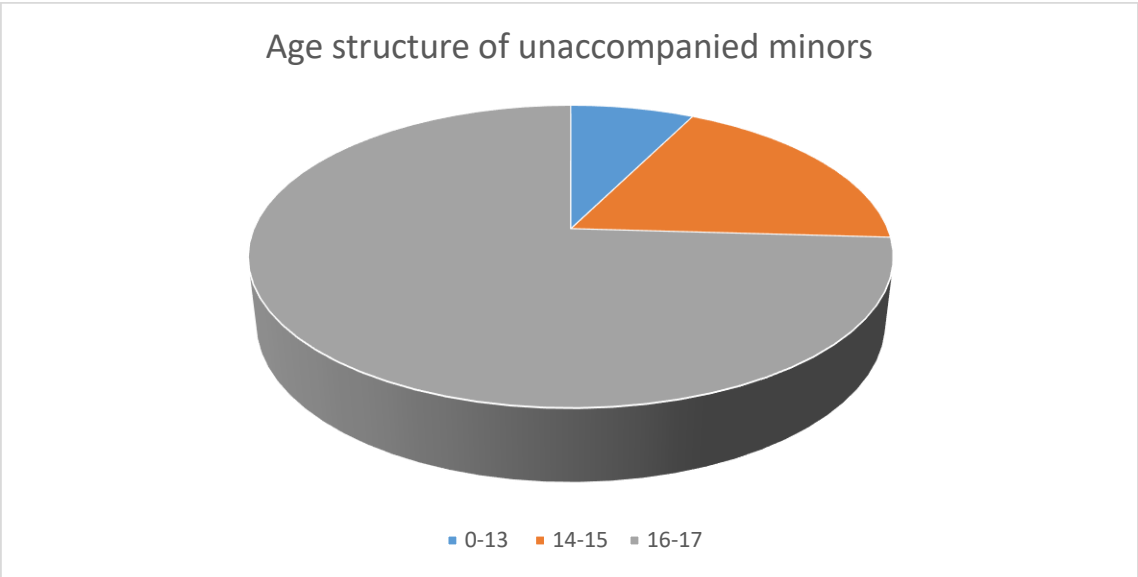


Chart 9: Age structure of unaccompanied children seeking international protection

In 2023, in addition to regular protection monitoring visits, UNHCR, together with the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, visited two children's homes - in Zagreb, where unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) were placed after being found by the police, and in Split, where a Ukrainian UASC was placed. Increased arrivals and very short stays of UASC, in some cases only a few hours, continued in 2023, raising protection concerns.

As part of the project "Legal Assistance and Capacity Building for Access to the Territory and Asylum System in

Croatia", the Croatian Law Center, as an implementing partner and with the financial support of UNHCR Croatia, organized a meeting of the Asylum Coordination on November 29, 2023. The Asylum Coordination was established back in 2003 with the aim of exchanging information between relevant actors in the asylum system, in particular on challenges, and, if possible, proposing solutions to challenges arising in practice. The topic of the meeting was "Protection of Unaccompanied Children in Light of Recent Practices within the Asylum System". Representatives of the

Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the Ministry of the Interior (Reception Center for Seekers of International Protection), the Croatian Institute for Social Work (Regional Office Novi Zagreb) and the Center for Community Service Provision in Zagreb gave short introductions to the topic of the meeting. The meeting was attended by 21 participants.

As part of the same project, on December 6, 2023, a lawyer from the Croatian Law Center held a lecture for 17 social work students at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb, within the Department of Family Law. The topic of the lecture was the family law protection of unaccompanied children.

6.1.1. Changes to the legal framework in relation to minors

The Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection (OG 33/2023), which was adopted on 17 March 2023 and entered into force on 1 April 2023, introduced amendments relating to minors.

It is thus stipulated that during the international protection procedure, the child is provided with access to recreational activities, including play,

appropriate to his or her age, and outdoor activities.

Also, through the amended legal provisions, the role of the special guardian in the care of an unaccompanied minor has been strengthened and it is stipulated that the special guardian of an unaccompanied child will, as soon as possible after submitting an application for international protection, take all necessary actions to find family members and reunite the child with the family, if this is in his or her interest, including contacting and cooperating with competent ministries, other state and foreign bodies and non-governmental organizations.

In addition, the Special Guardian is obliged to respect the principle of confidentiality in collecting, processing and exchanging data about the child and family members so as not to jeopardize their safety.

6.2. Care and protection of children from Ukraine

Taking into account the specific needs of Ukrainian citizens who fled from war-affected areas, and especially regarding the protection of the rights and well-being of children, amendments were made to the Law on Social

Welfare ("Narodne novine", no.: 18/22, 46/22, 119/22 and 71/23),³² which stipulates that persons under temporary protection receive benefits and services in the social welfare system to the same extent as foreigners under subsidiary protection and asylum seekers. In this way, children displaced from Ukraine have full protection of their rights.

The regional offices of the Croatian Institute for Social Work (hereinafter: Regional Offices) have been providing assistance and support to children displaced from Ukraine since the beginning of the aggression against Ukraine, cooperating with non-governmental organizations and the civil sector, and taking all protective and temporary measures to protect the rights and well-being of children during their stay in the Republic of Croatia in accordance with the national regulations of the Republic of Croatia. The regional offices have so far registered more than 500 children displaced from Ukraine who arrived in the Republic of Croatia unaccompanied by their parents or legal guardians. The children have been placed under guardianship and special guardians have been appointed: trusted persons, close family members or professional

employees of the Regional Offices. The majority of persons displaced from Ukraine are in private accommodation, and thus the majority of children from Ukraine who are in the Republic of Croatia unaccompanied by their parents or legal guardians are in collective or private accommodation together with trusted persons with whom they arrived in the Republic of Croatia.

6.2.1. Capacity building in the field of providing psychosocial support

UNICEF Croatia, in coordination with the Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the Croatian Institute for Social Work, the Split Regional Office and implementing partners, ensured the strengthening of professional capacities (knowledge and skills) for the integrated provision of mental health and psychosocial support services, services, programmes and interventions for protection and support to the most vulnerable children, adolescents and parents/caregivers of refugees from Ukraine.

Also, in cooperation with the Government of the Swiss Confederation and the Central State Secretariat for Migration, as part of the

³² [Act on Amendments to the Social Welfare Act \(nn.hr\)](#)

international program "Support to Refugee and Migrant Children in the Integration Process in EU Countries", the capacities of experts are being strengthened to provide support to families at risk, develop foster care for children from Ukraine, as well as to provide psychosocial and mental health support so that the system is more sensitive and more responsive to the needs of children and families from Ukraine.

As part of the project, an analytical assessment of the legal framework for custody, international protection and protection of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) displaced from Ukraine and an assessment of the information management system for the collection, processing and exchange of data on unaccompanied and separated children was made.

6.2.2. Study visit of the Ukrainian delegation to the Republic of Croatia, November 2023

The Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy was the coordinator and host of a study visit of a Ukrainian delegation from 27 to 30 November 2023 regarding the reform of childcare and the development of support for families.

The study visit was organized within the framework of the initiative "A Family for Every Child" - better care for children in Ukraine, launched by the Government of Ukraine in cooperation with UNICEF and numerous stakeholders.

The aim of the study visit was to gain insight into the policies and practices of childcare implemented in the Republic of Croatia through meetings, presentations and visits to relevant organisations and institutions. The Ukrainian delegation consisted of 18 members, including representatives of the Coordination Centre for Family Education and Childcare, a specially established advisory body of the Government of Ukraine tasked with implementing the childcare reform funded by the European Union, representatives of the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy, representatives of the Ukrainian Ministry responsible for education, a representative of the Volyn Regional State Administration, a representative of the Kharkiv Military Regional Administration, representatives of the UNICEF Office in Ukraine and representatives of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which supports the Government of Ukraine in implementing

the childcare reform. Accordingly, the Ministry, as the host, was supported in the organisation of the visit by the UNICEF Office in Croatia.

6.2.3. Summer School for Children of Ukrainian Veterans

In June 2023, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted a Decision on Support for the Holding of a Summer School in the Republic of Croatia for Children of Ukrainian War Veterans in 2023,³³ which tasked the Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy with the preparation and implementation of the activities of the summer school in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Education, the Central State Office for Demography and Youth and the Croatian Red Cross, as well as with monitoring the implementation of the activities. In order to implement the Decision, the competent authorities also involved civil society organizations and experts from individual fields.

Based on the aforementioned Government Decision, the Summer School for Children of Ukrainian Veterans in the Republic of Croatia was implemented in Rijeka during August 2023 for two groups of children

accompanied by adults, in two terms. The first group of 40 children stayed at the Rijeka Red Cross Home from 10 to 20 August 2023, and the second group of 41 children from 21 to 31 August 2023. The summer school program for children included English language workshops, STEAM workshops, creative workshops, sports workshops, swimming school, a tour of the city of Rijeka, a tour of the observatory, a one-day trip to the island of Krk and a one-day trip to Gorski Kotar, and learning about the culture and history of the Republic of Croatia. All costs of maintaining the summer school were covered by the Republic of Croatia.

6.2.4. Participation in the work of the expert group of the newly established consultative expert group at the Council of Europe (CGU) for the protection of the rights of Ukrainian children

The Council of Europe established the Consultative Group on Children from Ukraine, in order to ensure the practical implementation of the Reykjavík Declaration of 2023, and to facilitate dialogue and exchange of information, in a multilateral environment, on the applicable legal standards and policies regarding Ukrainian children residing in

³³ [224 - 8.docx \(live.com\)](#)

the member states of the Council of Europe, and for the purpose of harmonizing the treatment and effective protection of the rights of Ukrainian children who were forced to leave their homeland.

The group is composed of national experts responsible for decision-making and coordination of issues related to children in Ukraine, as well as experts from the European Union and other key international organizations and European and Ukrainian NGOs.

By the end of 2023, two online meetings of the VE Consultative Group on Children of Ukraine (CGU) were held on the topic of guardianship and understanding the risks of trafficking in children of Ukraine for the purpose of sexual and labor exploitation.

6.3. Gender-based violence

The coordination group for gender-based violence in reception centers, which was established in 2020 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the support of UNHCR based on the standard operating procedure, held three meetings in 2023. In response to

the training needs identified by the coordination group, UNHCR, in partnership with the NGO Society for Psychological Assistance, held a workshop on "How to deal with secondary trauma and burnout" on 6 December 2023 for twenty service providers and the Ministry of the Interior.

6.4. Other vulnerable groups

6.4.1. National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination

At its session held on March 30, 2023, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Decision on the adoption of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period until 2027 ³⁴, the Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2023, ³⁵and the Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2023 ³⁶.

The purpose of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period until 2027 is to ensure,

³⁴

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20ZPLJP%20razdoblje%20do%202027.pdf>

³⁵ [Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2023.pdf \(gov.hr\)](#)

³⁶ [Action plan to combat discrimination 2023.pdf \(gov.hr\)](#)

through multi-year planning, coordinated action of state administration bodies in the field of human rights protection and combating discrimination, to complement existing sectoral policies and to raise the level of knowledge and awareness of equality so that all citizens can exercise their rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and international treaties for the protection of human rights and combating discrimination. Through the implementation of specific objectives in a five-year period, it will contribute to the long-term achievement of a higher level of social inclusion and social solidarity, quality of life and the rule of law. The implementation of the National Plan largely supports the achievement of the horizontal priority of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030, the promotion of

equality and equal opportunities, in order to achieve the long-term vision of a society in which there is no discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national or social origin and disability, in which all Croatian citizens are equally present in all areas of public and private life, have equal status, equal opportunities to exercise their rights and equal benefit from the achieved results.

In order to ensure equal access to certain areas of life and to goods and services for all citizens, and especially to groups of citizens who are more often in a disadvantaged position, measures have been designed aimed at the areas of education, work and employment, healthcare and housing, as well as a special goal aimed at strengthening the rights of national minorities

7. INTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH APPROVED INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INTO CROATIAN SOCIETY

7.1. Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection

The new Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette, No. 33/23),³⁷ which entered into force on 1 April 2023, has adopted provisions that also relate to the position of persons granted international protection. The amendments relate to the abolition of the provision on the termination of the right to reside in the Republic of Croatia for an asylum seeker or a foreigner under subsidiary protection if they move out of the Republic of Croatia or continuously reside abroad for more than 6 months. The obligation to notify the Ministry of the Interior in cases where they move out of the Republic of Croatia or continuously reside abroad for more than 90 days in a period of 180 days has been defined. Also, the obtaining of documents (residence permits and travel documents) for family members of persons under international protection who have been granted temporary residence for the

purpose of family reunification has been defined more precisely by clearly referring to the provisions of the Act on Foreigners.

In the area of exercising the right to accommodation for persons granted international protection, it defined a



Figure 3: Protocol for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection

comprehensive standardization of issues accommodation of asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection, including accommodation in shelters for international protection seekers. With regard to the previous provisions that did not regulate the settlement of housing for asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection after the expiration of the two-year right

³⁷ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_03_33_581.html

to housing, the amendments exceptionally provide for the temporary use of a state-owned housing unit for asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection even after the expiration of the two-year right to housing, while defining participation in the payment of costs. Furthermore, misdemeanor provisions are prescribed in situations of violation of the defined obligations of asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection.

7.2. Publications and tools in the field of integration

7.2.1. Procedure protocol for the integration of persons who have been granted international protection

In the first quarter of 2023, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities published the Protocol of Procedures for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection which was adopted on 19.12.2022.³⁸

The publication is intended for all stakeholders involved in the integration of persons with granted international protection: state bodies, local self-

government, civil society organizations and persons with granted international protection themselves. The Protocol is designed as a series of interconnected steps that contribute to the integration of persons with granted international protection at the local level. In addition to the obligations of central state bodies, mainly ministries and government offices, the Protocol also regulates the steps that need to be taken at the level of cities as the places where integration into society actually takes place. The purpose of the Protocol is to help all bodies and organizations participating in the process understand the competencies, rights and obligations in individual areas of integration (education, employment, social welfare, health). The Protocol is available on the official website of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities.

7.2.2. Rights of persons under international and temporary protection

The Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia has also published a brochure entitled

³⁸ [Protocol of procedures during the integration of persons granted international protection.pdf \(gov.hr\)](https://www.gov.hr/documents/102630/102630/Protocol_of_procedures_during_the_integration_of_persons_granted_international_protection.pdf)

"The Rights of Persons Under International and Temporary Protection".³⁹ The brochure contains information on the available mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights and the suppression of discrimination in the Republic of Croatia, especially in the context of international and temporary protection, and is published in twelve languages: Arabic, English, Farsi, Filipino, French, Hindi, Croatian, Nepali, Pashto, Spanish, Turkish and Ukrainian.

The brochure came from the manual "Integration and human rights - a

manual for educators" created by Dijana Kesonja and Tatjana Vlašić for the educational activities of the project "INCLuDE - Interdepartmental cooperation in the empowerment of citizens of third countries" co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union.⁴⁰

7.2.3. Inclusion Handbook

In 2023, UNHCR presented the Interactive Manual on Inclusion for Practitioners at the Local Level⁴¹, developed by UNHCR and the Migration Policy Group, to

³⁹ <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/izdana-brosura-prava-osoba-pod-medjunarodnom-i-privremenom-zastitom/1149>

⁴⁰ A digital version of the brochure in twelve languages is available at the following links:

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/HR_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/ARABIC_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/EN_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/ESP_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/FARSI_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/FR_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/HINDI_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/NEPAL_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/PASHTO_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/PH_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/TR_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/UA_Prava%20osoba%20pod%20me%C4%91unarodnom%20i%20privremenem%20za%C5%A1titom.pdf

⁴¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/62b31bf84.pdf>

representatives of local authorities in five municipalities in Istria and representatives of local authorities from three cities in the Split-Dalmatia County, as well as to local non-governmental organizations and representatives of local social welfare centers that work with refugees. UNHCR provided information on its mandate; the latest global and national statistics on displaced and stateless persons and presented the Handbook. The toolkit focuses on how actors at the local level can ensure the effective inclusion of refugees in local communities. Istrian municipalities are relatively new communities that receive refugees, with an increasing number of Ukrainian refugees. While integration support for persons with international protection is provided centrally, from central state administration bodies, the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees is left to local communities, which often have no experience with inclusion and need support in this area.



Figure 4: Handbook on inclusion

7.3. Action Plan of the City of Zagreb

At its 23rd session in 2023, the Zagreb City Assembly adopted the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities for 2023 and 2024.

The lead agency for the development of the Action Plan was the Coordination of the City of Zagreb for Integration, which consists of 4 representatives of city administrative bodies and 5 external members selected through a public call

for expressions of interest to participate in the work of the Coordination.

The Action Plan applies to applicants for international protection, persons granted international or temporary protection and foreign workers . New measures that are a step forward compared to the previous Action Plan are language courses for foreigners, the establishment of the ONE STOP SHOP Central Information Point for Refugees and Migrants (which includes providing information to applicants for international protection, persons granted international or temporary protection and foreign workers), a pilot project to provide educational support to pupils and students granted international or temporary protection, and the development of a city strategic document for integration for a multi-year period. Civil society organizations are an indispensable partner in the implementation of the Action Plan.⁴²

7.4. Preparations for the opening of the "One stop shop"

On 10 November 2023, UNHCR, together with the City of Zagreb,

organized a roundtable discussion ahead of the establishment of a " *One-stop shop* " for refugees and migrants, the first of its kind in Croatia. *The one-stop shop* will be established in accordance with the Local Integration Action Plan of the City of Zagreb in April 2024. It will initially act as a reference and information center, and UNHCR will support the City of Zagreb in reaching out to refugee communities, as well as with individual recommendations and training on communication with communities.

On the occasion of the establishment of *the One-Stop Shop* as a central point for information and integration of refugees and migrants in Zagreb, the City of Zagreb and UNHCR Croatia organized a round table "Establishment and work of *the One-Stop-Shop for Refugees and Migrants in Zagreb*" at the Westin Hotel on November 10 , as part of the implementation of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities for 2023 and 2024. The round table discussed the needs and realization of rights and the availability of services intended for refugees and migrants in order to review the existing systems and

⁴²In April 2024, the organizations were selected for funding through the Public Call for Expressions of Interest from Civil Society Organizations for Participation in the Implementation of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities for 2023 and 2024.

capacities and recommend work modalities in the local context. More than 30 key stakeholders from national and local authorities, international organizations and civil society discussed modalities for its effective functioning. The event was attended by the Deputy Mayor Mr. Luka Korlaet , and a large number of participants from different areas, representatives of international and state institutions, civil society organizations, representatives of the Coordination of the City of Zagreb for Integration and others.

The One Stop Shop is a central point for informing refugees and migrants where foreigners will be able to obtain information on the possibilities of exercising their rights in accordance with the Aliens Act (OG 133/20, 114/22 and 151/22) and the International and Temporary Protection Act (OG 70/15, 127/17 and 33/23) as well as on the use of available services, in one place, located in the city center. The project will be implemented in 2024 by the City of Zagreb in cooperation with UNHCR Croatia.⁴³

7.5. Employment

On 16 June, UNHCR launched discussions between local and regional branches of two of UNHCR's main global partners, IKEA and INDITEX, to develop support modalities for an internship and employment model for INDITEX inspired by the IKEA-UNHCR partnership. The initiative followed a conference on 23 May on promoting the economic empowerment of refugees organized by UNHCR, IKEA, the Croatian Employers' Association, the Croatian Business Council for Sustainable Development and the Embassy of Sweden in Zagreb.

As part of the European Mobility Week, a round table "People on the Move" was held at the Cultural Information Center KIC on September 18, 2023 on the topic of living and working conditions of foreign workers in Zagreb, attended by representatives of trade unions, associations and foreign workers themselves. In December, a Forum for the Empowerment of Migrant Women was organized under the title "Foreign Workers: Perspectives in Zagreb" on

⁴³The Welcome Center opened in September 2024 <https://www.zagreb.info/vijesti/u-zagrebu-otvoren-centar-dobrodoslice-za-izbjeglice-i-migrante/663266/>

the topic of integration through work and employment.

7.6. Projects and capacity building in the field of integration

7.6.1. SINERGY - Ensuring a synergistic approach to the integration of third-country nationals

The Directorate for European Affairs, International Relations and European Union Funds of the Ministry of the Interior, as the Managing Authority in the management and control system for the implementation of the Internal Security Fund Programme, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Programme and the Integrated Border Management Fund Programme, the Instrument for Financial Support in the Field of Border Management and Visa Policy, has adopted a Decision on the direct allocation of funds to the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in the amount of EUR 1,125,000.00 from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Programme for the implementation of the project "SINERGY - Ensuring a Synergistic Approach to the Integration of Third-Country Nationals", which

represents 75% of the total eligible costs of the project, while the co-financing of 25% of the eligible costs of the project will be ensured from the funds of the Republic of Croatia's participation.⁴⁴

The total value of the project is EUR 1,500,000.00 including VAT, and the purpose of the project in question is to strengthen multi-level cooperation in the application of international and domestic standards for the integration of third-country nationals in the Republic of Croatia, with an emphasis on persons granted international protection.

7.6.2. New neighbors - inclusion of persons with granted international protection in Croatian society

The project "New Neighbors - Inclusion of Persons with International Protection in Croatian Society", which began in March 2020, was completed on 31.03.2023. The aforementioned project, with a total value of EUR 1,935,837.16, was co-financed with funds from the National Programme of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the state budget (10% co-financed from national funds). Through the aforementioned project, the Center

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<https://eufondovi.mup.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Odluke%20o%20dodjeli%20financijski%20sredstava/Odluka%20o%20dodjeli%20financijski%20sredstava%20-%20SINERGY.pdf?vel=132593>

7.6.3. Establishment of a resettlement mechanism

25,000.00 (25% co-financed from national funds), had as its general objective the introduction of the experiences of other countries and the preparation for the implementation of resettlement, in accordance with the implementation of the principle of solidarity between Member States. As part of the project, a mobile application " ReSettle " was created. in Croatia",⁴⁵ available in Croatian, English, Arabic and Kurdish. In addition to information on the steps, or rather the procedure in the Republic of Turkey, for arrival in the Republic of Croatia for persons from the resettlement program, the application offers information on the rights that persons acquire upon approval of international protection in accordance with the Law on International and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette, No.: 70/15, 127/17 and 33/23), the ways to exercise these rights and obligations in the Republic of Croatia. The application also offers useful information on all important aspects of life in the Republic of Croatia, from healthcare, education, work, housing to easier navigation in activities necessary for daily functioning.

50



Figure 5: ReSettle application in Croatia

As a prerequisite for good integration of refugees into Croatian society, learning and knowing the Croatian language is important, which is why an audio dictionary with basic terms and phrases recorded in Croatian was created. As part of the aforementioned project, a video was created in June 2020 that demonstrates the integration story of a Syrian family that arrived in the Republic of Croatia under the resettlement program.

7.6.4. Translation services during integration assistance

In the fourth quarter of 2023, the project "Translation Services during the Provision of Integration Assistance" was completed, co-financed from the funds of the National Programme of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which began its implementation in the third quarter of 2020. The aforementioned project, with a total

value of EUR 68,000.00 (10% co-financed from national funds), had as its general objective the provision of basic prerequisites for the social inclusion of persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia. The purpose of the project was to provide information and provide assistance and support to persons granted international protection for a more successful integration into Croatian society. The target group was identified as employees of the Directorate for Immigration, Citizenship and Administrative Affairs (6 of them) who use translation services to communicate with third-country nationals when providing integration assistance, while the indirect target group is third-country nationals who use integration assistance. More precisely, the content of the project related to the reimbursement of the costs of oral, written and video translation upon the granting of international protection.

7.6.5. Round table on the topic "The role of religious organizations in the empowerment of persons under international and temporary protection in the process of integration"

As part of the 'Empowerment for Employment' project, which UNHCR Croatia is implementing in partnership with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), a roundtable discussion was organized

at the Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb on the topic "The Role of Religious Organizations in Empowering Persons Under International and Temporary Protection in the Integration Process".

The round table was attended by the Archbishop of Rijeka, Mons. Mate Uzinić, and Prof. Dr. Tomislav Kovač, Head of the Department of Fundamental Theology, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Branko Murić from the same department, and the event was opened by Anna Rich, UNHCR representative in Croatia, and Stanko Perica, director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Southeast Europe. Four refugees who participated in the project shared their experiences with the attendees.

7.6.6. Participation in the project – UNITES

The last activities on the CONNECTION project were completed, and the integration activities continued through the implementation of the UNITES project, which is financed from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). As part of the UNITES project, a three-day meeting of project partners was held in Brussels from May 23 to 25, 2023, in which representatives of the City of Zagreb also participated. The goal of the project is training and

monitoring of local authorities in designing integration strategies in cooperation with migrants.

7.6.7. Cities4Refugees

As part of the Cities4Refugees project, which is funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme, the first partner meeting was held in the Zagreb City Hall on 20 and 21 April, attended by representatives of Berlin, Barcelona, Munich, Palermo and Villeurbanne and Zagreb, as well as representatives of the International Alliance of Safe Harbors (International Alliance of Safe Harbors). of Safe Harbors) and the organization BBAG ev. from Potsdam.

The work of civil society organizations in the city of Zagreb was presented and examples of good practice and planned activities in the continuation of the Project were exchanged. At the meeting, it was agreed to draft a joint statement of the mayors of the cities in the project related to the migration system, which was signed in November in Villeurbanne. The aim of the project is to improve the capacity for the integration of migrants and refugees in EU cities through dialogue, learning about examples of good practice and exchanging experiences of cities and municipalities and civil society

organizations in the field of migration and integration. Two projects have been applied for funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), one in partnership with the Croatian Law Center and the other with the EUROCITIES Network of Cities.

7.6.8. ALTERNATIVE teaching - intercultural school lesson

ALTERNATIVE Teaching - Intercultural School Lesson" in 19 primary and secondary schools in the Zagreb area. The project enables students to meet other and different people, cultures, customs and religions from various parts of the world, through lessons in geography, music and art, as well as politics and economics.

The project involves students, their teachers, and classes are taught by migrants from various parts of the world who are artists, intellectuals, and activists.

The goal of the project is to reduce prejudice, stereotypes, inequality and discrimination by getting to know, talking about and learning about different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious identities through artistic creative practices and dialogue.

Project implementation continued in 2024.

7.6.9. Coordination of the City of Zagreb for Integration

A public call for expressions of interest for additional members of the Coordination of the City of Zagreb for Integration was published by which 3 new members were selected: one person granted international protection, one person granted temporary protection and one foreign worker. Two Coordination sessions were held where issues related to integration were discussed.

7.6.10. Workshops for employees of professional services of preschool institutions in the City of Zagreb

At the end of 2023, workshops were organized for employees of professional services of preschool institutions in the City of Zagreb on the topic of introducing diversity and inclusion of children of migrant origin. It is planned to continue holding such workshops during 2024.

7.6.11. Croatian language course in the City of Zagreb

With the aim of facilitating and accelerating the integration and inclusion of foreign citizens into society by acquiring basic communication skills in the workplace and in everyday life, in the community where they live, a

Croatian language course was held for students and adults with the possibility of taking an exam and obtaining a certificate of knowledge of the Croatian language, which is necessary for regulating status in the Republic of Croatia or continuing education.

7.7. Events for the general public

7.7.1. Screening of films related to refugees

From 28 March to 3 April, as part of ZagrebDox Croatia's leading film festival, UNHCR supported the screening of three refugee-related films and co-organized a public debate on refugee inclusion in Croatia. A UNHCR representative, the Director of Caritas Croatia, and the Director of the first refugee organization in Croatia, Svoj, discussed the possibilities for inclusion and the challenges faced by refugees, and advocated for the timely implementation of Croatian language courses for all refugees and the early integration of refugees into the labor market.

7.7.2. World Refugee Day and International Migrants Day

UNHCR and the City of Zagreb organized an open-air event in the city center on 17 June with workshops and

concerts for the general public to mark World Refugee Day. The event was opened by the Deputy Mayor of the City of Zagreb and a UNHCR representative, and was attended by refugees and civil society organizations. The flags of UNHCR, the City of Zagreb, and a special refugee flag made by children were raised on the occasion. The event was part of the partnership between UNHCR and the City of Zagreb for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Integration of the City of Zagreb, the first of its kind in Croatia, which also includes the establishment of the first one-stop shop for refugees and migrants in 2024. The event aimed to raise awareness among citizens, especially young people, about the different and diverse cultural characteristics of the City of Zagreb. On 17 December, International Migrants Day was marked by organizing a rich program with various workshops, a theater performance for children, and a rich musical program.

7.8. Support from the City of Zagreb in the field of social care and education

In accordance with the Decision on Social Welfare (Official Gazette of the

City of Zagreb 22/22, ⁴⁶29/22 ⁴⁷), asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection with registered residence in the City of Zagreb, foreigners under temporary protection and their family members, as well as family members of asylum seekers and family members of foreigners under subsidiary protection who are legally residing in the Republic of Croatia and who have been granted international protection in accordance with the Act on International and Temporary Protection, are entitled to certain financial benefits and social services: the right to assistance in family packages, the right to meals in a soup kitchen, the right to assistance for children in dairy food, the right to financial compensation for beneficiaries of assistance and care allowance and beneficiaries of personal disability allowance, the right to financial compensation for beneficiaries of the right to child allowance, the right to compensation for housing costs, the right to financial compensation for persons who have been granted the right to the status of a foster parent or caregiver, the right to a free annual ZET ticket, the right to summer holidays for

children of preschool age and school age until the end of primary school.

A pilot project was implemented to provide educational support to pupils and students attending secondary and higher education institutions in the City of Zagreb.

In 2023, 57 grants were awarded to students under international and temporary protection.

By providing financial support to regular high school students and students under international and temporary protection, the City of Zagreb wants to contribute to the success of the educational process, improve social mobility, ensure equal opportunities, and contribute to building a welcoming society.

7.9. Human rights and combating discrimination

In 2023, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period until 2027, ⁴⁸with the corresponding Action Plan for the Protection and

⁴⁶ <https://www1.zagreb.hr/sluzbeni-glasnik/#/app/akt?id=15bb0d9b-aa1b-4cb7-8c8f-270f3af36c27>

⁴⁷ <https://www1.zagreb.hr/sluzbeni-glasnik/#/app/akt?id=c09f23b5-4945-4741-8ccf-1935b3ca8c0e>

⁴⁸

<https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocImages//dokumenti//Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20ZPLJP%20razdoblje%20do%202027.pdf>

Promotion of Human Rights for 2023⁴⁹ and the Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2023,⁵⁰ ⁵¹ which define and set specific goals related to the realization of human rights and combating discrimination in the Republic of Croatia. The National Plan is the result of participatory cooperation between relevant stakeholders from the state administration, civil society, independent institutions for the protection of human rights and the academic community, included in the composition of the Working Group.

The purpose of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period until 2027 is to ensure, through multi-year planning, coordinated action of state administration bodies in the field of human rights protection and combating discrimination, complement existing sectoral policies, raise the level of knowledge and awareness of equality so that all citizens can exercise the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and

international human rights treaties, and combat discrimination.

The implementation of specific objectives over five years will contribute to the long-term achievement of higher levels of social inclusion and solidarity, quality of life, the rule of law, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 at the national level.

The implementation of the National Plan greatly supports the achievement of the horizontal priority of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030, the promotion of equality and equal opportunities, in order to achieve the long-term vision of a society in which there is no discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national or social origin and disability, in which all Croatian citizens are equally present in all areas of public and private life, have an equal position, equal opportunities to exercise their

49

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Akcijski%20plan%20zastite%20i%20promicanja%20ljudskih%20prava%202023.pdf>

50

<https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Akcijski%20plan%20suzbijanja%20discriminacije%202023.pdf>

⁵¹ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_03_37_625.html

rights and equal benefits from the achieved results.⁵²

Draft Action Plans for 2024-25. are in the procedure of the previous procedure. For the purposes of creating new Action Plans, a new Working Group was established, consisting of representatives of state administration bodies, all ombudsman institutions, the academic community, as well as 8 representatives of civil society organizations, including representatives of vulnerable groups - LGBTIQ+, gender equality, representatives of national minorities and persons with disabilities.

⁵²Source: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/ljudska-prava/nacionalni-plan-zastite-i-promicanja-ljudskih-prava-i-suzbijanja-diskriminacije-za-razdoblje-od-2021-do-2027-godine/989>

8. BORDER, VISAS AND SCHENGEN

8.1. Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the Schengen Area

The Republic of Croatia has been fully implementing the Schengen acquis since 1 January 2023 and has abolished border controls at 66 border crossings on the internal border with the Republic of Slovenia and Hungary. As of 1 January 2023, border controls have been abolished at internal land and sea borders, and as of 26 March 2023 at border crossings at airports for passengers arriving from Schengen member states .⁵³With this, the Republic of Croatia has become an integral part of the area without border controls - the Schengen area.

With the entry of the Republic of Croatia into the Schengen area, significant changes occurred in the existing system of implementing state border control, and, in addition to the continuation of the control of the external border of the Republic of Croatia, so-called compensatory measures were introduced. Due to all of

the above, it was necessary to reorganize the border police, so a certain number of police officers, who worked at border crossings until 1 January 2023, were assigned to new positions, to organizational units for implementing compensatory measures, and their training was also carried out.

8.2. Legislative framework

In order to fully enable the implementation of the Schengen acquis, the following secondary legislation was adopted and entered into force on the day of publication:

- Ordinance on amendments to the Ordinance on the performance of state border surveillance tasks⁵⁴,
- Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on Designation of Temporary Border Crossing Points⁵⁵,
- Regulation on amendments to the Regulation on border crossings of the Republic of Croatia⁵⁶,
- Regulation amending the Regulation on standards and conditions that border crossings

⁵³ [Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia - Schengen \(gov.hr\)](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_01_1_6.html)

⁵⁴ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_01_1_6.html

⁵⁵ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_01_1_5.html

⁵⁶ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_01_1_3.html

must meet for the efficient and safe performance of border control ⁵⁷.

8.3. Joining the new EU border control systems (EES and ETIAS)

In order to prepare the national legislative framework for the implementation of the regulations establishing the Entry / Exit System (EES) ⁵⁸and ETIAS, ⁵⁹the Ordinance amending the Ordinance on the treatment of third-country nationals (OG 145/2023) was adopted.

The Ordinance in question contains forms relating to the national facilitation programme in the EES system, which will to a certain extent provide operational assistance when carrying out border control after the establishment of this system (especially where the crossing of the state border by the same third-country nationals is frequent, as well as in truck traffic). This Ordinance also contains decisions on the refusal, annulment and revocation

of travel authorisations in the ETIAS system. The Ordinance was adopted pursuant to the Amendments to the Aliens Act (Official Gazette 151/2022) ⁶⁰.

8.4. Visas

On 1 January 2023, amendments to the Aliens Act (Official Gazette, No. 151/22) entered into force ⁶¹. These amendments more precisely regulate the provisions related to visa extension, appeal, visa revocation and issuance of long-stay visas in the area of visas. At the same time, with the date of the Republic of Croatia's entry into the Schengen area, i.e. from 1 January 2023, certain provisions were deleted due to the direct application of the EU Visa Code ⁶².

In December 2023, a Schengen evaluation was carried out in the area of "common visa policy". The evaluation was carried out in Istanbul (Turkey) and Pretoria (South Africa).

⁵⁷ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_01_1_4.html

⁵⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017R2226>

⁵⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R1240>

⁶⁰ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_12_151_2347.html

⁶¹ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_12_151_2347.html

⁶² Regulation (EC) no. 810/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 July 2009 on the establishment of the Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 243, 15 September 2009)

9. ILLEGAL MIGRATION AND SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS

9.1. Illegal border crossings in 2023⁶³

During 2023, the Croatian Border Police recorded 69,726 actions against persons found to have illegally crossed the Croatian state border, which is 37.7% more than in the same period in 2022, when 50,624 actions against persons found to have illegally crossed the state border were recorded.⁶⁴

Illegal border crossings by citizenship:

| Citizenship | Illegal crossings of the state border (persons) | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|-------------|
| | 2022. | 2023. | Trend % |
| Afghanistan | 14877 | 22,100 | 48.6 |
| Bangladesh | 3237 | 2,759 | -14.8 |
| DR Congo | 162 | 458 | 182.7 |
| India | 1766 | 982 | -44.4 |
| Iraq | 6334 | 4,095 | -35.3 |
| Iran | 1914 | 885 | -53.8 |
| China | 123 | 1,286 | 945.5 |
| Congo | 692 | 560 | -19.1 |
| Kosovo | 870 | 572 | -34.3 |
| Cuba | 1777 | 1,535 | -13.6 |
| Morocco | 251 | 6,248 | 2389.2 |
| Nepal | 858 | 1,203 | 40.2 |
| Pakistan | 4429 | 5,286 | 19.3 |
| Syria | 1594 | 3,922 | 146.0 |
| Turkey | 4110 | 13,480 | 228.0 |
| Others | 7,630 | 4,355 | -42.9 |
| TOTAL | 50,624 | 69,726 | 37.7 |

Table 6: Number and nationality of foreigners who illegally crossed the state border in 2022 and 2023

Source: Ministry of the Interior

⁶³ https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/statistika/2024/3/Statisticki_pregled_2023_.pdf

⁶⁴ In 2021, 17,404 illegal migrants were registered

The most numerous are citizens of Afghanistan, who numbered 22,100 (2022 – 14,877), followed by citizens of Turkey, who numbered 13,480 (2022 – 4,110) and Morocco, who numbered 6,248 (2022 – 251).

The most common way of illegally crossing the land state border of the Republic of Croatia is on foot, following road directions or railway tracks, using navigation applications on mobile devices, and with the help of boats across the Sava River in the area of the Brod-Posavina Police Department.

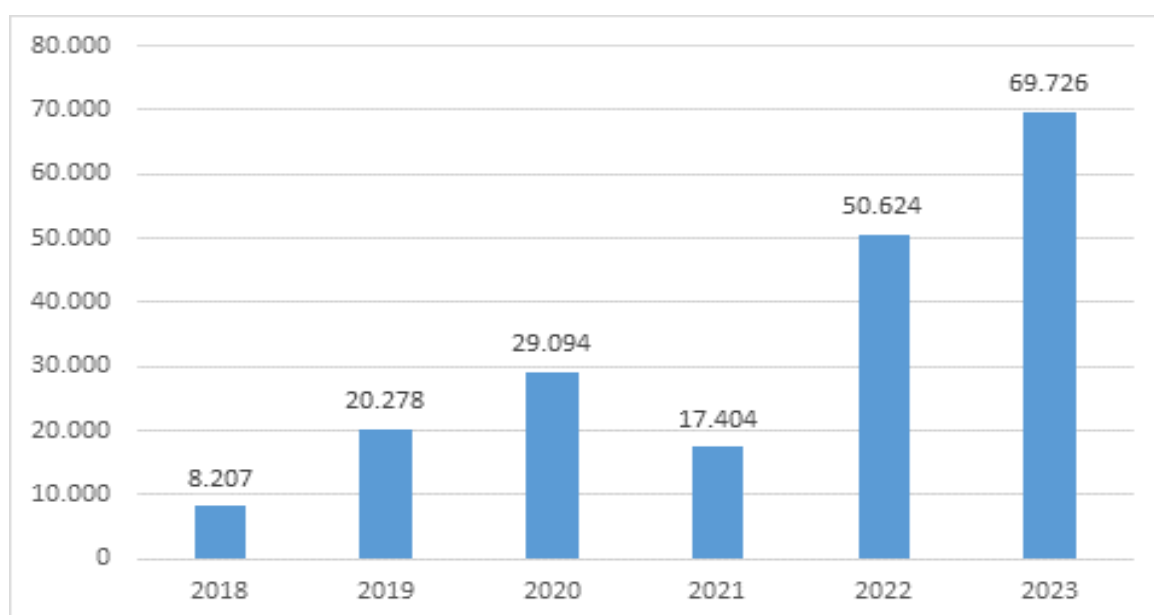


Chart 10 – Illegal state border crossings from 2018 to 2023.

Source: Ministry of the Interior

| Police Department | Illegal crossings of the state border (persons) | | |
|------------------------------|---|---------------|--------------|
| | 2022. | 2023. | Trend % |
| Zagreb | 6664 | 13,431 | +101.5 |
| Split-Dalmatia | 577 | 1,308 | +126.7 |
| Primorje-Gorski Kotar County | 3531 | 3,191 | -9.6 |
| Osijek-Baranja | 454 | 194 | -57.3 |
| Istrian | 3229 | 1,036 | -67.9 |
| Dubrovnik-Neretva Region | 534 | 1,074 | +101.1 |
| Karlovac | 10169 | 23,363 | +129.7 |
| Sisak-Moslavina | 7085 | 7,124 | +0.6 |
| Šibenik-Knin County | 58 | 295 | +408.6 |
| Vukovar-Srijem | 2070 | 2,067 | -0.1 |
| Zadar | 28 | 339 | +1110.7 |
| Bjelovar-Bilogora Region | 12 | 202 | +1583.3 |
| Brod-Posavina | 14262 | 10,178 | -28.6 |
| Koprivnica-Križevci | 37 | 161 | +335.1 |
| Krapina-Zagorje | 604 | 763 | +26.3 |
| Lika-Senj Region | 790 | 4,610 | +483.5 |
| Međimurje | 136 | 38 | -72.1 |
| Požega-Slavonia | 5 | 1 | -80.0 |
| Varaždinska | 349 | 349 | 0.0 |
| Virovitica-Podravina | 30 | 2 | -93.3 |
| Total | 50624 | 69,726 | +37.7 |

Table 7: Number and nationality of foreigners who illegally crossed the state border in 2022 and 2023 according to police departments

Source: Ministry of the Interior

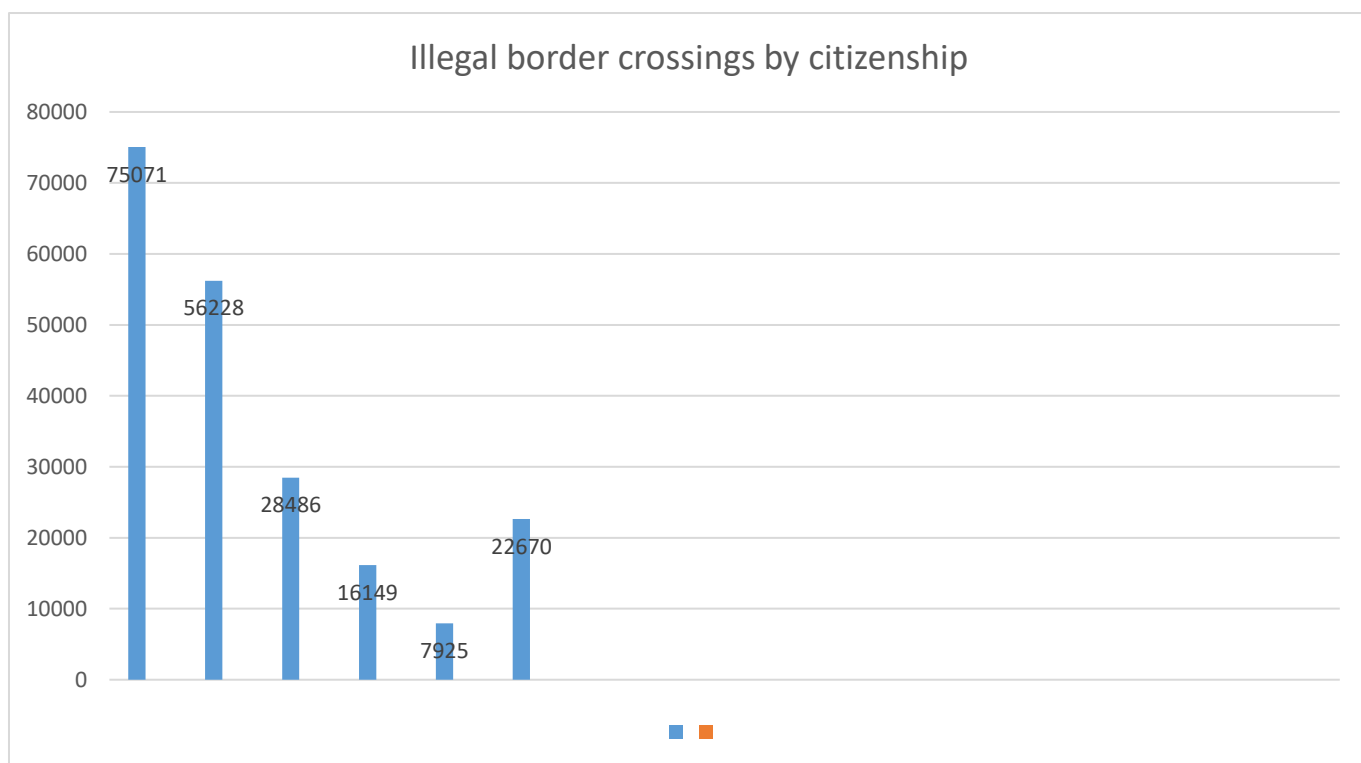


Chart 11: Illegal border crossings by citizenship 2022/2023

Source: Ministry of the Interior

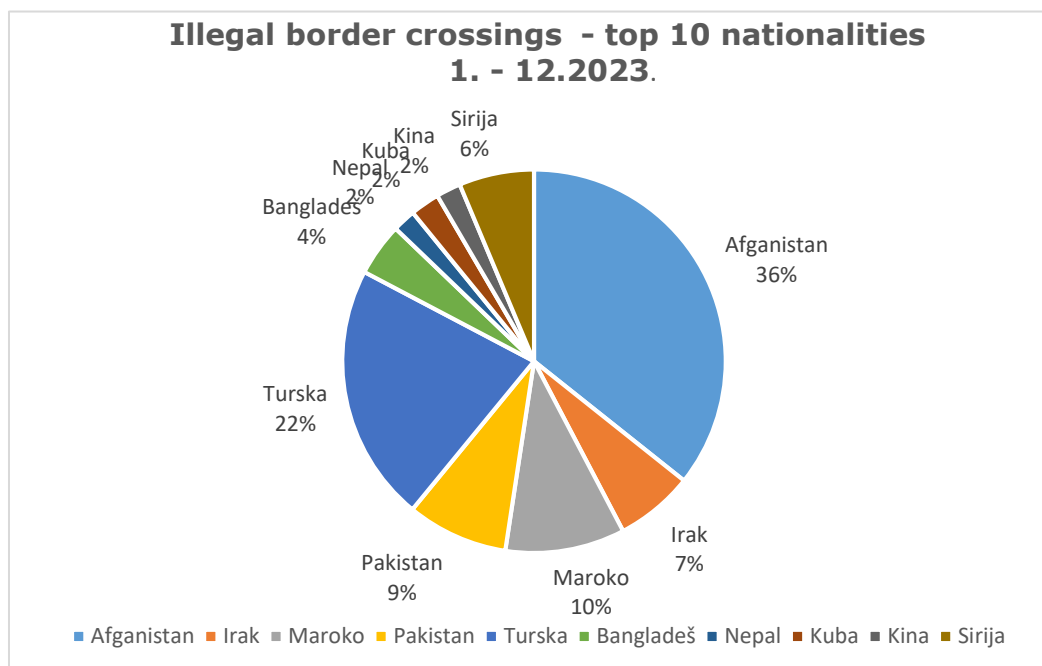


Chart 12: Presentation of illegal border crossings by citizenship in 2023.

9.2 . Agreement on cooperation for the implementation of an independent mechanism for monitoring the protection of fundamental human rights in the actions of police officers of the Ministry of the Interior in the field of border protection, illegal migration and international protection⁶⁵

During 2023, the activities of the independent mechanism for monitoring the protection of fundamental human rights in the actions of police officers of the Ministry of the Interior in the field of border protection, illegal migration and international protection were carried out. On 4 November 2022, a new Cooperation Agreement was concluded for the implementation of the independent mechanism for monitoring the protection of fundamental rights in the actions of police officers of the Ministry of the Interior in the field of border protection, illegal migration and international protection, as a continuation of the project that was implemented on the basis of the Cooperation Agreement for the implementation of the independent mechanism for monitoring the actions of police officers of the Ministry of the Interior in the field of illegal migration and international protection, which was concluded on 8 June 2021. The new Agreement was concluded for 24 months, and the project is financed from the EU fund (Integrated Border Management Fund - Instrument for financial support in the field of border management and visa policy for the period 2021-2027).

The mechanism is implemented at the external border of the EU, i.e. at the border of the Republic of Croatia with the Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Montenegro, in police stations, at border crossings, in reception centres for foreigners, on the green border and in shelters for applicants for international protection. The parties to the agreement are the Ministry of the Interior and as implementers of the activities: the Association of the Croatian Academy of Medical Sciences, the Croatian Academy of Legal Sciences Centre for Dialogue Culture, the Croatian Red Cross and prof. dr. sc . Iris Goldner Lang from the Faculty of Law in Zagreb as an independent legal expert.

⁶⁵<https://www.hck.hr/UserDocImages/Nezavisni%20mehanizam/Sporazum%20o%20suradnji%20radi%20provedbe%20nezavisni%20mehanizma.pdf?vel=2506032>

10. ACTIVITIES TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

10.1. Development of strategic documents

In 2023, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities prepared a draft of the National Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for the period until 2030 and a draft of the accompanying Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for the period until 2030, for 2024-2026.⁶⁶

During 2023, two working group meetings were held, as well as a series of smaller bilateral meetings with representatives of key institutions. The documents have passed the preliminary coordination phase and are expected to be adopted as soon as possible. Furthermore, in 2023, cooperation with the Croatian Red Cross continued in relation to the implementation of the project Supporting the work and strengthening the capacities of mobile teams for identifying and providing first forms of assistance to adult victims of

human trafficking, and funding for the work of mobile team members continued this year.

10.1.1. Meetings of the National Committee for Suppression of Human Trafficking and the Operational Team of the National Committee for Suppression of Human Trafficking

In 2023, 10 regular meetings of the Operational Team of the National Committee for the Suppression of Human Trafficking were held, at which each victim was discussed. Individually and also at a high political level, 2 regular meetings of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings were held, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia.

10.2. Detection and identification of victims

victims of human trafficking were identified in the Republic of Croatia in 2023. Of the total of 21 identified victims, 7 victims were male and 14 were female

⁶⁶The National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the Period Until 2030 and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the Period Until 2030, for the Period from 2024 to 2026 were adopted in 2024. [The Decision on the Adoption of the National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the Period Until 2030 and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the Period Until 2030, for the Period from 2024 to 2026 \(nn.hr\)](#)



Graph 13: Victims of human trafficking by gender

victims by nationality. citizens of the Republic of Croatia, 4 of Brazil, 3 of Bosnia and Herzegovina and one victim each from Nepal and the Republic of Serbia.

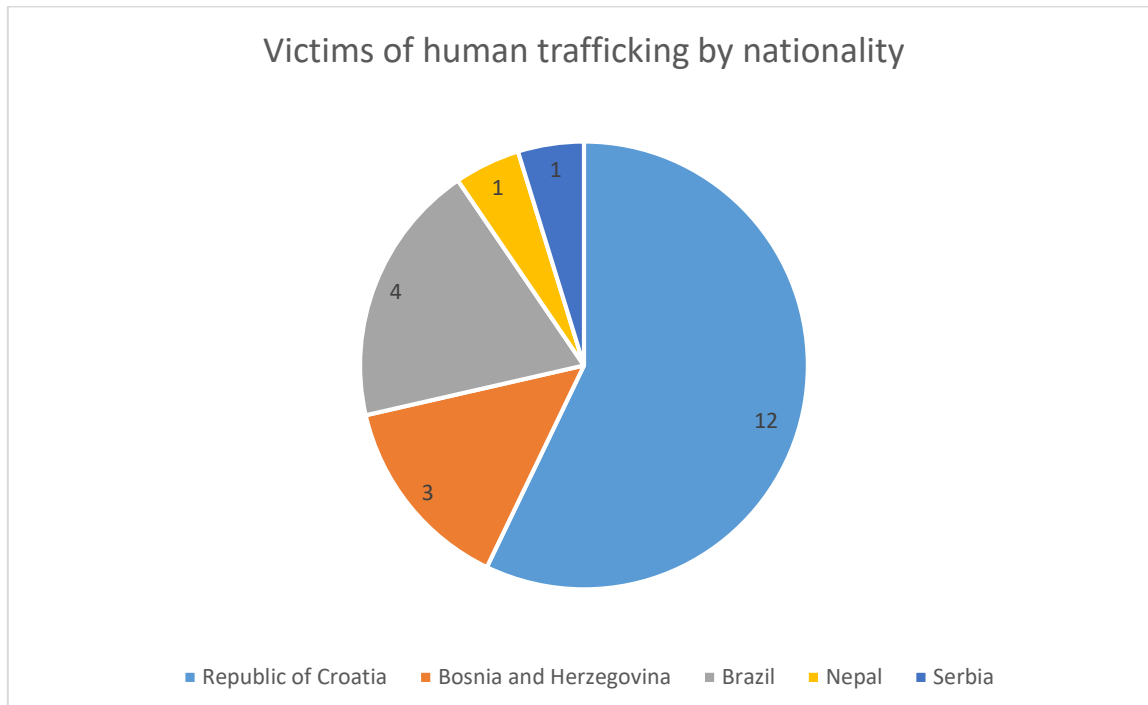


Chart 14: Victims of human trafficking by nationality

| Identified victims by nationality and gender | M | F |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Republic of Croatia | 7 | 5 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | - | 3 |
| Brazil | - | 4 |
| Nepal | - | 1 |
| Republic of Serbia | - | 1 |
| TOTAL | 7 | 14 |

Table 8: Number of identified victims of human trafficking in 2023 by nationality and gender

As many as 11 victims are children and young people aged 0-18, 5 victims are aged 19 to 30, 3 victims are aged between 31 and 40, and two identified victims are over 50.

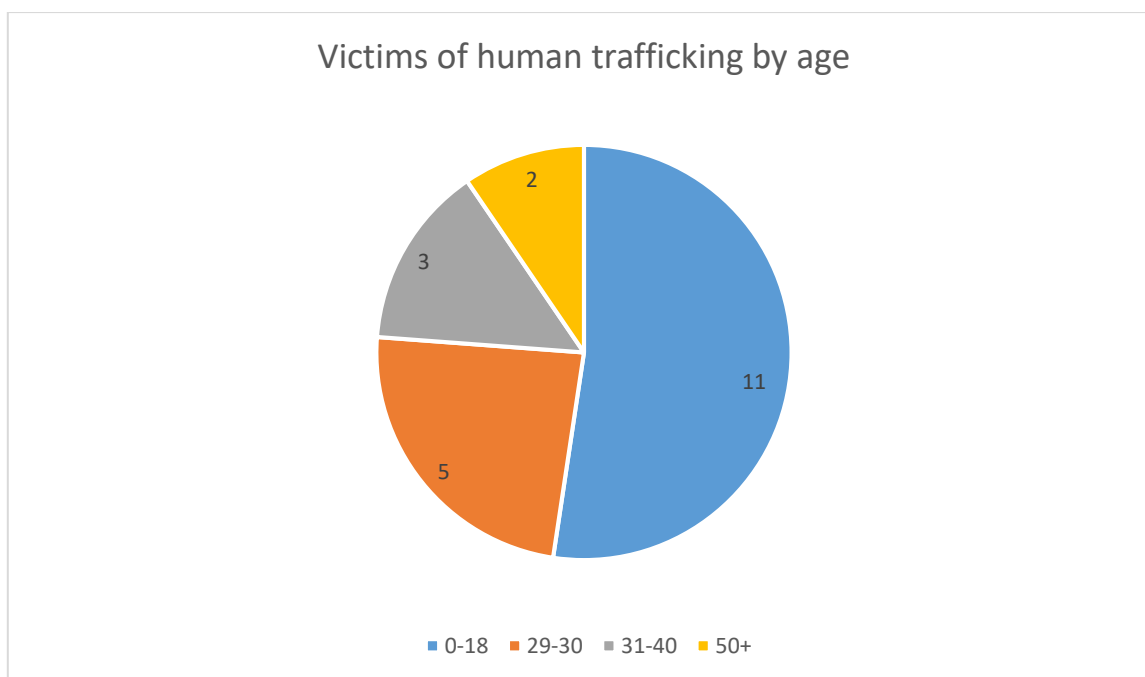


Chart 15: Victims of human trafficking by age

The most represented forms of exploitation are committing illegal acts (11 victims), sexual exploitation (9 victims), then labor exploitation (5 victims) and 1 victim was exploited to enter into an illegal/forced marriage.

Noting that some victims were exploited on several grounds.

According to citizenship and gender, the following exploitations of victims are involved:

- Two identified female victims, from Brazil, were attempted to be sexually exploited, and were also harmed by the criminal act of Extortion,
- two identified female victims, from Brazil, were sexually exploited,
- one identified mlt . female victim, hold . BiH, was exploited for work, as well as exploited for committing illegal acts of theft and begging,
- one identified mlt . female victim, hold . Bosnia and Herzegovina, was exploited for forced marriage in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- one identified female victim , holding BiH, was exploited for committing illegal acts of begging,
- one identified female victim , holding of the Republic of Serbia, was exploited for work, as well as exploited for committing illegal acts of begging,
- One identified female victim, a Nepali national, was sexually exploited.

10.3. Other activities

In May 2023, an International Conference was held in Dubrovnik on the topic: "Improving the response to

trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation, especially women and girls, by combating demand in South-Eastern Europe." ⁶⁷The conference brought together at the highest level representatives of all relevant international organizations, respected experts and national coordinators in the field of combating trafficking in persons. The International Conference was organized by the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The conference was assessed by all participants as one of the key and most successful conferences in the last twenty years on the topic of combating trafficking in persons.

Likewise, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities co-organized the 26th International

⁶⁷ <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/poboljsanje-reakcije-na-trgovanje-ljudima-radi-seksualnog-iskoristavanja-pesebno-zena-i-djevojica-borbom-protiv-potraznje-u-jugoistocnoj-europi/1173#:~:text=From%2027.%20to%2028.%20April%202023.%20godine%2C%20u,i%20djevoj%C4%8Dica%2C%20fighting%20against%20the%C5%BEenje%20in%20Southeast%C4%8Dnoj%20Europe%E2%80%9C>.

Scientific Conference "National Minorities, Migration and Security", which took place in September on the Brijuni Islands. As part of this scientific gathering, a special panel was devoted to the area of combating human trafficking, during which the most prominent experts and national coordinators held expert lectures on this topic.⁶⁸

The Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities continued to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Network of National Coordinators for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in South-Eastern Europe (NATC-SEE) and the Regional Expert Group (REGM). Representatives of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities participated in more than 10 meetings and trainings organized by these international organizations. The National Coordinator also actively participated in GRETA meetings and all other EU-level meetings that include the participation of National Coordinators for Combating

Trafficking in Human Beings and related mechanisms.

⁶⁸ <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/vijesti/28-medjunarodna-znanstvena-konferencija-nacionalne-manjine-migracije-i-sigurnost/1241>

11. RETURN AND READMISSION

11.1. Return

In order to support the Republic of Croatia in returning illegally staying foreigners, on June 8, 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding (Action Plan) in the field of return was signed between the Republic of Croatia and ⁶⁹Frontex .

11.1.1. Voluntary return

The Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) project, which was implemented in cooperation with IOM, ended on September 30, 2022. As part of the development of assisted voluntary return, the Ministry of the Interior has been participating in the Frontex Joint Programme since April 1, 2022. Reintegration Services (JRS) ⁷⁰. The programme provides counselling, organises return and provides reintegration assistance. In 2023, a total of 202 people were voluntarily returned to their countries of origin through this programme (mostly citizens of Turkey and India, followed by Egypt, Kosovo, Albania, Morocco, Algeria, Mongolia, Georgia and Nepal). Frontex return

experts deployed in the Republic of Croatia provide counselling on return and the possibility of using JRS assistance. Counselling is mainly provided in reception centres for foreigners and in shelters for applicants for international protection, and in other places if necessary.

In June 2023, Frontex held a five-day training for 14 Croatian experts on counseling in the return process, who are now able to conduct counseling on return and reintegration independently.

11.2. Readmission

In 2023, 6,103 foreigners were forcibly removed (in 2022, the Croatian police removed, including readmission , 2,855 foreigners).

In 2023, based on readmission agreements with neighboring countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Hungary, Slovenia and Serbia), the Republic of Croatia returned 3,755 people to other countries, while in the same period, based on readmission agreements, it accepted 146 of them.

⁶⁹ <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/potpredsjednik-bozinovic-predstavio-memorandum-o-razumijevanju-u-podrucju-vracanja-izmedju-republike-hrvatske-i-frontex-a/290504>

⁷⁰Now EURP European Union Reintegration Programs

| ADMISSION AND RETURN FOR 2022/2023 | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Border according to | Acceptance | | +-% | divination | | +-% |
| | 2022. | 2023. | | 2022. | 2023. | |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 5 | 3 | -40.00 | 769 | 3110 | 304.42 |
| Montenegro | 1 | 0 | -100.00 | 6 | 25 | 316.67 |
| Hungary | 32 | 0 | -100.00 | 0 | 0 | |
| Slovenia | 1972 | 141 | -92.85 | 8 | 1 | -87.50 |
| Serbia | 1 | 0 | -100.00 | 398 | 605 | 52.01 |
| Other countries | | 2 | | | 14 | |
| TOTAL | 2.011 | 146 | -92.74 | 1181 | 3755 | 217.95 |

Table 9: Number of accepted and returned persons under readmission agreements in 2022 and 2023

According to the number of returns and admissions, the most significant bilateral readmission agreements for the Republic of Croatia are those with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Slovenia.

According to the Agreement on the Acceptance of Persons with Bosnia and Herzegovina, 3 persons were accepted in 2023 (2022: 5), while 3,110 persons were returned in 2023 (2022: 769). In accordance with the Readmission Agreement, during 2023, 1 person was returned to the Republic of Slovenia (2022: 8), and 141 persons were accepted (2022: 1972), 605 persons were returned to the Republic of Serbia (2022: 398), and not a single person was accepted (2022: one person), 25

persons were returned to Montenegro. (2022: 6 persons), and not a single person was accepted, while in 2021, 1 person was accepted.

According to the Agreement on the Admission of Persons at the common state border with Hungary during 2023, no persons were accepted or returned.

Statistical annex



Statistical annex

Statistical indicators of persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia until 31 December 2023.

| PROTECTION/TYPE | 2006. | 2008. | 2009. | 2010. | 2011. | 2012. | 2013. | 2014. | 2015. | 2016. | 2017. | 2018. | 2019. | 2020. | 2021. | 2022. | 2023. | Total |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Asylum | 1 | 3 | 11 | 5 | 9 | 21 | 7 | 15 | 35 | 83 | 184 | 244 | 158 | 36 | 68 | 21 | 50 | 951 |
| M | 0 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 15 | 4 | 11 | 31 | 50 | 133 | 156 | 91 | 22 | 39 | 11 | 27 | 608 |
| 0-13 | | | 3 | | 1 | 3 | 2 | | 3 | 7 | 4 | 43 | 31 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 9 | 166 |
| 14-17 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | | | | 5 | 81 | 14 | 8 | 1 | 8 | | | 45 |
| 18-34 | | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | | 8 | 21 | 29 | 15 | 67 | 26 | 10 | 8 | 3 | | 273 |
| 35-64 | | | 1 | | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 9 | | 32 | 26 | 3 | 7 | | | 122 |
| 65> | | | | | | | | | | | 51 | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| F | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 33 | 22 | 88 | 67 | 14 | 29 | 10 | 23 | 342 |
| 0-13 | | | 3 | | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 2 | 35 | 25 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 140 |
| 14-17 | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 17 | 14 | 5 | | 4 | 1 | | 28 |
| 18-34 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 3 | | 3 | 2 | 15 | 10 | 17 | 17 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 97 |
| 35-64 | | | 2 | | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | | 21 | 19 | 4 | 8 | | 8 | 76 |
| 65> | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 |
| Subsidiary protection | 0 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 14 | 18 | 9 | 7 | 17 | 27 | 21 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 140 |
| M | 0 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 5 | 11 | 17 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 91 |
| 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 | | | 2 | 19 |
| F | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 11 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 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 |

| Statistical indicators of applicants for international protection by citizenship and gender for the period 01.01.-31.12.2023. | | | |
|---|--------|-------|--------|
| Country of origin | M | F | TOTAL |
| AFGHANISTAN | 18,281 | 1,014 | 19,295 |
| TURKEY | 7,372 | 3,827 | 11,199 |
| RUSSIAN FEDERATION | 4,943 | 3,564 | 8,507 |
| MOROCCO | 5,757 | 82 | 5,839 |
| PAKISTAN | 4,320 | 338 | 4,658 |
| IRAQ | 2,743 | 1,140 | 3,883 |
| SYRIA | 2,599 | 1,153 | 3,752 |
| BANGLADESH | 2,440 | 32 | 2,472 |
| CUBA | 726 | 620 | 1,346 |
| NEPAL | 492 | 600 | 1,092 |
| INDIA | 729 | 108 | 837 |
| IRAN | 574 | 157 | 731 |
| DR CONGO | 308 | 187 | 495 |
| CHINA | 319 | 170 | 489 |
| SIERRA LEONE | 268 | 104 | 372 |
| ALGERIA | 353 | 5 | 358 |
| CONGO | 240 | 114 | 354 |
| SRI LANKA | 148 | 198 | 346 |
| MONGOLIA | 174 | 160 | 334 |
| PALESTINE | 196 | 25 | 221 |
| BURUNDI | 134 | 64 | 198 |
| CAMEROON | 136 | 45 | 181 |
| SOMALIA | 89 | 41 | 130 |
| SUDAN | 100 | 3 | 103 |
| GUINEA | 67 | 12 | 79 |
| TUNISIA | 65 | 7 | 72 |
| EGYPT | 64 | 1 | 65 |
| GHANA | 48 | 12 | 60 |
| AZERBAIJAN | 39 | 14 | 53 |
| ERITREA | 48 | 5 | 53 |
| NIGERIA | 42 | 3 | 45 |
| TOGO | 34 | 7 | 41 |
| IVORY COAST | 27 | 11 | 38 |
| BOLIVIA | 20 | 15 | 35 |
| SENEGAL | 27 | 7 | 34 |
| GAMBIA | 27 | 1 | 28 |
| KOSOVO | 18 | 8 | 26 |
| LIBYA | 26 | | 26 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----|----|----|
| JORDAN | 20 | 5 | 25 |
| KAZAKHSTAN | 15 | 8 | 23 |
| UGANDA | 12 | 11 | 23 |
| SMALL | 13 | 4 | 17 |
| BURKINA FASO | 9 | 3 | 12 |
| LEBANON | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| ANGOLA | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| UKRAINE | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| CHAMBER | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| YEMEN | 8 | | 8 |
| KYRGYZSTAN | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| ARMENIA | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| DPR KOREA | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| ECUADOR | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| GEORGIA | 6 | | 6 |
| GUINEA BISSAU | 5 | | 5 |
| COLOMBIA | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| SINGAPORE | 5 | | 5 |
| BELARUS | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| ETHIOPIA | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| SERBIA | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| TANZANIA | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| UZBEKISTAN | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| ALBANIA | 3 | | 3 |
| HAITI | 3 | | 3 |
| JAMAICA | 3 | | 3 |
| SOUTH SUDAN | 3 | | 3 |
| PAPUA NEW GUINEA | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| USA | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| WESTERN SAHARA | 3 | | 3 |
| BENIN | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA | 2 | | 2 |
| CHAD | 2 | | 2 |
| KENYA | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| MOLDOVA | 2 | | 2 |
| NORTH MACEDONIA | 2 | | 2 |
| CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC | 2 | | 2 |
| WITHOUT CITIZENSHIP | | 1 | 1 |
| BRAZIL | | 1 | 1 |
| BUTANE | 1 | | 1 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| MONTENEGRO | 1 | | 1 |
| DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | 1 | | 1 |
| GABON | | 1 | 1 |
| LIBERIA | 1 | | 1 |
| MAURITANIA | 1 | | 1 |
| MOZAMBIQUE | 1 | | 1 |
| RWANDA | 1 | | 1 |
| ROMANIA | 1 | | 1 |
| TURKMENISTAN | 1 | | 1 |
| ZIMBABWE | | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 54,185 | 13,929 | 68,114 |

| Statistical data on unaccompanied minors seeking international protection by age and gender as of 31 December 2023 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Gender / Age | 2009. | 2010. | 2011. | 2012 | 2013 | 2014. | 2015 | 2016 | 2017. | 2018. | 2019. | 2020. | 2021. | 2022. | 2023. | TOTAL |
| M | 21 | 38 | 194 | 69 | 54 | 10 | 5 | 163 | 251 | 59 | 65 | 169 | 174 | 337 | 1,458 | 3,067 |
| 0-13 unaccompanied | 3 | | 3 | | | | 2 | 15 | 23 | 11 | 3 | 21 | 28 | 12 | 100 | 221 |
| 14-15 unaccompanied | 4 | 6 | 18 | 11 | 8 | | 1 | 47 | 62 | 13 | 12 | 30 | 40 | 74 | 273 | 599 |
| 16-17 unaccompanied | 14 | 32 | 173 | 58 | 46 | 10 | 2 | 101 | 166 | 35 | 50 | 118 | 106 | 251 | 1,085 | 2,247 |
| F | | | 3 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 17 | 21 | 99 | 58 | 221 |
| 0-13 unaccompanied | | | | | | | | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 17 | 12 | 50 |
| 14-15 unaccompanied | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | 4 | 5 | 24 | 8 | 44 |
| 16-17 unaccompanied | | | 3 | 1 | 1 | | | | 5 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 58 | 38 | 127 |
| TOTAL | 21 | 38 | 197 | 70 | 55 | 10 | 5 | 164 | 261 | 64 | 70 | 186 | 195 | 436 | 1,516 | 3,288 |

Statistical indicators of the application of the Dublin procedure for the period 01.01.-31.12.2023.⁷¹

| Incoming transfers were carried out from the following member states: | |
|---|--------------|
| Country | 2023. |
| Austria | 193 |
| Belgium | 87 |
| Bulgaria | 1 |
| Denmark | 1 |
| Finland | 8 |
| France | 117 |
| Luxembourg | 2 |
| Germany | 278 |
| Netherlands | 10 |
| Norway | 9 |
| Poland | 3 |
| Slovakia | 6 |
| Slovenia | 9 |
| Sweden | 14 |
| Switzerland | 159 |
| Total | 897 |

| Number of outgoing transfers (from Croatia) | |
|---|--------------|
| Country | 2023. |
| Bulgaria | 4 |
| Germany | 3 |
| Netherlands | 1 |
| Poland | 1 |
| Slovenia | 1 |
| Sweden | 2 |
| Total | 12 |

Source for statistical annex: Ministry of the Interior

⁷¹<https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234>

