



# CROATIA 2021

Main developments in migration  
and international protection,  
including latest statistics

EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

August 2022



## OVERARCHING CHANGES

The Aliens Act entered into force in early 2021. It introduced a new model of employment of third-country nationals and abolished the annual quota. Employers are now required to contact the Croatian Employment Service (CES) to carry out a labour market test. The Act also set out the possibility of regulating temporary residence for so-called digital nomads (i.e. foreigners who perform work digitally for foreign employers). On 5 February 2021, the Croatian Parliament passed the 'National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030'. One of the social policy priorities is to improve the availability and quality of comprehensive social care for vulnerable groups, including victims of trafficking and asylum seekers (among others). Greater certainty of regular migration flows – and thus increased internal security – required effective implementation of migration policy and the capacity to respond to illegal migration challenges.

In September 2021, the Ministry of the Interior organised its Conference on the Future of Europe. The conference focused on the EU Talent Partnership proposed under the new Migration and Asylum Pact, strengthening the legislative framework on the European Blue Card, and other initiatives related to legal migration (e.g. digital nomads). It provided an opportunity to exchange views on whether new EU initiatives and modern approaches to the labour market can solve the challenges of illegal migration.

As of September 2021, Croatia completed all necessary bilateral security agreements and met the required B1/B2 visa refusal rate, thereby qualifying for designated entry into the US Visa Waiver Programme. From October 2021, Croatian citizens could travel to the US without a visa, provided they had approval from the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) online.

## KEY POINTS



The Aliens Act introduced a new system of third-country national employment (abolishing the quota system), a new labour market test procedure, and a new temporary permit for digital nomads.



Croatia completed all necessary bilateral security agreements, met the required B1/B2 visa refusal rate, and qualified for entry into the US Visa Waiver Programme.



Croatia met all conditions for the application of the full Schengen acquis.



## LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

In December 2021, the EU Ministers of the Interior unanimously approved the Conclusions on the fulfilment of the necessary conditions for the application of the Schengen acquis by the Republic of Croatia.

The Aliens Act entered into force on 1 January 2021 and set out a new model of employment of foreigners. Previously, the government passed an annual decision determining the quota of employment permits for third-country nationals. The new employment model requires employers to first contact the CES to conduct a labour market test in order to find workers. Where no labour is available in Croatia, the employer may submit an application for a residence and work permit for a third-country national. Before issuing an opinion, the

CES checks the conditions the employer must meet in order for the competent police administration to issue the residence and work permit. The Act also laid down an exception to the implementation of the labour market test, allowing the Governing Board of the CES to exempt certain occupations from a labour market test, depending on the national, regional and local labour market. This option was used twice in 2021. A labour market test was deemed unnecessary for seasonal occupations in agriculture, forestry, catering and tourism for up to 90 days in a calendar year.

The Act set out the possibility of regulating temporary residence for digital nomads. A digital platform was introduced for applications for certain categories of residence and work permits and for applications of residence for digital nomads. It also introduced the possibility for family members of Croatian nationals from abroad (third-country nationals) to regulate their temporary stay in Croatia without proving a means of subsistence and health insurance. They could also apply for national permanent residence after three years of legal stay in Croatia.

## WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

In addition to the new model of employment of foreigners, activities and occupations in which the employment of third-country nationals is allowed will depend on labour market needs. The CES labour market test reviews the data in the register of unemployed persons with the aim of employing workers from the national labour market. Where the employment of third-country nationals is allowed, an opinion must be officially sought from the CES.

A digital platform was introduced for applications for residence and work permits that are issued with the CES opinion as a precondition.

## FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Changes were introduced to the waiting time for family members to join sponsors in Croatia.

## INFORMATION ON ROUTES TO AND CONDITIONS OF LEGAL MIGRATION

A digital platform was introduced for applications for certain categories of residence and work permits and for applications of residence for digital nomads.

## OTHER MEASURES

This Act set out the possibility of regulating temporary residence for digital nomads.



## INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

### LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

COVID-19-related epidemiological, policy and operational measures developed throughout 2020 were implemented as necessary in 2021.

Applicants for international protection were given access to COVID-19 vaccination, while safety measures such as health certificates for physical access to accommodation facilities were also implemented. COVID-19 restrictions impacted the operation of some aspects of international protection. For example, implementation of the Dublin procedure depended on being able to carry out transfers safely and in line with health guidelines.

Preparations for amendments and initial drafts of the amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection were underway in 2021.

Important policy measures included public procurement for the project 'Record development, implementation and maintenance of applications (IT) for international protection system'. Other noteworthy developments included projects to renovate reception centres for applicants for international protection in Zagreb and Kutina (co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)). The projects increased the accommodation capacity of reception centres in Zagreb and co-financed the purchase of equipment. Following the earthquakes in 2020 – and given the age of the buildings – a complete renovation was necessary to improve safety conditions.

## RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT<sup>1</sup>

Croatia joined the European External Action Service (EEAS) initiative and received a total of 41 Afghan nationals (and their families). Of those, 37 Afghans were granted international protection and provided with individual support under the Agreement on Cooperation signed by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia and the Centre for the Culture of Dialogue (CKD) for the project 'New neighbours - Inclusion of persons under international protection in Croatian society', co-financed by AMIF.



## MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

### MINORS

Guidelines on the Protocol on the Treatment of Unaccompanied Children were developed and adopted by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Families and Social Policy and the Ministry of the Interior.

The Ministry of the Interior, together with the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Family and Social Policy developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) to implement the Dublin procedure for unaccompanied children.

### OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

The 'SOP on the Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Reception for International Protection Applicants' was developed in 2021.

<sup>1</sup> Includes Humanitarian Admission Programmes



## INTEGRATION

### NATIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY

Proposal of action plan to integrate beneficiaries of international protection was developed for the City of Zagreb.

### INVOLVEMENT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia published the 'Integration and Human Rights - Handbook for Educators', 'Integration of Third-Country Nationals - Handbook for Local Government Representatives' and 'Empowerment of School Professionals and Teachers for Better Integration of Refugee Students through Community Social Action'.

The project 'Legal Support in the Asylum System' was implemented by the Croatian Law Centre, as part of which the handbook 'Integration of refugees into Croatian society: legislation and realisation in practice' was published.

### BASIC SERVICES

Proposals were drafted to amend the Act on International and Temporary Protection, specifically the right to accommodation for beneficiaries of international protection during their stay in reception centres or on expiry of the two-year subsidised right to accommodation.



## CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

### ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP

The Ordinance on Manner and Procedure of the Ceremonial Pledge entered into force in October 2021.



## BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

### BORDER MANAGEMENT

On 30 September 2021, a border crossing point was temporarily opened at Svilaj-Donji Svilaj. Croatia established independent monitoring of police treatment of migrants by non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

### VISA POLICY

In November 2021, Croatia met the strict requirements for acceptance to the US Visa Waiver Programme.

In August 2021, a Regulation on the Visa Regime (Official Gazette 92/2021) entered into force.

### SCHENGEN GOVERNANCE

On 9 December 2021, the European Council concluded that Croatia had fulfilled the necessary conditions for full application of the Schengen acquis.



## IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

No significant developments in 2021.



## TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

In 2021, several campaigns, educations, projects and other activities related to trafficking in human beings have been carried out in the Republic of Croatia, with the aim of preventing and raising awareness of this issue. In particular, the world and European anti-trafficking day was marked, and the action "Together" continued.



## RETURN AND READMISSION

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) implemented the project "Assisted Voluntary Return"



## MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

No significant developments in 2021.



## STATISTICAL ANNEX

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

# STATISTICAL ANNEX

## ! GENERAL NOTES

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

### COLOUR LEGEND

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

Data relative to Croatia

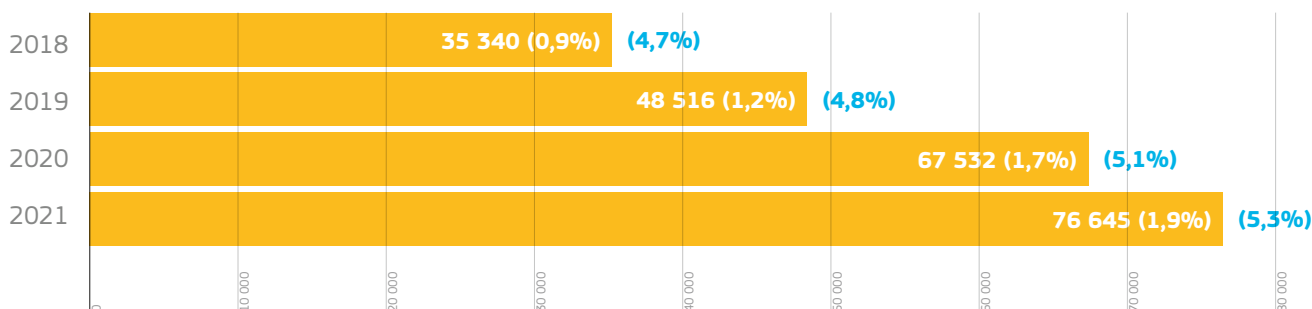
Data relative to EU



## LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

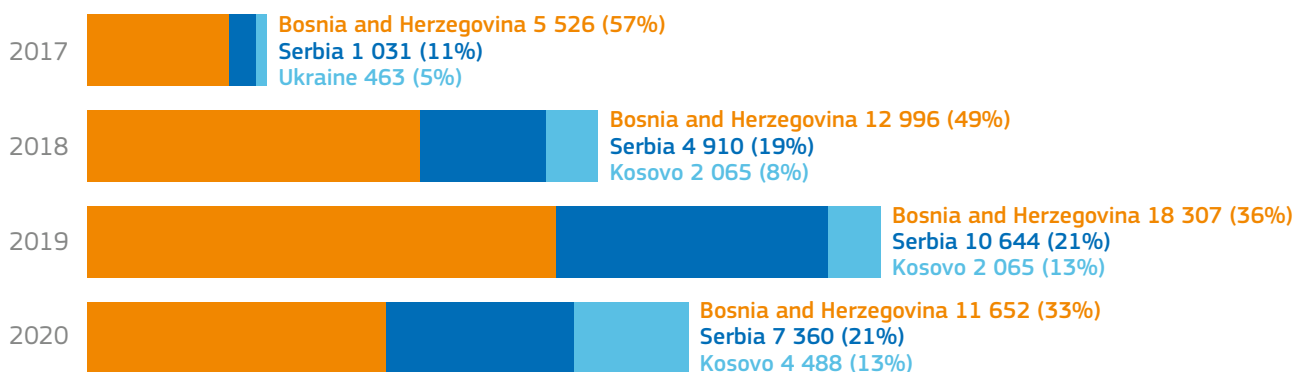
### Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) as % of total population in the country (and in the EU) and in absolute numbers

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_pop1ctz)



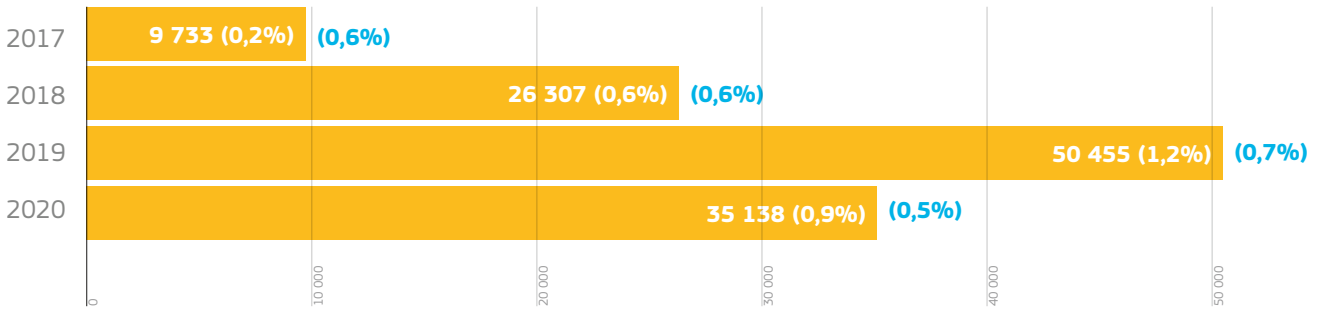
### Top 3 nationalities of number of first residence permits annually issued: number of permits and % of total annual permits

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resfirst)



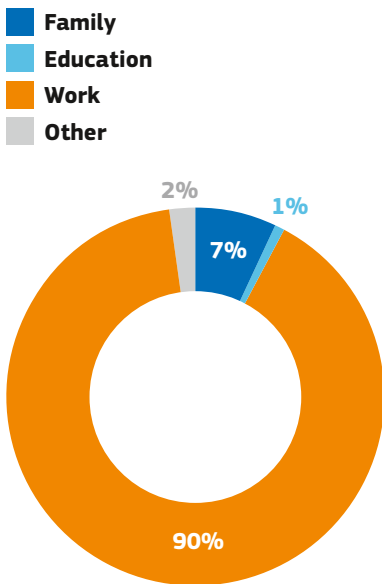
### First residence permits annually issued: total number and % of total population in the country (and in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resfirst, migr\_pop1ctz)



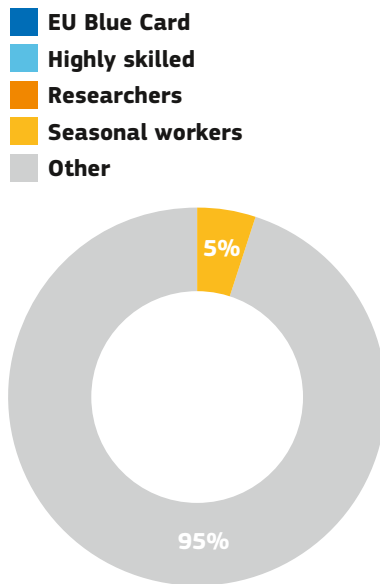
### First residence permits annually issued by reason in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resfirst)



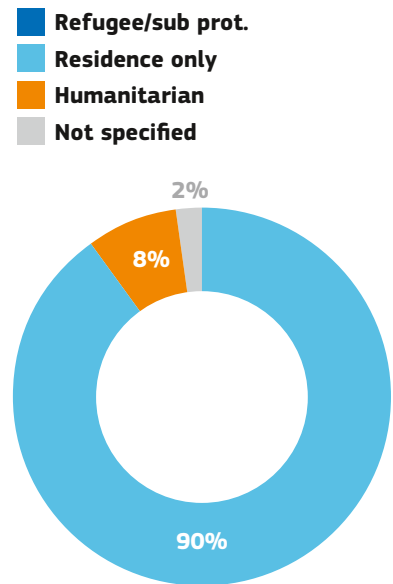
### First residence permits annually issued for work reasons in 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resocc)



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

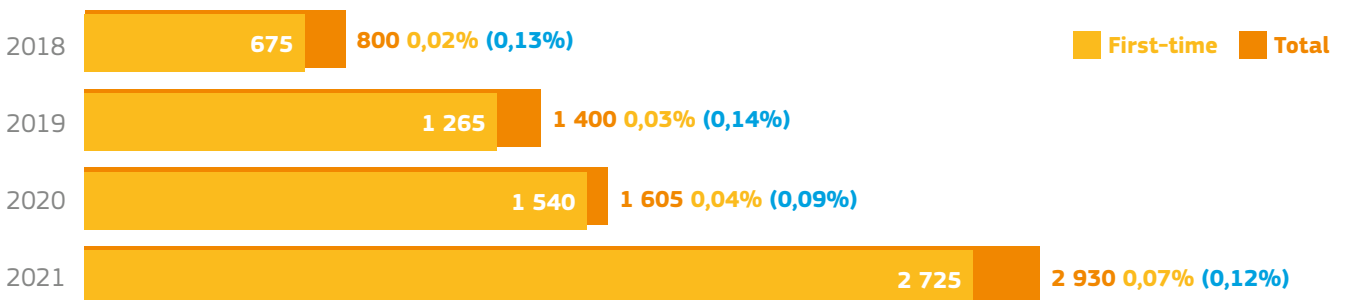
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resoth)



## INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

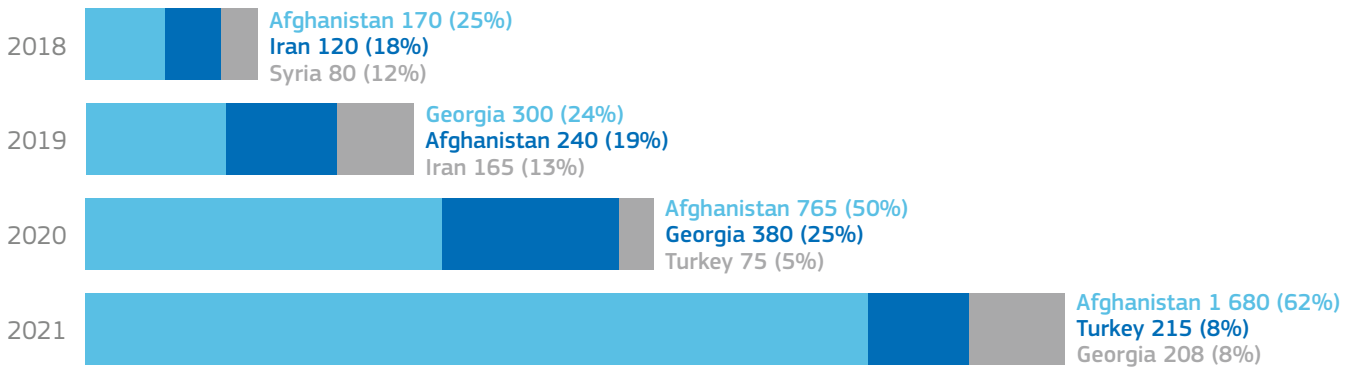
### Total/first-time asylum applications; first-time asylum applications as % of population in the country (and in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza, migr\_pop1ctz)



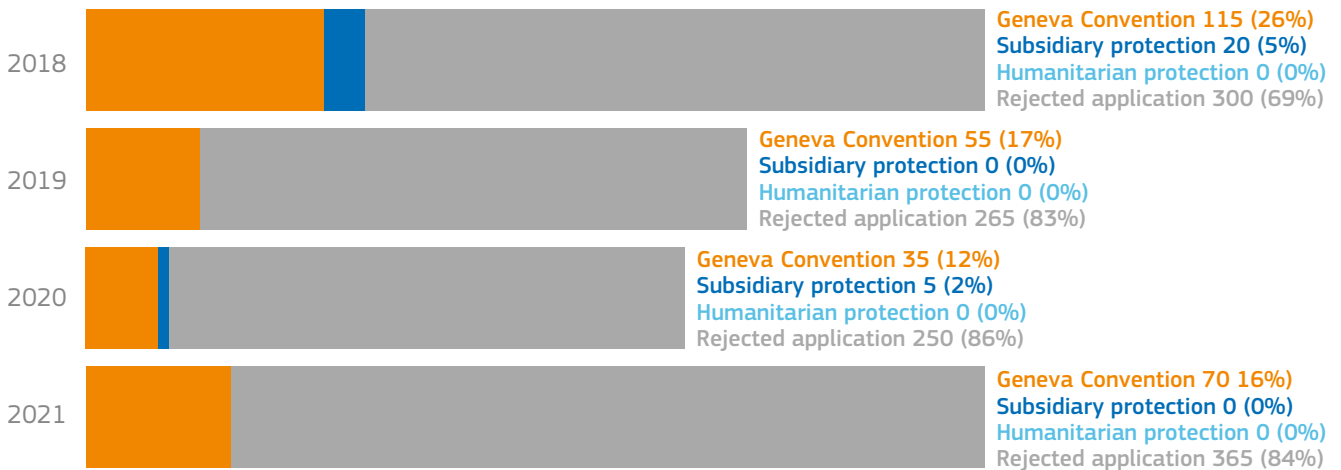
## Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-time asylum applications: number of applications and % of total first-time annual applications

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza)



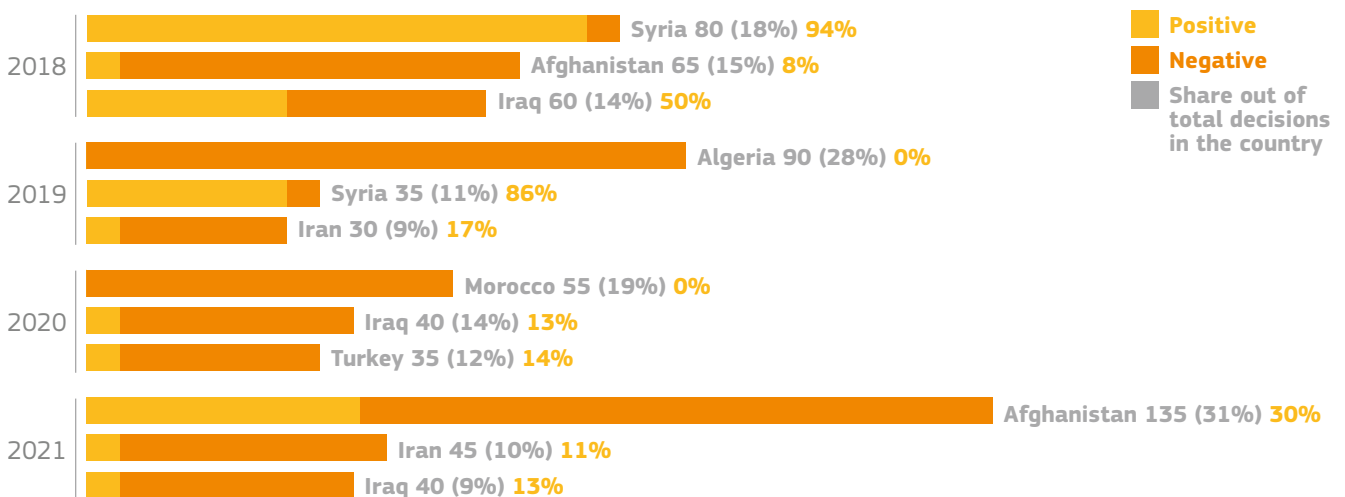
## Number of first-instance asylum decisions by outcome (% of total decisions)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asydcfsta)



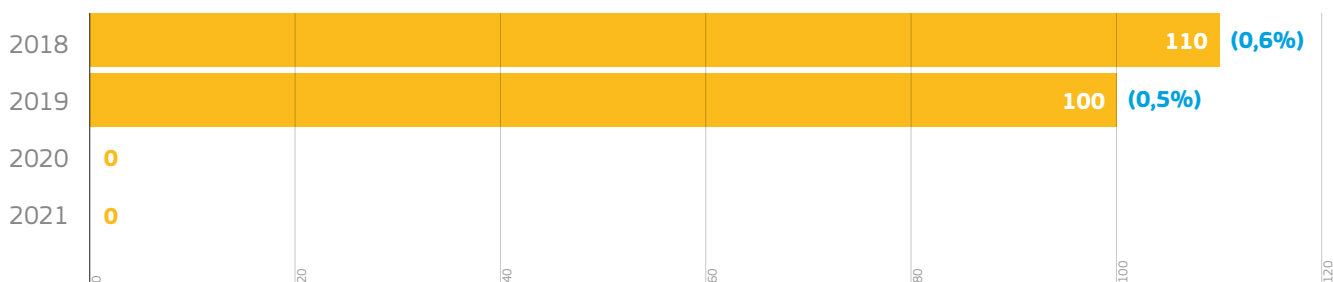
## Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-instance decisions: number of decisions (% of total decisions in the country) and % of positive outcomes

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asydcfsta)



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

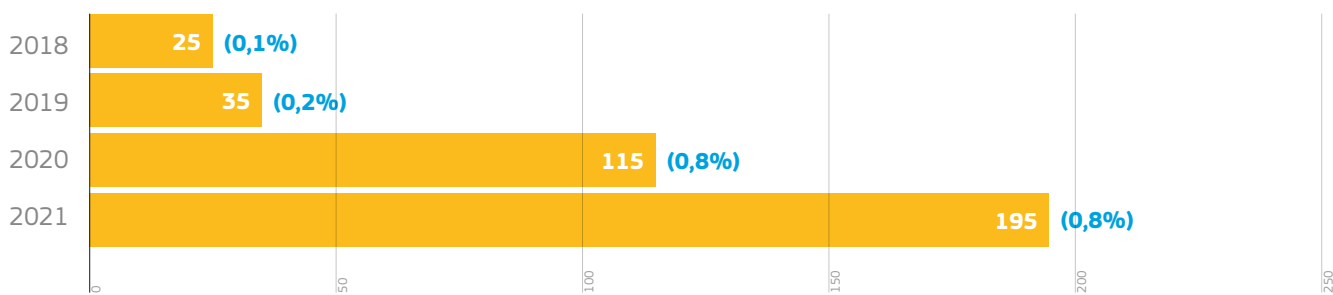
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asyresa)



## UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

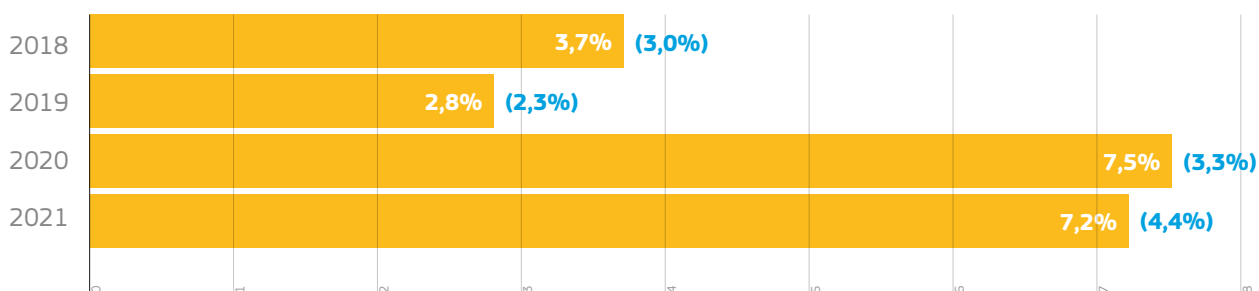
### Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in the country (and % of total applications from unaccompanied minors in the EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asyunaa)



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

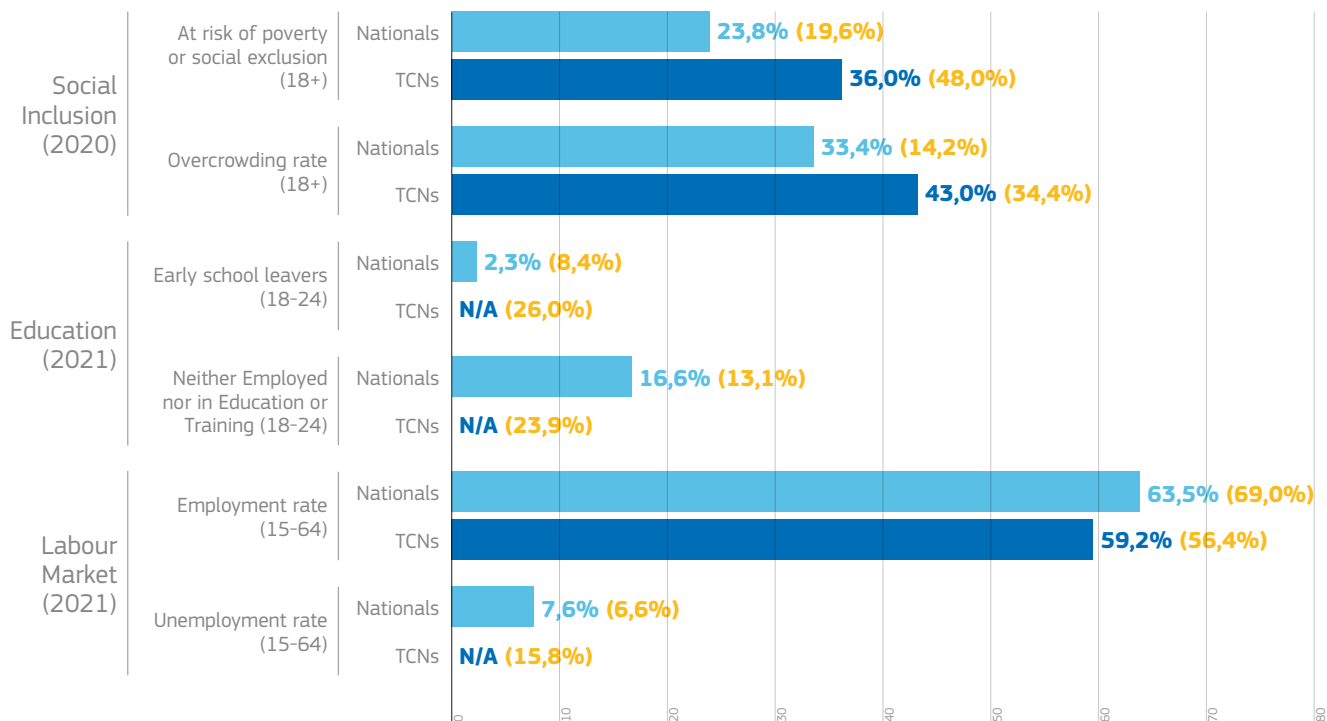
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asyunaa, migr\_asyappctza)



## INTEGRATION

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

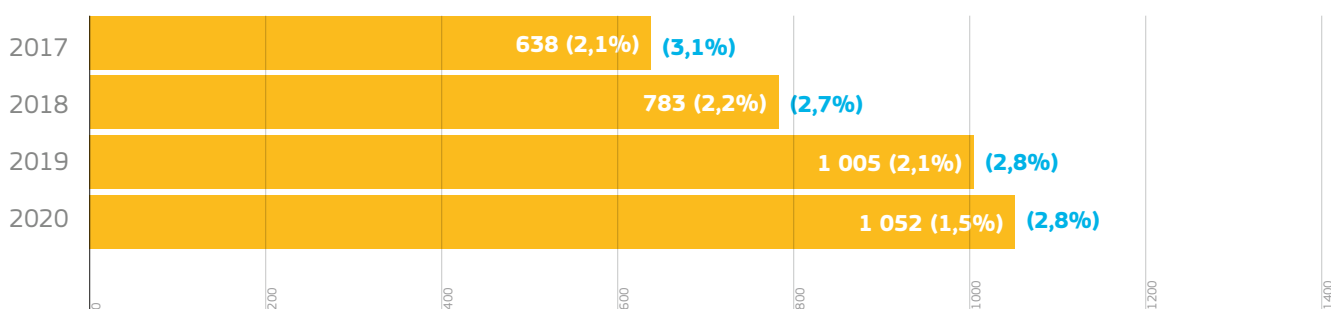
SOURCE: Eurostat (ilc\_peps05, ilc\_lwho15, edat\_lfse\_01, edat\_lfse\_23, lfsa\_ergan, lfsa\_urgan)



## CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

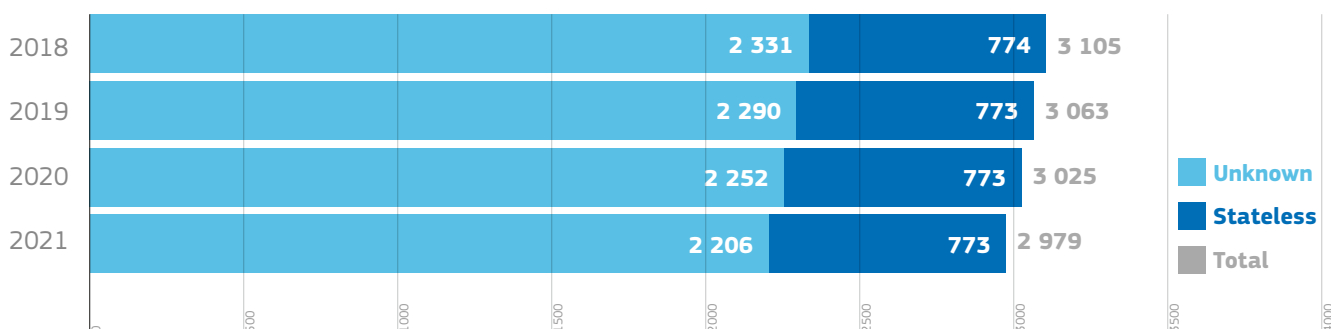
Third-Country Nationals who have acquired citizenship as a share of total Third-Country Nationals (in the country and in the EU) and in absolute numbers

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_acqs, migr\_acq)



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

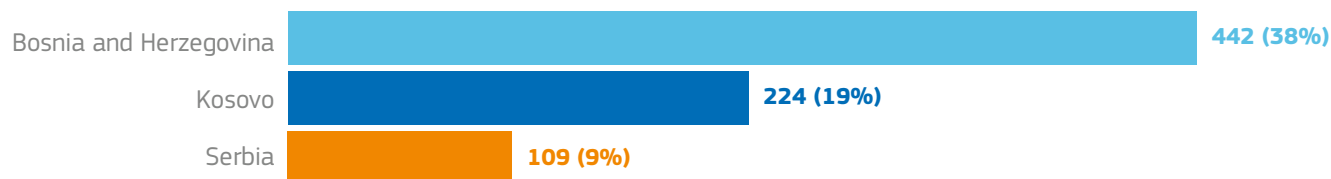
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_pop1ctz)





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

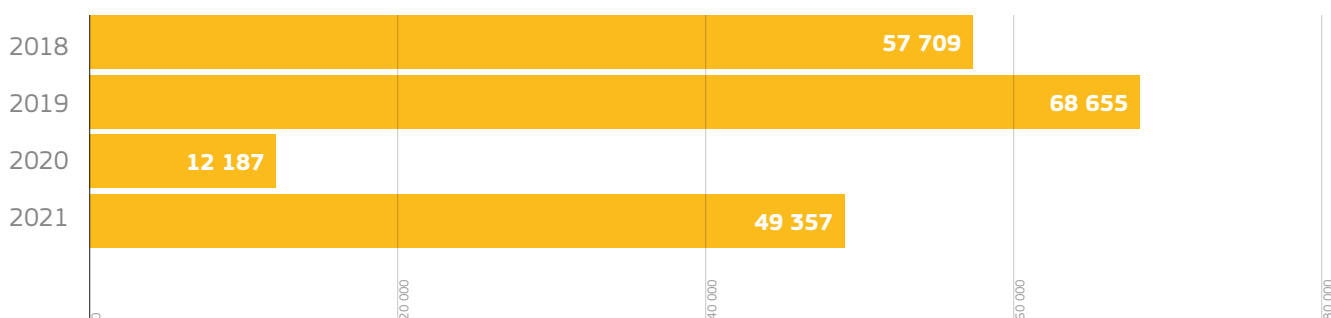
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_acq)



## BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

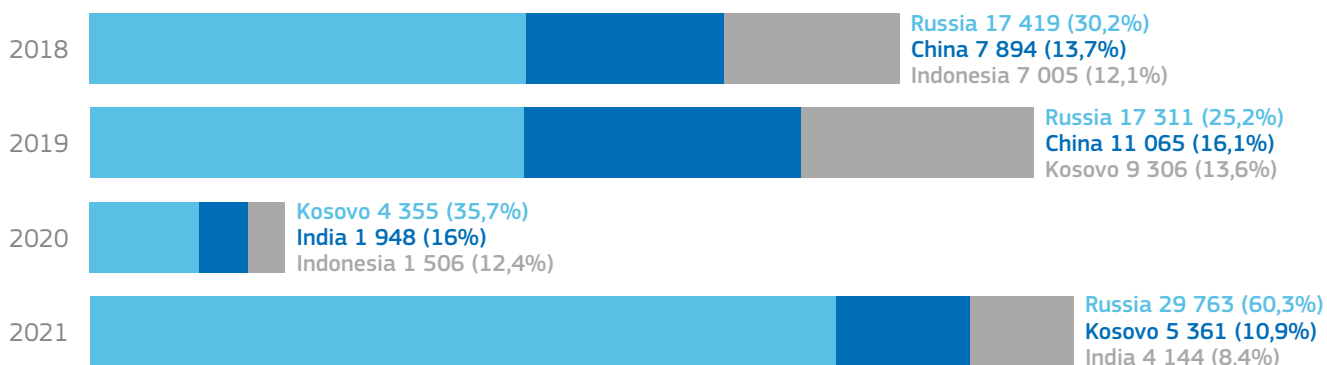
### Short-term visa issued

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



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

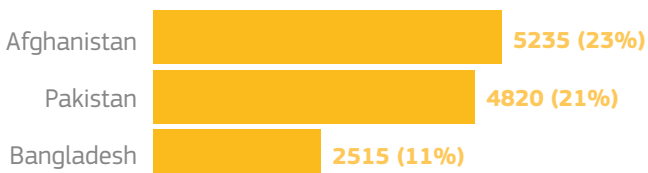
SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



## IRREGULAR MIGRATION

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_eiord)



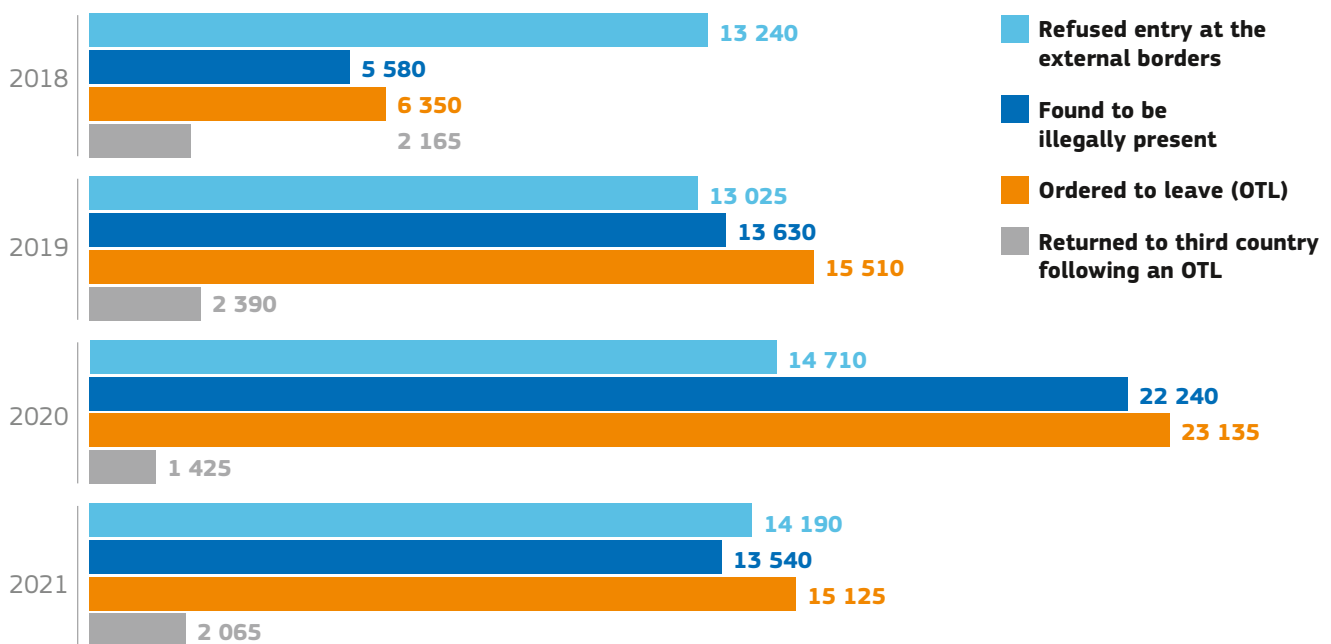
### Top 3 nationalities returned to third country in 2021, in absolute number and as a share of all nationalities ordered to leave the country

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_eirtn)



## General statistics on irregular migration

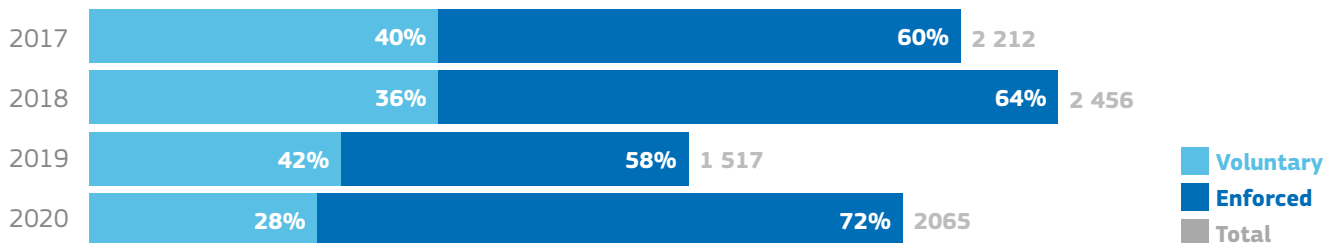
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_eirfs, migr\_eipre, migr\_eiord, migr\_eirtn)



## RETURN AND READMISSION

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_eirt\_vol)



## TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resoth)

