

BELGIUM

EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

2020

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION, INCLUDING LATEST STATISTICS



OVERARCHING CHANGES

From March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on Belgian asylum and migration policies, ranging from travel restrictions to the temporary suspension of asylum interviews.

On 1 October 2020, a new federal government took office in Belgium. In his first general policy note, the new Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration announced his intention to adopt several measures, including the establishment of an Interministerial Conference on Migration and Integration, an external audit of asylum and migration services, the creation of a Migration Code, and collection/publication of asylum and migration data.



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

In the past, any third-country national with a valid short-term or long-term stay in Belgium could apply for a single permit within the territory. As of September 2020, it is only possible to apply for a single permit for work and stay from within Belgium from either a legal short stay or a stay as student or researcher. In any other case, the application for a single permit can only be done from abroad.

Together with its partners, the Belgian Development Agency (Enabel) began to prepare a Pilot project on Entrepreneurial Mobility (PEM) between Belgium and Senegal, funded by the EU Mobility Partnership Facility. The project will test the use of business visas (*visa*

KEY POINTS



The COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on Belgian asylum and migration policies, ranging from travel restrictions to the temporary suspension of asylum interviews.



The new federal government and the regions agreed to establish an Interministerial Conference on Migration and Integration to provide a platform for dialogue and better coordinate their policies.



The Belgian resettlement programme resumed after a 13-month suspension due to the lack of reception places.

d'affaires) by nano and micro-entrepreneurs from Senegal. These visas will match them with Belgian enterprises to accelerate and internationalise their businesses.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

COVID-19 measures prevented many family members of third-country nationals in Belgium from submitting their applications for family reunification on time. The Immigration Office announced that actions taken by governments to fight the spread of COVID-19 could be taken into account as 'exceptional circumstances' that had prevented the submission.

OTHER MEASURES

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented many third-country nationals with a valid visa or residence permit from leaving Belgium. The Immigration Office introduced a

procedure to apply for an extension of stay for *force majeure* reasons. Third-country nationals authorised to stay on this basis could apply for a (regional) work permit for up to 90 days, provided they had an employment contract for that period.



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

COVID-19 saw asylum authorities temporarily suspend some of their direct-contact activities with applicants (registration of applications, personal interviews, hearings). The authorities adapted their procedures to comply with sanitary requirements, allowing them to resume their activities.

RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT

In August 2020, the resettlement programme/transfers resumed after a 13-month suspension due to the lack of reception places. The new federal government's Coalition Agreement made a clear commitment to fulfil Belgium's resettlement pledges. In 2020, the Belgian government relocated 29 unaccompanied minors on an *ad hoc* basis in response to emergency situations at refugee camps in Greece.



MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

From summer 2020, there was a considerable rise in the number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Belgium. The lack of reception places forced the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) to increase the number of reception places and to accelerate the outflow from the Observation and Orientation Centres for this group.

In April 2020, the Ministers of Poverty Reduction and Social Integration established a 'Task Force for Vulnerable Groups' to address the problems faced by vulnerable persons during the COVID-19 pandemic' (e.g. those staying irregularly, applicants for international protection, victims of exploitation and human trafficking).



INTEGRATION

OVERARCHING DEVELOPMENTS

On 18 December 2020, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of an Interministerial Conference on Migration and Integration to provide a platform for dialogue between the competent federal

and regional authorities and to better coordinate their policies on migration and integration.

INTEGRATION OF ADULTS

The compulsory integration course that was due to enter into force in the Brussels Capital Region was postponed by one year due to practical and technical problems. Flanders began its redesign of the civic integration programme to enhance its performance and effectiveness. The programme will no longer be free of charge and will exclude applicants for international protection.

FIGHTING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

On 19 February 2020, the Interministerial Conference on Anti-Racism was established to strengthen cooperation between the different policy levels and to develop an inter-federal policy to better combat racism generally. The Interministerial Conference began to prepare Belgium's first Inter-federal Action Plan against Racism.



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

STATELESSNESS

The federal government announced its intention to find a solution for stateless persons who cannot return to their country for reasons beyond their control. The Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration later confirmed that recognition as a stateless person would lead to residence rights, provided certain conditions are met.



BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

BORDER MANAGEMENT

The 1993 Eurostar agreements between the United Kingdom (UK), France and Belgium were extended to the Netherlands. The new agreement was signed on 7 July 2020 and takes Brexit into account. It determines border controls between the UK and France, the Netherlands and Belgium.

SCHENGEN GOVERNANCE

Several Ministerial Decrees were adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One measure was the temporary reintroduction of controls at internal borders, in accordance with Article 28 of the Schengen Borders Code.



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

In his first policy note, the new Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration emphasised the importance of tackling human smuggling and human trafficking, including the crucial role of specialised centres for victims of trafficking. He also stated that victims of trafficking should be informed of the possibility to obtain residence rights.

The National Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings 2015-2019 was updated in 2020 pending the formation of a new government. At the end of 2020, a new Action Plan for 2021-25 began to be drafted.

On World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (30 July 2020), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and its partners across Belgium undertook several initiatives to raise awareness of the fight against human trafficking and the work done by first responders in this respect.



RETURN AND READMISSION

MAIN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In his general policy note, the new Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration made it clear that return will be a priority for the government.

In Belgium, the new coalition government expressed its intention to prioritise return and promote voluntary return, for example by focusing on intensive and informative return coaching, shortening the return procedure through digitalisation and increasing the detention capacity.

A series of measures were taken in line with national COVID-19 mitigation measures. Return operations generally continued, including identification and detention, albeit on a smaller scale.

COVID-19 restrictions drove new developments in reintegration, such as introducing more flexibility in prolongation of reintegration supports.

COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Cooperation with third countries suffered during the COVID-19 crisis. Nevertheless, efforts to maintain and initiate relationships with third countries continued. The main objective was to maintain relationships with third countries' embassies and local authorities, and to support return operations. Negotiations began on a readmission agreement with Angola, while missions to Senegal and Morocco explored the possibility of (prolongation of) a Memorandum of Understanding.



MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

At national level, the Pact on Migration and Asylum reinvigorated discussions on the need for sustainable approaches to migration and the link between migration and development cooperation. The Immigration Office also continued its bilateral and intergovernmental cooperation on specific developmental projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Senegal.

STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Statistical Annex was prepared by the European Commission's Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography (KCMD) and provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Belgium on aspects of migration and international protection (2017-2020), 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'.

A How to Read guide, describing each chart and reporting the sources, is available [here](#).



GENERAL NOTES

This four-page 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 left blank or 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.

A How to Read guide, describing each chart and reporting the sources, is available on the EMN website.



COLOUR LEGEND

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



data relative to Belgium



data relative to EU



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

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

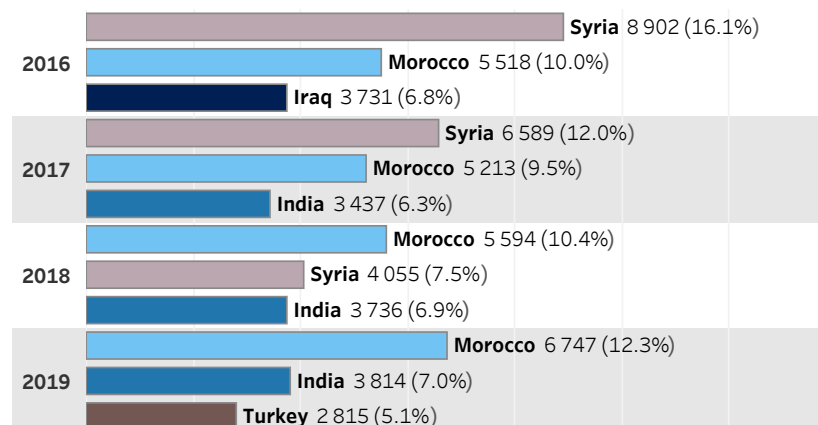
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)

Number of TCNs



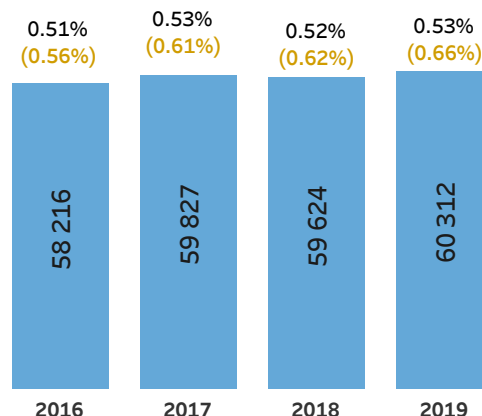
Top 3 nationalities of number of first residence permits annually issued: number of permits and % of total annual permits

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



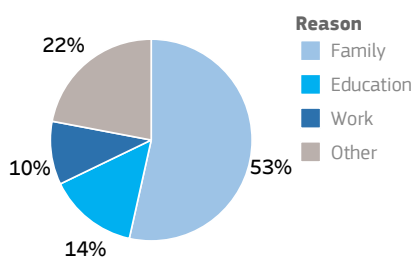
First residence permits annually issued: tot. num. and % of tot. pop. in the country (and EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



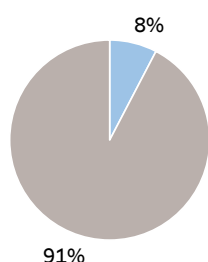
First residence permits annually issued by reason in 2019

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)



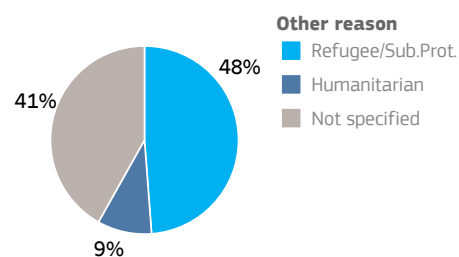
First residence permits annually issued for work reasons in 2019

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resocc)



First residence permits annually issued for 'other reasons' in 2019

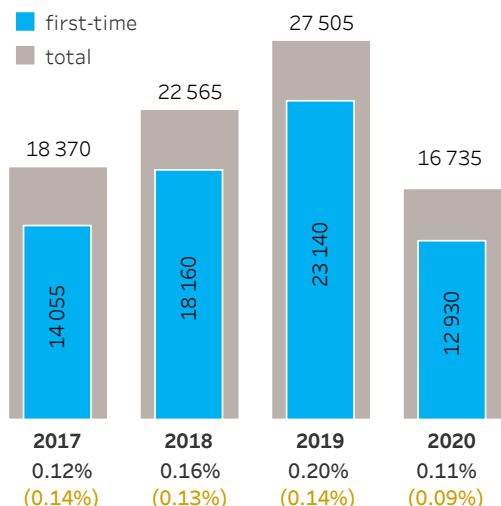
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resoth)



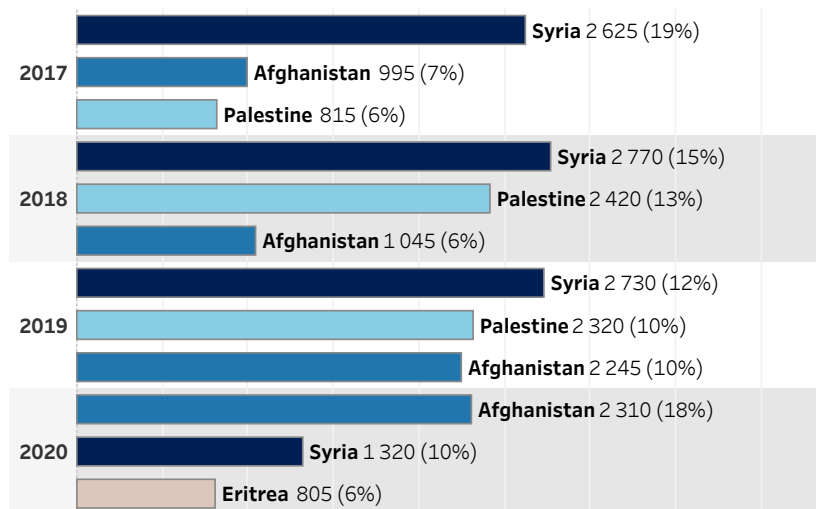


INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

Total/first-time asylum applications; first-time asy app as % of population in the country (and in EU) SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza, migr_pop1ctz)

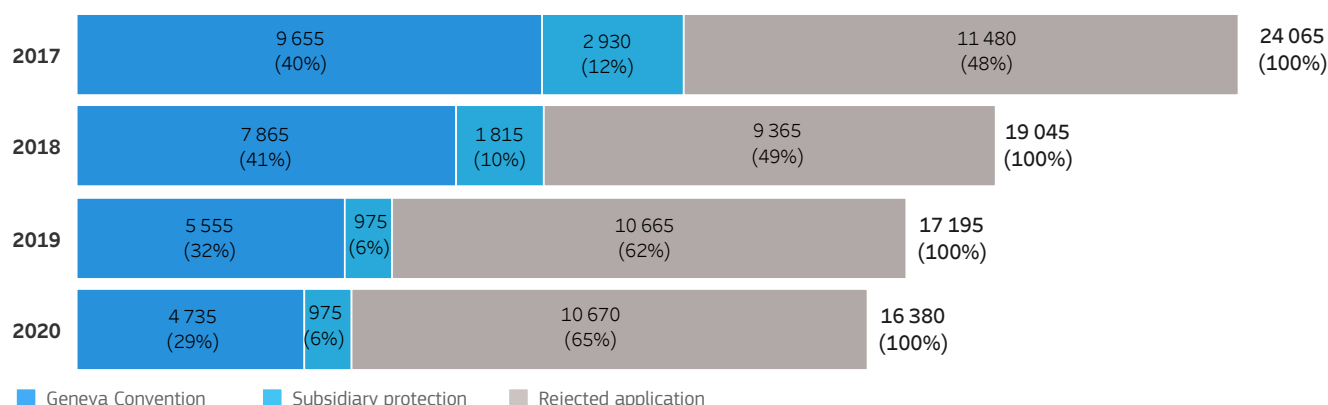


Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-time asylum applications: number of applications and % of total first-time annual applications SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza)



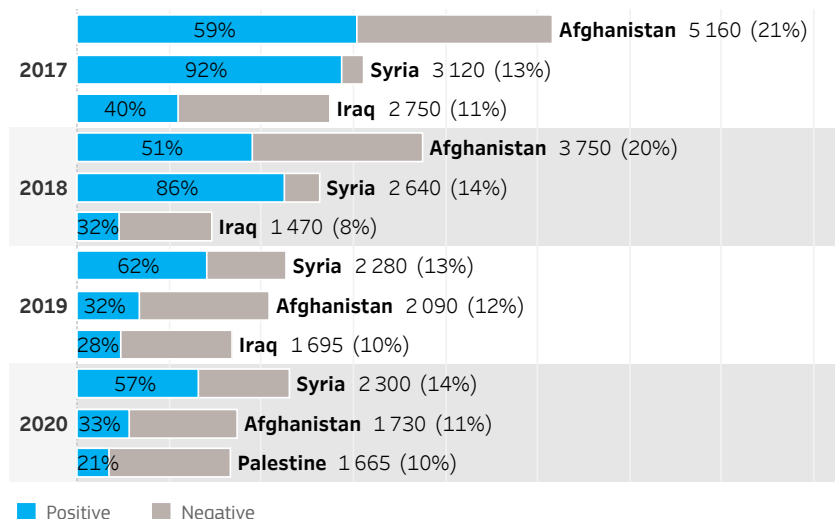
Number of first-instance asylum decisions by outcome (% of total decisions)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfst)



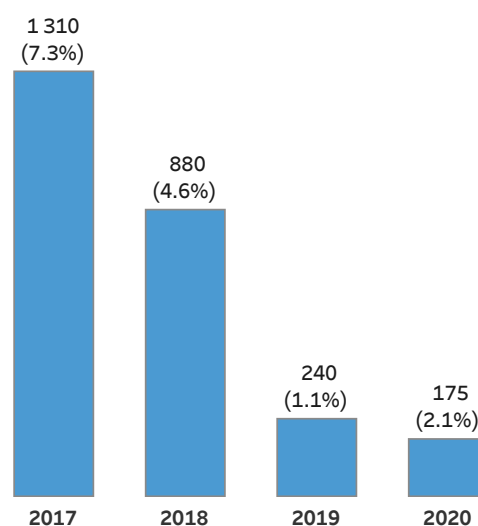
Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-instance decisions: number of decisions (% of total decisions in the country) and % of positive outcome

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asydcfst)



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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyresa)

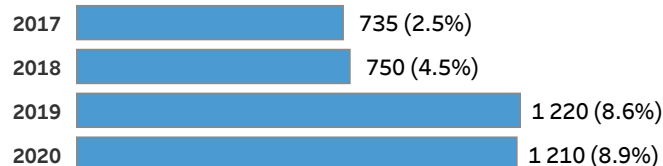




UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

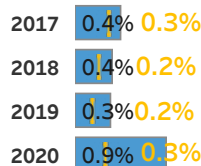
Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in the country (and % of total applications from unaccompanied minors in EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa)



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

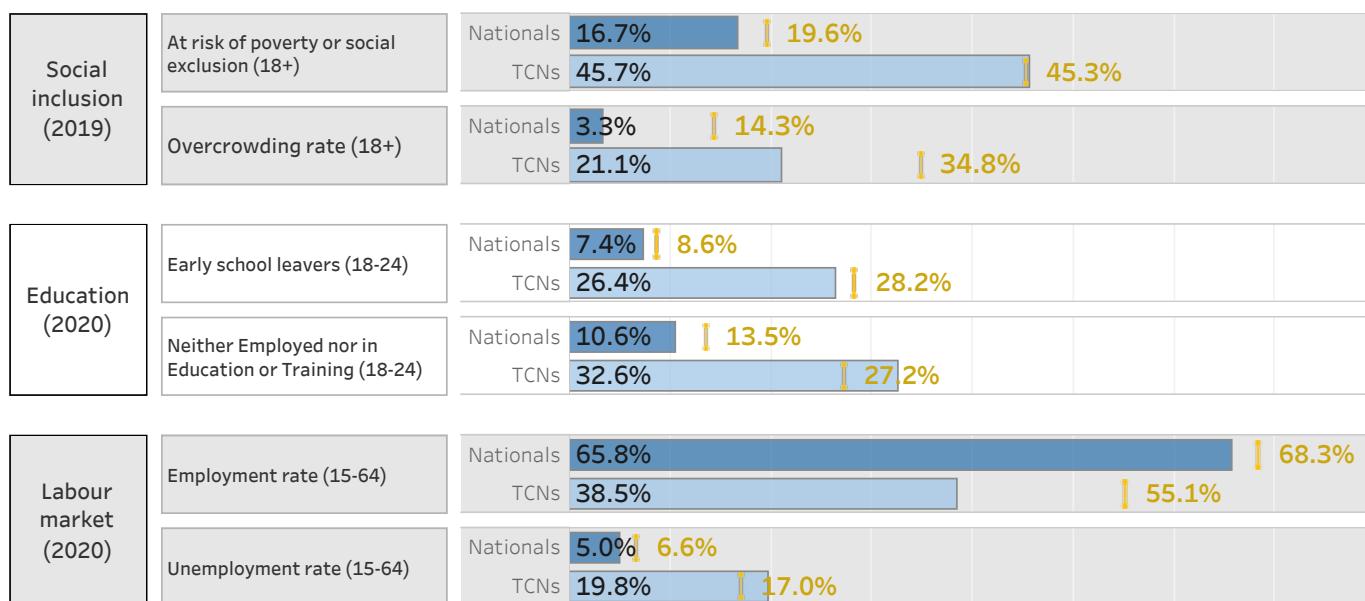
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa)



INTEGRATION

Integration indicators for nationals of the country (blue) and Third-Country Nationals (TCNs - light blue) in the country (when available). The same indicator is provided in yellow for EU. Data are relative to the last available year.

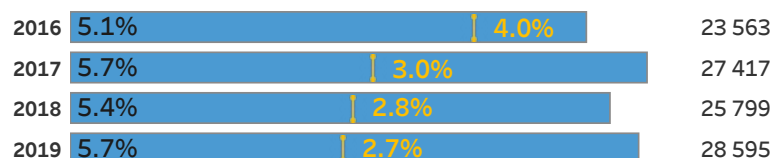
SOURCE: Eurostat (ilc_peps05, ilc_lvho15, edat_lfse_01, edat_lfse_23, lfsa_ergan, lfsa_urgan)



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

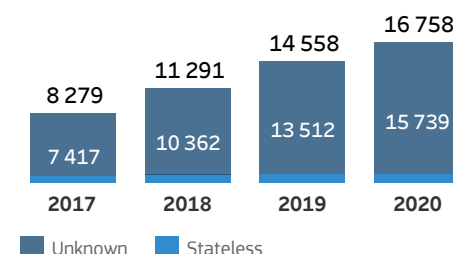
Third-Country Nationals who have acquired citizenship as a share of total Third-Country Nationals (in the country and in the EU) and in absolute number

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acqs, migr_acq)



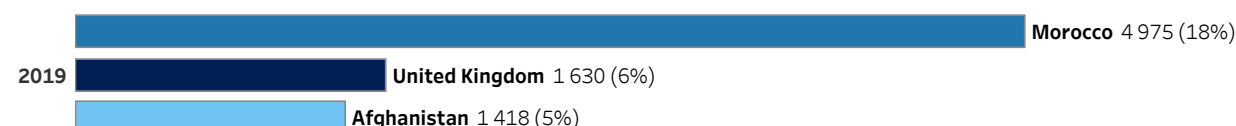
Stateless, unknown citizens and recognised non-citizens (RNC) - where present

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctza)



Top 3 nationalities by number of citizenship acquisition in 2019: absolute number and % of total acquisitions in the country by Third-Country Nationals

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_acq)

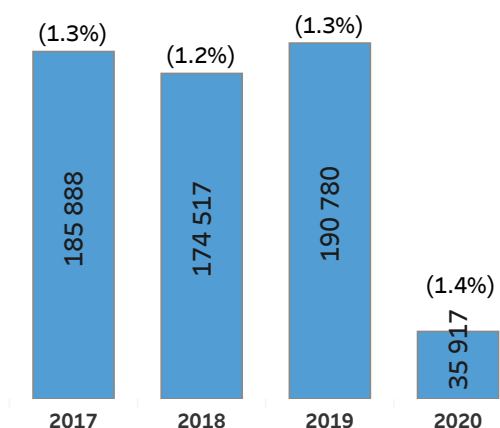




BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

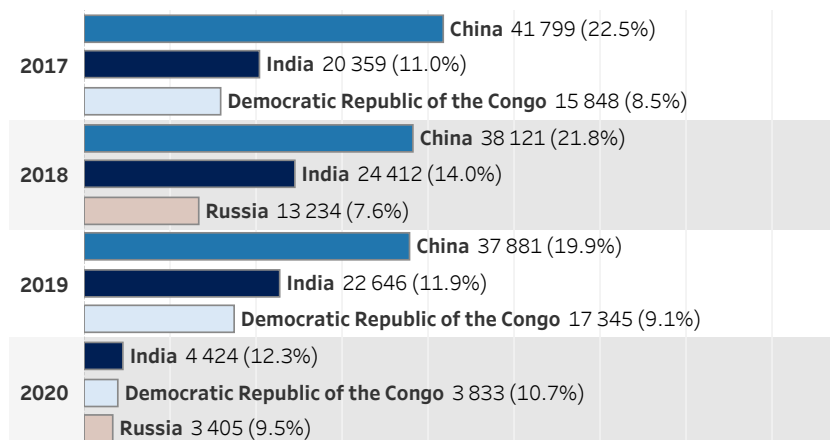
Short-term visa issued (% of Schengen)

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



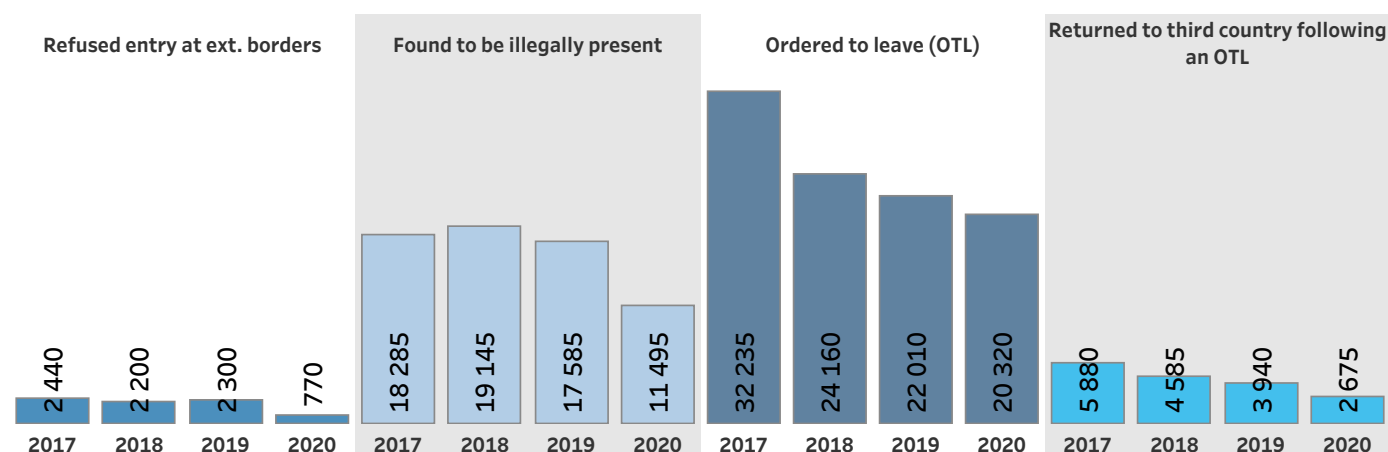
Short-term visa issued in top 3 consulate countries (% of total issued)

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



IRREGULAR MIGRATION

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



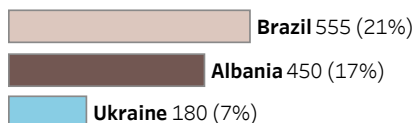
Top 3 nationalities ordered to leave the country, 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eiord)



Top 3 nationalities returned to third countries, 2020

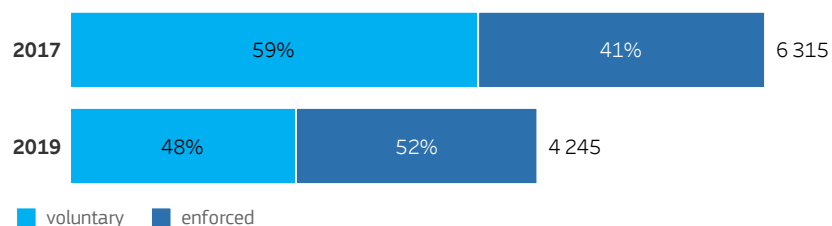
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirtn)



RETURN AND READMISSION

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_eirt_vol)



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr_resoth)

