

# CYPRUS

## EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

2020

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION, INCLUDING LATEST STATISTICS



### OVERARCHING CHANGES

In March 2020, the Ministry of the Interior announced Cyprus' new holistic action plan to tackle growing migration flows. Formally adopted by the Council of Ministers, the plan aimed to:

- 1) Shorten asylum applications' review time;
- 2) Amend legislation to shorten deadlines for the right of appeal to the courts;
- 3) Develop a list of safe countries in order to distinguish applications that are clearly unfounded;
- 4) Instantly issue a deportation order on rejection of unfounded applications;
- 5) Amend legislation to combat the phenomenon of marriages of convenience;
- 6) Introduce strict criteria for the enrolment of third-country nationals in private colleges;
- 7) Combat illegal labour by intensifying controls;
- 8) Enhance cooperation with Frontex on returns and restricting the flow of irregular migrants by land/sea.



### LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

#### WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

COVID-19 health and employment measures saw asylum seekers granted temporary authorisation to work as seasonal workers in the agricultural sector. From June 2020, asylum seekers and third-country

### KEY POINTS



**A new action plan was adopted to manage growing migration flows by tackling unfounded asylum applications and sham marriages, shortening review periods, and imposing stricter criteria for enrolment in private colleges.**



**Asylum and immigration laws were updated to include shorter appeal periods and to allow for simultaneous rejection of an asylum application and issuing of a return decision.**



**Stricter criteria were introduced for the enrolment of third-country nationals in private colleges.**

national students were permitted to work in certain agricultural sectors.

#### STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

In September 2020, the following measures were imposed to avoid third-country nationals abusing student status:

- 1) Restricting the admission of foreign students to up to 120% of the authorised capacity of each college;
- 2) Stricter checks on students' academic qualifications in the English language;
- 3) Requesting a bank certificate for possible reimbursement of tuition fees for the student's first year of study;

- 4) Enhanced audits of higher education schools by the Ministry of Education and Culture;
- 5) Granting student work permits only for traineeships that form part of their study curriculum or for work related to their field of study.



## INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

For the fourth consecutive year, Cyprus had the highest number of asylum applications compared to its population. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting travel restrictions, 7 094 people applied for asylum (13 249 in 2019).

On 10 March 2020, the Council of Ministers approved an extended national list of safe countries of origin, including Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Ghana, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Philippines, Nepal, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, The Gambia, Egypt and Nigeria.

In September 2020, an amendment of the Constitution and three additional bills were approved, which updated asylum and immigration laws. The time limits for an appeal before the Administrative Court of International Protection now distinguish between an ordinary and an accelerated procedure for manifestly unfounded cases. An appeal against a negative decision of the Asylum Service shall be submitted within 30 days (reduced from 75 days) in the ordinary procedure and within 15 days in the accelerated procedure.

European Asylum Support Office (EASO) experts continued to provide support on the registration and lodging of asylum applications at the District Immigration Offices of the Police and the First Reception Centre (Pournara). The Pournara and Kofinou reception centres were adapted to create quarantine areas for new arrivals, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, with the support of the European Commission and all competent authorities (Asylum Service, social welfare services, health services, civil registry, Migration Department, civil defence, etc.), Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were drafted and implemented at Pournara.



## MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

A new project 'Creating Semi-Independent Housing Structures for Hosting Unaccompanied Children Over 16 Years' began in April 2020. Financed by the national budget, the project is managed and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Cyprus, in partnership with the social welfare services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. The project sought to ease the transition to adulthood for unaccompanied migrant children through semi-independent housing and other supports.

A new Asylum and Migration Integration Fund (AMIF) relocation programme was implemented, following an agreement with Finland, and in cooperation with EASO. 16 single mothers and their children were relocated from Cyprus to Finland in July 2020. A further 14 unaccompanied minors were relocated to Finland in September 2020.

Vulnerability experts (from EASO and the Asylum Service) were posted at the Pournara and Kofinou reception centres to better identify vulnerable persons and unaccompanied minors. Social welfare officers were also posted at the First Reception Centre in Pournara, where a safe zone for vulnerable persons was constructed under EASO guidelines.

Social welfare services secured direct funding from the European Commission under the AMIF Emergency Assistance Folder for the project 'Strengthen the existing structures and operational capacity of the social welfare services to cope with the rapidly increasing numbers of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors'. 42 additional social welfare officers were employed, a number of whom were placed at the two reception centres to respond to asylum seekers' needs (detection of trafficking victims, monitoring vulnerable people). The project began in July 2020 and will run until December 2021.



## INTEGRATION

### OVERARCHING DEVELOPMENTS

The first edition of the new National Plan on the Integration of Migrants 2020-2022 was published on 15 October 2020, followed by a public consultation on the new Plan. At the end of 2020, the draft Integration Plan was revised in light of public and stakeholder comments, ahead of being presented to the Ministry of

Interior for approval and submission to the Council of Ministers. The Plan will update Cyprus' integration policy. The National Action Plan for Integration will be based on good practice examples from other Member States and will form the basis for the design of future integration policy



## CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

### ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP

On 13 October 2020, the Council of Ministers approved the proposal by the Ministers of Finance and the Interior to abolish the current Investment Programme (Cyprus' investor citizenship scheme) from 1 November 2020. The proposal highlighted long-term weaknesses and abuse of the Programme.



## BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

### BORDER MANAGEMENT

Based on Article 3 of EU Regulation 2019/1896, Cyprus authorities established the National Strategy for Integrated Border Management (IBM), including the horizontal issues of human rights, training and education, research and innovation, as well as 11 individual components (e.g. border control measures, risk analysis). All relevant authorities will build or adjust their strategies to achieve the targets of the relevant components.

### SCHENGEN GOVERNANCE

Cyprus' technical evaluation for joining the Schengen Area continued in 2020. Despite the COVID-19 restrictions, a field visit to evaluate returns took place in December 2020.



## IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

A Frontex operation (Focal Point Sea) has been active since August 2019. The operation provides technical and operational support to the Cypriot authorities on debriefing, screening, detection of false and falsified travel documents, etc. 25 experts from different Member States were deployed to the operation in 2020.

A EUROPOL operation sought to assist local authorities with issues in relation to intelligence for facilitation networks involved in trafficking of human beings. The number of officers deployed ranged from two to four on a permanent basis.

Cyprus' authorities participated in a Frontex joint operation (Focal Point Air) at Larnaca Airport, with five experts from different Member States deployed to assist with the detection of false/falsified travel documents and second-line checks.

A Frontex joint operation (Coordination Points Air 2020) in Kutaisi/Georgia scheduled the deployment of three Cypriot experts (secondary line officers and an advanced level document officer). The target of the operation was to prevent illegal migration from Kutaisi to Member States. The deployment was cancelled due to COVID-19, however.



## TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Cyprus took part in the OSCE Financial Investigation in Trafficking in Human Beings pilot project. The project targeted greater cooperation between law enforcement agencies, financial investigators and banks to find strong evidence to identify traffickers and victims, support prosecutions, assist courts in confiscating illicit funds and compensating victims, and prevent the misuse of the financial services industry by traffickers.

From July 2020, the Anti-trafficking Police Office adopted the Special Assessment Form to facilitate transparency in the identification of victims of trafficking. Based on key indicators for each form of exploitation, the form is evaluated before a final decision is made on whether a person is a victim of trafficking or not.

The Cyprus police revised the Manual for the Identification of Human Trafficking Victims. The Manual includes include guidelines for child victims of human trafficking and is used by all police officers, particularly front-line officers.



## RETURN AND READMISSION

### MAIN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Legal amendments introduced in September 2020 created the possibility for the Asylum Service to simultaneously reject an asylum application and issue a return decision/deportation order. The Asylum Service became the second authority that can issue a return

decision or deportation order, along with the Civil Registry and Migration Department, which remains Cyprus' return authority.

During October 2020, a new Return Office was established within the Civil Registry and Migration Department, co-funded by the AMIF EMAS Fund. Responsible for return policy and coordination of all relevant authorities (police, Asylum Service, law service), the Return Office will enhance the return procedures of irregular third-country nationals.

In cooperation with Frontex, the Cypriot authorities concentrated their efforts on voluntary return of migrants residing illegally. 576 persons returned to their country of origin, with three voluntary return flights to Georgia, one to India and one joint flight to India and Nepal.

In September 2020, a grant agreement renewed Cyprus' Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme until 30 June 2022. IOM Cyprus will implement this project, co-funded by AMIF and Cyprus. The project has a total budget of €1.2 million and includes assistance to both voluntary returns and reintegration of the returnee in their country of origin.

Cyprus introduced case management and obligatory reporting to a police station as an alternative to detention. Case management projects are implemented by the Cyprus Refugee Council, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO).



## MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

There were no significant developments in 2020.

## 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 Cyprus 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 Cyprus



data relative to EU



## LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

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

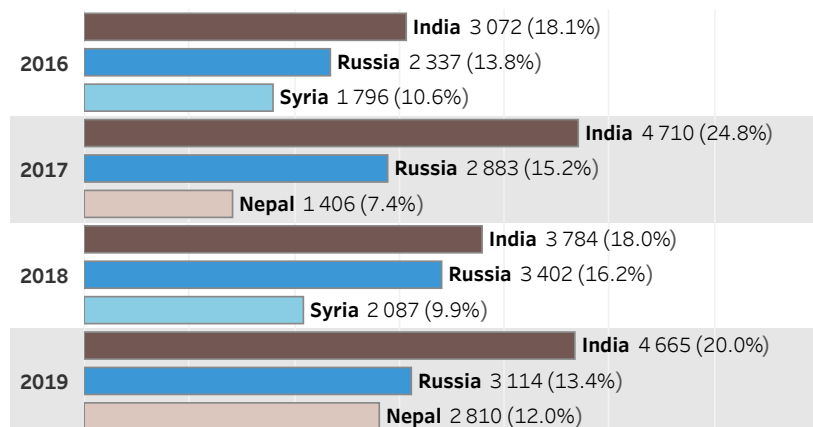
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_pop1ctz)

### Number of TCNs



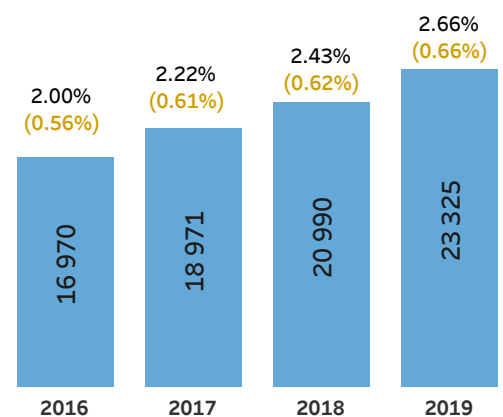
### Top 3 nationalities of number of first residence permits annually issued: number of permits and % of total annual permits

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resfirst)



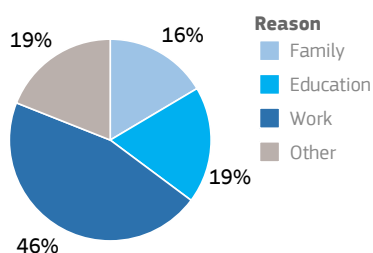
### First residence permits annually issued: tot. num. and % of tot. pop. in the country (and EU)

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resfirst)



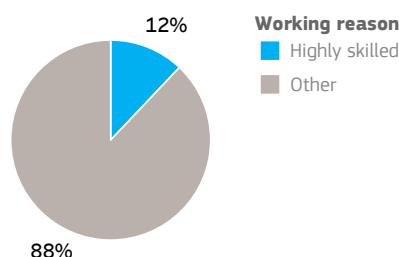
### First residence permits annually issued by reason in 2019

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resfirst)



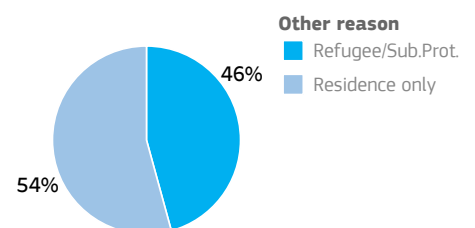
### First residence permits annually issued for work reasons in 2019

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resocc)



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

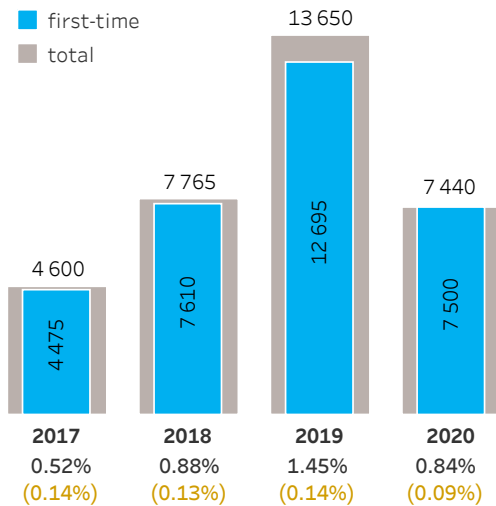
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resoth)



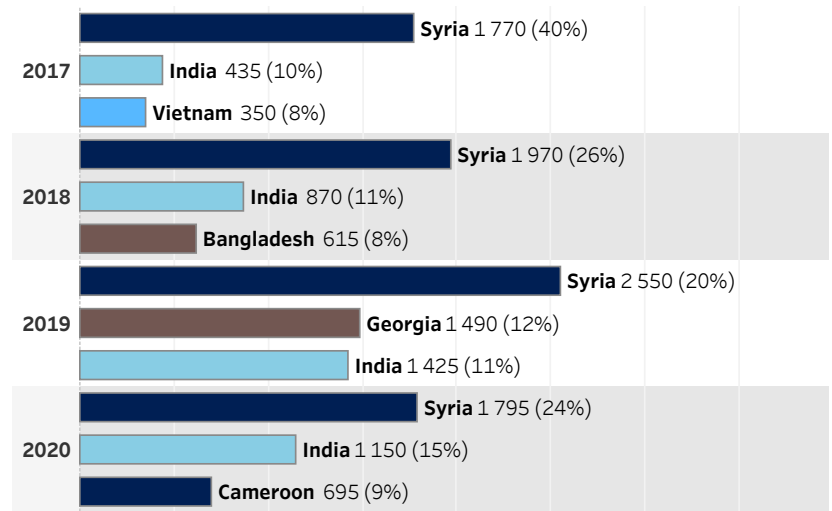


## INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

**Total/first-time asylum applications; first-time asy app as % of population in the country (and in EU)** SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza, migr\_pop1ctz)

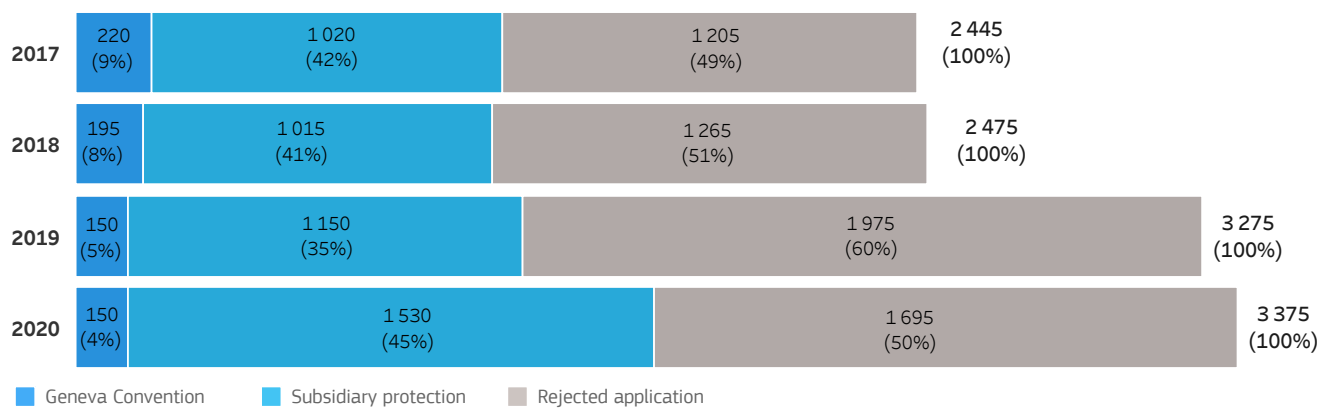


**Top 3 nationalities of annual number of first-time asylum applications: number of applications and % of total first-time annual applications** SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza)



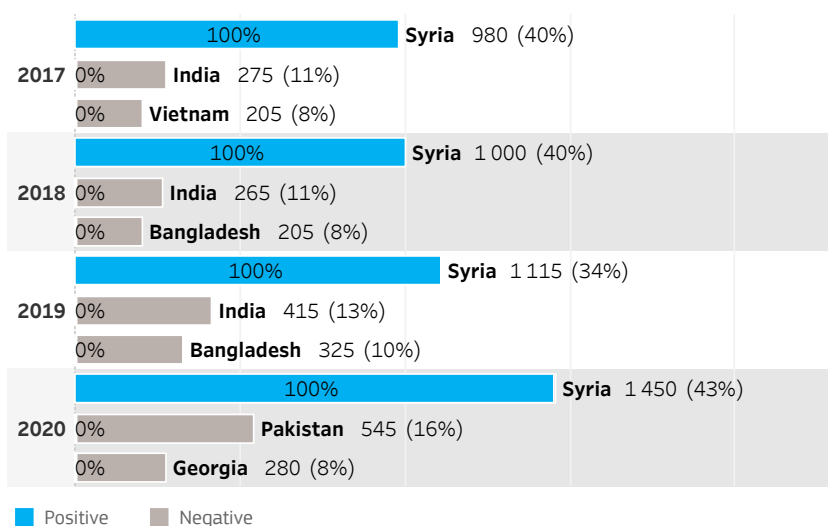
**Number of first-instance asylum decisions by outcome (% of total decisions)**

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asydcfsta)



**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\_asydcfsta)

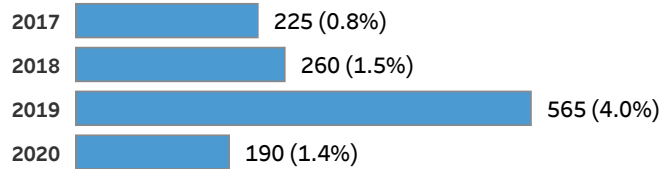




## UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

**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)**

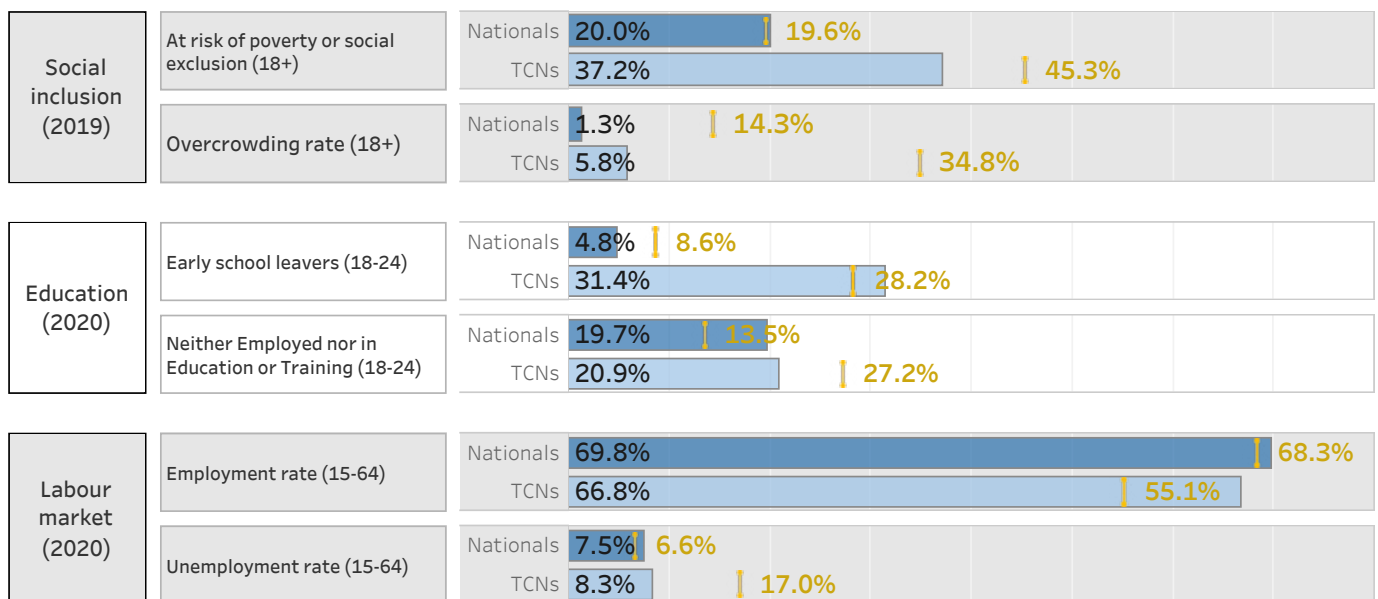
SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_asyunaa)



## 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.**

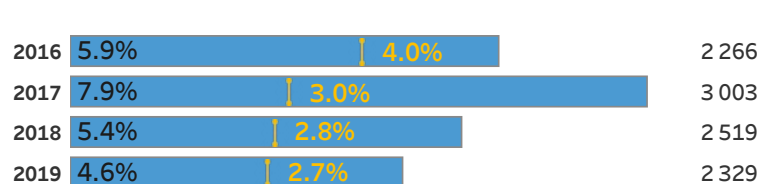
SOURCE: Eurostat (ilc\_peps05, ilc\_lvho15, edat\_lfse\_01, edat\_lfse\_23, lfsa\_ergan, lfsa\_urgan)



## CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

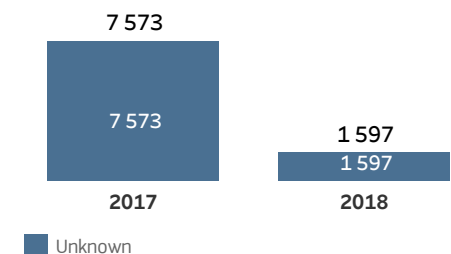
**Third-Country Nationals who have acquired citizenship as a share of total Third-Country Nationals (in the country and in the EU) and in absolute number**

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)



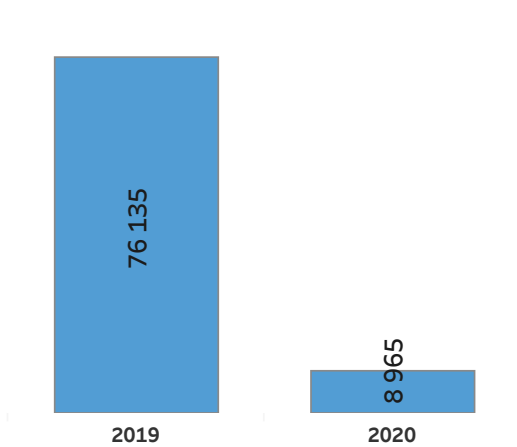




## BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

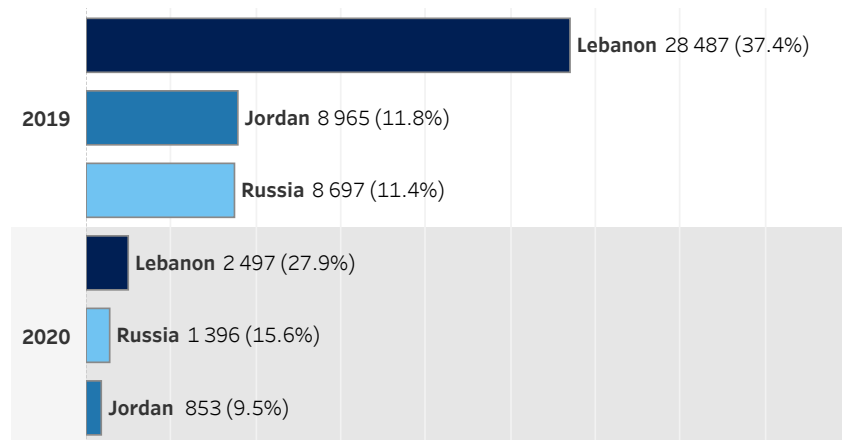
### Short-term visa issued

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



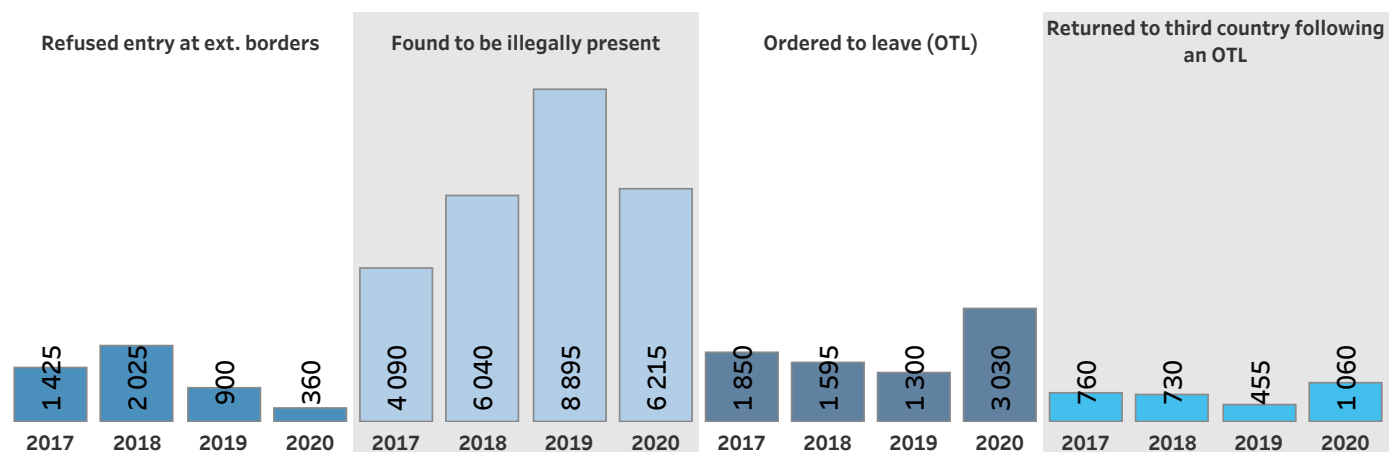
### Short-term visa issued in top 3 consulate countries (% of total issued)

SOURCE: DG Migration and Home Affairs



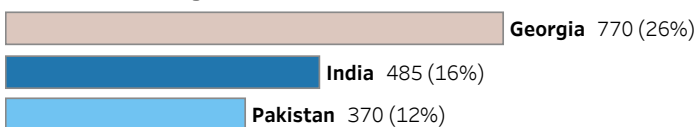
## IRREGULAR MIGRATION

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



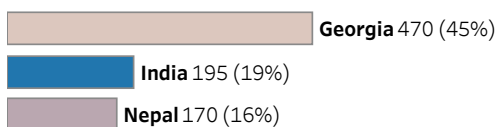
### Top 3 nationalities ordered to leave the country, 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_eiord)



### Top 3 nationalities returned to third countries, 2020

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_eirtn)



## TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

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

SOURCE: Eurostat (migr\_resoth)

