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ANNUAL REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN 2021

Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic in 2021

Report of the National Contact Point
of the European Migration Network for the Slovak Republic

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EMN activities are focused on topics related to migration of third-country nationals. The activities are implemented through national contact points in all EU Member States, Norway, Georgia and Moldova in coordination with the European Commission (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs).

The report was elaborated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Bratislava as the coordinator of the EMN National Contact Point for the Slovak Republic. The Slovak EMN National Contact Point comprises the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium, Migration Office, Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior), the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (Department of International Relations and European Affairs), the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (Section of Social Statistics and Demography) and the IOM.

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Preface

This report contains information on the most important changes, development and activities related to migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2021. It is the only publication in the Slovak Republic which annually maps all the dimensions of third-country nationals' migration.

This report is a part of the EMN Synthesis Report with the same focus, which was prepared at the EU level and summarizes the findings of national reports compiled by EU Member States and Norway on the basis of common specifications. Since 2015, the Synthesis Report has replaced in full the European Commission's Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. The following reports are also based on this Annual Report: the EASO Annual Report on the Situation of the Asylum in the EU 2021, the EMN's Children in Migration and the EMN Overviews of developments in individual EU MS in 2021.

The Synthesis Report and the individual reports of EU Member States and Norway are available in English on the European Commission website www.ec.europa.eu/emn. The report of the Slovak Republic is published in Slovak and English. Both versions are available on the Slovak EMN National Contact Point website www.emn.sk.

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List of Abbreviations and References

AMIF – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ARM – EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum
AVR(s) – assisted voluntary return(s)
AVRR – Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme
BBFP PFP – Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium
BMVI – Border Management and Visa Instrument
CEAS – Common European Asylum System
CFC(s) – Children and Family Centre(s)
CFC Medzilaborce – Children and Family Centre DLAŇ in Medzilaborce
Coll. – Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic
COLSAF – Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family
COMIN – Community Center for Work and Knowledge Mobility
CVEK – Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture
DFEA MIO – Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior
DIREA – Department of International Relations and European Affairs of the MoLSAF SR
DM(s) – diplomatic mission(s)
EASO – European Asylum Support Office
EC – European Commission/Community
EEA – European Economic Area
EMN – European Migration Network
EU MS(s) – European Union Member State(s)
Eurostat – Statistical Office of the European Union
EU – European Union
FAD EPS MoI SR – Foreign Aid Department of the European Programmes Section of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
FPD PF – Foreign Police Department of the Police Force
Frontex – European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GRETA – Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
HRL – Human Rights League
IC MoI SR – Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM – International Organization for Migration
IOM MIC – IOM Migration Information Centre
ISF – Internal Security Fund
KMV – Office of the Minister of Interior
LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MEKOMIC – Inter-Ministerial Expert Committee for Labour Migration and Foreigners' Integration
MoH SR – Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
MoLSAF SR – Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
MJ SR – Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic
MoESRS SR – Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic
MO MoI SR – Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
MoI – Ministry of Interior

MoI SR – Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
MoFEA SR – Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
NCP – National Contact Point
NC SR – National Council of the Slovak Republic
NUCIM BBFP PF – National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium
NVIS – National Visa Information System
ODA – Official Development Assistance
OLSAF(s) – office(s) of labour, social affairs and family
o. z./OZ – civic association
PDCF(s) – Police Detention Centre(s) for Foreigners
PAS MoI SR – Public Administration Section of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
PF – Police Force
PFP – Police Force Presidium
RCMS – Readmission Case Management System
SEP(s) – self-employed person(s)
SHC – Slovak Humanitarian Council
SO SR – Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
SPCSG – socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship
SR – Slovak Republic
TCN(s) – third-country national(s)
UAM(s) – unaccompanied minor(s)
UK/United Kingdom – United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN – United Nations
USA – United States of America
VIS – Visa Information System
V4 – Visegrad Group

Explanation of symbols (not applicable for Table 9 in the Annex):

(:) – data unavailable

(-) – the phenomenon did not occur

Methodology and Terms

Methodology and Elaboration

This report has been compiled on the basis of common specifications prepared by EU Member States and the EC. Common specifications for all EU Member States and Norway enable the comparability of national reports and their subsequent use for the European-wide EMN annual report and other outputs at the EU level.

The report has Part 1, which is prepared for the European Commission and is not publicly available, and Part 2, which as a publication serves the Member States. The publication is based on Part 1, while the text is adjusted to national needs (e.g. in Slovakia, the text is extended by other national activities, with a special focus on EU-funded projects). The report also includes national statistics, including those which are not collected at the EU level (through Eurostat or Frontex).

In terms of methodology, the report is based on secondary research and has a descriptive nature. The authors of the report used available expert publications, statistics, legislation, Slovakia's policy documents, Internet sources and media monitoring¹. Reference documents and information obtained from the following state administration bodies were a significant source of information: Ministry of Interior of the SR (namely BBFP PFP, MO Mol SR, DFEA MIO, Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the Mol SR, FAD EPS Mol SR, PAS Mol SR), Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family (indirectly through MoLSAF SR), Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, Ministry of Justice of the SR (indirectly through DFEA MIO), General Prosecutor's Office of the SR (indirectly through DFEA MIO), Statistical Office of the SR and the IOM. Materials, publications and websites of other state, European, international and non-governmental institutions also represent important sources of information. The report also refers to several EMN publications and activities.

Media releases were also used as sources of information. The text therefore contains links to media references to migration topics and activities carried out by public administration, the non-governmental sector and international organisations.

The report was elaborated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Bratislava as the coordinator of the EMN National Contact Point for the Slovak Republic. The report was reviewed by experts from the Ministry of Interior of the SR, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR and the Statistical Office of the SR. The report was approved by Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior.

¹ The IOM as the coordinator of the EMN National Contact Point for the SR has been carrying out weekly media monitoring of migration and international protection issues since 2012. The media monitoring is used for preparing EMN publications.

Terms and Definitions

The terms used in this report largely correspond to the definitions in the *EMN Migration and Asylum Glossary*.² If it was not possible to use the Glossary, the terms are used in compliance with national or EU legislation (regulations, directives).

Special attention should be paid to the term *foreigner*, which under the Slovak legislation, namely Art 2(2) of the Act on Residence of Foreigners³ means anybody who is not a citizen of the SR. According to the EMN Glossary, a foreigner in the EU context is a person who is not a national of an EU Member State, and, in the global context, a person who is not a national (native or citizen) of a given state. Slovak legislation, however, denotes a foreigner who is not a national of an EU Member State as a *third-country national*.⁴ In this report, the term foreigner is therefore used mainly in texts and statistics which are related to or are kept in compliance with national legislation. In such a case, the term foreigner corresponds with the definition under Art 2 (2) of the Act on Residence of Foreigners, and not with the definition in the EMN Glossary.

The report also uses the term *migrant*. Unlike the definition in the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary,⁵ in this text it is used as a synonym for foreigner or third-country national.

In this report, the terms *irregular* and *illegal* are considered synonyms and their use depends on the specific context. Slovak legislation uses the term *illegal*. Similarly, the terms *(state) citizenship* and *nationality* are also used as synonyms in this report.

² Asylum and Migration Glossary 7.0 – a Tool for Better Comparability (2021). European Migration Network. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/pages/glossary/alien_en (consulted on 08/05/2022).

³ Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Foreigners and on changes and amendments to some acts.

⁴ Under Art. 2(4) of the Act on Residence of Foreigners, a third-country national is anybody who is not a national of the SR or an EU national. Stateless persons are also third-country nationals.

⁵ According to the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary, a migrant is defined as follows: "In the global context, a person who is outside the territory of the State of which they are nationals or citizens and who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate." Source: Asylum and Migration Glossary 7.0 – a Tool for Better Comparability (2018). European Migration Network. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary_en (consulted on 02/05/2022).

Summary

This report summarizes information on the most important changes, development and activities related to migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2021. It is the only publication in the SR which annually maps all the dimensions of third-country nationals migration, including those related to the EU's policies and legislation. The report also describes legal migration, international protection, minors and other vulnerable groups, integration, citizenship and the situation of stateless persons, border control and management, visa practices, irregular migration, including smuggling, human trafficking, returns and readmissions, as well as migration and development cooperation. The Annex to this report includes selected statistics related to the above-mentioned areas.

Overview of Asylum and Migration Policy Developments

In 2021, the SR approved the new *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025*. In this strategic document, the SR defines basic goals, direction and development priorities in the following areas: legal migration, with an emphasis on managed economic migration; emigration from Slovakia with an emphasis on the return of the labour force; international protection; integration; irregular migration and borders; readmission agreements and returns; combating human trafficking; humanitarian and development cooperation and communication about migration topics. Another goal of the new policy is to "evaluate the option of centralising the agendas of migration, integration and asylum into one centralised body".

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures continued to influence the management of migration in the SR. It triggered the preparation of the *Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia*, which includes migration mainly in the chapters "Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talents" and "Component 9: More Efficient Management and Strengthening of R & D & I Funding". They are based on the current demographic and labour market situation and name the impact of the brain-drain from Slovakia to foreign countries.

In 2021, both the Act on Residence of Foreigners and the Act on Employment Services were amended. The SR also continued the preparation of amendments to the Act on Slovak Citizenship and to the Act on Asylum.

From the institutional and organisational perspective, the system of managing migration has not changed substantially. The position of the Slovak Ambassador-at-Large for Migration, which had been active at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR since 2016, was cancelled. The Ministry of Interior of the SR became the managing body of the Internal Security Fund (ISF), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) for the next programming period 2021 – 2027.

Since 2015, the media in Slovakia have been covering international migration in a greater extent and communicating about it actively. In 2021, several significant events resonated in the media and on the Slovak political scene: growing tensions on Polish-Belarusian border, the situation of migrants and refugees in the Schengen border areas as well as the conflict in Afghanistan and related mass displacement of the population and evacuation flights by Western countries, including the SR.

Migration and migrants have been a common target of disinformation and apart from COVID-19 one of the most shared topics. At the end of 2021, the developments on Polish and Ukrainian borders were a common topic of fake news websites.

Legal Migration

The number of foreigners has been continuously growing in recent years. EU citizens together with third-country nationals comprised 3.08% of Slovak population in 2021, while in 2020 the number was 2.75%. Of the total of 167,519 foreigners with valid residence in Slovakia, more than a half (66.52%) were from non-EU countries, representing 2.05% of the overall population of the Slovak Republic. Among the most numerous groups were Ukrainian nationals (56,480), Serbian nationals (16,331), Vietnamese nationals (7,235), Russian nationals (6,389) and UK nationals (2,795). The highest number of third-country nationals (more than one-third) resided in the Bratislava region in 2021.

The *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* also defines priorities in the field of legal migration, with an emphasis on controlled economic migration. The SR considers "creation of an attractive environment for foreigners who are needed for the development of our economy and society" to be of key importance. The priorities of the SR in the field of controlled economic migration are, above all, the linking of information systems and ensuring cooperation among relevant institutions, the provision of information to foreigners in major languages, controlling the arrival and stay of foreigners in the SR, streamlining and digitising the acquisition of residence permits or optimising the number of workers working at the most prominent workplaces.

The *Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR* in its *Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talent* focuses on meeting labour market needs by highly qualified workers in particular in the fields of health care, education and IT.

The SR prepared simplified access to the Slovak labour market for highly qualified university-educated non-EU workers in 2021. In December 2021 the Slovak Government adopted the Regulation on the Interest of the Slovak Republic to Grant National Visas to Highly Qualified Third-country Nationals effective as of April 2022. These individuals will not be required to enter the Slovak Republic before signing their employment contract in order to handle all formalities. Once they are granted employment, they go through the standard administrative process.

The SR also prepared *Amendment to the Act on the Provision of Health Care* in 2021, which simplifies access to the health care system for medical practitioners from foreign countries, including non-EU countries, in 2022. The possibility of a temporary professional internship, introduced in 2020, will be extended to the period after the revocation of the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SR continued to allow performance of employment during the emergency situation even after the expiration of validity periods of residence permits and employment permits or single work permit certificates in 2021.

The *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education until 2030* was adopted in December 2021 and its implementation is to commence in 2022. The strategy aims to open the Slovak

higher education environment to foreign university students, teachers and researchers. Measures that concern foreign university students, teachers, researchers and artists (including third-country nationals) include, above all, support for existing international mobility scholarship programmes, the granting of national visas, support for socio-cultural integration and changes to the process of filling the positions of associate professors and professors.

The SR conducted the Population and Housing Census in 2021 which concerned both Slovak nationals as well as foreigners – EU citizens, TCNs and stateless persons. The census mapped, inter alia, information on gender, nationality, country of birth, level of completed education, employment, stays abroad and the year of arrival to the SR since 1980.

International Protection

The number of asylum applications and the number of various forms of international protection granted in the SR in 2021 remained low. The majority of a total of 330 applications concerned people from Morocco, Afghanistan, Algeria, India and Libya. Twenty-one asylum applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors, predominantly from Afghanistan. In 2021, asylum was granted to 29 applicants, mostly from Afghanistan and Iran. In the same period of time, the SR granted subsidiary protection to 27 persons who, similarly to the previous year, were mostly from Afghanistan.

After the beginning of the conflict in Afghanistan in August 2021, the SR evacuated 46 Afghan nationals to its territory, 32 of whom applied for asylum, and 12 more, who were received through Ukraine, also applied for asylum. Non-governmental organisations also engaged in the evacuation assistance.

The new *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* “complies with the traditional pillars of the asylum policy and, at the same time, it also supports new forms of provision of protection in reaction to new initiatives of the international community”. The priorities of the SR in the field of international protection include mainly active engagement in the ongoing negotiations on the reform of the Common European Asylum System (with the position to prevent the adoption of a system of compulsory relocation of asylum seekers), voluntary engagement in regional and international processes to share the burden of the consequences of forced migration, ensuring systemic regulation of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection by the state, as well as the deployment of experts through the EASO.

In 2021, the SR was preparing an amendment to the *Act on Asylum*, which aims to fundamentally regulate initial integration of persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. The SR updated the internal instrument of the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic used to identify vulnerability and specific needs of asylum seekers, the so-called social profile.

The SR initiated activities aimed at sharing experiences in the field of migration and international protection, which resulted in the signing of the *Memorandum of Cooperation on Migration and Asylum between the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina* in September 2021.

Minors and Other Vulnerable Groups

There were no significant developments in relation to policies or legislation concerning measures aimed at vulnerable migrant groups, including the care for minors, in the SR in 2021. Even though the number of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) placed in Slovak facilities more than doubled compared to 2020, the number of UAMs applying for asylum remains low, and their voluntary departures from the facilities are still a challenge. In the context of the increase in the UAMs numbers, the SR continued to increase material and human capacities in the field of caring for UAMs. A new methodological guideline has been issued in order to unify the procedures for the cooperation between SPCSG bodies and Police Force authorities in this area.

Integration

In 2021, the *Migration Policy of the SR: Perspective until the Year 2025* was adopted. It defines the priorities of the SR also in integration. The *Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia* was also concerned with integration and in particular focused on the integration of Slovak citizens returning to Slovakia, highly qualified employees from third countries and their family members, as well as foreign university students studying in Slovakia. This document also addresses the facilitation of qualifications recognition.

Regarding other strategic documents touching upon integration, the following were adopted in 2021: *Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance 2021–2030* and *National Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities 2021–2027*.

Legislatively speaking, integration was also influenced by the adoption of an amendment to Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance.

In 2021, the projects of various organisations working in migration in Slovakia (e. g. the IOM, the SHC, the Mareena civic association or the Human Rights League) continued to be an important part of measures to support the integration of third-country nationals. They focused on the provision of counselling, language courses or activities raising the awareness of migration. CVEK published several publications about the integration of foreigners.

In 2021, there was no new development of policies and legislation related to the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. As in the previous years, many activities continued to be implemented by means of various projects conducted by state institutions, international or non-governmental organisations.

Citizenship and the Situation of Stateless Persons

In the last five years, with the exception of the “pandemic” year 2021, the number of third-country nationals who have been granted citizenship in the SR has been continually rising. Between 2017 and 2021, state citizenship was granted to 400 – 600 third-country nationals a year. In 2021, the SR granted 480 citizenships. Most new citizens of the SR come from Serbia, Ukraine, USA, Russia and the United Kingdom. In 2021, the SR prepared an amendment to the Act on Citizenship, which was adopted in February 2022 and enters into force in April 2022. Its main aim is to simplify obtaining state citizenship for former citizens who lost the Slovak citizenship by obtaining foreign state citizenship and for foreigners holding the status of Slovaks living abroad.

Similar to 2020, in 2021, the SR did not adopt any legislative or other measures which would significantly influence the situation of stateless persons present in their territory.

Borders, Schengen and Visa

In 2021, there were no new developments in border control legislation. As for the policies, the priorities of the SR related to borders were also defined in the adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025*.

The issuing of visas continued to be partially limited due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The number of issued Schengen visas in 2021 was slightly higher than in 2019 but not as high as before the pandemic. The number of issued national visas also slightly increased in comparison with 2020.

Irregular Migration including Smuggling

Measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 also affected the development of irregular migration in Slovakia in 2021. Even though irregular migration increased by 37% in 2021 as compared with 2020, it did not amount to the pre-pandemic levels. It most often concerned nationals of Afghanistan, Morocco, Syria, Ukraine and Pakistan.

There were no significant changes in the measures against the misuse of legal migration methods, combating smuggling and preventing irregular migration in 2021.

Already active projects implemented in cooperation with non-EU countries aiming to prevent irregular migration continued in 2021.

Trafficking in Human Beings

The number of foreigners who were identified as human trafficking victims in Slovakia has remained very low. In 2021, out of the 43 identified victims of human trafficking, two were foreigners. Sexual and labour exploitation has been the most frequent purpose of trafficking in the last five years. The SR has noted two new trafficking purposes in 2021: organ, tissue and cell harvesting at the experimental stage and illegal child adoption. The SR has observed an increase in the number of child victims of human trafficking in the last three years: in 2019, child victims amounted to one-sixth of identified victims, in 2020 one-fourth and in 2021 nearly one-third of all identified victims. The SR filed charges against 39 persons and convicted 21 persons of committing this crime in 2021.

The SR began to apply the updated *National Referral Mechanism* in 2015. The document offers a more comprehensive model of cooperation of various stakeholders at the national level. The SR has defined the following priorities of fighting human trafficking and helping foreign victims in the adopted *Migration Policy of the SR: Perspective until the Year 2025*: to improve identification and sensitive approach when identifying human trafficking victims and their needs, to punish the perpetrators, to cooperate on the national and international levels as well as to implement educational programmes for professionals working with people vulnerable to this criminal activity.

The challenges faced by the SR in relation to identification, investigation and pursuit of the crime of human trafficking have been confirmed by the research *Sumarizácia a analýza rozsudkov súdov Slovenskej republiky týkajúcich sa trestných činov obchodovania s ľuďmi za roky 2015 - 2020* [Summary and Analysis of Slovak Republic Court Judgements Related to Crimes of Human Trafficking for 2015 – 2020]. The reports point to insufficient compensation of victims and very low punishment rates for the perpetrators.

Amendment to the Health Insurance Act effective from 1 January 2021 made it possible for foreigners placed in the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme who do not have health insurance in the EU and who are holders of tolerated residence to be entitled to health care costs reimbursement.

In 2021, the internal tool of the Migration Office of the Mol SR was updated to identify vulnerability and special needs of asylum seekers, i.e. the “social profile”. The tool contains a list of vulnerability indicators, including the cases of potential human trafficking victims.

When cooperating with the EU MS or non-EU countries, the SR did not embark on any new activities or adopt any significant changes in 2021. Cooperation with the United Kingdom was predominant.

Returns and Readmissions

The pandemic situation also continued to influence the number of returns carried out in 2021. There was no new significant development in legislation or policies. The responsible institutions continued to implement projects focusing on the execution of returns, capacity building and assistance to returnees.

Migration and Development Cooperation

In the adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025*, the priorities of the SR concerning the synergies of migration with humanitarian aid and development cooperation were defined. They include above all increasing coherence between migration and development policy, directing aid and cooperation not only into priority countries, but also into the countries relevant from the perspective of migration into Slovakia or the EU, preventing forced and irregular migration, as well as using the potential of circular migration and Government scholarships for the development of countries outside of the EU.

In 2021, the SR helped the countries of origin or transit of irregular migrants or refugees through several SlovakAid, EU and UN mechanisms. Slovakia did not implement systemic changes concerning the synergy of migration and development policies of countries outside the EU in 2021. In 2021, it continued to focus on addressing the origin and causes of forced migration and therefore contributed to the EU Trust Funds.

Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2021 states migration as one of the most important long-term challenge of development cooperation. In this document, the SR continues to support “dealing with the causes of migration in the countries of origin and transit, be it by means of bilateral activities or within the V4 regional format”.

The SR has prepared two strategies for development cooperation for 2021 – 2023 with Kenya and Moldova, in which it works on migration topics, too. A new ODA tool called *Sharing Slovak Expertise* supported passing on Slovak experience in asylum and migration in 2021, which led to a closer cooperation between the SR and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina has repeatedly highlighted this experience and described it as extremely beneficial.

As in previous years, in 2021 the SR launched a call for supporting activities that respond to the consequences of armed conflicts and prevent the emergence and negative effects of migration by improving the living conditions of the population as well as their prospects for employment in their home communities. This was the call for humanitarian aid projects for the countries of the Middle East – specifically Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.



Introduction

The *Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (ARM)* informs about the most important changes, development and activities related to migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2021, while focusing on third-country nationals.⁶ It serves as a basis for the European-wide EMN Annual Report,⁷ which fully replaced the *European Commission's Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum* in 2015. The following reports are also based on this Annual Report: the *EASO Annual Report on the Situation of the Asylum in the EU 2021*,⁸ *EMN's Children in Migration*⁹ and *EMN Country Factsheets*¹⁰ describing the developments in individual EU MS in 2021.

The report describes changes, developments and activities related to the legislative, institutional, political and practical aspects of migration and international protection in Slovakia from 1 January 2021 until 31 December 2021. The described developments have been set into the context of the EU's policies and legislation. The Report consists of eleven thematic chapters focused on the following areas: overview of migration and asylum policy developments, legal migration, international protection, minors and other vulnerable groups, integration, citizenship and stateless persons, visa practice, border control and management, irregular migration, in-

⁶ The general structure of the political and legal system related to migration and international protection in Slovakia is described in the EMN's *Organisation of Asylum and Migration Policies in the Slovak Republic* study, the updated version from 2014. <https://emn.sk/sk/na-stiahnutie-emn/publikacie-emn/item/138-organizacia-azylovej-a-migracnej-politiky> (consulted on 2/5/2022).

⁷ The last EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2020 is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/emn-annual-reports_en (consulted on 02/05/2022).

⁸ The last EASO Asylum Report 2021 is available at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-knowledge/asylum-report> (consulted on 02/05/2022).

⁹ Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/665-deti-v-migracii-2021.html> (consulted on 02/05/2022).

¹⁰ EMN Country Factsheets 2020 are available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/country-factsheets_en (consulted on 02/05/2022).

cluding migrant smuggling, human trafficking, returns and readmissions, migration and development cooperation. The Annex to this report includes selected statistics, including those not collected at the EU level through Eurostat or Frontex, as well as a bibliography.

The chapter *Overview of migration and asylum policy developments* provides a general picture of what shaped migration policies and legislation in Slovakia in 2021. This overview describes the framework political, legislative and institutional developments, (inter-)ministerial cooperation, discussions related to measures and policymaking, media discussions, as well as the wider social context that influenced different areas of migration, including international protection. This chapter contains a list of research on migration conducted in Slovakia in 2021.

The chapter *Legal Migration* describes the policies, legislation, measures and activities concerning the admission and residence of different groups of migrants, satisfying labour market needs or prevention of social dumping. The chapter is also devoted to migration and mobility management and to provision of information to migrants from third countries on routes to and conditions of legal migration.

The chapter *International Protection* contains information on asylum system in the Slovak Republic, on the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), institutional and legislative changes, national and European jurisprudence, intra-EU relocations and resettlement, and other activities.

The chapter *Minors and other vulnerable groups* addresses mainly policies, legislation, measures and activities related to admission of and care for minor migrants from third countries as well as measures in the area of services provisions to other vulnerable groups.

The chapter *Integration* focuses on socioeconomic integration measures focusing on third-country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection. It also describes activities related to awareness-raising about migration and non-discrimination, as well as to integration at the local level and the civic participation of foreigners.

The chapter *Citizenship and situation of stateless persons* is concerned with policies and measures related to the acquisition of citizenship and stateless persons in the territory of the Slovak Republic.

The chapter *Borders, Schengen and visas* provides information about external border control and management, visa policies and measures aimed at cooperation with third countries in border control and management.

The chapter *Irregular migration, including migrant smuggling* includes information on the misuse of legal migration channels, policies and measures against facilitation of irregular migration (smuggling), as well as on the monitoring and identification of migration routes.

The chapter *Trafficking in human beings* from third countries informs about the policies, legislation, international monitoring, national projects, campaigns and other activities, as well as cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels in this area.

The chapter *Returns and readmissions* follows up on the chapter on irregular migration and includes information about forced returns and readmissions as well as (assisted) voluntary returns and reintegrations of migrants in the country of return.

The chapter *Migration and development cooperation* provides an overview of activities and measures to include migration into development and other sectoral policies. The chapter also informs about bilateral cooperation and assistance in third countries.

The Annex *National statistics* summarises selected statistics for the SR on migration, international protection and integration in 2021, including those which are not collected at the EU level through Eurostat¹¹ or the Frontex agency.¹² The Annex presents statistical information related to the numbers of foreigners: the number of those employed, issued residence permits and visas, children of foreigners in the education system, obtained citizenships, cases of irregular migration and detained third-country nationals, smuggled persons, related granted periods for consideration and residence permits to smuggled persons, smugglers, returns and reintegrations, numbers related to various aspects of international protection, relocations and resettlements, unaccompanied minors and victims of human trafficking from third countries, related granted periods for consideration and residence permits granted to human trafficking victims and of traffickers.

¹¹ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics (consulted on 02/05/2022).

¹² Available at: <http://frontex.europa.eu/publications/> (consulted on 02/05/2022).



Overview of Asylum and Migration Policy Developments

In 2021, the SR approved the new *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025*. In this strategic document, the SR defines basic goals, direction and development priorities in the following areas: legal migration, with an emphasis on managed economic migration; emigration from Slovakia with an emphasis on the return of the labour force; international protection; integration; irregular migration and borders; readmission agreements and returns; combating human trafficking; humanitarian and development cooperation and communication about migration topics. Another goal of the new policy is to “evaluate the option of centralising the agendas of migration, integration and asylum into one centralised body”.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures continued to influence the management of migration. It triggered the preparation of the *Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia*, which includes migration mainly in the chapters “Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talents” and “Component 9: More Efficient Management and Strengthening of R & D & I Funding”. They are based on the current demographic and labour market situation and name the impact of the brain-drain from Slovakia to foreign countries.

In 2021, both the Act on Residence of Foreigners and the Act on Employment Services were amended. The SR also continued the preparation of amendments to the Act on Slovak Citizenship and to the Act on Asylum.

From the institutional and organisational perspective, the system of managing migration has not changed substantially. The position of the Slovak Ambassador-at-Large for Migration, which had been active at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR since 2016, was cancelled. The Ministry of Interior of the SR became the managing body of the Internal Security Fund (ISF), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) for the next programming period 2021 – 2027.

Since 2015, the media in Slovakia have been covering international migration in a greater extent and communicating about it actively. In 2021, several significant events resonated in the media and on the Slovak political scene: growing tensions on Polish-Belarusian border, the situation of migrants and refugees in the Schengen border areas as well as the conflict in Afghanistan and related mass displacement of the population and evacuation flights by Western countries, including the SR.¹³

Migration and migrants have been a common target of disinformation and apart from COVID-19 one of the most shared topics. At the end of 2021, the developments on Polish and Ukrainian borders were a common topic of fake news websites.

2.1. Migration Management System, Legislation and Migration Policies

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to influence the management of migration. The extraordinary situation declared by the Government of the SR in March 2020 was in place until the end of 2021. The state of emergency from October 2020 was in place until 14 May 2021. The third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in redeclaration of the state of emergency in the SR, including a curfew from 25 November 2021.¹⁴ The SR applied its anti-pandemic measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in its migration and asylum system. Also, the changes and measures from 2020 (such as changes to opening hours of the Foreign Police departments, the limited number of accepted residence applications and foreigners applications processed in person, limitations to allowing the entry of persons to the territory of the SR or border management) persisted.¹⁵ In migration and asylum facilities, several further measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 remained valid and changed depending on the current situation, such as restriction of movement, quarantine measures, isolation of those who tested positive, restriction of activities in the facilities, disinfection, etc. All the applied measures and processes were in compliance with the measures and guidelines of the Chief Public Health Officer of the SR and Public Health Officer of the Mol SR in cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the SR.¹⁶

Policies and measures related to migration and international protection of TCNs in 2021 remained within the scope of authority of three ministries: the Ministry of Interior of the SR, the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR. In 2021, the Ministry of Interior of the SR became the managing body of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Border Management and Visa Instru-

¹³ Source: IOM media monitoring 2021.

¹⁴ Source: <https://minv.sk/?ukoncenie-nudzoveho-stavu-platnost-mimoriadnej-situacie-v-suvlosti-covid-19-ouke> (consulted on 03/04/2022).

¹⁵ Source: Behúňová, K., Oboňová, S. (2021): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

¹⁶ Source: Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP and MO Mol SR.

ment (BMVI) for the next programming period 2021 – 2027.^{17,18}

The SR has prepared or followed several strategic documents:

- Migration Policy of the SR: Perspective until the Year 2025 (2021),
- Recovery Plan: Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talents and Component 9: More Efficient Management and Strengthening of R & D & I Funding (2021),
- Integration Policy of the SR (2014),
- Strategy on the Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the SR (2018),
- National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for 2019 – 2022 (2019),
- National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and Promotion of the Slovak Republic (2015).¹⁹

New Migration Policy of the SR

In September 2021, the Government of the SR approved the *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025*²⁰. In this strategic document, the SR defines basic goals, direction and development priorities in the following areas: legal migration, with an emphasis on managed economic migration (see Section 3.1); emigration from Slovakia with an emphasis on the return of the labour force; international protection (see Section 4.1); integration (see Section 6.1); irregular migration and borders (see Section 9.1); readmission agreements and returns (see Section 11.1); combating human trafficking (see Section 10.1); humanitarian and development cooperation (see Section 12.1) and communication about migration topics. Another goal of the new policy is to “evaluate the option of centralising the agendas of migration, integration and asylum in one centralised body”²¹. The previous Migration Policy also had this aim.²² The document replaced the *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until 2020*. Based on a Resolution of the Government of the SR²³, respective ministries are to develop the Migration Policy into action plans by 30 November 2021.²⁴

The adoption of the new Migration Policy of the SR was based on the *Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2020 – 2024*. The document was prepared by the Ministry of Interior of the SR based on documents submitted by public administration authorities and international organisations.²⁵ Also, the previous Migration Policy²⁶ covered the period until 2020 and an update was needed.

¹⁷ By Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 329 of 27 May 2020.

¹⁸ Source: Organisation of Migration and Asylum Policies in the Slovak Republic 2021, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava. Available at: https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/download/2852_c13f60c51a6fe81a294959f028709661.html (consulted on 03/04/2022).

¹⁹ Source: Organisation of Migration and Asylum Policies in the Slovak Republic 2021, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava. Available at: https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/download/2852_c13f60c51a6fe81a294959f028709661.html (consulted on 03/04/2022).

²⁰ Source: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2020/385> (consulted on 25/05/2021).

²¹ Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, p. 4, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

²² Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until 2020, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=153851>

²³ Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 496/2021 regarding the Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/26387/1>

²⁴ The Government of the SR approved the goals and principles of the migration policy of the SR until 2025, <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacovspravy&sprava=vlada-schvalila-ciele-a-principy-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky-do-roku-2025>

²⁵ Source: Questionnaire from the MO MoI SR.

²⁶ Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until 2020, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=153851>

Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia – components covering migration

In 2021, the SR also prepared the *Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia*,²⁷ which is concerned with migration primarily in two components: “Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talents” and “Component 9: More Efficient Management and Strengthening of R & D & I Funding”. They are based on the current demographic and labour market situation and name the impact of the brain-drain from Slovakia to foreign countries.²⁸ The main driver of the *Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia* was the COVID-19 pandemic. As far as migration is concerned, the brain-drain and demand for some professions lacking a domestic labour force are the main reasons. The Document states that “the brain-drain and leaving of the labour force with important skills limits innovations and economic development, especially in the fields of healthcare, education and IT.”²⁹

- Component 10 proposes reforms and measures to support labour and research mobility from abroad, including non-EU countries, as well as measures to simplify the processes in residence and labour legislation (see Section 3.3).³⁰
- Component 9 within the context of migration focuses on internationalisation, which is insufficient in Slovakia (only 2% of academic employees at higher education institutions come from abroad, and there is only one significant programme bringing foreign researchers to Slovakia). The Component also states that as a result of the brain-drain the Slovak Republic “can encounter a lack of qualified experts even after increasing research and innovation resources” (see Section 3.4).³¹

Component 10 aims “to develop effective policies to promote student and labour mobility, actively motivate highly qualified foreign experts (including Slovak nationals), students and entrepreneurs to establish themselves in Slovakia and thus benefit from international brain circulation. The aim of the policies to support labour mobility is to mitigate for increasing demographic pressure and attract human capital essential for Slovakia’s economic development. The ambition is to increase, over a five-year horizon, the share of highly qualified foreign nationals in the workforce from 0.5% to 1% and to level the balance of outgoing and incoming students to Slovak higher education institutions”³²

Component 9 increases the demand for human capacities and as far as migration is concerned, it aims “to create internationally competitive and internationalisation stimulating environment for the best scientists – salary-wise as well as from the perspective of attractive research schemes availability.”³³

²⁷ The Recovery and Resilience Plan sets out a cohesive package of reforms and investments which will be implemented until 2026 and supported from the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Plan consists of investments and reforms answering calls identified within the European Semester and especially in the European Commission recommendations to Slovakia. The Plan also contains measures focusing on solving challenges Slovakia must face in relation with green and digital transformation. More information available at: <https://www.planobnovy.sk/otazky-a-odpovede/>

²⁸ <https://www.planobnovy.sk/kompletny-plan-obnovy/veda-vyskum-inovacie/>

²⁹ Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia – Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talents, p. 4, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1058/komponent_10_lakanie_a_udrzanie_talentov_1.pdf

³⁰ Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia – Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talents, p. 5, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1058/komponent_10_lakanie_a_udrzanie_talentov_1.pdf

³¹ Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia – Component 9: More Efficient Management and Strengthening of R & D & I Funding p. 19, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1057/komponent_09_veda_vyskum_inovacie_24042021_1.pdf

³² Source: <https://www.planobnovy.sk/kompletny-plan-obnovy/veda-vyskum-inovacie/> and Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia – Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talents, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1058/komponent_10_lakanie_a_udrzanie_talentov_1.pdf

³³ Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia – Component 9: More Efficient Management and Strengthening of R & D & I Funding p. 19, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1057/komponent_09_veda_vyskum_inovacie_24042021_1.pdf

Legal framework of third-country nationals' migration from non-EU countries into the SR and the conditions of their residence, work or international protection are governed primarily by the following acts:

- Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Foreigners, which among others governs the entry of foreigners, their residence, basic rights and obligations and expulsion,
- Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, which regulates the employment of foreigners, and
- Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum, which among others governs the asylum procedure.

Other laws related to the migration of third-country nationals are concerned, for example, with recognition of professional qualifications, granting of citizenship, illegal work and employment, health care etc.³⁴ In 2021, both the Act on Residence of Foreigners and the Act on Employment Services were amended. The SR also continued the preparation of amendments to the Act on Slovak Citizenship and to the Act on Asylum (see the following chapters).

Changes to the Act on Residence of Foreigners

Since 1 January 2021, the amendment to Act on Residence of Foreigners³⁵ has applied the end of the transitional period stipulated in the Agreement on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU. Nationals of the United Kingdom who entered the territory of the SR after 1 January 2021 and who have not obtained residence in the territory of the SR before this date are considered third-country nationals³⁶.

The SR adopted amendment to the Act on Residence of Foreigners.³⁷ The amendment has been in force since January 2022 and should lower the bureaucratic burden on residence applicants.³⁸ The amendment brought two changes:

- The application for five-year permanent residence does not have to include a marriage licence if the marriage to a Slovak citizen with permanent residence in the territory of the SR occurred in the territory of the SR or it is inscribed in a special registry office and the applicant indicates the place of marriage.
- It suffices to include in a residence application the birth certificate of a child born in an EU MS territory (the Foreign Police is now able to verify the birth of a child in the SR using the Ministry of Interior information systems).³⁹

34 Source: Organisation of Migration and Asylum Policies in the Slovak Republic 2021, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava. Available at: https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/download/2852_c13f60c51a6fe81a294959f028709661.html (consulted on 03/04/2022).

35 By Act No. 424/2020 Coll. from 8 December 2020 amending Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Foreigners and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended; available at: https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2020/424/vyhlasene_znenie.html

36 Source: Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

37 By Act No. 310/2021 from 24 July 2021 changing and amending Act No. 177/2018 Coll. on Certain Measures to Reduce Administrative Burden through Use of Public Information Systems and on changes and amendments of certain acts (the "Anti-Bureaucracy Act") as amended by Act No. 221/2019 Coll. changing and amending certain acts; available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2021/310/>

38 Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

39 Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

2.2. Political Development and (Inter)ministerial Cooperation

In 2021, the political elite in Slovakia focused primarily on forced migration and EU external borders management. After the outbreak of the conflict and overthrowing the government in Afghanistan in August 2021, the Slovak government representatives discussed and coordinated the options of evacuating stranded people with ties to Slovakia. According to the information available in the media, approximately 250 nationals of Afghanistan requested the assistance of and evacuation by the SR. The SR organised one evacuation flight from Kabul to Slovakia (see Section 4.3).⁴⁰

At the end of the year, the Slovak Parliament reacted to the worsening situation at the Polish-Belarusian borders. They adopted a resolution "strictly refusing the misuse of migrants for political purposes and expressing regret over the actions of the states abusing people from third countries as hostages". The Parliament expressed solidarity and support to directly affected Poland, Lithuania and Latvia and also deployed material humanitarian aid to the area (see Section 12).⁴¹

(Inter)ministerial Cooperation and Coordination

In 2021, no significant organisational or institutional changes were made to the key state administration departments related to migration, including international protection. The position of the Slovak Ambassador-at-Large for Migration, which had been active at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR since 2016, was abolished.⁴²

In the area of migration and integration, close cooperation between the relevant ministries continued. Negotiations and workshops took place, focusing on legislation and solving practical problems in the field. In addition to direct cooperation between other ministries, cooperation also took place through:

- *Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreigners*, which, due to the persistent COVID-19 pandemic, met only twice in 2021: on 30 June and 12 October. During the meetings, the Committee members addressed topics related to current developments in migration and asylum (especially the situation in Afghanistan and on the EU borders with Belarus), prepared the Action Plans of individual ministries within the new Migration Policy: Perspective until the Year 2025, and discussed the EU-level negotiations concerning the legislative proposals of the EC related to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. IOM representatives participated in both meetings. They informed about the European Migration Network (EMN) activities and the international work mobility scheme project.⁴³
- *Inter-Ministerial Expert Committee for Labour Migration and Foreigners' Integration (MEKOMIC)*,⁴⁴ which did not meet in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, though the MoLSAF SR (via DI-REA) continuously communicated with members of the Committee via emails, sharing news and relevant information.⁴⁵

40 Source: <https://plus.noviny.sk/627284-zasiahne-nas-vlna-utecencov-z-afganistanu-premier-heger-tvrdi-ze-tato-tema-bude-na-stole-tak-omiesiac-sme-pripraveni> (consulted on 03/04/2022).

41 Source: Resolution of the NC SR No. 1147 of 2 December 2021 regarding information at EU external borders with Belarus (print 799), available at: https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Static/sk-SK/NRSR/Doc/v_uznesenie_1147_20211202.pdf (consulted on 03/04/2022).

42 Source: <https://emn.sk/sk/novinky/631-organizacia-migracie-a-azyly-v-sr-2021.html> (consulted on 03/04/2022).

43 Information provided by the MO Mol SR.

44 MEKOMIC is a coordination body of the MoLSAF SR for migration and integration policy issues and also an advisory body of the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR. MEKOMIC comprises experts from (central) state administration bodies implementing integration policy objectives and measures. Interdepartmental and non-governmental organisations are invited to MEKOMIC meetings as necessary.

45 Information provided by the MoLSAF SR.

- *EMN National Contact Point⁴⁶ for the SR,⁴⁷ which implemented various activities in 2021, including the preparation of publications,⁴⁸ the submission of and responding to ad/hoc queries, and the organisation of expert meetings⁴⁹ (e. g. an online educational seminar on migration whose lecturers also resonated in the Slovak media⁵⁰), the number of which was influenced by the pandemic. These activities concern the migration of TCNs and are meant mainly for policymakers, public administration representatives, research institutions, academia and the non-governmental sector.^{51,52}*

2.3. Public Opinion and Migration in Media

The Milan Šimečka Foundation, this time in cooperation with the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK), attempted to determine the attitude of the Slovak population towards foreigners and migration also in 2021 using a representative sample of 1,004 Slovak citizens. Most Slovak citizens are willing to accept foreigners they would benefit from, who would themselves try to be accepted and who would have qualifications necessary in Slovakia. Nearly one in three respondents stated that foreigners can feel at home in Slovakia only when they have spent majority of their life here. However, more than three-quarters of respondents also partially or completely refused the premise that the foreigners should never be accepted into Slovak society. One in five considers the ties to Christianity important. Most refused groups of foreigners that include Muslims and Hindus (56.5% and 46.5% of respondents, respectively, think that Slovakia should not allow them to come live in its territory at all). More than a half of respondents think the SR should evaluate the applications for refugee status strictly.⁵³

Since 2015, the media in Slovakia have been covering international migration in a greater extent and actively communicating about it.⁵⁴ Significant events of 2021 included the growing tensions on Polish-Belarusian border, the situation of migrants and refugees in the Schengen border areas,⁵⁵ as well as the conflict in Afghanistan and related mass displacement of the population and evacuation flights by Western countries, including the SR.^{56,57}

46 The European Migration Network (EMN) provides up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and international protection to support policymaking in the EU and its MS. The EMN conducts their activities by means of National Contact Points in all EU MS and in Norway, Georgia and Moldova and in coordination with the EC's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs. The EMN's activities focus on topics related to the third-country nationals' migration.

47 The EMN National Contact Point for the SR comprises representatives of the MoI SR, MoLSAF SR, SO SR and IOM Office in the SR, acting as its coordinator.

48 Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie.html> (consulted on 23/05/2022).

49 Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/podujatia-emn.html> (consulted on 23/05/2022).

50 E. g.: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/interview/profesor-ka-migracneho-prava-ak-nechceme-cakat-na-auto-pol-roka-potrebujeme-zahranicnych-pracovnikov/>, <https://spravy.pravda.sk/svet/clanok/599067-odbornicka-na-migraciu-slovensko-nemusi-zobrat-milion-afgancov-ale-moze-urobit-viac/> (consulted on 23/05/2022).

51 Information provided by the IOM Office in the SR.

52 Source: www.emn.sk (consulted on 23/05/2022).

53 Source: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/prieskum-najodmietanejsou-skupinou-cud/577199-clanok.html> (consulted on 29/05/2022).

54 Source: EMN Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum 2015 – 2020. European Migration Network, IOM Slovakia, Bratislava.

55 E. g.: <https://svet.sme.sk/c/22780614/lukasenko-spravil-z-utecencov-zbran-polska-hranica-pripomina-vojnovu-zonu.html>, <https://spravy.pravda.sk/svet/clanok/607334-polsko-na-hranici-je-1-200-migrantov-850-prichytil-bielorusky-sklad/>, <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/interview/reportuje-z-polsko-bieloruskej-hranice-utecenecka-kriza-sa-da-vyriesit-za-12-hodin/>, <https://www.noviny.sk/zahranicie/644333-migracna-kriza-na-polsko-bieloruskej-hranici-stupnovanie-ako-aj-nasledky-zmiernenie-krizy> (consulted on 29/05/2022).

56 E. g.: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22719619/dobre-rano-taliban-posle-do-europy-tisice-utecencov.html>, <https://dennikn.sk/2507065/riaditel-migracneho-uradu-ozvali-sa-prvi-afganci-ktori-chcu-na-slovensko-dostat-pribuznych/>, <https://www.startitup.sk/komentar-matusa-jevcaka-hrozi-eu-dalsia-migracna-vlna-taliban-donutil-statisice-afgancov-opustit-svoje-domovy/>, <https://www.trend.sk/spravy/evakuacne-lety-kabulu-pokracuju-usa-vysetruju-ludske-pozostatky-podvozku-jedneho-nich>, <https://www1.pluska.sk/spravy/zo-zahranicia/usa-obnovili-evakuacne-lety-kabulu-odviezli-odtia-lyse-13-000-ludi>, <https://www.dobrenoviny.sk/c/201458/dva-noci-v-obkluceni-talibanu-prezradili-detaily-akcie-pocas-ktorej-sme-z-afganistanu-zachranili-zeny-a-deti>, <https://spravy.rtv.s/2021/12/nemecko-chce-prijat-25-000-utecencov-z-afganistanu/> (consulted on 29/05/2022).

57 Source: Unsorted IOM media monitoring 2021.

Migration and migrants are a common target of disinformation and hoaxes. The most often shared fake news of 2021 was related to COVID-19. According to the Police Force report, disinformation on migration and migrants was also massively shared.⁵⁸ At the end of 2021, the developments on Polish and Ukrainian borders remained a common topic of fake news websites monitored by the Infosecurity.sk project.⁵⁹ The Police of the SR expects that the massive sharing of fake news about COVID-19 will continue in 2022. It is possible that “misleading narratives concerned with the situation on Belarus-Poland border could combine with related topic of migration and with the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, which could have devastating misinforming effects on the whole central Europe region.”⁶⁰

2.4. Research of International Migration in Slovakia

In 2021, research of migration focused on the migration of third-country nationals in several thematic areas. Research publications and other short outputs included (in alphabetical order):

- *Cudzinci na Slovensku. Hľadanie nového domova. Skúsenosti cudzincov s integráciou na Slovensku – výskumné zistenia [Foreigners in Slovakia. Searching for a new home. Experience of foreigners with integration in Slovakia – research findings](Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK, research project focused on integration of foreigners – obstacles, tools, attitudes: <http://cvek.sk/cudzinci-na-slovensku-hladanie-noveho-domova-skusenosti-cudzincov-s-integraciou-na-slovensku-vyskumne-zistenia/>)*
- *Cudzie nechceme, svoje si nedáme. Postoje majoritnej populácie k migrácii a cudzincom na Slovensku [We don't want anything foreign. We won't give up what is ours. Attitudes of majority population towards migration and foreigners in Slovakia] [Experience of foreigners with integration in Slovakia – research findings](Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK, research project focused on integration of foreigners – obstacles, tools, attitudes: <http://cvek.sk/cudzie-nehceme-svoje-si-nedame-postoje-majoritnej-populacie-k-migracii-a-cudzincom-na-slovensku/>, summary: <http://cvek.sk/cudzie-nehceme-svoje-si-nedame-zhrnutie/>)*
- *Deficit riadenia migrácie a dôsledky, ktoré z neho plynú [Migration Management Deficit and its Impacts](Ambrela, SDGs and Migration – Multipliers and Journalists Addressing Decision Makers and Citizens in the EU project and the Tváre migrácie [Faces of Migration] project: https://tvaremigracie.ambrela.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ambrela_Deficit_riadenia_migracie_FoM_BackgroundPaper_2021.pdf)*
- *Children in Migration (EMN Slovakia: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/665-deti-v-migracii-2021.html>)*
- *Fenomén odlivu mozgov a imigrácia vysokoškolsky kvalifikovanej pracovnej sily do SR [The Brain Drain and Immigration of Highly Qualified Workforce to Slovakia] (Ambrela, SDGs and Migration – Multipliers and Journalists Addressing Decision Makers and Citizens in the EU project and the Tváre migrácie [Faces of Migration] project: https://tvaremigracie.ambrela.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Ambrela_Brain_Drain_studia_FoM_april2021_Svk.pdf)*

58 Source: Police Force Report on Disinformation of the Slovak Republic in 2021, available at: https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/images/slovak-republic-report-dezinfo-2021.pdf (consulted on 29/05/2022).

59 Source: <https://infosecurity.sk/dezinfo/neutichajuci-prud-dezinformacii-migracia-a-ukrajina-v-centre-pozornosti-prokremelskych-medii/> (consulted on 29/05/2022).

60 Source: Police Force Report on Disinformation of the Slovak Republic in 2021, available at: https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/images/slovak-republic-report-dezinfo-2021.pdf (consulted on 29/05/2022).

- Integration of Migrant Women in the SR (EMN Slovakia: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn.html>)
- Integrácia utečencov na trh práce na Slovensku [Labour Market Integration of Refugees in Slovakia] (Human Rights League: <https://www.hrl.sk/userfiles/files/Vy%CC%81skumna%CC%81%20s%C%8Ctu%CC%81dia.pdf>)
- KapaCITY. Príručka dobrej praxe zo zahraničia [Handbook of Best Practices from Abroad] (Milan Šimečka Foundation, CVEK, Human Rights League, Marginal: https://www.nadaciamilanasec-ku.sk/files/dokumenty/kapacity_zahranicne_skusenosti.pdf)
- Communication Strategy for the Labour Mobility Scheme for Slovakia (IOM: <https://iom.sk/en/activities/cooperation-and-partnership/labour-mobility-scheme-for-slovakia.html>)
- Labour Mobility Scheme for Slovakia (IOM: <https://iom.sk/en/activities/cooperation-and-partnership/labour-mobility-scheme-for-slovakia.html>)
- Slovakia and migration. Hľadanie ciest k spolužitiu [Finding Pathways to Coexistence] (Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK, research project focused on integration of foreigners – obstacles, tools, attitudes: <http://cvek.sk/slovensko-a-migracia-hladanie-ciest-k-spoluzitiu/>)
- Police Force Report on Disinformation of the Slovak Republic in 2021 (Police Force of the SR): https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/images/slovak-republic-report-dezinfo-2021.pdf.
- Organisation of Migration and Asylum System in the Slovak Republic 2021 (EMN Slovakia): <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/652-organizacia-azylovej-a-migracnej-politiky-prehľad-2021.html>)
- Survey of the rate of contact with foreigners and the attitudes towards them (Milan Šimečka Foundation and the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK): <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/prieskum-najodmietanejsou-skupinou-cud/577199-clanok.html>)
- Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2020 (EMN Slovakia: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyrocné-spravy-emn-o-migracii-a-azylye/item/641-vyrocná-správa-o-migrácii-a-azylye-za-rok-2020.html>)
- Sumarizácia a analýza rozsudkov súdov Slovenskej republiky týkajúcich sa trestných činov obchodovania s ľuďmi za roky 2015 - 2020 [Summary and Analysis of Slovak Republic Court Judgements Related to Crimes of Human Trafficking for 2015 – 2020] (Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Interior of the SR: https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/mvsr/obchodovanie_ludmi/2021/Analýza%20rozsudkov%202015_2020_FINAL.pdf)
- Third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings: detection, identification and protection (EMN Slovakia: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/663-statni-prislusnici-tretich-krajin-ako-obete-obchodovania-s-ludmi-zistovanie-identifikacia-a-ochrana-2021.html>)
- Z cudzincov domáci: Ako na integráciu v samospráve [Foreign to Domestic: How to approach Integration on Self-Government Level] (Milana Šimečka Foundation, Human Rights League, Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK: <https://www.hrl.sk/assets/files/obsah/1066-Z%20cudzincov%20doma%CC%81ci%20-%20Ako%20na%20integra%CC%81ciu%20v%20samospra%CC%81ve.pdf>)
- Zbierka príkladov dobrej praxe – Inšpiratívne skúsenosti z využitia storytellingu v školskom

prostredí [Collection of Best Practices Examples: Inspiring Experience of Using Storytelling at School], Eduma: <http://eduma.sk/online-ziva-kniznica/>

This report uses selected results of some of the mentioned research publications.

03

Legal Migration

The number of foreigners has been continuously growing in recent years. EU citizens together with third-country nationals comprised 3.08% of Slovak population in 2021, while in 2020 the number was 2.75%. Of the total of 167,519 foreigners with valid residence in Slovakia, more than a half (66.52%) were from non-EU countries, representing 2.05% of the overall population of the Slovak Republic. Among the most numerous groups were Ukrainian nationals (56,480), Serbian nationals (16,331), Vietnamese nationals (7,235), Russian nationals (6,389) and UK nationals (2,795). The highest number of third-country nationals (more than one-third) resided in the Bratislava region in 2021.

The *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* also defines priorities in the field of legal migration, with an emphasis on controlled economic migration. The SR considers “creation of an attractive environment for foreigners who are needed for the development of our economy and society” to be of key importance. The priorities of the SR in the field of controlled economic migration are, above all, the linking of information systems and ensuring cooperation among relevant institutions, the provision of information to foreigners in major languages, controlling the arrival and stay of foreigners in the SR, streamlining and digitising the acquisition of residence permits or optimising the number of workers working at the most prominent workplaces.

The *Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR* in its *Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talent* focuses on meeting labour market needs by highly qualified workers in particular in the fields of health care, education and IT.

The SR prepared simplified access to the Slovak labour market for highly qualified university-educated non-EU workers in 2021. In December 2021 the Slovak Government adopted the *Regulation on the Interest of the Slovak Republic to Grant National Visas to Highly Qualified Third-country Nationals* effective as of April 2022. These individuals will not be required to enter the Slovak Republic before signing their employment contract in order to handle all formalities. Once they are granted employment, they go through the standard administrative process.

The SR also prepared *Amendment to the Act on the Provision of Health Care* in 2021, which simplifies access to the health care system for medical practitioners from foreign countries, including non-EU countries, in 2022. The possibility of a temporary professional internship, introduced in 2020, will be extended to the period after the revocation of the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SR continued to allow performance of employment during the emergency situation even after the expiration of validity periods of residence permits and employment permits or single work permit certificates in 2021.

The *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education until 2030* was adopted in December 2021 and its implementation is to commence in 2022. The strategy aims to open the Slovak higher education environment to foreign university students, teachers and researchers. Measures that concern foreign university students, teachers, researchers and artists (including third-country nationals) include, above all, support for existing international mobility scholarship programmes, the granting of national visas, support for socio-cultural integration and changes to the process of filling the positions of associate professors and professors.

The SR conducted the Population and Housing Census in 2021 which concerned both Slovak nationals as well as foreigners – EU citizens, TCNs and stateless persons. The census mapped, inter alia, information on gender, nationality, country of birth, level of completed education, employment, stays abroad and the year of arrival to the SR since 1980.

3.1. Statistics and Trends

The number of foreigners has been continuously growing in recent years. EU citizens together with third-country nationals comprised 3.08% of Slovak population in 2021, while in 2020 the number was 2.75%. Of the total of 167,519 foreigners with valid residence in Slovakia, more than a half (66.52%) were from non-EU countries, representing 2.05% of the overall population of the Slovak Republic. Among the most numerous groups were Ukrainian nationals (56,480), Serbian nationals (16,331), Vietnamese nationals (7,235), Russian nationals (6,389) and UK nationals (2,795) (see **Table 1** in the Annex). The highest number of third-country nationals (more than one-third) resided in the Bratislava region in 2021 (see **Table 2** in the Annex).

As of the end of 2021, there were 67,188 foreign workers employed in the Slovak Republic, 37,593 of whom were from non-EU countries – mostly from Ukraine (19,453), Serbia (9,249), Russia (809), Korea (749) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (722) (see **Table 4** in the Annex). Approximately one-third of these foreigners worked in the Bratislava region, followed by Trnava and Nitra regions. Since 2016 the number of non-EU foreigners working in the Slovak Republic has been growing by more than 10,000 annually, but the pandemic years 2020 and 2021 interrupted

this growing trend. Yet the number of working foreigners decreased only slightly – from 78,298 to 69,012 persons in 2020 and 67,188 in 2021, with the largest drop concerning the number of foreigners from third countries (see the table below). It needs to be mentioned that for several years prior to the 2020 pandemic there was an increased demand by employers established in the SR for foreign workers, including non-EU workers.⁶¹

The first residence permits in the Slovak Republic in 2021 grew to the levels comparable to the pre-pandemic period. The SR granted 29,067 first residence permits, while in the pandemic year of 2020 the number of such permits was 18,251, which represents a 7% drop compared to the previous year 2019, when their number was 28,836.⁶² The majority of first permits granted by the SR was granted for the purpose of remunerated activities (21,852) and the rest comprised permits granted for family reasons (3,724), for the purpose of education and study (2,721) and for other reasons (787) (see **Table 3** in the Annex). Unlike the previous years, when employment dominated the list, the highest share of remunerated activities in 2021 was business (an almost 70% share). Dominating this group of labour migrants in 2021 were Ukrainians, followed by Serbs, Vietnamese and Northern Macedonians. This proves the continuation of the growing trend of first permits for business purposes from 2019 (a year-on-year increase of 64% in 2019), especially from Ukrainians and Vietnamese nationals.⁶³

Of all the purposes in 2020, Slovakia recorded a year-on-year increase in the first permits only for the business purposes category, namely by 14%. In 2021, the year-on-year increase in the first permits for business purposes is by 180%. For comparison, the SR issued a total of 20,989 first residence permits in 2018;⁶⁴ 13,635 in 2017⁶⁵ and 10,304 in 2016,⁶⁶ which indicates the permanently growing trend in the granting of first residence permits.

The number of illegally employed TCNs in 2021 was similar to 2020 (see Section 9.1).

Number of foreigners employed in the SR in 2017 – 2021

	Situation as of 31/12/2017	Situation as of 31/12/2018	Situation as of 31/12/2019	Situation as of 31/12/2020	Situation as of 31/12/2021	Most numerous nationalities – all foreigners, 2021	Most numerous nationalities – TCNs, 2021
EU/EEA citizens	27,726	32,851	32,114	29,937	29,595	1. Ukraine (19,453) 2. Serbia (9,249) 3. Romania (7,016) 4. Czech Republic (6,006) 5. Hungary (5,105)	1. Ukraine (19,453) 2. Serbia (9,249) 3. Russia (809) 4. Republic of Korea (749) 5. Bosnia and Herzegovina (722)
Third-country nationals	21,752	36,265	46,184	39,075	37,593		
Total	49,478	69,116	78,298	69,012	67,188		

Source: MPSVR SR.

3.2. General Legislative Changes

The priorities of the SR in the field of legal migration with an emphasis on controlled economic migration were defined in the *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a Perspective until the Year 2025* (see Section 2.1).

From the perspective of the SR, it is of key importance to “create an attractive environment for foreigners, who are needed for the development of our economy and society. Work related migration is thus becoming a major component of legal migration in the territory of the SR.”⁶⁷ The priorities of the SR in the field of controlled economic migration are, above all, the linking of information systems and ensuring cooperation among relevant stakeholders, the provision of information to foreigners in major languages, controlling the arrival and stay of foreigners in the SR, streamlining and digitising the acquisition of residence permits or optimising the number of workers working at the most prominent workplaces.⁶⁸ Specific measures related to legal migration are provided for in the relevant Action Plan of the Ministry of Interior of the SR⁶⁹ and by the Action Plan of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR.⁷⁰

61 Source: Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic for the years 2018 – 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

62 Source: Behúňová, K., Oboňová, S. (2021): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

63 Information provided by the BBFP PFP.

64 Source: Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2019): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2018. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

65 Source: Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2018): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2017. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

66 Source: Bachtíková, I., Oboňová, S. (2017): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum Policies. Slovak Republic 2016. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

67 Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, page 5, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

68 Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky>.

69 Information provided by MO Mol SR.

70 Action Plan of Migration Policy in the domain of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until 2025, available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/sk/uvodna-stranka/informacie-cudzincov/dokumenty/akcny-plan-mpsvr-sr-k-migracnej-politike-sr-st.pdf>

3.3. Work-related Migration

Transitional provisions of the *Act on Employment Services and the Act on Residence of Foreigners* allowing for the employment of foreigners during an emergency situation caused by COVID-19 pandemic even after the expiry of the validity period of their residence and employment permits, provided they expired during the emergency situation, continued to apply in 2021 in the SR with the aim to prevent irregular stays in the territory of the Slovak Republic.⁷¹

The *Labour Mobility Scheme of the SR*⁷² was drafted in 2021 with the aim of streamlining the employment of non-EU and non-EEA nationals and nationals of Switzerland in Slovakia, in particular in the professions with a shortage of labour. The Scheme is an expert document and is of a recommendatory nature. It is derived from the *Strategy on Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic*, adopted by the Government of the SR in 2018, and it reflects the recently adopted *Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia* especially concerning the attracting of the necessary workforce from abroad. The Scheme was prepared in close cooperation with the relevant state authorities' experts, employer representatives, trade unions representatives and local self-governments. The *Labour Mobility Scheme of the SR Communication Strategy*⁷³, which is one of the supporting materials for the Scheme, aims to help government officials, other institutions and partners involved in the designing of the scheme or who would be affected by the changes it brings to prepare themselves for various communication opportunities.

The Scheme was drafted within the scope of the technical assistance provided to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with the European Commission. The measures (legislative, technical and motivational) aim to facilitate and accelerate the reception of foreign workers on the Slovak labour market, to increase the attractiveness of the SR for foreign workforce, to assist foreign workers with their integration in the society and to support the return of foreign workers to their countries of origin, thus contributing to an effective labour mobility policy in the SR.⁷⁴

In relation to admission and residence of particular categories of migrants from non-EU countries in the SR for work-related purposes, the following changes occurred in 2021:

(Highly) Qualified Workers

The *Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia*, in its *Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talent*, focuses on saturating labour market needs with highly qualified workers especially in the field of healthcare, education and IT (see Section 2.1).⁷⁵

In December 2021, the Government of the SR adopted a *Regulation no. 521/2021 on the Interest of the Slovak Republic to Grant National Visa to Highly Qualified Third-country Nationals*,⁷⁶ which will take effect in April 2022. As stated by the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family Milan

71 MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

72 Available at: <https://iom.sk/sk/aktivita/spolupraca-a-partnerstvo/schema-pracovnej-mobility-pre-slovensku-republiku.html>

73 Available at: <https://iom.sk/sk/publikacie/spolupraca-a-partnerstvo.html?download=376:iom/iom-srsp-schema-prac-mob-2021-komunik-strategia-sk.pdf>

74 <https://iom.sk/sk/aktivita/spolupraca-a-partnerstvo/schema-pracovnej-mobility-pre-slovensku-republiku.html>

75 Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia – Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talent, page 5, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1058/komponent_10_lakanie_a_udrzanie_talentov_1.pdf

76 <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2021/521/20220401>

Krajniak, these persons will not have to enter Slovakia before signing their employment contract in order to comply with all relevant formalities. They will go through the standard administrative process after they gain employment.⁷⁷ The aim is to simplify access to the Slovak labour market for highly qualified foreign workers with university degree from non-EU countries. A national visa will be granted to a third-country national for the purpose of:

- Looking for employment for a period of 90 days;
- Employment for the duration of the employment, for a maximum period of one year.⁷⁸

Graduates from the top 500 universities worldwide and highly qualified experts in professions with a shortage of labour will also be entitled to apply for a national visa.⁷⁹ The maximum number of national visas is 3,000.⁸⁰

Adoption of the Directive stems from the *Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia (Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talent)* as well as from the *Strategy on Labour Mobility of the SR* (long-term measure no. 1).⁸¹

The SR was preparing an *amendment to the Act on the Provision of Health Care*⁸² in 2021, which aimed at simplifying the access of medical practitioners from foreign countries, including non-EU countries, to the Slovak healthcare system. The possibility of a temporary professional internship introduced in 2020⁸³ should be extended to last even after the end of the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸⁴ Healthcare professionals from foreign countries, including non-EU countries, should be able to find employment in the Slovak healthcare system faster and more easily due to the reduced administrative burden placed on applicants. This legal norm follows the ongoing shortage of health care professionals in Slovakia.⁸⁵

Intra-corporate Transferees

There were no developments in the SR in 2021 related to intra-corporate transferees.⁸⁶

Seasonal and Other Low/Medium Qualified Workers

No legislative changes were adopted in the SR in 2021 related to circular migration or to foreign seasonal and other low and medium qualified workers.⁸⁷

77 <https://spravy.rtvsk/2021/12/slovensko-zjednodusi-kvalifikovanim-ludom-z-krajin-mimo-eu-pristup-na-trh-prace/?fbclid=IwAR3q75w5RZ8n8pF5qrXPByialjVDAn0I81QtsDa49F4MX4Ft2PEsp67iNY>

78 <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2021/521/20220401>

79 <https://spravy.rtvsk/2021/12/slovensko-zjednodusi-kvalifikovanim-ludom-z-krajin-mimo-eu-pristup-na-trh-prace/?fbclid=IwAR3q75w5RZ8n8pF5qrXPByialjVDAn0I81QtsDa49F4MX4Ft2PEsp67iNY>

80 <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2021/521/20220401>

81 MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

82 Act No. 578/2004 Coll. on Healthcare Providers, Health Professionals, Professional Organisations in Healthcare and on amendments to certain acts, as subsequently amended and amending and supplementing certain acts

83 The amended Act on Provision of Health Care introduced the temporary professional internship possibility for foreign doctors (EU citizens and TCNs alike) after their training (diploma) is recognised in Slovakia. However, temporary professional internship employment was linked exclusively to the duration of the crisis situation declared due to COVID-19 and a foreigner would not be able to continue to perform their activity after this crisis situation is revoked. Source: Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2020, available at: https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyrocné-spravy-emn-o-migrácii-a-azyle/item/download/2865_fbbf50a0506edf17e0ba8476496cb864.html

84 <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/vstup-zdravotnikov-z-cudziny-do-zdravot/594671-clanok.html>

85 MoH SR questionnaire.

86 Information provided by the MoLSAF SR and the BBFP PFP.

87 Information provided by the MoLSAF SR and the BBFP PFP.

Entrepreneurs and Investors

No legislative changes were adopted in the SR in 2021 related to entrepreneurs and investors.⁸⁸

Au pairs, Volunteers, Interns and Others

No legislative changes were adopted in the SR in 2021 related to au pairs, volunteers, interns or paid workers other than those mentioned above.⁸⁹

3.4. Students and Researchers

The *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education until 2030*⁹⁰ was adopted in December 2021 and its implementation is to commence in 2022. The strategy aims to open Slovak higher education environment to foreign university students, teachers, researchers and artists; promoting the attracting of foreign students and ensuring the “brain circulation” in the Slovak university environment; increasing attractiveness of Slovak university studies; increasing the competitiveness of Slovak universities; and increasing the availability of international experience during university studies.⁹¹

Students

The *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education until 2030*⁹² measures that concern foreign students, including third-country nationals, include:

- Support for existing scholarship programmes promoting the implementation of the international mobility of students, university teachers, researchers and artists, an increase in the amounts provided as scholarships for existing selected scholarship programmes and schemes, or an increase in the number of approved scholarship recipients.
- A new scholarship scheme to increase the attractiveness of the first degree of university education in the SR for talented foreign students, aiming to attract 200 students annually with a scholarship for the entire period of undergraduate (Bc.) studies.
- Support for socio-cultural integration of foreign students and for language training of university staff members – socio-cultural orientation courses for the provision of permanent guidance services at universities and foreign language courses for university staff members.
- A change of conditions for the inclusion of foreign students – TCNs in the obligatory public health insurance system, at least as self-payers.
- A simplification will be introduced for demonstrating completed education in the case of applicants with a foreign educational document, assessing compliance with the completed education level for the purpose of the admission procedure by a higher education institution authorised to establish study programmes on the basis of the decision of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, and the compliance of the internal quality system of this institution with the accreditation standards.
- The granting of national visas in the interest of the SR for a period of one year – pursuant to the

⁸⁸ Information provided by the MoLSAF SR and the BBFP PFP.

⁸⁹ Information provided by the MoLSAF SR and the BBFP PFP.

⁹⁰ Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/strategia-internacionalizacie-vysokeho-skolstva-do-roku-2030/>

⁹¹ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

⁹² Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/strategia-internacionalizacie-vysokeho-skolstva-do-roku-2030/>

Act on the Residence of Foreigners – to third-country nationals arriving within the scope of scholarship programmes, the creation of which was directly approved by the Government of the SR, which were approved by the Government of the SR through the adoption of strategic documents, or which are implemented on the basis of international agreements or within the scope of the EU's programme to support education and training, youth and sport. The list of these programmes, including the indication of the institutions responsible for the administration and implementation of the programmes in the SR, should be published and regularly updated on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR.

The adopted measures aim to facilitate access to quality information on study opportunities for foreign students at Slovak universities, actively promote study opportunities at Slovak universities among potential applicants for studies abroad, modernise the admission procedure and actively attract potential foreign students, integrate foreign students into the academic environment and university social life, support the existing scholarship programmes promoting the implementation of international mobility of students, university teachers, researchers and artists and promote the automatic recognition of the study results obtained in scope of international mobility programmes.⁹³

Researchers

Apart from the support for the existing international mobility scholarship programmes, granting national visas and support for socio-cultural integration (see above), the *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education until 2030*⁹⁴ measures that concern foreign university teachers, research workers and artists (including third country nationals) also include:

- Changes to the process of filling the positions of associate professor and professors in order to increase the attractiveness of working at Slovak universities for university teachers working abroad. Based on this legal norm, it will be possible to fill the position of an associate professor or a professor with a person who has not obtained the scientific-pedagogical title or artistic-pedagogical title of “associate professor” or “professor” without the currently applicable requirement of undergoing habilitation (associate professor title) or inauguration (professor) procedure within the period of three years from the filling of the position in question.

The aim is to establish a quality working environment for university teachers, researchers and artists and to attract foreign university teachers, researchers and artists.⁹⁵

Government scholarships

In 2021, the SR provided 48 scholarships, 26 of which were granted to students from countries affected by war or from countries of origin of forced migration with the aim to improve access to education for vulnerable migrant groups.

Fulfilment of the commitment of the SR to contribute to the solving of the migration and refugee crisis from the so-called Obama Summit (which took place on 20 September 2016 in New York as a side event of the 71st session of the UN General Assembly). In its declaration, the SR com-

⁹³ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

⁹⁴ Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/strategia-internacionalizacie-vysokeho-skolstva-do-roku-2030/>

⁹⁵ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

mitted, inter alia, to provide an additional 3.4 mil Euro beyond the scope of the existing ODA SR for humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and voluntary financial contributions to the relevant international agencies, funds and programmes in the period of years 2017–2021. In relation to the commitment declared during the so-called Obama Summit to provide 550 scholarships for refugees until 2021, the SR redefined the territorial priorities of the existing Slovak government scholarship programme in order to streamline the scholarship system and focus on countries affected by war and the refugee crisis (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Sudan or Ethiopia).⁹⁶

3.5. Prevention of Social Dumping and Lowering of Work Standards

Following the measures to stop spreading of the COVID-19 disease, the Labour Inspectorate restricted its activities aimed at controlling illegal employment as well as labour rights compliance controls during the first and the second wave of the pandemic again in 2021 (see Section 9.1).⁹⁷

3.6. Further Measures Related to Legal Migration

3.6.1. Bilateral Agreements Related to Work-related Migration

Based on the *Agreement Between Canada and the Slovak Republic on Youth Mobility*, a reciprocal 2022 annual quota for the applications submitted in 2021 was set at 350 participants.⁹⁸

The Government of New Zealand announced a temporary suspension of the execution of the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and New Zealand on a Working Holiday Scheme (effective since 17 April 2012) due to the epidemiological situation in relation to COVID-19 and related international travel restrictions. For this reason, eligible nationals of the contractual parties have not been allowed to enter the host country. New Zealand has committed to re-launch the Working Holiday Scheme application process as soon as possible.⁹⁹

3.6.2. Population and Housing Census

The SR conducted its first electronic *Population and Housing Census* in 2021. The census concerned both Slovak nationals and foreigners – EU citizens, TCNs and stateless persons. The census mapped, inter alia, information on gender, nationality, country of birth and the level of completed education, employment, stays abroad and the year of arrival to the SR since 1908. The electronic census form was available in Slovak and in the languages of the most numerous national minorities – Hungarian, Roma, Ukrainian, Rusyn (Ruthenian), English, German and French.¹⁰⁰

The main findings from the census were published at the end of 2021. More processed results are gradually being added and made publicly available at www.scitanie.sk. The novelty of the

⁹⁶ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

⁹⁷ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

⁹⁸ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

⁹⁹ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹⁰⁰ Source: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/radime-scitaci-formular-mozno-vyp/534821-clanok.html> (consulted on 12/02/2022).

census resided in the full computerisation, but also in the integration of the data drawn from a combination of relevant administrative data sources.¹⁰¹

A total of 83.5% declared themselves to be of Slovak nationality, which represents almost 4.6 million citizens out of the total of 5,449,270 inhabitants with permanent residence in the SR. A total of 600 thousand citizens declared their affiliation to national minorities, which represents 10.8% of the total population with permanent residence. The most numerous nationalities were those from non-EU countries. Citizens could declare double nationality for the first time ever, and 306.2 thousand, or 5.6% of inhabitants with permanent residence, did so.¹⁰²

3.7. Information on the Possibilities and Conditions of Legal Migration

In 2021, information was provided to third-country nationals predominantly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes related to it with respect to travelling and staying in the territory of the SR.

3.7.1. State Institutions

Border and Foreign Police departments continued to be the main source of information on the possibilities and conditions of legal migration even in 2021. For illustration, 72,918 clients who booked their appointments via the electronic booking system were handled by 10 (out of the total of 13) BBFP departments in 2021.¹⁰³

Of the total of 74 diplomatic missions of the SR conducting consular activities, 53 missions carried out a visa agenda and 58 missions carried out the residence agenda in 2020. Out of them, 7 diplomatic missions are located in the Schengen Agreement countries (so called regional visa centres) and their territorial competences are divided such that they cover all Schengen countries.¹⁰⁴

3.7.2. International Organisations and the Civic Sector

The IOM Migration Information Centre (MIC) funded by the AMIF¹⁰⁵ provided more than 1,000 consultations more in its Bratislava and Košice offices in 2021 than in 2020. MIC staff provided 14,660 in-person, phone or e-mail consultations concerning residence, family, employment, business, education, citizenship of the SR or on measures to prevent the spreading of the COVID-19 disease. The counselling services were used by a total of 7,572 clients, mainly from Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Serbia, India, the USA and Iran. A total of 678,974 visitors searched for information on the MIC website,¹⁰⁶ which means the site was visited by approx. 55,000 people a month.

¹⁰¹ Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic questionnaire.

¹⁰² Source: <https://www.scitanie.sk/zilinsky-kraj-s-najvyssim-podielom-slovenskej-narodnosti> (consulted on 27/05/2022).

¹⁰³ BBFP PFP questionnaire.

¹⁰⁴ Information provided by MoFEA SR.

¹⁰⁵ Name of the project: IOM Migration Information Centre to Support Integration of Migrants in Slovakia (Phase X). Project code: SK 2019 AMIF SC2.1/2. Project duration: 01/01/2020 – 31/12/2021. The MIC is a counselling centre of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Since 2006, it has been providing foreigners with services supporting them in social, economic and cultural integration in Slovakia. It offers comprehensive integration, social and labour counselling, supports their inclusion into the labour market, organises open Slovak language and social and cultural orientation courses, provides important information about life in Slovakia and supports the community life of foreigners.

¹⁰⁶ Available at: <http://sk.danubecompass.org/?lang=sk> (consulted on 26/05/2022).

The MIC continued to offer counselling services in the form of *online webinars*,¹⁰⁷ which inform and respond to questions concerning the family benefits and allowances foreigners can apply for, family reunification questions and questions concerning education of children of foreigners in Slovakia, as well as questions about legislation and rights and obligations related to the employment of foreigners in the SR.

The *Visa Check* web application services were used by 4,854 clients from 152 countries, and the *Work Permit Check* web application services were used by 2,291 clients in 2021.¹⁰⁸ MIC's applications provide information to foreigners from any country who want to come to Slovakia and to find out if they need a visa to enter Slovakia and what kind of residence they need in order to study, work or engage in business in Slovakia.¹⁰⁹

The supranational web portal *Danube Compass*,¹¹⁰ which was established in 2018, was finalised in 2020. This is a multilanguage website that gathers information on residence, education, business activities, job search or learning the official language of a new country for all 8 countries included in the project: Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Serbia. The part about Slovakia is available in Slovak, English, Ukrainian, Serbian and the Vietnamese language.¹¹¹



International Protection

The number of asylum applications and the number of various forms of international protection granted in the SR in 2021 remained low. The majority of a total of 330 applications concerned people from Morocco, Afghanistan, Algeria, India and Libya. Twenty-one asylum applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors, predominantly from Afghanistan. In 2021, asylum was granted to 29 applicants, mostly from Afghanistan and Iran. In the same period of time, the SR granted subsidiary protection to 27 persons who, similarly to the previous year, were mostly from Afghanistan.

After the beginning of the conflict in Afghanistan in August 2021, the SR evacuated 46 Afghan nationals to its territory, 32 of whom applied for asylum, and 12 more, who were received through Ukraine, also applied for asylum. Non-governmental organisations also engaged in the evacuation assistance.

The new *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* "complies with the traditional pillars of the asylum policy and, at the same time, it also supports new forms of provision of protection in reaction to new initiatives of the international community".¹¹² The priorities of the SR in the field of international protection include mainly active engagement in the ongoing negotiations on the reform of the Common European Asylum System (with the position to prevent the adoption of a system of compulsory relocation of asylum seekers), voluntary

¹⁰⁷ Available at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgWkt_s8RCEoydcuiTRybH3g9TYe_C9zu (consulted on 21/05/2022).

¹⁰⁸ Available at: <https://www.mic.iom.sk/workcheck/sk/domov/> (consulted on 21/05/2022).

¹⁰⁹ Source: IOM questionnaire.

¹¹⁰ The web portal is an output of the international project Danube Region Information Platform for Economic Integration of Migrants – DRIM within the EU scheme Interreg Danube Transnational Programme 2014 – 2020. The project partner from the SR is the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

¹¹¹ Source: <http://sk.danubecompass.org/?lang=sk> (consulted on 26/05/2022).

¹¹² Migration policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, page 7, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

engagement in regional and international processes to share the burden of the consequences of forced migration, ensuring systemic regulation of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection by the state, as well as the deployment of experts through the EASO.¹¹³

In 2021, the SR was preparing an amendment to the *Act on Asylum*,¹¹⁴ which aims to fundamentally regulate initial integration of persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.¹¹⁵ The SR updated the internal instrument of the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic used to identify vulnerability and specific needs of asylum seekers, the so-called social profile.

The SR initiated activities aimed at sharing experiences in the field of migration and international protection, which resulted in the signing of the *Memorandum of Cooperation on Migration and Asylum between the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina* in September 2021.

4.1. Statistics and Trends

Compared to the European average, the SR has been recording low numbers of asylum applications and various forms of international protection granted in the long-term. This trend has not changed in the last five years, although the number of asylum applications has been increasing slightly.¹¹⁶ In 2021, a total of 370 asylum applications were submitted in the SR (330 of which were first applications and 40 were repeated applications); they were submitted mainly by nationals of Morocco, Afghanistan, Algeria, India and Libya (see **Table 13** in the Annex).

The numbers of asylum applications submitted in previous years were lower: 282 applications in 2020, 232 applications in 2019, 178 applications in 2018, 166 applications in 2017 and 146 applications in 2016. Twenty-one asylum applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors, predominantly from Afghanistan (see **Table 18** in the Annex).

In 2021, the SR granted asylum to 29 people, mainly from Afghanistan and Iran. In the same period of time, subsidiary protection was granted to 13 persons who, similarly to the previous year, were mostly from Afghanistan and Syria. The SR denied asylum in 122 cases and denied subsidiary protection in 14 cases. As many as 212 cases were discontinued, most frequently due to the arbitrary departure of the applicant from the territory of the SR before the decision in the case was issued. The SR granted citizenship to 10 persons who were granted international protection (see **Table 13** in the Annex).¹¹⁷

113 Migration policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

114 Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum and on changes and amendments to some acts, as subsequently amended

115 MO Mol SR questionnaire.

116 Source: Behúňová, K., Oboňová, S. (2021): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

117 Source: Štatistická správa Migračného úradu Ministerstva vnútra Slovenskej republiky – rok 2021. [Statistical Report of the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.] Available at: <http://www.minv.sk/?statistiky-20> (consulted on 16/04/2022).

Asylum applications and International protection in the SR in 2017 – 2021

Indicator	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Asylum applicants (of which first applications)	166 (153)	178 (155)	232 (214)	282 (267)	370 (330)
Asylum granted	29	5	9	11	29
Subsidiary protection granted	25	37	19	27	13
Citizenship granted	6	18	9	14	10

Source: MO Mol SR

4.2. National Policies and Legislation

International protection priorities of the SR were defined in the adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* (see Section 2.1). The SR “complies with the traditional pillars of the asylum policy and, at the same time, it also supports new forms of provision of protection in reaction to new initiatives of the international community”.¹¹⁸ The priorities of the SR in the field of international protection include mainly active engagement in the ongoing negotiations on the reform of the Common European Asylum System (with the position to prevent the adoption of a system of compulsory relocation of asylum seekers), voluntary engagement in regional and international processes to share the burden of the consequences of forced migration, ensuring systemic regulation of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection by the state, as well as the deployment of experts through the EASO.¹¹⁹ Specific measures related to international protection are provided for in the relevant Action Plan of the Ministry of Interior of the SR, which is an internal document that should be continuously updated.¹²⁰

In line with the amendment of the *Act on Health Insurance*,¹²¹ as of 1 January 2021 the obligation to cover health care of TCNs granted subsidiary protection who do not hold public health insurance transferred from the Ministry of Healthcare of the SR to the health insurance agency with the largest number of insured persons. This health insurance agency also issues entitlement cards for the persons granted subsidiary protection.¹²²

In 2021 the SR was preparing an *amendment to the Act on Asylum*,¹²³ which was subjected to a cross-sectoral consultation process. The draft amendment was expected to be deliberated on and adopted by the Slovak Parliament in 2022. The amendment aims to fundamentally regulate

118 Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, page 7, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

119 Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

120 Information provided by the MO Mol SR.

121 Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance and on changes and amendments to some acts as subsequently amended and Act No. 95/2002 Coll. on Insurance and on changes and amendments to certain acts as amended. Available at: <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2020-393> (consulted on 15/05/2022)

122 Source: Behúňová, K., Oboňová, S. (2021): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

123 Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum and on changes and amendments to some acts, as subsequently amended

initial integration of persons granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection as well as other provisions of the Act on Asylum based on knowledge and practical needs and to align the law of the Slovak Republic with EU law.¹²⁴

A *Memorandum of Cooperation on Migration and Asylum between the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (see Section 9.3. and 12.1.) was signed in September 2021.

4.3. Reception and Caring for Asylum Seekers

An internal instrument of the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic used to identify vulnerability and specific needs of asylum seekers, the so-called social profile, was updated in 2021. The update was carried out on the grounds of the *Instruction of the Director of the MO Mol SR of 22 December 2021 on Record Keeping, the "Social Profile of an Asylum Seeker"*. A clear and comprehensive social profile of an asylum seeker's personality, including an individual assessment of his or her vulnerability and subsequent care, was created.¹²⁵ Social profile should allow for timely and more effective identification of vulnerability and specific needs of asylum seekers, improved cooperation between different stakeholders (professions), improved status of the helping professions and preparation of asylum seekers for their potential integration. Analysis of the needs from practice and application of the experience resulting from the deployment of MO Mol SR experts through EASO operation in the field of reception in Malta.¹²⁶

After the beginning of the conflict in Afghanistan in August 2021, the SR evacuated 46 Afghan nationals to its territory, 32 of whom applied for asylum, and 12 more, who were received through Ukraine, also applied for asylum. Non-governmental organisations also engaged in the evacuation assistance. For instance, the programme "Donate a Contact" was launched within the scope of this assistance, through which the Slovak Humanitarian Council mediated contacts to a number of people from Afghanistan.¹²⁷

The SR did not participate in any European or bilateral relocation activities in 2021 (see **Table 14** in the Annex). Similarly, the SR did not implement any relocation programme or other non-EU refugee reception programme (see **Table 15** in the Annex), nor any special humanitarian refugee transfer through its territory (see **Table 16** in the Annex).¹²⁸

In 2021, the SR continued with COVID-19 screening, the necessary isolation of asylum seekers in asylum facilities and continued to apply the established facility zoning model. The MO Mol SR regularly informed staff and applicants on the use of personal protective equipment, handled the issuing of documents related to COVID-19 vaccination (COVID passes, recognition of vaccination certificates for foreign countries, etc.) and prepared information leaflets on vaccination for applicants.

¹²⁴ MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹²⁵ When filling in the information in documents, a social worker gains information by means of social work and mainly by interviewing the applicant. A social worker also obtains information from other receiving professionals and informs the MO Mol SR organisational units in writing of the specific vulnerability of the applicant.

¹²⁶ MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹²⁷ MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹²⁸ The SR has been conducting special humanitarian refugee transfers in cooperation with the UNHCR and IOM since 2009. The latest trilateral Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic, the UNHCR and the IOM concerning Humanitarian Transfer of Refugees in Need of International Protection through the Slovak Republic was concluded on 18 November 2015.

Despite various anti-pandemic measures, the SR continued to execute Dublin transfers to the states applying the Dublin Regulation, provided the requests of the Slovak Republic were accepted by the concerned Member State and the transfer decisions were enforceable pursuant to the applicable Slovak legislation. In 2021, 39 cases were transferred to the territory of the SR for further process and 107 persons were transferred from Slovakia to the Member States responsible for examining their international protection applications.¹²⁹

The Migration Office continued its cooperation with non-governmental organisations, especially within the scope of EU-funded projects. The Slovak Humanitarian Council continued to implement the *Effective Services for Asylum Seekers in the SR III* project,¹³⁰ which was prolonged by 10 months until the end of October 2022. Within the scope of the project, basic and complementary services were provided to all asylum seekers, including those in asylum facilities. Special attention was given to the needs of vulnerable persons. Complementary services included Slovak language teaching, psychological counselling, social work, spare time activities, etc.¹³¹

The AMIF-funded project *Capacity Building in the Field of Asylum*,¹³² which was prolonged until the end of October 2022, continued in 2021. The MO Mol SR staff completed group supervision sessions (divided by departments and place of their work; the managing staff supervision session was held separately).¹³³

The training of MO Mol employees continued in 2021, mainly through EASO training modules. To strengthen their competences in the field of interviews with applicants and how to conduct them, the decision-makers also attended training with the participation of foreign experts on the specificities of the asylum procedure, with an emphasis on credibility assessment and intercultural differences, organised in cooperation with the UNHCR. MO Mol SR staff participated in the seminars organised by the IC Mol SR aimed at building their skills in the field of identification of victims of human trafficking among foreigners, the national referral mechanism and the provision of assistance to foreign victims of human trafficking, and on the exchange of practical experience.¹³⁴

4.4. Court Decisions at the National and European Level

The SR continuously applies the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU as well as the European Court of Human Rights in its decision-making activities in granting international protection and national protection statuses. In 2021, however, the Slovak Republic did not record such decisions of these institutions that would have a significant impact on the creation of national policies in this area.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹³⁰ Project code: SK 2019 AMIF SC1.1/1. Project duration: 01/01/ 2020– 31/10/2022 31/12/ 2021. Grant: €1,189,773.62. Funding: AMIF and State Budget of the SR.

¹³¹ Information provided by the FAD EPS Mol SR.

¹³² Project code: SK 2018 AMIF SC1.1. Project duration: 01/01/ 2019 – 31/10/ 2022. Grant: €41,553.08 . Funding: AMIF and State Budget of the SR

¹³³ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹³⁴ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹³⁵ MO Mol SR questionnaire.

4.5. Cooperation on the Level of EU Member States

The SR continued negotiations on the legislation proposals introduced by the European Commission together with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum¹³⁶ in 2021. In the same year, the Regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), which has been under discussion since 2016 when the Commission presented two legislative proposals on asylum packages, was adopted.

There were 12 secondments to EASO Support Teams by the SR in 2021 (5 to Malta, 3 to Cyprus, 2 to Italy and 2 to Lithuania).¹³⁷

The SR and Austria supported mitigation of migration consequences in Greece by the provision of health care both on Greek islands and in the mainland. The SR contributed €1 million euro to the project and Austria's contribution was €2 million. The IOM was the project implementation partner in both countries.¹³⁸ The IOM will build screening centres with biochemical laboratories and X-ray stations in reception centres on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Leros and Kos, and it will upgrade the existing health care facility on Samos island. The IOM will also provide laboratory technicians and radiologists to ensure operation of health care facilities.¹³⁹

The SR provided humanitarian financial and in-kind assistance to cover the needs of migrants and refugees to several states in 2021 (see Section 12.2.).

You can read more about the integration of persons granted international protection and about awareness-raising activities in the field of forced migration in Sections 6.1 and 6.3.

¹³⁶ Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=pakt-o-migracii-a-azyle-kam-sme-sa-posunuli-po-roku> (consulted on 15/05/2022).

¹³⁷ MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹³⁸ Source: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko-spolu-s-rakuskom-podpori-zmiernenie-nasledkov-migracie-v-grecku-na-projekt-pojde-milion-eur/> (consulted on 17/05/2022).

¹³⁹ Source: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1383-ministerstvo-vnutra-sr-podpori-zdravotnicku-pomoc-migrantom-v-grecku.html> (consulted on 17/05/2022).



Minors and Other Vulnerable Groups

There were no significant developments in relation to policies or legislation concerning measures aimed at vulnerable migrant groups, including the care for minors, in the SR in 2021. Even though the number of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) placed in Slovak facilities more than doubled compared to 2020, the number of UAMs applying for asylum remains low, and their voluntary departures from the facilities are still a challenge. In the context of the increase in the UAMs numbers, the SR continued to increase material and human capacities in the field of caring for UAMs. A new methodological guideline has been issued in order to unify the procedures for the cooperation between SPCSG bodies and Police Force authorities in this area.

5.1. Unaccompanied Minors

Statistics and Trends

The number of unaccompanied minors in the SR grew in the period of years 2017 – 2021. A total of 183 new unaccompanied minors were placed in SPCSG facilities in the SR in the course of 2021,¹⁴⁰ mainly from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Syria, Morocco and Algeria. This number represents a significant increase compared to 2020, when the total number of new unaccompanied minors in the SR was 79. A growing trend in the numbers of new UAMs could be observed in the period of years 2017 – 2020: the number of new UAMs was 76 in 2019, 19 in 2018 and 38 in 2017. How-

¹⁴⁰ SPCSG bodies registered a total of 194 UAMs (of which 2 were girls) in 2021.

ever, it needs to be said that a vast majority of these UAMs leave the SR after some time. In 2021, the number of such departures was 164, which represents almost 90%.¹⁴¹

A total of 194 UAMs were registered in the CFCs in Medzilaborce and Kolárovo in 2021. Of these, 166 UAMs left the facilities voluntarily to an unknown location (see **Table 17** in the Annex). Twenty-one UAMs applied for asylum in 2021, which represents 11.5% of the total number of UAMs newly arriving in the SPCSG facilities (see **Table 18** in the Annex). This is an increase compared to the previous year, when 9 UAMs applied to enter the asylum procedure. In general, the total number of UAMs who applied for asylum in the SR in the period of years 2017 – 2021 is low: 29 UAMs in 2019, 10 UAMs in 2018 and 11 UAMs in 2017.¹⁴²

According to the statistics of the National Institute for Education, as of 15 September 2021 (i.e. in the 2021/2022 academic year) there were 1,089 foreigners' children in preschool facilities (state, religious and private and specialised), 4,809 foreigners' children in elementary schools (state, religious and private and specialised) and 2,697 foreigners' children in secondary schools (comprehensive secondary schools, conservatories, special schools and vocational schools) in the SR.¹⁴³

Policies, Legislation and Measures

There were no significant developments in relation to legislation concerning vulnerable migrant groups, including the field of care for minors, in the SR in 2021.

In May 2021, a new methodological guideline aimed to unify the procedures for submitting proposals for urgent court measures, appointment of a guardian, cooperation between SPCSG bodies and Police Force authorities entitled *Implementation of Socio-legal Protection of Children and Social Guardianship Measures by SPCSG Authorities* was issued for all Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and their SPCSG departments.¹⁴⁴ The BBFP PFP has also issued a guideline for directors of subordinate departments in this context.¹⁴⁵ According to the guideline, the SPCSG authority will be provided an assumed name, surname, date of birth and nationality of the minor third-country national by the BBFP PFP, in order to file a petition to the court.¹⁴⁶

In the context of the continuous increase of UAM numbers, the SR continued to build material and personnel capacities in the field of care for UAMs. The number of specialised individual groups in the CFC Medzilaborce was increased to 4 (with a capacity of 32 places) and one temporary quarantine group was established in the CFC Kolárovo (with a capacity of 8 places). The temporary quarantine group in Kolárovo for UAMs found in Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra or Trenčín regions, which was established on 21 January 2020 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued its operation in 2021.¹⁴⁷

Organisational and logistical requirements for the placement of UAMs in the CFC in Kolárovo were taken care of by the Kolárovo CFC.

¹⁴¹ Source: CoLSAF.

¹⁴² Source: MO MoI SR, available at: <https://minv.sk/?statistiky-20>, consulted on 18/04/2022

¹⁴³ Source: National Institute for Education. These numbers also include EU citizens.

¹⁴⁴ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹⁴⁵ BBFP PFP questionnaire.

¹⁴⁶ MoLSAF SR and BBFP PFP questionnaires.

¹⁴⁷ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

(approx. 14 days), the UAMs were transferred into the care of the Medzilaborce CFC. At the same time, the performance and provision of urgent actions as close as possible to the child by the SPCSG authorities in Komárno and in Kolárovo CFC was strengthened.

The IOM MIC continued to provide counselling and advisory services to UAMs in CFCs even in 2021. A total of 152 persons received services, which included mostly Slovak language courses, individual labour counselling and the involvement of the IOM MIC cultural mediator in integration measures and social and cultural orientation for the UAMs.¹⁴⁸ In 2021, the IOM MIC prepared a new guide *Ahoj! Hello, Welcome to Slovakia* aimed at UAMs. The brochure and leaflet with information is available in seven languages – Arab, English, Dari, Hindi, Pashto, Urdu and Vietnamese.¹⁴⁹

The EMN SR organised two dedicated meetings on the topic of care for and protection of unaccompanied minors in Slovakia with the participation of relevant representatives of state authorities in 2021. The meetings aimed to look for concrete solutions to challenges identified in the field of care for UAMs and their protection in Slovakia, which can be implemented in a short-term or mid-term horizon and in line with valid legal norms. The current situation in the field of care for UAMs in Slovakia, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this care and the challenges in this field were discussed during the meeting. Participants agreed on the need to organise further meetings on the topics in the coming year.¹⁵⁰

5.2. Minor Migrants

There were no significant developments in relation to measures concerning minor migrants in 2021.

In 2021, an amended version of the Act on Asylum was being prepared, which, inter alia, should lay down that the primary consideration in the application of the Act in relation to minors should be the best interest of the child, to be assessed and determined on the basis of the best interest of the child principle pursuant to Section 5 of Act No. 36/2005 Coll. on Family and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended by Act No. 175/2015 Coll. The reason for this amendment is to ensure that when applying the Asylum Act in relation to a child, i.e. when adopting specific measures related to the assessment of circumstances of the child in an asylum procedure and measures related to the integration of the child, the competent public administration authorities take into account, inter alia, also the safety and stability of the environment the child resides in; the protection of the child's dignity; the child's mental, physical and emotional development; the circumstances pertaining to the child's state of health; the conditions for preserving the child's identity and for developing the child's abilities and talents; the child's opinion, or the conditions allowing for the formation and development of relations and ties with both the child's parents, his/her siblings and other close relatives.¹⁵¹

During its meeting on 30 June 2021, the Government of the SR adopted the *Proposal of Measures to Ensure Compliance with the Recommendations of the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) Regarding the Implementation of the Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* (see Section 10.2.).

¹⁴⁸ Information provided by the IOM Office in the SR.

¹⁴⁹ Available at: <https://www.mic.iom.sk/sk/na-stiahnutie/brozury-a-letaky/itemlist/category/80-maloleti-bez-sprivedu.html> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁵⁰ Information provided by the IOM Office in the SR.

¹⁵¹ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

The draft proposals reflect the following recommendations made by GRETA that also concern children, including children with foreign nationality:

1. all professionals working with children should receive necessary interdisciplinary training on the rights and needs of children;
2. Slovak authorities should continue making efforts to prevent child trafficking, including by sensitising and training child protection professionals across the country, raising children's awareness of their rights and the risks of human trafficking (including recruitment and abuse through Internet/social networks), paying particular attention to children leaving institutions, Roma communities and unaccompanied children;
3. Slovak authorities should take steps to ensure that full use is made of the methodological tool and guidelines on identification of, and assistance to child trafficking victims in training of relevant professionals;
4. Slovak authorities should set up a sufficient number of specially adapted interview rooms around the country and systematically use them to interview children and other vulnerable victims of trafficking in human beings, and ensure that testimony given in such rooms is used in court.¹⁵²

5.3. Other Vulnerable Groups

No legislative or policy changes occurred the field of care for vulnerable groups in 2021.

The MO Mol SR in its asylum facilities creates adequate conditions for the accommodation and care of foreigners while taking into account the special needs of vulnerable persons which were detected based on the individual examination of their state. The term "adequate conditions" also includes the adoption of adequate measures to prevent assaults and violence as well as provision of protection to human trafficking victims.

An internal instrument of the MO Mol SR used to identify vulnerability and specific needs of asylum seekers, the so-called social profile, was updated in 2021 (see also Section 4.3.).

Education of employees in this area was undertaken again mainly via EASO training modules. In 2021, one national trainer for the EASO module Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation and one trainer for the EASO module Human Trafficking was trained. A national training on the Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation module took place and was attended by 18 participants.¹⁵³

An MO Mol SR employee participated in Vulnerability Assessment Simulation Exercise organised by Frontex. The main objective of the exercise was to assess the functionality of Slovakia's contingency plans in the event of the arrival of large numbers of migrants through the external border.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² MoLSAF SR and DEFA MIO questionnaires (also filled in by IC Mol SR).

¹⁵³ MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹⁵⁴ MO Mol SR questionnaire.



Integration

In 2021, the *Migration Policy of the SR: Perspective until the Year 2025* was adopted. It defines the priorities of the SR also in integration. The *Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia* was also concerned with integration and in particular focused on the integration of Slovak citizens returning to Slovakia, highly qualified employees from third countries and their family members, as well as foreign university students studying in Slovakia. This document also addresses the facilitation of qualifications recognition.

Regarding other strategic documents touching upon integration, the following were adopted in 2021: *Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance 2021–2030* and *National Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities 2021–2027*.

Legislatively speaking, integration was also influenced by the adoption of an amendment to Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance.

In 2021, the projects of various organisations working in migration in Slovakia (e. g. the IOM, the SHC, the Mareena civic association or the Human Rights League) continued to be an important part of measures to support the integration of third-country nationals. They focused on the provision of counselling, language courses or activities raising the awareness of migration. CVEK published several publications about the integration of foreigners.

In 2021, there was no new development of policies and legislation related to the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. As in the previous years, many activities continued to

be implemented by means of various projects conducted by state institutions, international or non-governmental organisations.

6.1. Integration of Third-Country Nationals

6.1.1. Policies and Legislation

Measures concerning the integration of foreigners were included in two strategic documents: *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* and *Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia*. Updating the Integration Policy of the SR did not continue.

According to the newly adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* (see Section 2.1), one of the SR's goals related to the integration of foreigners is primarily to ensure "long-term coexistence of all inhabitants of the SR without any problems, as well as extending the possibilities, ways and forms of funding integration measures, with an emphasis on systemic financing and effective use of financial resources from EU funds and other alternative non-budgetary sources."¹⁵⁵

Within individual areas of integration of foreigners, the SR aims mainly to strengthen the integration of foreigners on the regional and local levels, to provide high-quality education for the children of foreigners, including the teaching of the Slovak language as a foreign language, to support the access of foreigners to adequate housing, to promote their cultural and social integration as well as inter-cultural dialogue, to introduce a language and cultural orientation mechanism and support, implement and check the provision of adequate preventative healthcare. Priorities also include strengthening social inclusion and cohesion, facilitating systemic regulation of the integration of vulnerable groups of foreigners, introducing a vocational subject focused on the integration of foreigners into social work studies, supporting, streamlining and digitising the process of obtaining information on the health condition of foreigners.¹⁵⁶

Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia (see Section 2.1) in its *Component 10 (Attracting and Retaining Talents)* addresses attracting a highly qualified labour force from the countries outside the EU by simplifying their employment process and adopting a fast-track scheme for the purpose of job-seeking and related integration measures.

This component presupposes the set-up and launch of the programmes intended for helping the integration of returnees¹⁵⁷, highly qualified employees from third countries and their family members, as well as foreign university students studying in Slovakia.

A legal framework will be created for "one-stop shops" – "client centres" providing comprehensive advice and services facilitating establishment in Slovakia and starting a career. The centres will act as support for attracting language and socio-cultural skills of highly qualified workers from abroad and their family members, as well as their overall adaptation focusing on the labour market, with the emphasis on effective mastering of necessary communication with the authori-

ties (such as the Foreign Police, Financial Administration, Social Insurance Agency, etc.) or on retraining courses. The support will also focus on assistance services for providing information and assistance in finding accommodation and orientation in the real estate market (e. g. when signing a lease), in the field of health insurance and healthcare (e.g. informing about health insurance options and obligations, and healthcare in Slovakia, or assistance in finding a doctor), in the field of employment of family members of a highly qualified employee (e.g. by providing information on the Slovak labour market and assistance in communicating with Labour Offices or employment agencies), in the field of childcare (e.g. an overview of the Slovak and the European school and higher education system and assistance in choosing a school and filling in forms), and in the field of transport (explaining how the public transport system works). The process will include cooperation with potential employers of highly qualified workers in order to adapt more quickly to the labour market (e.g. creating employee programmes, socio-cultural education in order to adapt more quickly to the work process). It will be possible to use the infrastructure of the client centres for specific training to increase the language skills of office staff (Foreign Police, client centres, Labour Offices) in order to facilitate communication and increase the quality of the services provided. The investment will also include the provision of language courses for public sector employees in general (not only central state administration bodies, but also employees of universities, self-government authorities, hospitals and their capacity building in providing counselling services aimed at the integration of foreigners).¹⁵⁸

Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia in its Component 10 (Attracting and Retaining Talent) presupposes a simplification of the regime for the recognition of qualifications and professional qualifications for the exercise of regulated professions. For countries with a bilateral agreement on the recognition of qualifications (Ukraine, Russia, China, and the European Higher Education Area – EHEA states), it aims to not require an attestation of the university's accreditation to provide the relevant education. In addition, the capacity of the Centre for the Recognition of Diplomas shall be strengthened for it to be able to obtain the education certificates (recognition of a higher-education degree without comparing contents) from all countries and to speed up the qualifications recognition process. In the case of medical doctors, the goal is also to reduce the time limits for the recognition of certificates of further education of highly qualified medical workers and to modify the "temporary professional internship" (Act No. 578/2004 Coll. on Health Care Providers, Health Professionals and Professional Associations and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended and on changes and amendments to some acts) in order to use it even after the conclusion of the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to widen the pool of highly qualified medical professions.¹⁵⁹

Drawing on the *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025's* goals,¹⁶⁰ on 24 November 2021, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted the *Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance 2021–2030*¹⁶¹ by Resolution No. 678/2021. Several measures of the Strategy address various target groups of adults, including migrants: in particular in the measure focusing on the improvement of basic skills and pilot intervention programmes, as well as in the measure aiming to promote the civic education of adults.

¹⁵⁵ Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, p. 8, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky>

¹⁵⁶ Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

¹⁵⁷ Citizens of the SR returning to the SR after work or study mobility abroad (author's note).

¹⁵⁸ Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia – Component 10, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1058/komponent_10_lakanie_a_udrzanie_talentov_1.pdf (consulted on 26/04/2022)

¹⁵⁹ Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia – Component 10, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1058/komponent_10_lakanie_a_udrzanie_talentov_1.pdf (consulted on 26/04/2022)

¹⁶⁰ Questionnaire from the MoESRS SR.

¹⁶¹ Available at: https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/11044_strategia-celozivotneho-vzdelavania-a-poradenstva-na-roky-2021-2030.pdf (consulted on 26/04/2022).

Specific activities will be presented in action plans for individual Strategy implementation periods: the first will be submitted to the Government of the SR in the first half of 2022.¹⁶²

By amended Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance (in effect from 1 January 2021) a period (6 months) was determined during which a person granted asylum will be considered a state-insured person. After this transitional period, the state will continue paying insurance for these persons if they meet the conditions for the payment of insurance by the state, as well as for other persons with permanent residence in the territory of the SR (e.g. registered at the Labour Office, beneficiaries of material need benefit, reaching retirement age etc.). When being provided healthcare, the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection will present a foreigner's card of entitlement to healthcare reimbursement (an entitlement card) issued by the health insurance agency with the largest number of insured persons. The validity of the entitlement card is equal to the period of granted subsidiary protection.¹⁶³ So far, this healthcare has been funded from the MoI SR budget, and the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection presented a document issued to them by the MoI SR to the healthcare provider.

In order to simplify these activities, a transfer of these costs to the MoH SR was proposed, as this is the body responsible for healthcare. The technical activities related to the provision of this healthcare are performed and financed by the health insurance company with the largest number of insured persons (given the existing staff and technical support for these activities), to whom the Ministry of Health of the SR will reimburse the costs.¹⁶⁴

In 2021, an amendment to the Act on Asylum, several parts of which will also influence the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, was being prepared (see Section 4.2).¹⁶⁵ The draft act, which will probably be adopted in 2022, redefines primary integration, which means a narrowing of the subject of the act related to integration, increasing the one-time financial benefit for persons granted asylum, which will also be provided to the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and introducing an integration benefit. Primary integration will include the provision of social counselling, psychological counselling and cultural orientation course. The integration centre will be able to provide accommodation not only to the persons granted asylum, but also to the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Within primary integration, the status of persons granted asylum and foreigners who are beneficiaries of subsidiary protection will become unified.¹⁶⁶

6.1.2. Measures to Support Integration

Integration also continued to be supported mainly by project activities in 2021. They focused on various integration areas and provided either direct support to migrants (such as counselling, courses, etc.) or contributed to the creation of policies and measures as well as to sensitize the public debate.

In 2021, despite the anti-pandemic measures, the IOM Migration Information Centre provided not only their counselling services on legal questions, but also other services to support integration: labour and socio-cultural counselling, language and vocational education of foreigners,

¹⁶² Questionnaire from the MoESRS SR.

¹⁶³ Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.

¹⁶⁴ Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.

¹⁶⁵ Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.

¹⁶⁶ Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.

and the protection of UAMs' rights and support for their integration. Cooperation with migrant communities was also developed.

The MIC, as usual, provided their consultations in person (if possible and in compliance with anti-pandemic measures), via a discounted hotline or e-mail. In 2021, the IOM MIC in Bratislava and Košice provided 14,660 consultations. The number of consultations increased by more than 1,000 year-on-year. The counselling services were used by a total of 7,572 clients mainly from Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Serbia, India, Iran and the USA.

Detailed information is available at the IOM MIC website in Slovak, English and Russian. In 2021, the site received a record 678,974 visitors and 1,713,226 page views. This may be due mainly to the fact that in 2021, the IOM MIC continued to provide on its website up-to-date information on Slovakia's measures against the spread of COVID-19 and their impact on residence, work and other areas of the life of foreigners in Slovakia, in addition to the standard information on residence, work, studies, citizenship, business, etc.¹⁶⁷ In this respect, one of the most popular topics among clients and the public was the new video tutorials on how to apply for temporary residence for the purposes of employment or for a PCR test in the case of COVID-19 symptoms after contact with a positive person or when entering Slovakia. In 2021, with the same aim (to provide information to as wide an audience as possible), the IOM MIC continued to organise their online webinars to inform and answer questions about family benefits that foreigners can apply for, family reunification and education of children of foreigners in Slovakia, legislation, as well as the rights and obligations of foreigners entering into employment in Slovakia.¹⁶⁸

In 2021, the IOM MIC web applications continued to be actively used: 4,854 clients from 152 countries used the Visa Check¹⁶⁹ and 2,291 clients used the Work Permit Check.^{170, 171} The innovative MIC applications offer information for foreigners from any country in the world who want to come to Slovakia and first need to find out whether they need a visa to enter and what kind of residence is required to study, work or conduct business in Slovakia.

Free-of-charge legal aid (counselling and representation) is also provided by the Human Rights League (HRL) within their specific projects focused on a) the promotion of family and private life of foreigners' families aiming in particular at LGBTI families¹⁷² and b) hate crimes victims or potential victims – Muslims, refugees, asylum seekers and other migrant groups living in the SR.¹⁷³ The project activities include the creation of a network composed from lawyers, attorneys, non-governmental organisations, and foreign experts working with these topics (more information in 6.2).

During 2021, the HRL's website also continued providing information for foreigners concerning various measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, using informational leaflets, analysing legislation or summarising useful contacts.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Source: IOM Bratislava.

¹⁶⁸ Video tutorials available at: IOM Slovakia - YouTube (consulted on 01/05/2022)

¹⁶⁹ Available at: <https://mic.iom.sk/visacheck/en/home/> (consulted on 01/05/2022)

¹⁷⁰ Available at: <https://www.mic.iom.sk/workcheck/sk/domov/> (consulted on 01/05/2022)

¹⁷¹ Source: IOM Bratislava.

¹⁷² Families without Borders: How Families with Immigration Status can Enjoy their Lives Together in Slovakia – the project was supported by the Government of the United States of America under the Small Grants Program and was under way between January and December 2021. More information at: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/co-robime/projekty/aktualne-projekty/rodiny-bez-hranic-ako-mozu-rodiny-migrantov-zit-spolocene-na-slovensku> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁷³ The SalamSK project was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014 – 2020), and the duration of the project is from January – December 2022. More information at: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/co-robime/projekty/aktualne-projekty/salamsk-bojujeme-proti-islamofobii-a-podporujeme-obete-nenavistnych-trestnych-cinov-na-slovensku> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁷⁴ Source: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/info-o-migracii/covid-19> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

Regarding the support for foreigners in their integration into the labour market in Slovakia, the IOM MIC in 2020 provided consultations to 565 clients (this number is slightly lower than 698 clients in 2020). The consultations concerned labour market orientation, preparation of CVs, preparation for a job interview, communication with employers, searching for job ads or mediating employment. In order to increase the chances of being successful on the labour market, the IOM MIC also provided financial support, based on which 38 clients took a retraining course.¹⁷⁵

The extraordinary pandemic situation also influenced the way of conducting Slovak language courses, which were moved online. Slovak language courses were available to third-country nationals from private institutions on several online platforms.¹⁷⁶ Within the scope of the IOM MIC project, in 2021, Slovak language courses were provided free of charge in Bratislava, Košice, Žilina, Banská Bystrica and Medzilaborce for third-country nationals, including Slovak language courses for unaccompanied minors. In 2021, 1,309 persons attended these courses, and 923 persons participated in social and cultural orientation courses which help foreigners navigate important areas of living in Slovakia. In addition, 6 Welcoming Slovakia meetings for more than 124 participants were organised in 2021 in cooperation with cultural mediators – representatives of associations and communities of foreigners in Slovakia. The foreigners obtained practical and useful information on life in Slovakia in these meetings.¹⁷⁷

The Mareena civic association also provided Slovak language and conversation courses in 2021, mainly for third-country nationals as well as other foreigners. Slovak language courses can be tailored or individual, and the course fee is lower than the commercial prices of comparable courses. Foreigners also had the option to apply for a scholarship.¹⁷⁸

Regarding the health of migrants, in 2021 the project *Creation of Recommended and Standard Processes for the Prevention and Timely Intervention Related to the Migration of Third-Country Nationals in Slovakia* by the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic continued.¹⁷⁹ The main goal of the project was to create recommended and standard procedures for the prevention (of disease outbreaks and transmission) and for (crisis and timely) intervention in order to detect sufficiently early, diagnose and treat disease related to the migration of TCNs. The standard procedure titled *Pravidelná fyzická aktivita ako nástroj prevencie neprenosných ochorení u utečencov a migrantov [Regular Physical Activity as a Tool to Prevent Non-Contagious Diseases in Refugees and Migrants]*¹⁸⁰ was published in 2021.

COVID-19 vaccinations of foreigners were another topic of 2021. The Ministry of Health of the SR modified the pool of foreigners entitled to the vaccination, even though they are not publicly health insured.

In 2021, the implementation of Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture's project *Research of Integration of Foreigners – Obstacles, Tools, Attitude* continued, with the main goal to comprehensively map the integration of foreigners, the availability of integration services and the per-

¹⁷⁵ Source: IOM Bratislava.

¹⁷⁶ More information available at: *Materiály na individuálne štúdium slovenského jazyka - Migračné informačné centrum IOM [Materials for Self-learning of Slovak Language – IOM Migration Information Centre]* (consulted on 01/05/2021).

¹⁷⁷ Source: IOM Bratislava.

¹⁷⁸ More information available at: <https://mareena.sk/programy>.

¹⁷⁹ The project was implemented by 30 September 2021 and funded from AMIF.

¹⁸⁰ Available at: <https://www.standardnepostupy.sk/zoznam-schvalenych-postupov-zam/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

ception of integration by the foreigners themselves and the majority population. The following two analyses were published within the project in 2021: *Cudzie nechceme, svoje si nedáme. Pos-toje majoritnej populácie k migrácii a cudzincom na Slovensku [We don't want anything foreign. We won't give up what is ours. Attitudes of majority population towards migration and foreigners in Slovakia]* including the associated short summary and *Cudzinci na Slovensku. Hľadanie nového domova. Skúsenosti cudzincov s integráciou na Slovensku – výskumné zistenia [Foreigners in Slovakia. Searching for a new home. Experience of foreigners with integration in Slovakia – research findings]* and a longer publication titled *Slovensko a migrácia. Hľadanie ciest k spolužitiu [Slovakia and Migration. Finding Pathways to Coexistence]*.¹⁸¹

Within the Labour Mobility Scheme for Slovakia,¹⁸² the IOM prepared an online survey of labour mobility among 50 nationals of non-EU/EEA countries who in the last two years were or are employed in Slovakia. The questions focused on the ways of finding work in Slovakia, reasons why foreigners decide to remain in the SR, if they accept work corresponding to their qualifications, if they feel integrated in the SR etc.¹⁸³

With regard the integration of foreigners in the SR, the *Labour Mobility Scheme*¹⁸⁴ (see also Section 3.3) proposes the creation of a state administration office/body with nationwide competence which will cover methodological guidelines, data collection, technical proposals, cooperation with individual actors and sources of funding as well as oversee the overall implementation of integration activities and the fulfilment of the objectives in this area. Within the framework of integration measures, the scheme also proposes to ensure the coherence of integration and social policies, ensure diversified and complementary funding between state and project funding, promote good practices and use synergies to mainstream it into other services. The scheme highlights the need of self-governments to be involved in the implementation of integration measures at the local and regional levels by establishing, e. g., support centres at the regional level, providing information in foreign languages or sharing information through a local platform. It also highlights the need for cooperation with non-governmental organisations, universities, scientific institutions, chambers of commerce and businesses through innovative partnerships.

6.1.3. Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection

Regarding the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, there were no new developments related to policies and legislation in 2021, apart from the ongoing preparation of an amendment to the Act on Asylum, which will impact the integration of beneficiaries of international protection (see Section 4).

Integration of beneficiaries of international protection is ensured mainly by means of AMIF-funded projects.

¹⁸¹ The project was funded by the AMIF. The analyses are available at: <http://cvek.sk/publikacie/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁸² Technical Support for the development of a Labour Mobility Scheme for the Slovak Republic project was funded by the European Union through the Structural Reform Support Programme and implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with the European Commission's Directorate General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM). The project was implemented between 1 January 2020 and 30 September 2021.

¹⁸³ Available at: <https://iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1395-prieskum-iom-pracovna-mobilita-zahranicnych-pracovnikov-na-slovensko.html> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁸⁴ Available at: <https://iom.sk/sk/aktivity/spolupraca-a-partnerstvo/schema-pracovnej-mobility-pre-slovensku-republiku.html> (consulted on 06/07/2022).

In this respect, the implementation of the project of the MO Mol SR *Capacity Building in the Field of Asylum* continued. The project aims to extend the knowledge of the Migration Office staff members coming into direct contact with asylum seekers as well as with the beneficiaries of international protection in the SR concerning the reception of asylum seekers, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, including their earlier and more precise identification.¹⁸⁵ In 2021, MO Mol SR employees were supervised (they were divided by Departments and place of work and the supervision of head employees was conducted separately).¹⁸⁶

The Slovak Humanitarian Council continued implementing their *Rifugio* project in 2021. Clients were provided social, labour and psychological counselling, legal and social aid or assistance in finding accommodation, material and financial assistance as well as Slovak language courses and school integration.¹⁸⁷

In 2021, supporting the labour market integration of refugees was a topic of HRL project in which they examined various aspects of and obstacles to the labour market integration of asylum seekers, persons granted asylum and foreigners who are the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Among other things, the project contains research activities, advocacy activities and legal aid. The *Integrácia utečencov na trh práce na Slovensku [Labour Market Integration of Refugees in Slovakia]* position document was published in 2021 in this respect.¹⁸⁸

In 2021, the HRL created three animated informational videos for foreigners related to labour market integration. In a brief and simple manner, they cover illegal work and illegal employment, commencement of employment, rights of employees and advice on how to proceed in case of problems at work. These and other topics are subsequently explained in a greater detail in four related presentations of individual topics. Apart from Slovak, the information is available in the four most represented languages among refugees: English, Arabic, Pashto and Farsi.¹⁸⁹

In cooperation with IKEA, the HRL launched a three-year Skills for Employment programme to support beneficiaries of international protection in Slovakia. This initiative aims to help these people obtain new skills and work experience, i.e. a better chance to find work – whether in IKEA or other companies in Slovakia. Participants will also get a better opportunity to integrate into their new host community. The programme includes 16 hours of labour law education and the learning skills needed when searching for a job, 4 months of language courses or consultations to improve Slovak language skills, and a training course focused on finding employment in IKEA, the job interview process and selection process. The project started in January 2021 and will end in 2023. IKEA offers 19 jobs in Bratislava to beneficiaries of international protection. The project builds on IKEA's global commitment to support more than 2,500 refugees in 300 IKEA units in 30 countries by the end of 2022.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ The project was implemented by 31 September 2021 and funded from the AMIF. Available at: Budovanie kapacít v oblasti azylu [Capacity Building in the Field of Asylum], Ministerstvo vnútra SR - Európske programy (minv.sk) (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁸⁶ Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.

¹⁸⁷ The project will be implemented by 30 October 2022 and is funded by the AMIF. Available at: <https://nasiutecenci.sk/rifugio/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁸⁸ More information about the project available at: Podpora utečencov v ich integrácii na pracovný trh [Supporting the Labour Market Integration of Refugees] - Hrl.sk or [https://www.hrl.sk/userfiles/files/Pozici%C4%8Cny%C4%81%20dokument%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.hrl.sk/userfiles/files/Pozici%C4%8Cny%C4%81%20dokument%20(1).pdf) (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁸⁹ The Refugee Labour Kit was created within the Podpora utečencov v ich integrácii na pracovný trh [Supporting the Labour Market Integration of Refugees] project supported by the US government within the Julie Taft grant programme to help refugees. Available at: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/info-o-migracii/refugee-labour-kit-> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁹⁰ Source: <https://www.ikea.com/sk/sk/this-is-ikea/community-engagement/ikea-pomaha-utecencom-s-uplatnenim-na-trhu-prace-pub2c2373f0> (consulted on 14/04/2022).

In September – October 2021, the Mareena civic association launched a social pop-up coffee shop called Mareena café: They provided work opportunities to women who are beneficiaries of international protection and foreigners from non-EU countries. Its aim is to contribute to their economic independence and social inclusion, develop their potential and skills and help deepen the relations between Slovaks and foreigners. During the months in which the coffee shop was operational, 8 women from Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Cameroon and Ukraine found work there.¹⁹¹ In December 2021, Mareena launched fundraising to reopen the café.

In 2021, the Marginal, o. z. civic association continued in the *V4NIEM 2020 – 2021: Towards common advocacy on integration* project. Its aim is to evaluate integration policies, strengthen them and improve the integration of refugees and beneficiaries of international protection in the V4 countries. In 2021, the following comparison reports were created within this project: *Housing Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic*, *The Role of Local Governments in the Integration of Refugees in the V4 Countries* and *The Impact of Coronavirus Country Measures on Asylum and Reception Systems in Hungary, Slovakia and Poland*.¹⁹²

6.1.4. Integration on the Local Level and Civic Participation of Foreigners

In 2021, there was relatively fewer activities to support the integration of foreigners on the regional and local levels also due to finalisation of some projects that had been active in 2020.

The Community Centre for Work and Knowledge Mobility (COMIN) also continued their activity in 2021, serving as a first-contact point for foreigners and continuing to inform foreigners about various aspects of life in this city, the measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic and Slovak language courses provided in cooperation with the Mareena civic association.¹⁹³

On a Europe-wide level, the Successful Migrant Integration in Regions project, on which the HRL was cooperating, continued in 2021. Apart from the HRL, three partner organisations from the EU MS participate: the Czech Sdružení pro integraci a migraci [Association for Integration and Migration (CAIM)] as the project leader, the Belgian City of Mechelen and the German Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ausländer-, Migranten und Integrationsbeiräte Bayerns [Working group of foreigners, migrants and integration councils of Bavaria]. The project is focused on the creation of innovative tools to facilitate integration on the regional and local levels and on the exchange of innovation among the EU MS and their adoption to local needs.¹⁹⁴ *Over three years it plans to create and try out a method of integration workshops for self-governments, prepare a comparative study on the structural dimensions of local integration and promote an existing manual for self-governments.*

The IOM also continued its cooperation with the *Staromestské noviny* monthly published in Bratislava – Staré mesto city district in 2021. The IOM submits articles in Slovak and English to the Foreigners section of the monthly. They are about various topics useful for foreigners living in Slovakia and Bratislava.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Available at: <https://mareena.sk/mareena-cafe> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁹² Available at: <https://marginal.sk/category/aktuality/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁹³ COMIN was established in Nitra in October 2019 as the point of first contact for foreigners who have been granted temporary or permanent residence in the SR. The Centre offers legal counselling and provides basic information about the life of foreigners in Slovakia. More information at: <https://comin.sk/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

¹⁹⁴ The project is implemented within the Erasmus+, key action 2: Strategic Partnerships. More information about the project available at: Úspešná integrácia migrantov v regiónoch [Successful Migrant Integration in Regions] - Hrl.sk, consulted on 01/05/2022.

¹⁹⁵ Information provided by the IOM Office in the SR.

6.2. Raising Awareness about Migration and Non-Discrimination

The Government of the SR approved the *National Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities 2021–2027*¹⁹⁶, including its Action Plan, on 28 April 2021. This is a strategic framework document aiming to implement the policy of equality between women and men in the SR. The strategy aims to “achieve a just society – a society in which material equality of men and women is achieved, without any forms of discrimination, violence or any practices harmful for women and girls.”¹⁹⁷ It refers to groups vulnerable in multiple ways in some chapters, including women migrants among them. It also states that the equality of men and women as well as strengthening of the position of women in international development cooperation and humanitarian aid will be applied.¹⁹⁸

In this respect, an amendment of the anti-discrimination act taking into consideration the need for equality between women and men and related legislation is planned by 2025.

Several of HRL's projects should also contribute to better tolerance and non-discrimination in Slovak society in relation to foreigners or people from other cultures. The project *MED SK [Migrant Empowerment for Diversity in Slovakia]* which started in 2021, is one of them. Planned activities within this project are: an online campaign to promote tolerance, publishing related podcasts and the results of the research *Analýza postavenia a ochrany obetí nenávistných trestných činov z radov utečencov a cudzincov žijúcich na Slovensku [Analysis of the Status and Protection of Hate Crimes Victims from Refugee or Foreigners Living in Slovakia]*.¹⁹⁹ The analysis was prepared within another HRL project entitled *SalamSK* in cooperation with the Islamic foundation in Slovakia, which is aimed at suppressing Islamophobia in Slovakia, raising public awareness and supporting victims of hate crimes. Within this project, informational videos were created which contain relevant legal information in the Slovak, English, Ukrainian, Serbian, Arabic and Farsi languages for the target group. The project also includes the provision of legal counselling and the creation of a network of lawyers (see Section 6.1.2.). A series of podcasts, several meetings and workshops are planned, too. In 2021, data on the presentation of Islam and Muslims in Slovak media were collected²⁰⁰ and a meeting of Muslim women called BaBinec was organised in order to strengthen the voice of Muslim women and underline their qualities and contribution to the society.²⁰¹

Despite the pandemic, several other events were organised in 2021 aiming to approach migration and asylum in the SR in a more sensitive manner. In September, the Milan Šimečka Foundation's multigenre and multicultural Fjúžn festival was held. Each year it focuses on migration and foreigners living in Slovakia.²⁰²

In June, the Milan Šimečka Foundation, in cooperation with the Slovak Humanitarian Council and with the support of MoI SR, organised the Umbrella March in Bratislava's Old Town and cultural activities, discussions, an exhibition and many other activities to celebrate the World Refugee Day.²⁰³

¹⁹⁶ Available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/25845/1> (consulted on 26/04/2022)

¹⁹⁷ National Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities 2021–2027, p. 5, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/download.dat?id=3BF5B0B68F104FE3BF94AEEDC175D78F-E25993FD84DD71761AD93998015F12B1> (consulted on 26/04/2022).

¹⁹⁸ Questionnaire of the MoLSAF SR.

¹⁹⁹ Available at: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/co-robime/projekty/aktualne-projekty/med-sk> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

²⁰⁰ The project was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014 – 2020). Available at: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/co-robime/projekty/aktualne-projekty/salamsk-bojujeme-proti-islamofobii-a-podporujeme-obete-nenavistnych-trestnych-cinov-na-slovensku> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

²⁰¹ Available at: <https://www.islamonline.sk/2021/08/babinec-rande-so-sebou-spoznava-motivuj-sa-inspiruj/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

²⁰² Available at: <https://fjuzn.sk/zaostri-na-svet-ktory-mame-doma-zacina-sa-16-rocnik-festivalu-fjuzn/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

²⁰³ Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.

In September, the SHC implemented the *Tvoríme s láskou [Creation with Love]* project. The main idea was to connect general and professional public in one discussion about various social topics, to identify possible forms of cooperation and to exchange information about the lives of ordinary people (children and adults) as well as those struggling with difficult circumstances – the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of population (including asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection).²⁰⁴

The Human Rights League, in cooperation with the weekly magazine *.týždeň*, prepared new episodes of the *Migration Compass* podcast which has been informing the public and leaders about various topics connected to migration in international and Slovak context since 2019.²⁰⁵

In 2021, the IOM also prepared a new series of their *Aj my sme tu doma [We Are at Home Here]* podcast. Listeners can get to know various countries listening to people who were born and raised in them and later decided to live in Slovakia. For teachers, the IOM created a guide to using podcasts and recommendations for activities with them which can be used for example in global education of high school students.²⁰⁶

In cooperation with *zmudri.sk* the IOM prepared the video *What kind of migrants live in Slovakia? Myths and facts about migration*, which explains basic facts about migration and tries to disprove many stereotypical opinions about migration.²⁰⁷

The EMN SR also raised awareness of migration. In June 2021, they organised the *Refugees Among Us – How Does It Work in Slovakia?*²⁰⁸ online discussion of professionals in cooperation with the MO Mol SR and the Representation of the European Commission in the SR about global migration challenges, refugees and the provision of international protection in the SR.

In August 2021, the EMN organised the 8th year of their educational seminar about migration titled *Migration in a Multilateral World*.²⁰⁹ Over three days in a virtual studio experts from 15 countries addressed over 120 participants from 25 countries and spoke about the topics such as how the pandemic has affected migration, what the role of multilateralism is in managing migration, what life is like in refugee camps in Greece, the migration situation in Afghanistan, and the possibilities for legal migration and labour mobility to the EU. The seminar also included the screening of two films for the general public about refugees from Afghanistan and labour migration to Germany.

Within the *Faces of Migration* project activities, the organisation Ambrela – Platform for Development Organisations continued to organise thematic campaigns and educational training and prepared expert analyses as well as short videos aiming to explain the topic of migration to the public in 2021.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.

²⁰⁵ Available at: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/info-o-migracii/https://www.hrl.sk/sk/info-o-migracii/podcast/podcast-migracny-kompas-vysvetlujeme-detaily-o-migracii-integracii-a-azyle> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

²⁰⁶ Available at: <https://iomslovakia.podbean.com/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

²⁰⁷ Available at: <https://iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1406-myty-a-fakty-o-migracii-a-migrantoch-na-slovensku-jul-2021.html> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

²⁰⁸ Available at: IOM Slovakia - YouTube (consulted on 01/05/2022).

²⁰⁹ Available at: <https://www.emnconference.sk/> (consulted on 01/05/2022). The lectures are available as podcasts at <https://emnslovakia.podbean.com/> (consulted on 01/05/2022) and videos at <https://www.emnconference.sk/lecturers-and-outputs.html> (consulted on 06/07/2022).

²¹⁰ Available at: <https://ambrela.org/projekty/rozvojova-spolupraca-a-migracia-slovakaid-projekt/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

Given the need to address the situation of women migrants in Slovakia, the HRL initiated a public discussion by means of a seminar titled *Invisible Women. Gender equality in the field of migration and integration of migrant women in Slovakia* in November 2021. A study prepared by the EMN was mentioned in the discussions.²¹¹

In 2021, Eduma continued in their activities within the *Živá knižnica [Live Library]* online portal addressing the topic of inclusion, including migration topics via storytelling.²¹² In 2021, they published *Zbierka príkladov dobrej praxe – Inšpiratívne skúsenosti z využitia storytellingu v školskom prostredí [Collection of Best Practices Examples: Inspiring Experience of Using Storytelling at School]*, which includes the stories of people immigrating to the SR.²¹³ A festival of live books was organised in 2021, too, and videos with the stories of migrants in the SR are available in their online library.²¹⁴

MO Mol SR employees attended the Slovak Alternative Summer festival on 16 and 17 July 2021, during which the Migrants and Refugees alias Facts in Migration debate was organised in the discussion tent in cooperation with the Mareena civic association, the SHC, and the Záhrada civic association in Banská Bystrica. The visitors were able to learn facts about asylum, and thanks to the cooperation with the UNHCR regional office in Budapest they were also able to watch 3D films about refugees using virtual reality glasses.²¹⁵

Due to the COVID-19 situation and the subsequent closure of schools and anti-pandemic restrictions, it was not possible to fully develop cooperation with schools in 2021. In 2021, the MO Mol SR cooperated only with the Jarná Primary School in Žilina for the pupils of the second stage of primary school, for whom it prepared 8 lectures on asylum and migration. On 14 May 2021, an online discussion was held for students of social work at the Faculty of Health Sciences and Social Work, University of Trnava, which introduced students to the work of social workers in the Humenné reception centre.²¹⁶

211 Available at: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/o-nas/aktuality/neviditelne-zeny--rodova-rovnost-v-oblasti-migracie-a-integracie-migrantiek-na-slovensku> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

212 Available at: <http://eduma.sk/online-ziva-kniznica/> (consulted on 26/07/2022).

213 Available at: <http://eduma.sk/online-ziva-kniznica/> (consulted on 26/07/2022).

214 Available at: <http://eduma.sk/jedenastka-novych-videi-festivalove-zive-knihy-v-online-zivej-kniznici/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

215 Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.

216 Questionnaire from the MO Mol SR.



Citizenship and the Situation of Stateless Persons

In the last five years, with the exception of the “pandemic” year 2021, the number of third-country nationals who have been granted citizenship in the SR has been continually rising. Between 2017 and 2021, state citizenship was granted to 400 – 600 third-country nationals a year. In 2021, the SR granted 480 citizenships. Most new citizens of the SR come from Serbia, Ukraine, USA, Russia and the United Kingdom. In 2021, the SR prepared an amendment to the Act on Citizenship, which was adopted in February 2022 and enters into force in April 2022. Its main aim is to simplify obtaining state citizenship for former citizens who lost the Slovak citizenship by obtaining foreign state citizenship and for foreigners holding the status of Slovaks living abroad. Similar to 2020, in 2021, the SR did not adopt any legislative or other measures which would significantly influence the situation of stateless persons present in their territory.

7.1. Statistics and Trends

Third-country nationals currently comprise more than two-thirds of all foreigners acquiring citizenship in Slovakia each year. In the last years, the number of third-country nationals who have been granted citizenship in the SR has been continually rising.²¹⁷ The “pandemic” year 2021 is the only exception during which the SR granted the state citizenship to 480 third-country nationals.

217 Source: Behúňová, K., Oboňová, S. (2021): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

Between 2017 and 2021, state citizenship was granted to approximately 400 – 600 third-country nationals a year. Most new citizens of the SR come from Serbia, Ukraine, USA, Russia and the United Kingdom (see **Table 6** in the Annex).

Citizenship of the SR can also be obtained by persons from non-EU countries to whom international protection was granted. In 2021, 10 asylum or subsidiary protection holders acquired Slovak citizenship (see **Table 13** in the Annex).

Citizenship of the SR acquired in 2017 – 2021

Indicator	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021*
Citizenship of the SR obtained by third-country nationals	479	381	546	626	480
Citizenship of the SR obtained by all foreigners (including asylum or subsidiary protection holders)	814	1,071	913	916	707

Source: Mol SR.

* The total number accounts for the post-Brexit situation. This means that the total number includes the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

7.2 Acquiring and Losing Citizenship

In 2021, the SR prepared an amendment to the Act on Citizenship²¹⁸, which was adopted in February 2022 and enters into force in April 2022. Its main aim is to simplify obtaining state citizenship mainly for former citizens who had lost the Slovak citizenship by obtaining foreign state citizenship and for foreigners holding the status of Slovaks living abroad.

The preparation of the Citizenship Act amendment is based mainly on the *Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2020 – 2024*, according to which “the Government of the SR will ensure for the citizens of the SR for long-term living in another state to obtain the citizenship of that country without losing Slovak citizenship. The Government of the SR will also deal with the situation of persons who, based on a valid act, lost their Slovak citizenship, so that it will be returned to them based on standard European principles of obtaining citizenship and that the conditions of obtaining state citizenship for Slovaks living abroad will be relaxed”²¹⁹.

Similar to 2020, in 2021, the SR did not adopt any legislative or other measures which would significantly influence the situation of stateless persons present in their territory.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Government draft act changing and amending Act of the NC SR No. 40/1993 Coll. on Citizenship of the Slovak Republic, as amended, available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&MasterID=8138> (consulted on 15/05/2022).

²¹⁹ Government draft act changing and amending Act of the NC SR No. 40/1993 Coll. on Citizenship of the Slovak Republic, as amended, available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&MasterID=8138> (consulted on 15/05/2022).

²²⁰ Source: Questionnaire from the DFEA MIO (filled in also by the Department of State Citizenship and Registry Office of the Mol SR).



Borders, Schengen, and Visa

8.1. Statistics and Trends

Between 2017 – 2021 the SR recorded mostly a decrease in the number of visas issued. The significant decrease in the number of Schengen visas issued between 2017 and 2018 (from 40,776 in 2017 to 25,681 in 2018) was caused mainly by the introduction of the visa-free regime with Ukraine in 2017 for its citizens who hold a biometric passport. In 2020, the steep decrease in the number of issued Schengen visas (from 29,148 in 2019 to 7,240) was caused mainly by the COVID-19 pandemic and the MoFEA's decision to stop accepting Schengen visa applications at all DMs (aside from cases worthy of special treatment), as well as by means of visa centres of the external service provider (VFS Global) as of 12 March 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic impact continued in 2021, when the number of Schengen visas issued was slightly higher than in 2019 (8,365) but not as high than before the pandemic (see **Table 5** in the Annex).²²¹

The number of national visas granted in 2017 and 2018 was relatively stable (2,865 in 2017 and 2,662 in 2018). However, the year 2019 saw significant increase (5,640) caused mainly by the amendment to the Act on Residence of Foreigners, based on which third-country nationals were able to apply for a national visa for the purposes of applying for residence in the territory of the SR. This created the possibility to submit the application not only at diplomatic missions abroad but also directly to the Foreign Police departments within the SR. However, the COVID-19 pan-

²²¹ Source: MoFEA and Mol SR.

demic still lowered the number of issued national visas to 3,111 in 2020. In 2021, a slight increase to 4,647 was recorded (see **Table 5** in the Annex).²²²

8.2. Border Control Policies and Measures

In 2021, there were no new developments in border control legislation. As for the policies, the priorities of the SR related to borders were defined in the adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* (see Section 2.1).

The SR aims to prevent severe security threats and support significant strengthening of personnel and material capacities when protecting the external Schengen border so that EU Member States would not face potential further massive migration waves which could destabilize them politically and economically. The priorities of the SR related to border management and combatting irregular migration are based mainly on the *National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for 2019 – 2022*, which sets out the priorities of the SR in building European integrated border management.²²³

In compliance with the *National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for 2019 – 2022*,²²⁴ several projects were implemented in the SR in 2021²²⁵ aiming to improve the technical equipment and automation of border controls. Specifically speaking, these were projects focused on, e.g., purchasing an ABC gate for automated border control of EU citizens crossing the SR external border at M. R. Štefánik Airport in Bratislava, the exchanging of technical equipment for examining documents, renewal of technical equipment for the second and third lines of document control, renewal of the technical and hardware equipment within the National Visa Information System (N-VIS) and Central Screening Console (CSC), modernising and renewing hardware of the national SIS II part, and purchasing means of transport or thermal cameras for border surveillance etc.

The project²²⁶ of language education for the Border and Foreign Police members in English, Russian and Ukrainian language focusing on Schengen acquis also continued. It aims to improve the language skills of the PF members when in contact with third-country nationals.²²⁷

Based on the *Agreement between the Police Force Presidium of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the National Police Headquarters of Hungary on the establishment of joint patrols in the territory of Hungary within the framework of joint operations* from 19 October 2015 and its amendment signed on 18 November 2021, the Slovak contractual party will deploy Police Force members to Hungary to help and cooperate with members of the National Police Headquarters of Hungary in performing joint patrols along the state border between Hungary and Croatia, Hungary and Serbia, Hungary and Romania, and Hungary and Ukraine.

²²² Source: MoFEA and MoI SR.

²²³ Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

²²⁴ Behúňová, K., Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2020): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2019. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

²²⁵ All the projects were funded by the Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa, were implemented in 2020 – 2021 and continued in 2022. More information also available in Behúňová, K., Oboňová, S. (2021): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

²²⁶ Funded by the Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa.

²²⁷ Source: questionnaire of the FAD MoI SR. The project is funded from the Internal Security Fund and its duration is from 14 July 2017 to 31 March 2022.

The Agreement was concluded with the aim to strengthen the controls at Hungarian land borders which were exposed to an intensified migration pressure. The original agreement made it possible to deploy the Police Force members only to perform joint patrols along the state border between Hungary and Serbia. The contractual parties agreed on extending this cooperation to further parts of Hungarian state border.²²⁸

Slovak police officers are deployed in Hungarian territory in relation with the performance of tasks related to joint patrols within Hungary as required, at the request of the Hungarian contractual party. In the application, the Hungarian contractual party will determine the part of state border, the required number of Slovak officers and the planned duration of the deployment of Slovak police officers in Hungarian territory.²²⁹ However, the foreign department did not deploy any members for this activity in 2021.²³⁰

8.3. Visa Policy and Applying the Schengen Acquis

As stated in 8.1, issuing visas continued to be partially limited due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.²³¹

In 2021, health and security checks continued to be conducted at internal borders. Their goal was to check quarantine obligations at the entry to the SR imposed by the Decree of the Public Health Authority of the SR prescribing measures in the case of threat to public health or after entering the SR.

In 2021, the SR started to apply *Council Decision (EU) 2021/1940 of 9 November 2021 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Belarus on the facilitation of the issuance of visas* as a part of EU's response to the abuse of migrants for political purposes by the Belarusian regime. The change impacts official delegations and representatives of Belarus without influencing regular visa applicants.²³²

In 2021, the Czech Republic and Latvia, after having temporarily suspended the implementation of the reciprocal representation agreements in 2020, resumed acting on behalf of the SR in the visa procedure.

Due to the temporary closure of the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Kabul for security reasons, the Czech Republic temporarily paused acting on behalf of the SR when processing Schengen visa applications in Kabul, effective from 15 August 2021.²³³

8.4. Cooperation with Third Countries in the Border Management

In 2021, there were no changes in cooperation with third countries, and no agreements or other forms of bilateral or multilateral cooperation were concluded which would focus on strengthening operational capacities of combatting irregular migration and checking external borders.

²²⁸ Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

²²⁹ Questionnaire from the DFEA MIO.

²³⁰ Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

²³¹ Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

²³² Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

²³³ Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

Based on the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Interior of the SR and the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Macedonia on the Creation of Joint Patrols in the Territory of the Republic of Macedonia within Joint Operations of 18 April 2016, 26 PF members were deployed to the Northern Macedonia territory in 2021 in order to strengthen border surveillance.²³⁴



Irregular Migration including Smuggling

Measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 also affected the development of irregular migration in Slovakia in 2021. Even though irregular migration increased by 37% in 2021 as compared with 2020, it did not amount to the pre-pandemic levels. It most often concerned nationals of Afghanistan, Morocco, Syria, Ukraine and Pakistan.

There were no significant changes in the measures against the misuse of legal migration methods, combating smuggling and preventing irregular migration in 2021.

Already active projects implemented in cooperation with non-EU countries aiming to prevent irregular migration continued in 2021.

9.1. Statistics and Trends

Since 2017, the SR has been recording a decreasing trend in irregular migration: it has decreased by 35% (from 2,706 persons in 2017 to 1,769 persons in 2021). A more significant decrease was recorded mainly in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (1,295 persons) while in 2021 there was a 36.6% increase compared with 2020 (1,769 persons). However, the numbers did not amount to pre-pandemic levels (see **Table 8** in the Annex).²³⁵

²³⁴ Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

²³⁵ Source: BBFP PFP.

In 2021, the 2020 trend continued: there was a high proportion of secondary transition migration from Hungary (68.1%) in the overall irregular migration. The anti-pandemic measures did not limit it. The measures did influence the development of and situation related to irregular migration in 2021, but the impact was visible mainly as a change in the proportion of individual categories of irregular migration. It comprised mainly the following two important categories: unauthorised stay in the country, including secondary transit migration (86%), and unauthorised crossing of the external green border (11%). A year-on-year increase was recorded in both categories: unauthorised stay by 34.4% (from 1,160 to 1,559) and unauthorised state border crossing by 55.6% (from 135 to 210). The remaining three percent is divided between the rest of the categories: unauthorised stay at border crossing when leaving the SR (which had been the most numerous category in the last two years before the pandemic), unauthorised air border crossing and unauthorised stay after having been returned from another EU MS.²³⁶

As for the two main migration routes crossing the territory of the SR, an increase was recorded for both. The increase along the Western Balkans route from Hungary was substantial: 153%. The number of secondary transit migrations recorded in 2021 was significantly higher than those recorded during the 2015 migration crisis (779 in 2015 and 1,206 in 2021). A milder increase was recorded concerning the number of illegal entries along the Eastern European route through Ukraine: 58%.²³⁷

Developments in Policies and Legislation to Prevent and Tackle Irregular Migration

In 2021, there were no significant developments in this area.

The Irregular Migration and Borders chapter of the *Migration Policy – Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* states that “intense cooperation with transit and source countries of irregular migration and support for the development of their own capacities when limiting irregular migration flows towards EU territory is important” for the SR.

9.2. Cooperation with Third Countries

The implementation of several projects with third countries also continued in 2021. They aim to stop irregular migration or act as a means of prevention.

In 2021, preparations of a joint project between the V4 countries and the Federal Republic of Germany continued. The project aims at building capacities of Morocco as a transit country when managing irregular migration as well as at preventing the causes of migration by means of creating jobs in the water and waste management sectors (planned budget of €30 million, planned implementation period of four years). The implementation of the “development pillar” of this project, which should have started in June 2021, however, is based on the diplomatic resolution of bilateral relations between Morocco and Germany. The implementation of the second “migration pillar” of the project has not started yet due to the same reason.²³⁸ The project aims to build capacities of Morocco as a transit country when managing irregular migration, prevent the causes of migration by means of creating jobs in the water and waste management sectors.

²³⁶ Source: BBFP PFP.

²³⁷ Source: BBFP PFP.

²³⁸ Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

In 2021, the cooperation of V4 and Italy within the “Support to Integrated Border and Migration Management in Libya” project via EUTF Africa continued. One part of the project (€20 mil.) was dedicated to mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by helping the public health care system in Libya. These activities were continuously implemented by multilateral organisations ((WHO, UNICEF and ILO) in 2021–2022 and take form of renewal, equipment and technical assistance for health protection posts in the context of migration flows at the southern border of Libya. The remaining €15 million is to be used to build capacities of the Libyan Coast Guard in border management and addressing irregular migration, mainly by means of procuring three ships (two were already delivered in 2021).²³⁹

A *Memorandum of Cooperation on Migration and Asylum between the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina* was signed in September 2021. The contractual parties will cooperate in migration and asylum, notably by study visits and experts deployments in order to help create secure and stable conditions for migrants and migration centre employees in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The cooperation between the MO Mol SR and the Service for Foreigners’ Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina will also continue. In 2021, the activity was funded from a Slovak Aid programme called *Sharing Slovak Experience* with the main aim of exchanging experience in migration and asylum and practically supporting capacity building in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁴⁰

9.3. Combatting Smuggling and Prevention of Irregular Migration

In 2021, Slovakia did not adopt any legislative changes or measures related to combatting smuggling.

In 2021 there were 834 irregular migrants documented as smuggled in investigation files, and such acts were committed in the previous years, too. Of the mentioned number, 270 were captured in 2021. They had entered the territory of the Slovak Republic illegally with the help of smugglers. Most often they were citizens of Serbia, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Ukraine.²⁴¹

This amounted to a 30% increase compared with 2020; 190 irregular migrants entering the territory of the Slovak Republic illegally with the help of smugglers were captured.²⁴²

Monitoring and Identification of Irregular Migration Routes

In 2021, the BBFP PFP did not introduce new forms or ways of monitoring and identifying irregular migration routes. Regarding the monitoring of organised irregular migration and smuggling routes crossing the territory of the SR, a year-on-year increase of 58% was recorded in 2021 with respect to the number of irregular entries through the external land border (the Eastern European route) and a year-on-year increase of nearly 153% was recorded in cases of secondary transit migration from Hungary.²⁴³

²³⁹ Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

²⁴⁰ Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR, MO Mol SR and Mol SR press release available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=slovensko-posiela-humanitarnu-pomoc-bosne-a-hercegovine>. (consulted on 21/04/2022)

²⁴¹ Source: BBFP PFP.

²⁴² Source: BBFP PFP.

²⁴³ Source: BBFP PFP.

The increase of transit migration from Hungary was caused by the increased flow of secondary transit migration as a continuation of the Western Balkan route,²⁴⁴ which passes through the SR. Therefore, secondary transit migration also considerably influenced the overall irregular migration in 2021 – its proportion was 68% (37% in 2020, 6% in 2019, and only 2% in 2018). The development of the secondary transit migration in the SR in the upcoming period will mostly depend on the development on the Western Balkan route, in the Eastern Mediterranean (Turkey, Greece) and also in the countries of the Silk route region (source countries of irregular migration). Also, adopted measures in EU MS along the route and pull factors in destination countries have a considerable influence on the level of transit migration also affecting the SR. The destination countries for migrants on this transit migration routes are Germany, France and Austria.²⁴⁵

A slight increase of migration from Ukraine was partially influenced by the relaxation of anti-COVID-19 measures, favourable spring to autumn weather and activation of smugglers networks. No cases related to migration pressure on the EU-Belarus border were recorded by the Slovak Republic.²⁴⁶



Trafficking in Human Beings

The number of foreigners who were identified as human trafficking victims in Slovakia has remained very low. In 2021, out of the 43 identified victims of human trafficking, two were foreigners. Sexual and labour exploitation has been the most frequent purpose of trafficking in the last five years. The SR has noted two new trafficking purposes in 2021: organ, tissue and cell harvesting at the experimental stage and illegal child adoption. The SR has observed an increase in the number of child victims of human trafficking in the last three years: in 2019, child victims amounted to one-sixth of identified victims, in 2020 one-fourth and in 2021 nearly one-third of all identified victims. The SR filed charges against 39 persons and convicted 21 persons of committing this crime in 2021.

The SR began to apply the updated *National Referral Mechanism* in 2015. The document offers a more comprehensive model of cooperation of various stakeholders at the national level. The SR has defined the following priorities of fighting human trafficking and helping foreign victims in the adopted *Migration Policy of the SR: Perspective until the Year 2025*: to improve identification and sensitive approach when identifying human trafficking victims and their needs, to punish the perpetrators, to cooperate on the national and international levels as well as to implement educational programmes for professionals working with people vulnerable to this criminal activity.

The challenges faced by the SR in relation to identification, investigation and pursuit of the crime of human trafficking have been confirmed by the research *Sumarizácia a analýza rozsudkov súdov Slovenskej republiky týkajúcich sa trestných činov obchodovania s ľuďmi za roky 2015 - 2020* [Summary and Analysis of Slovak Republic Court Judgements Related to Crimes of Human Traffick-

²⁴⁴ Given the geographical location, the Western Balkans migration route leading through Slovakia from Hungary continues westward (the Czech Republic, Austria) and to a small extent also northward (Poland). The second significant irregular migration route crossing the SR is the Eastern European route leading from the East (Ukraine) to the West of the country (Austria, the Czech Republic) and further to the Western European countries. More information on migration routes can be found in Behúňová, K., Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2020): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2019. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

²⁴⁵ Source: BBFP PFP.

²⁴⁶ Source: BBFP PFP.

ing for 2015 – 2020].²⁴⁷ The reports point to insufficient compensation of victims and very low punishment rates for the perpetrators.

Amendment to the Health Insurance Act effective from 1 January 2021 made it possible for foreigners placed in the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme who do not have health insurance in the EU and who are holders of tolerated residence to be entitled to health care costs reimbursement.

In 2021, the internal tool of the Migration Office of the MoI SR was updated to identify vulnerability and special needs of asylum seekers, i.e. the “social profile”. The tool contains a list of vulnerability indicators, including the cases of potential human trafficking victims.

When cooperating with the EU MS or non-EU countries, the SR did not embark on any new activities or adopt any significant changes in 2021. Cooperation with the United Kingdom was predominant.

10.1. Statistics and Trends

The number of foreigners identified as human trafficking victims in Slovakia has remained very low. In 2021, out of the 43 identified victims of human trafficking, two were foreigners (see **Table 19** in the Annex) (compared with 2020 and 2019, this is fewer by one-quarter). Sexual and labour exploitation have been the most frequent purposes of trafficking in the last five years. The SR has noted two new trafficking purposes in 2021: organ, tissue and cell harvesting at the experimental stage and illegal child adoption. The SR has observed an increase in the number of child victims of human trafficking in the last three years: in 2019, child victims amounted to one-sixth of identified victims, in 2020 one-fourth and in 2021 nearly one-third of all identified victims. Most child victims are 12- to 17-year-old girls exploited mainly sexually or to conclude a forced marriage. In 2021, more victims, approximately one-fourth of all identified, entered the specialised *Provision of Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme* (compared to one-sixth in 2020). Only a couple of victims a year act as victims in criminal proceedings and are also provided assistance.²⁴⁸

Work in construction, industrial manufacturing, administrative and support services has been a long time risk in terms of human trafficking in the SR. Illegal employment of third-country nationals occurred more often if the employing subjects were based abroad. The SR has detected sophisticated schemes of employing third-country nationals who on their way to end service consumer/labour in Slovakia move through a chain of several entities. Undeclared work or incorrectly or only partially declared work (e.g. paying a part of wages in cash outside of official accounting, keeping records of working time that do not correspond to the reality or forcing employees to perform work under trade license as self-employed instead of employing them, including third-country nationals holding a residence permit for the purposes of entrepreneurship) remains a problem for the SR.²⁴⁹

247 Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality&subor=402707> (consulted on 09/05/2022).

248 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?obchodovanie-s-ludmi-a-slovenska-republika> (consulted on 21/05/2021).

249 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?obchodovanie-s-ludmi-a-slovenska-republika> (consulted on 21/05/2021).

In relation to the crime of human trafficking, in 2021 the SR filed charges against 39 persons in 17 cases (21 men and 18 women) and convicted 21 persons of committing this crime (see **Table 20** in Annex).²⁵⁰

Further information on trends and statistics is available in the situational reports of the Ministry of Interior of the SR. Its *Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2021* describes specific activities and measures taken against human trafficking.²⁵¹

10.2. Policies, Legislation and International Monitoring

In the adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025*, the priorities of the SR with respect to human trafficking and helping foreign victims were defined. The SR's priority in this area is mainly to improve identification and a sensitive approach when identifying human trafficking victims and their needs, punishment of perpetrators, cooperation on national and international levels, as well as implementation of educational programmes for professionals working with people vulnerable to this criminal activity.²⁵²

The SR has continued to implement the *National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2019 – 2023*, which contains the *Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2019 – 2023* with 21 tasks to be fulfilled by individual stakeholders active in the field of prevention, protection, investigation and cooperation.²⁵³ In 2021, the Action Plan tasks were continually fulfilled. Two tasks with a deadline were completed. One of them, the *Sumarizácia a analýza rozsudkov súdov Slovenskej republiky týkajúcich sa trestných činov obchodovania s ľuďmi za roky 2015 - 2020* [Summary and Analysis of Slovak Republic Court Judgements Related to Crimes of Human Trafficking for 2015 – 2020], was completed as of March 2021. It was prepared by the IC MoI SR and published on the MoI SR website – the section on human trafficking. The other task with a deadline, *Zmapovanie aktuálnej situácie v oblasti obchodovanie s ľuďmi na trhu práce* [Mapping the Current Situation Related to Human Trafficking on the Labour Market], for which the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family was responsible, was not completed by the end of December 2021. The task is planned for 2022.²⁵⁴

From 1 January 2021, an amendment to the *Health Insurance Act*²⁵⁵ makes it possible for health-care to also be paid for foreigners from the *Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme* who are not insured in the EU and have been granted tolerated residence. Such healthcare is newly covered by the health insurance company with the highest number of insured persons and which issues entitlement cards to those persons. The costs incurred by the health insurance company will be reimbursed by the Ministry of Health of the SR.²⁵⁶ Improving the access of human trafficking victims to healthcare and improving the effectiveness of the healthcare provision/reimbursing system for victims is the objective.²⁵⁷ The Act in a similar way

250 Information provided by the NUCIM BBFP PF and the DFEA MIO.

251 Source: Situačná správa o obchodovaní s ľuďmi za rok 2021 [Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2021] https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/mvsvr/obchodovanie_ludmi/vyhodnotenia_ppoo/Situacna_sprava_OSL_za_rok_2021.pdf 9 (consulted on 21/05/2022).

252 Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162> (consulted on 07/02/2022).

253 Source: Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

254 Source: Questionnaire from the DFEA MIO.

255 Available at: <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2004-580> (consulted on 08/05/2022).

256 Source: EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2020, available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyrocné-spravy-emn-o-migrácii-a-azyle/item/641-vyrocná-správa-o-migrácii-a-azyle-za-rok-2020.html>

257 Source: Questionnaire from the DFEA MIO.

regulated the provision/reimbursing of healthcare also to the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (see Section 4.2).

In 2021, the internal tool of the Migration Office of the MoI SR was updated to identify vulnerability and special needs of asylum seekers, the “social profile” (see Section 4.3). The tool contains a list of vulnerability indicators including the cases of potential human trafficking victims.²⁵⁸

International Monitoring

Several recommendations were given to the Slovak Republic, as one of the signatories of the Council of Europe’s Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, in the third evaluation round. The recommendations were reflected in the *Proposal of Measures to Ensure Compliance with the Recommendations of the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) Regarding the Implementation of the Council of Europe’s Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in the Third Evaluation Round*.²⁵⁹ The Government of the SR approved it by Resolution No. 380/2021. For the first time in the history of the SR’s participation in the evaluation process of the Council of Europe’s Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, relevant subjects were obliged to comply with the recommendations by a Resolution of the Government of the SR. The recommendations also concern foreign victims, including children (see Section 5.2). The SR has to send the status of implementation of the recommendations to the Committee of the Parties by 12 June 2022.²⁶⁰

In the last evaluating *Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP)* issued annually by the US Department of State, Slovakia in 2021 remains among the Tier 2 of countries meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. It was placed there in 2019. The reasons remain the same: mainly a lower number of identified victims and convicted traffickers, as well as a low rate of utilisation of tools for aiding and compensating victims also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the report appreciates the efforts of the SR to actively improve the mentioned areas, e.g. investigating more trafficking cases, increasing the percentage of traffickers that received significant prison terms or increased funding for prevention activities.²⁶¹

The challenges faced by the SR in relation to the prevention of and fight against human trafficking have been confirmed by the research *Sumarizácia a analýza rozsudkov súdov Slovenskej republiky týkajúcich sa trestných činov obchodovania s ľuďmi za roky 2015 - 2020 [Summary and Analysis of Slovak Republic Court Judgements Related to Crimes of Human Trafficking for 2015 – 2020]*.²⁶² The reports point to insufficient compensation of victims and very low punishment rates for the perpetrators.²⁶³

258 Source: Questionnaire from the MO MoI SR.

259 Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/LP/2021/290>

260 Source: Questionnaire from the MoLSAF SR and DFEA MIO (filled in also by the IC MoI SR).

261 Source: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/slovakia/> (consulted on 09/05/2022).

262 Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality&subor=402707> (consulted on 09/05/2022).

263 Source: Situačná správa o obchodovaní s ľuďmi za rok 2021 [Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2021] https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/mvsr/obchodovanie_ludmi/vyhodnotenia_ppoo/Situacna_sprava_OSL_za_rok_2021.pdf 9 (consulted on 09/05/2022).

10.3. Interinstitutional and International Cooperation

In 2021, the SR started applying the National Referral Mechanism from 2015. The *Regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the SR No. 161/2020 on Implementing the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme* came into force on 1 January 2021. The Regulation governs national procedures for identifying potential victims of human trafficking (including third-country nationals). The changes clarify and organize the provision of assistance and support for human trafficking victims, introduce the procedure of the Ministry of Interior of the SR when identifying victims before they are included into the programme, including the identification interview, and specify the provisions regarding child victims (both Slovak and foreign citizens)²⁶⁴. The changes reflect on strengthening cooperation among institutions which are responsible for combatting human trafficking in Slovakia and assisting victims during 2020.²⁶⁵

In 2021, the national *Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* was extended to several subjects. It now comprises: respective departments and sections of the Ministry of Interior of the SR; Ministry of Justice of the SR; Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR; Ministry of Health of the SR; Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR; Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR; Ministry of Finance of the SR; Ministry of Defence of the SR; Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the SR; the Office of the Government of the SR; the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities; the General Prosecutor’s Office of the SR; the National Labour Inspectorate; the National Institute for Education in the SR; the Association of Self-Governing Regions; the Association of Slovak Towns and Cities; the IOM; the Centre for International Protection of Children and Youth; the Office of the Public Defender of Rights and non-governmental sector representatives. In 2021, two meetings of the Expert Group took place.²⁶⁶

Another national working group which is addressing current problems of care provision to victims was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Interior of the SR and non-governmental organisations working on services of support and protection of victims, as well as assisted voluntary returns of victims within the programme. In 2021, the “cooperation between the NUCIM and the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR has been intensified, internal processes to ensure legal counselling for victims were better implemented and a closer cooperation between the NUCIM and Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the SR set up.” The group met once in three months in 2021.²⁶⁷

In 2021, the SR continued to perform regular checks of business entities to detect illegal work and illegal employment and to identify potential victims of human trafficking, taking into consideration the pandemic situation and its impacts (see Section 9.1). The checks were conducted jointly by the BBFP PFP and Labour Inspectorates or COLSAF authorities.²⁶⁸

264 Mainly these areas:

- searching for sustainable solutions for a child who is a victim of human trafficking (this commitment was absent in the previous legislation),
- situations were specified: who is acting on behalf of the child taking into account their best interest and during which actions,
- also, the services provided from the programme for child victims placed in a facility were specified.

265 Source: Questionnaire from the DFEA MIO.

266 Source: Situačná správa o obchodovaní s ľuďmi za rok 2021 [Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2021] https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/mvsr/obchodovanie_ludmi/vyhodnotenia_ppoo/Situacna_sprava_OSL_za_rok_2021.pdf 9 (consulted on 09/05/2022).

267 Source: Situačná správa o obchodovaní s ľuďmi za rok 2021 [Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2021] https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/mvsr/obchodovanie_ludmi/vyhodnotenia_ppoo/Situacna_sprava_OSL_za_rok_2021.pdf 9 (consulted on 09/05/2022).

268 Source: Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

Entities included in the National Referral Mechanism also continued to build cooperation within their activities in the international context by exchanging information, experience and partaking in various events. The cooperation of the SR in detecting and investigating human trafficking cases through the international organisations Europol and Interpol and police attachés deployed for the performance of state service abroad continued. The cooperation with the police attaché in Germany and the United Kingdom as well as direct contact with police forces of neighbouring countries (Hungary, Austria, Ukraine) was particularly beneficial. The SR joined the Europe-wide action days focusing on organised criminal groups trafficking vulnerable persons. The Joint Action Days are regularly organised by Europol and Frontex and focus on detecting the crime of human trafficking and its victims.²⁶⁹

Also, in 2021, the SR organised the following seminars through the IC Mol SR for selected professional groups who come into contact with (potential) human trafficking victims:

- a series of seminars for Mol SR Migration Office employees focusing on improving the identification of human trafficking victims among foreigners, a National Referral Mechanism and the provision of assistance to foreign human trafficking victims;
- a seminar in June for Slovak Humanitarian Council non-governmental organisation employees focused on identification and processes of providing specialised assistance to human trafficking victims and the protective measures related to third-country nationals as human trafficking victims. The Slovak Humanitarian Council in their projects facilitates adequate and suitable conditions for third-country nationals in detention, contributes to the care of asylum seekers in the entire Slovakia with supplementary services and helps with integration of beneficiaries of international protection;
- retraining of Slovak Bar Association members concerning the rights of human trafficking victims and available assistance, with an emphasis on the specificity of human trafficking victims – third-country nationals, as they might encounter this target group in their work. The retraining took part at the end of 2021 and the lecture will be shared with other Slovak Bar Association members in 2022.²⁷⁰

Training and educational events concerning human trafficking prevention were also organised by non-governmental organisations and the IOM in 2021. Two IOM training events were attended by a total of 56 participants from the whole of Slovakia: Police Force members working in prevention, employees of the Ministry of Interior, Centres for Educational and Psychological Counselling and Prevention, non-governmental organisations or EURES, social pedagogues or field workers.²⁷¹

Within the not-for-profit sector, the topic of responsible purchasing resonated in 2021. An IOM roundtable for experts from Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland who work in preventing and combating human trafficking addressed how to shop responsibly for food and clothing to prevent the exploitation of workers in these sectors abroad and how the UK's withdrawal from the EU will affect the fight against human trafficking.²⁷² The Slovak Catholic Charity NGO organ-

269 Source: Questionnaire from the DFEA MIO.

270 Source: Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

271 Source: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1433-iom-slovensko-v-septembri-2021-vyskolila-dalsich-56-odbornikov-v-prevencii-obchodovania-s-ludmi.html> (consulted on 08/05/2022).

272 Source: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1355-iom-okruhly-stol-stretnutie-expertov-cthb-sr-pl-cz-be-uk-januar-2021.html> (consulted on 09/05/2022).

ised a public event *Móda a/ako obchod* [Fashion and/as Trade] concerning the prevention of labour exploitation in fashion industry.²⁷³

10.4. Provision of Information and Assistance

Ahead of the 2021 summer season the Ministry of Interior prepared a preventive and awareness-raising campaign about the risks of human trafficking for exploitation purposes. The campaign ran from June 2021 online on social networks and job advertising web portals.²⁷⁴ The non-governmental organisation Slovak Catholic Charity implemented the *Nie si na predaj* [You are not for sale] campaign focused on the risks of exploitation of women and girls.²⁷⁵

In 2021, victims were referred to the Slovak Catholic Charity and Prešov Greek Catholic Charity non-governmental organisations, which provide help and support to human trafficking victims within a specialised Reintegration Programme for the Victims of Human Trafficking. The Slovak Catholic Charity also operated the National Help Line to help victims of human trafficking (800 800 818). The information line on human trafficking and safe travel was also operated by the IOM Slovakia in 2021. Their staff answered phone and e-mail queries about human trafficking, requests to vet labour agencies or requests for information on training to prevent human trafficking. The organisations also provided reintegration assistance to the victims.²⁷⁶ In 2021, social and material assistance, psychological, social and legal counselling were most often provided to the victims included in the above-mentioned programme in 2021.²⁷⁷

Pre-return assistance was provided to 11 persons (10 Slovak and 1 EU citizen). Assisted voluntary return was provided to 2 Slovak citizens.

In 2021, the IOM updated the *Prevencia obchodovania s ľuďmi* [Human Trafficking Prevention] training manual²⁷⁸ and the *SAFE Travel & Work Abroad mobile application*²⁷⁹. They now include new information related to the UK's exit from the EU. It has also expanded the number of languages on the application by four more. The application is therefore available in 11 languages: Slovak, English, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, German, French, Roma, Russian, Ukrainian and Serbian. The IOM has also updated *Tips and activities for professionals*²⁸⁰ on how to use the SAFE Travel & Work Abroad application to educate young people about human trafficking and to inform them about safe travel.²⁸¹

273 Source: <https://www.charita.sk/pozyvame-na-podujatie-moda-a-ako-obchod/#> (consulted on 09/05/2022).

274 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?aktuality-obchodovanie-s-ludmi&sprava=pred-letnou-sezonou-ministerstvo-vnutra-pripravilo-kampan-onastrahach-obchodovania-s-ludmi> (consulted on 09/05/2022).

275 Source: <https://obchodsludmi.sk/nova-kampan-nie-si-na-predaj/> (consulted on 09/05/2022).

276 Source: Questionnaire from the IOM.

277 Source: Questionnaire from the DFEA MIO.

278 Available at: <https://iom.sk/sk/publikacie/boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi.html?download=234:ct/iom-cthb-treningovy-manual-2021.pdf> (consulted on 08/05/2022).

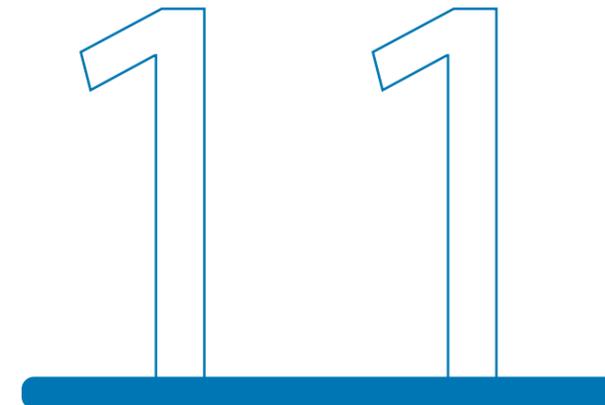
279 Available at Google Play (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.beesafe.ios.safe>), AppStore (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/safe-travel-work-abroad/id1163826719?mt=8>) a www.safe.iom.sk (consulted on 08/05/2022).

280 Available at: <https://iom.sk/sk/publikacie/boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi.html?download=284:ct/iom-manual-safe-app-2021-sk.pdf> (consulted on 08/05/2022).

281 Source: Questionnaire from the IOM.

10.5. Research

Within the European Migration Network (EMN) activities, the contribution of the SR to the EMN study *Third-Country National Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings: Detection, Identification and Protection* was prepared in 2021. The study addresses the national measures and experiences around detection, identification and protection of third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings. It maps the measures in 2015 – 2020 and covers migrants who are asylum applicants, in an irregular situation or in possession of a valid authorisation to stay in a country where they are. The study also maps the cooperation between countries at the European and international levels. It identifies the main challenges and good practices with respect to the impact of COVID-19.²⁸²



Returns and Readmissions

The pandemic situation also continued to influence the number of returns carried out in 2021. There was no new significant development in legislation or policies. The responsible institutions continued to implement projects focusing on the execution of returns, capacity building and assistance to returnees.

11.1. Statistics and Trends

Measures adopted to stop the spread of COVID-19 continued to influence returns and caused their decrease – especially of voluntary returns, including assisted voluntary returns from the SR. As for forced returns, there was a slight increase compared with 2020: from 193 in 2020 to 298 forced returns in 2021. In 2021, nationals of Ukraine, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey and Bangladesh were in particular returned using the forced returns mechanism.

A significant decrease was noted in voluntary returns, including assisted voluntary returns: from 250 in 2020 to 72 in 2021. As for assisted voluntary returns, only 9 were executed in 2021 as compared with 80 in 2020. A legislation change related to the COVID-19 pandemic was the reason for such a significant decrease: According to the amendment to the Act on Residence of Foreigners, the residence of foreigners was deemed valid even after their permits expired as well as one month after the end of extraordinary situation. This considerably limited migrants' access to the AVR programme. Foreign nationals holding an expired residence permit were not issued a decision on administrative expulsion, which means that they did not meet the criteria for registering

²⁸² Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/663-statni-prislusnici-tretich-krajin-ako-obete-obchodovania-s-ludmi-zistovanie-identifikacia-a-ochrana-2021.html> (consulted on 08/05/2022).

into the AVR programme. Other pandemic-related restrictions also contributed to the low number of assisted voluntary returns, e.g. limitations by the countries of origin to receive even their own nationals, travel restrictions (the reduced number of flights and destinations where they flew) and sanitary and health restrictions related to vaccination or testing. In 2021, IOM-mediated assisted voluntary return was utilised mainly by Serbian and Turkish nationals. Reintegration aid was provided to 28 persons, in particular from Serbia and Ukraine.²⁸³

Overall, the number of returns significantly decreased compared with the previous years: 1,740 returns in 2017, 2,097 returns in 2018, and 1,596 returns in 2019 (see **Table 12** in the Annex).²⁸⁴

11.2. Developments in Policies and Legislation

The readmission agreements and return priorities of the SR were defined in the adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025* (see Section 2.1).

Within the return policy, the SR prefers voluntary returns, including assisted voluntary returns to forced returns, if this is made possible by the nature of the case and purpose of the procedure. Concerning returns and readmission agreements, the priority of the SR is mainly to conclude new or revise existing readmission agreements and their implementing protocols, including support for concluding EU readmission agreements, to improve and strengthen cooperation with third countries whose citizens are most often expelled or in which the problem with implementing expulsion persists, to ensure an effective system of checking the fulfilment of return assistance conditions, to follow diligent enforcement of court and administrative expulsions, to perform joint checks in order to identify illegal work and illegal employment.²⁸⁵

11.3. Forced Returns and Readmissions

In 2021, the SR launched the Readmission Case Management System (RCMS)²⁸⁶ platform with Pakistan. However, it has not yet been used. The SR is also included in the RCMS with Sri Lanka, which has already been used successfully. The SR does not plan RCMS platforms with other third countries.²⁸⁷

As in the previous years, the implementation of BBAP PFP's *Forced Return – AMIF III* project continued in 2021.²⁸⁸ Its main goal was to improve the effectiveness of return operations management and ensure the sustainable, safe and dignified return of third-country nationals with the aim of contributing to the management of effective migration flows. The project activities are mainly operative in nature (ensuring transport, flight tickets, accommodation, replacement of travel documents, interpreting, expert assessment of age, etc.).

283 Source: BBFP PFP and IOM.

284 Source: BBFP PFP and IOM.

285 Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162> (consulted on 26/04/2022).

286 System aiming to facilitate the execution of readmission.

287 Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

288 The project follows the Forced Return – AMIF II, which was implemented in 2017 – 2019. It was financed from the National AMIF programme until 31 December 2021.

In 2021, the BBFP PFP's *Capacity Building in the Field of Returns III* national project was finalised.²⁸⁹ It focused on educating employees through training aimed at legislation and its practical implementation during the work of the Border and Foreign Police.

The Slovak Humanitarian Council non-governmental organisation continued to implement the KOMPAS III project in 2021,²⁹⁰ which primarily focused on the provision of dignified living conditions to persons placed in the BBFP PFP specialised facilities or 60 days following their release from these facilities, with a special emphasis on vulnerable groups. The project activities included the provision of social and psychological counselling to the third-country nationals in PDCFs, leisure time activities and education (Slovak language and cultural orientation courses), supplementary health care, material assistance and translations and interpreting. Third-country nationals released from PDCFs received assistance for 60 days following their release. The aid to such persons included basic care (provision of basic needs for a dignified life, such as hygienic needs, necessary health care, a food benefit, financial means for administrative costs, low threshold accommodation, travel expenses, field social care) and was provided based on consultation and a favourable statement of the PDCF. The above activities contribute to an effective return process for these persons.²⁹¹

11.4. Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration

In 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) continued to implement humane, dignified and financially effective returns of unsuccessful asylum seekers and foreigners without a residence permit to their country of origin within the *Voluntary Return and Reintegration in the Country of Origin*²⁹² project. The activities included comprehensive services within the programme: informing the target group and cooperating institutions about the programme, preparation and implementation of assisted voluntary returns to the countries of origin, and the provision of reintegration assistance to migrants following their return.

In 2021, 9 foreigners returned from Slovakia to 6 countries with the assistance of the IOM. The IOM provided reintegration assistance for obtaining basic living needs and making a living after returning home to 28 individuals and families in 2 countries – Serbia and Ukraine. Migrants used the assistance in particular for the provision of temporary housing, reconstruction of houses, health care assistance or the combination of several types of assistance.²⁹³

289 The project was funded by the AMIF.

290 The project follows the KOMPAS II project which had been implemented from 1 December 2016 to 31 December 2019. The implementation period of KOMPAS III project was 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2021.

291 Pracros Girmanová, A., Ulrichová, N.: Responses to Long-Term Irregularly Staying Migrants: Practices and Challenges – contribution of the SR, IOM Bratislava, 2020.

292 The project was a natural continuation of the previous project titled Voluntary Return and Reintegration in the Country of Origin project. The project is funded by the AMIF and the original planned implementation period was by 31 December 2021. In 2021, by a decision of Ministry of Interior of the SR, the implementation was prolonged by 30 October 2022.

293 Source: IOM Bratislava.

12

Migration and Development Cooperation

In the adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025*, the priorities of the SR concerning the synergies of migration with humanitarian aid and development cooperation were defined. They include above all increasing coherence between migration and development policy, directing aid and cooperation not only into priority countries, but also into the countries relevant from the perspective of migration into Slovakia or the EU, preventing forced and irregular migration, as well as using the potential of circular migration and Government scholarships for the development of countries outside of the EU.

In 2021, the SR helped the countries of origin or transit of irregular migrants or refugees through several SlovakAid, EU and UN mechanisms. Slovakia did not implement systemic changes concerning the synergy of migration and development policies of countries outside the EU in 2021. In 2021, it continued to focus on addressing the origin and causes of forced migration and therefore contributed to the EU Trust Funds.

Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2021 states migration as one of the most important long-term challenge of development cooperation. In this document, the SR continues to support “dealing with the causes of migration in the countries of origin and transit, be it by means of bilateral activities or within the V4 regional format”.

The SR has prepared two strategies for development cooperation for 2021 – 2023 with Kenya and Moldova, in which it works on migration topics, too. A new ODA tool called *Sharing Slovak Expertise* supported passing on Slovak experience in asylum and migration in 2021, which led to

a closer cooperation between the SR and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina has repeatedly highlighted this experience and described it as extremely beneficial.

As in previous years, in 2021 the SR launched a call for supporting activities that respond to the consequences of armed conflicts and prevent the emergence and negative effects of migration by improving the living conditions of the population as well as their prospects for employment in their home communities. This was the call for humanitarian aid projects for the countries of the Middle East – specifically Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

12.1. Development Cooperation

In the adopted *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025*, the priorities of the SR concerning the synergies of migration with humanitarian aid and development cooperation were defined. The priorities of the SR within humanitarian aid and development cooperation include above all increasing coherence between migration and development policy, directing aid and cooperation not only into priority countries, but also into the countries relevant from the perspective of migration into Slovakia or the EU, preventing forced and irregular migration, as well as using the potential of circular migration and Government scholarships for the development of countries outside of the EU.²⁹⁴

Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2021 states migration as one of the most important long-term challenge of development cooperation. In this document, the SR continues to support “dealing with the causes of migration in the countries of origin and transit, be it by means of bilateral activities or within the V4 regional format”.²⁹⁵ In 2021, the SR did not open a separate call for Afghanistan within the development aid mainly due to the unfavourable security situation in the country after the Taliban took power, the small pool of applicants for the long-term, questionable transparency, and the impossibility of monitoring projects in the field.²⁹⁶ In 2021, assistance for Afghanistan was provided primarily through financial contributions to international organisations (UNHCR, IOM, ICRC) in the overall amount of €500,000.²⁹⁷

The SR has prepared three strategies for development cooperation for 2021 – 2023 with Kenya,²⁹⁸ Georgia,²⁹⁹ and Moldova.³⁰⁰ The strategies for Kenya and Moldova include migration topics. The strategy for Kenya works with the continued prioritisation of activities which are intended to help the country lower the forced and irregular migration rate.³⁰¹ The Strategy with Moldova mentions cooperation in the creation of a market environment and jobs in order to lower the pressure to emigrate.³⁰²

²⁹⁴ Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the Year 2025, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky&subor=419162>

²⁹⁵ Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2021, p. 1, available at: <https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Zameranie-ODA-SR-2021.pdf>

²⁹⁶ Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2021, available at: <https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Zameranie-ODA-SR-2021.pdf> (consulted on 12/05/2022).

²⁹⁷ Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

²⁹⁸ Source: Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Development Cooperation with the Republic of Kenya for 2021 – 2023, available at: https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CSP-Kena_online_23.7..pdf (consulted on 17/05/2022).

²⁹⁹ Source: Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Development Cooperation with Georgia for 2021 – 2023, available at: https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CSP-Gruzinsko_online_23.7..pdf (consulted on 17/05/2022).

³⁰⁰ Source: Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Development Cooperation with the Republic of Moldova for 2021 – 2023, available at: https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CSP-Moldavsko_online_23.7..pdf (consulted on 17/05/2022).

³⁰¹ Source: Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Development Cooperation with the Republic of Kenya for 2021 – 2023, available at: https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CSP-Kena_online_23.7..pdf (consulted on 17/05/2022).

³⁰² Source: Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Development Cooperation with the Republic of Moldova for 2021 – 2023, available at: https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CSP-Moldavsko_online_23.7..pdf (consulted on 17/05/2022).

A new ODA tool called *Sharing Slovak Expertise* supported information exchange and passing on Slovak experience in asylum and migration in 2021, which led to signing the *Memorandum of Cooperation on Migration and Asylum between the Slovak Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina* (see Section 9.3). Several months later, this activity was followed by deploying the Migration Office of the MoI SR to Bosnia and Herzegovina to ascertain the current situation, assess the development in the field, map the existing needs and exchange experiences or receiving asylum seekers/migrants and working with them in asylum facilities/temporary centres, in particular with vulnerable groups.³⁰³

In 2021, projects in cooperation with the V4 countries continued. One example is the Kenya project, which helps solve the causes of irregular and forced migration in Kenya by creating new jobs for young people and stimulating economic independence of inhabitants through working in agriculture (€1.9 mil.). The project was successful in obtaining funding (€580,000) through the AgriFI Kenya Challenge Fund for the construction of a cashew nut and sesame processing factory in Kilifi, as well as a grant from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (€2.81 mil.) for the follow-up activities of the project.³⁰⁴

12.2. Humanitarian Aid

As in previous years, in 2021 the SR launched a call for supporting activities that respond to the consequences of armed conflicts and prevent the emergence and negative effects of migration by improving the living conditions of the population as well as their prospects for employment in their home communities. This was the call for humanitarian aid projects for the countries of the Middle East – specifically Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. Five humanitarian projects with a total subsidy of €999,914.97 were approved (two are implemented in Lebanon, two in Syria and one in Iraq). The call placed specific focus on the improvement of living conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons, the adverse economic situation of individuals and on creating conditions that allow for their return, provided the situation in their countries of origin or in their original place of residence allows it.³⁰⁵ In May 2021, the clinic in the Palestinian Dbayeh refugee camp in Lebanon, which is a project of the St. Elizabeth College of Health and Social Work, was visited by a Slovak delegation led by the State Secretary of the MoFEA SR, Ingrid Brocková. The participating Slovak Members of Parliament and representatives of the MoFEA SR also brought two tons of material humanitarian aid to Lebanon, mainly intended for measures against the spread of COVID-19. The aid was officially handed over to the University Hospital in Beirut.³⁰⁶

Further financial contributions of the SR in 2021 for international protection included, for example, €957,880 to the EU Trust Facility for Refugees (Turkey), €30,000 for UNHCR during the Donors' Conference on Venezuela and €50,000 for the International Federation of Red Cross in connection with the situation on the EU-Belarus border.

In 2021, the SR supported the most vulnerable groups of the population – migrants and refugees – also in the form of material humanitarian aid, which was distributed in Lithuania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Greece.

In 2020, the SR also continued to grant Government scholarships (see Section 3.4) for countries affected by conflict or for countries of origin of migration, while increasing their number. In 2021, it awarded 25 scholarships to students from countries affected by conflict.³⁰⁷

slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CSP-Moldavsko_online_23.7..pdf (consulted on 17/05/2022).

303 Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

304 Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

305 Questionnaire from the MoFEA SR.

306 Source: <https://spravy.rtvs.sk/2021/05/slovensky-projekt-pomaha-palestinskym-utecencom-v-libanone/?fbclid=IwAR2gFz1tfy55DjavAA01pmi3glwFW6JtxzTiPHrEgMpE1PrxPrk3heyYqQ> (consulted on 17/05/2022).

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Questionnaire filled in by the Department of International Relations and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior of the SR

Questionnaire filled in by the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the SR

Questionnaire filled in by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR

Questionnaire filled in by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR

Questionnaire filled in by the Statistical Office of the SR

Questionnaire filled in by the Office of the IOM in the SR

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Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Development Cooperation with Georgia for 2021 – 2023

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Annex: National Statistics

The Annex contains selected migration and international protection statistics for 2021, including those which are not collected at EU level through Eurostat³⁰⁸ or Frontex agency³⁰⁹.

National statistics for Slovakia are available mainly in the annual statistical overviews of BBFP PFP³¹⁰ (legal and irregular migration, returns), annual statistical reports of MO Mol SR³¹¹ (international protection including UAMs applying for asylum), statistics of COLSAF³¹² (employment of foreigners, UAMs not applying for asylum), MoFEA SR³¹³ (visa), SO SR³¹⁴ (demographic data and international migration), Public Administration Section of Mol SR³¹⁵ (citizenship) and MoESRS SR³¹⁶ (education of children). Summary of the basic statistical data on migration in Slovakia for a calendar year from Eurostat provides the annual EMN Country Factsheet³¹⁷ on developments in the area of migration and international protection or the website of the IOM Office in the SR³¹⁸.

Table 1: Foreigners with valid residence in the SR in 2021 (by nationality and type of residence)

Indicator	As of 31 December 2021		Top nationalities of foreigners
Number of foreigners with valid residence	167,519		1. Ukraine (56,480) 2. Serbia (16,331) 3. Czech Rep. (12,562) 4. Hungary (9,565) 5. Vietnam (7,235)
Share of foreigners in total population	3.08 %		
Number of TCNs with valid residence	111,427	temporary residence: 85,286	1. Ukraine (56,480) 2. Serbia (16,331) 3. Vietnam (7,235) 4. Russia (6,389) 5. UK (2,795)
		Permanent residence: 26,066	
		Tolerated stay: 75	
Share of TCNs in total number of foreigners	66.52 %		
Share of TCNs in total population	2.05 %		

Source: BBFP PFP and SO SR.

Note: *The total population of the Slovak Republic represents number of persons with permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic irrespective of their citizenship. As of 31 December 2021 the total population was 5,434,712.

308 Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics (consulted on 8/03/2021).

309 Available at: <http://frontex.europa.eu/publications/> (consulted on 8/03/2021).

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312 Available at: http://www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/zamestnavanie-cudzincov-statistiky.html?page_id=10803 (consulted on 8/03/2021).

313 Statistics on numbers of issued visas are available upon request.

314 Available at: https://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/portal/ext/themes/demography/population/news!/ut/p/b1/jdDRColwFABgZ-kF3HFbc7ucRnM-l5jTLdhMWEVJqUBS9fRbeZp27A9__wznlogLZprxXx_JWtU15fu-WbY2nue-7Eri_wqC9OHXnxqi5Szuw6UCgZEi9CIBHagxahnkqDCEgyX95-DISfu-VnyFa72nnsawccAEKx4IJzoCxsSBojexgRe71YJoIWAqqgkm6mJeBphnEcOg2A8Abg-GnvABA1fGYVsfUHY9oUudF89MV8IRjJ5AKltdl4/d5/L2dBlSEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/ (consulted on 8/03/2021).

315 Statistics are available upon request.

316 Statistics are available upon request from the Ministry or from the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information, which processes and published these statistics.

317 Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/na-stiahnutie-emn/publikacie-emn/itemlist/category/5-vyrocné-spravy-emn> (consulted on 8/03/2021).

318 Available at: <http://www.iom.sk/sk/migracia/migracia-na-slovensku> (consulted on 8/03/2021).

Table 2: Third-country nationals with a valid residence by regions within the Slovak Republic in 2021

Region	As of 31 December 2021
Bratislava region	38,945
Trnava region	13,805
Košice region	13,760
Nitra region	12,041
Prešov region	9,957
Žilina region	9,318
Trenčín region	7,718
Banská Bystrica region	5,883
Total	111,427

Source: BBFP PFP.

Table 3: Residence permits issued in the SR to third-country nationals in 2020 by sex and purpose³¹⁹

Sex	Total (out of which first permits)	Residence purpose			
		Family formation and reuni- fication (family reasons) ³²⁰	Education and study ³²¹	Remunerated activities ³²²	Other reasons ³²³
Male	:	:	:	:	:
Female	:	:	:	:	:
Total (out of which first permits)	53,931 (29,067)	8,405 (3,707)	4,232 (2,721)	39,314 (21,852)	1,980 (787)

Source: BBFP PFP.

Notes: Total residence permits are understood all granted, renewed or extended residences in the given year. First residences (data in brackets) are understood residences which were granted in the given year in the SR for the very first time or in the period of minimum 6 month after the end of the previous residence.

319 Reasons for issuing residence are in accordance with the respective EU legislation (Commission Regulation (EU) No. 216/2010 of 15 March 2010 implementing Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection, as regards the definitions of categories of the reasons for the residence permits) and are divided into four categories: 1. Family formation and reunification, (family reasons) 2. Education and study, 3. Remunerated activities, and 4. Other reasons. National types of and reasons for residence permits are divided into these four categories.

320 Category **family formation and reunification (family reasons)** following the Act on Residence of Foreigners No. 404/2011 as amended includes: 1. temporary residence – person with long term residence in another MS in line with Article 30 par. 1e); family reunification; Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states the category family); 2. permanent residence for 5 years in line with Article 43 par. 1a) to d); family member of EU citizen; Brexit for 5 years (if the foreigner states the category family) – registered from 2020 onwards; 3. permanent residence for unlimited period of time in line with Article 46 par 1a) and b); family member of EU citizen - permanent; 4. long term residence in line with Article 52 par. 1a) - family; Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states the category family); Article 52 par. 1b) (if the foreigner states the category family); Brexit for unlimited period of time (if the foreigner states the category family) – registered from 2020 onwards; 5. tolerated stay – if it is needed due to the respect for private and family life of the foreigner and does not represent a threat to the security of the state and public order in line with Article 58 par. 1b).

321 Category **education and study** following the Act on Residence of Foreigners No. 404/2011 as amended includes: 1. temporary residence for the purpose of study (study – student, study - pupil); study – student/Art. 24 par. 1b), study – student/Art. 24 par. 1/c), study – student/Art. 34 par.1 b), study – pupil/Art. 24 par. 1a), special activities – Governmental or EU programme (only category study); special activities – international treaty (only category study); special activities – international treaty (only category study, special activities - traineeship within study outside of the SR; special activities – volunteering activities; for the purpose person with long term residence in another MS in line with Article 30 par. 1c) or in line with Article 30 par. 1d) (if the foreigner states the category study); Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states the category study); 2. permanent residence for 5 years - Brexit for 5 years (if the foreigner states the category study) – registered from 2020 onwards; 3 long-term residence for the unlimited period of time in line with Article 52 par. 1a) – Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states the category study); Article 52 par. 1b) – special activities (if the foreigner states the category study), Article 52 par. 1b) (foreigner states the category study);

322 Category **remunerated activities** following the Act on Residence of Foreigners No. 404/2011 as amended includes: 1. temporary residence for the purpose of business; business – start-up; employment in line with Article 23 par. 1 a 2, seasonal employment; special activities – journalist; special activities – lecturing; special activities – artistic activities; special activities – sport; special activities – international treaty (only category remunerated); special activities – Governmental or EU programme (only category remunerated), for the purpose of intra-corporate transfer (ICT – manager, ICT – specialist, ICT – trainee); person with a long-term residence in another MS in line with Article 30 par. 1a) and b) and also in line with Article 30 par. 1d) (if the foreigner states category remunerated); performing professional duties by civilian units of the armed forces in line with Article 28; EU Blue Card; Research and development; Research and development /Art. 34. par.1b); Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states category remunerated); 2. permanent residence for 5 years in line with Article 43 par. 1e) – interest of the SR; Brexit for 5 years (if the foreigner states category remunerated) – registered from 2020 onwards; 3. permanent residence for unlimited period of time in line with Article 46 par. 1a) – interest of the SR; 4. long-term residence in line with Article 52 par. 1a) - employment; Article 52 par. 1a) - business; Article 52 par.1a) – research and development; Article 52 par. 1a) – Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states category remunerated), Article 52 par. 1a) – special activities (if the foreigner states category remunerated), Article 52 par. 1b) (if the foreigner states category remunerated); Article 52 par. 1c) – EU Blue Card holder; Brexit for unlimited period of time (if the foreigner states category remunerated) – registered from 2020 onwards.

323 Category **other reasons** following the Act on Residence of Foreigners No. 404/2011 as amended includes the following types of residence which do not fall under any of the previous: 1. temporary residence for the purpose of special activities – health care - providing healthcare and accompanying a TCN who is provided healthcare; Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states category other reasons); person with long-term residence in another MS in line with Article 30 par. 1d) (if the foreigner states category other reasons); 2. permanent residence for 5 years in line with Article 43 par. 1e) – if it is in the interest of the SR and based on Article 45a (if the foreigner states category other reasons); Brexit for 5 years (if the foreigner states category other reasons) – registered from 2020 onwards; 3. permanent residence for unlimited period of time in line with Article 46 par. 2 – if it is in the security interests of the SR (if the foreigner states category other reasons); 4. long-term residence for the unlimited period of time in line with Article 52 par. 1a) – Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states category other reasons); Article 52 par. 1b) (if the foreigner states category other reasons); Brexit for unlimited period of time (if the foreigner states category other reasons) – registered from 2020 onwards; 5. tolerated stay – if it concerns a minor found in the SR in line with Article 58 par. 1a) or if it concerns victim of trafficking in human beings who is at least 18 years old in line with Article 58 par. 1c), eventually if it concerns victim of trafficking in human beings who is at least 18 years old, where as a tolerated stay a period of maximum 90 days in line with Article 58 par. 3 is considered, further if it results from international obligations of the SR in line with Article 58 par. 1 d), also if it concerns illegally employed person under particularly exploitative working conditions or an illegally employed minor person, whose presence in the SR is necessary for the purpose of criminal proceeding in line with Article 58 par. 2; 6. subsidiary protection; 7. asylum.

Table 4: Foreigners employed in the SR in 202

	As of 31 December 2021 (out of which female)	Top nationalities	Top nationalities (third-country nationals)
EU/EEA citizens	29, 595 (8, 465)	1. Ukraine (19, 453) 2. Serbia (9, 243) 3. Romania (7, 016) 4. Czech Rep. (6, 006) 5. Hungary (5, 105)	1. Ukraine (19, 453) 2. Serbia (9, 243) 3. Russia (809) 4. Republic of Korea (749) 5. Bosnia and Herzegovina (722)
Third-country nationals	38, 593 (10, 966)		
Total	68, 188 (19, 431)		

Source: COLSAF.

Table 5: Visas issued by the SR to third country nationals in 2021 (by type of visa and previous residence)

Total	(Schengen) short stay visas (A and C and LTV types of visa)		National visas (D type of visa)*	
	previous residence			
	issued in third country	issued in other EU MS	issued in third country	issued in other EU MS
8, 365	3, 241	4, 77	4, 475	172

Source: MoFEA SR (based on the Microcomp data from the NVIS system).

* Out of the total number, MoI SR issued 100 national visas .

Explanations:

- A type of visa – airport transit visa
- C type of visa – tourist visa
- D type of visa – national visa
- LTV visa – visa with limited territorial validity

Table 6: Acquired Slovak citizenship* in 2021 (by sex and previous citizenship)

Sex	Total Slovak citizenship acquired by foreigners	Top previous citizenships (foreigners)	Total Slovak citizenship acquired by third country nationals**	Top previous citizenships (third country nationals)
Male	373	1. Hungary (104) 2. Czech Rep. (59) 3. Germany (16) 4. Switzerland (13) 5. Romania (9)	270	1. Serbia (242) 2. Ukraine (75) 3. Russia (36) 4. USA (22) 5. UK (18)
Female	334		210	
Total	707		480	

Source: MoI SR

Note: * Citizenship of the SR is usually acquired by naturalization.

** Following so called Brexit, the total number includes also UK citizens.

Table 7: Foreigners in the school system in the SR as of 15 September 2020 (school year 2020/2021) – kindergartens, primary and secondary schools

Indicator	Total	Out of which third country nationals	Top nationalities – third country nationals
Foreigners in kindergartens	1,089	:	:
Foreigners in primary schools	4,809	:	:
Foreigners in secondary schools	2,697	:	:
Foreigners total	8,595	:	:

Source: Slovak Center of Scientific and Technical Information

Note: This concerns kindergartens and primary schools – state, private, church and special schools. In case of secondary schools this concerns general secondary schools, conservatories, vocational secondary schools and special secondary schools.

Table 8: Irregular migration in the SR in 2021

Indicator	Number of cases	Top nationalities - third-country nationals
Registered illegal border crossings	210	1. Pakistan (31) 2. Ukraine (21) 3. Afghanistan (18) 4. Bangladesh (17) 5. Turkey (16)
Registered irregular stay	1 559	1. Afghanistan (452) 2. Morocco (284) 3. Syria (201) 4. Ukraine (187) 5. Algeria (64)
Total	1 769	1. Afghanistan (470) 2. Morocco (285) 3. Ukraine (208) 4. Syria (207) 5. Pakistan (93)

Source: BBFP PFP.

Table 9: Smuggled persons in the SR in 2021³²⁴

Indicator	Male	Female	Total	Top nationalities of third-country nationals
Third-country nationals identified as smuggled persons	:	:	834/270*	1. Serbia 2. Syria 3. Afghanistan 4. Somalia 5. Ukraine

Source: BBFP PFP.

* 834 irregular migrants were identified in investigation files in 2021, while the acts happened also in previous years. From the stated number in 2021, 270 irregular migrants who entered in the SR illegally with smugglers were arrested.

Notes:

(:) Unavailable data (in the cases documented by the NUCIM BBFP PFP, only the nationality of irregular migrants and the relation to the crime for which a charge was brought against the smugglers are recorded).

³²⁴ According to the Art. 355 and Art. 356 of the Act No. 300/2005 Coll. Criminal Code, smuggling is defined as follows:

§ 355: Any person who organises illegal crossing of the state border of the SR, or a transfer through its territory, for a person who is neither a citizen of the SR nor a person with permanent residence in the territory of the SR, or who enables such activity or aids and abets it with the intention of obtaining financial or other material benefit.

§ 356: Any person who, with the intention of obtaining financial or other material benefit for himself or another either directly or indirectly, enables or helps a person, who is neither a citizen of the SR or of another EU MS or a citizen of a contracting state of the Agreement on the EEA nor a person with permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic, to stay or get an illegal job in the territory of the SR or of other EU MS or a contracting state of the Agreement on the EEA, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of two to eight years.

Table 10: Smugglers in the SR – selected indicators in 2021

Indicator	Smugglers		
	Arrested as suspected/ charged	Top nationalities	Convicted
Total³²⁵	124*/106**	1. Slovak Republic 2. Ukraine 3. Syria	21***

Source: BBFP PFP (arrested as suspected), General Prosecutor's Office of the SR (charged) and Ministry of Justice of the SR (convicted).

* The total number of persons suspected from the criminal offence of migrant smuggling.

** The number of charges (out of the total arrested persons). 54 persons were charged with assisting in illegal entry and 52 persons were charged with assisting with illegal stay.

*** 20 persons were convicted based on Article 355 and 16 persons based on Article 356 of Act No. 300/2005 Coll. Criminal Code.

Table 11: Detained third-country nationals in the SR in 2021*

	PDCF Sečovce	PDCF Medveďov	Total
Number of placed TCNs as of 01/01/2021	105	79	184
Number of placed TCNs as of 31/12/ 2021	62	72	134
Number of placed TCNs during 2021	395	593	988

* TCNs detained by the SR are placed in Police Detention Centres for Foreigners (PDCF).

³²⁵ The number includes convicted persons based on Article 355, Article 356 of the new Criminal Code No. 300/2005 and Article 171 of the old Criminal Code No. 140/1961 (based on the nature of the criminal act).

Table 12: Third-country nationals returned from SR in 2020 (by type of return, nationality and country of return)

Indicator	Returned within forced return measures*				Returned voluntarily (including AVR)**				Returned voluntarily within AVR programme				Persons with provided reintegration assistance within AVR			
	Total	M	F	Out of which Min.	Total	M	F	Out of which Min.	Total	M	F	Out of which Min.	Total	M	F	Out of which Min.
Total	298	267	31	12	72	53	19	0	9	5	4	0***	28	6	22	0***
Top nationalities	1. Ukraine (75) 2. Pakistan (31) 3. Turkey (21) 4. Afghanistan (18) 5. Bangladesh (17)				1. Ukraine (58) 2. Serbia (4) 3. Georgia/Turkey (2)				1. Serbia (3) 2. Turkey (2) 3. Ukraine/Moldova/China/Nigeria (1)				1. Serbia (23) 2. Ukraine (5)			
Top countries of return	1. Ukraine (237) 2. Hungary (25) 3. Serbia (10) 4. Turkey (6) 5. Georgia (5)				1. Ukraine (60) 2. Serbia (4) 3. Georgia/Turkey (2)				1. Serbia 2. Turkey 3. China/Moldova/ 4. Nigeria/Ukraine				1. Serbia 2. Ukraine			

Source: BBFP PFP³²⁶ and IOM in the SR³²⁷.

* Forced return – This category refers to the execution of decision on administrative or judicial expulsion by Police Force escort: a) via external land border; b) via internal land border or; c) via airplane to a third country.

** Returned voluntarily (including AVR) – This category includes a) voluntary fulfilment of an obligation to travel out of the Slovak territory within the time limit set in the decision on administrative expulsion due to detected unauthorised stay within the Slovak territory (fulfilment of this obligation was recorded at the border crossing on external border) or b) traveling out of the Slovak territory after detecting irregular stay on the border crossing point while a foreigner is leaving Slovakia, issuing him/her decision on administrative expulsion. Such case includes also persons whose return was organised by IOM through the AVRR programme, after issuance of decision on administrative expulsion. One person is included only once (that means one person is only issued one decision on expulsion).

*** Explanations: AVR – assisted voluntary returns; F – female; M – male; Min – minor

Table 13: Asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection in the SR in 2021 – selected indicators

Indicator	Total	Male	Female	Out of which minors	Top nationalities***
Applications for asylum (out of which first applications)	370 (330)	335 (295)	35 (35)	21 (35)	1. Morocco (116) 2. Afghanistan (97) 3. Algeria (24) 4. India (20) 5. Libya (14)
Asylum granted	29	21	8	5	1. Afghanistan (16) 2. Iran (8) 3. Yemen (3) 4. Ghana/Turkey (1) 5. -
Asylum not granted**	122	120	2	1	:
Subsidiary protection provided*	13	12	1	1	1. Afghanistan (5) 2. Syria (4) 3. Somalia (2) 4. Pakistan/Libya (1) 5. -
Subsidiary protection not provided	14	14	0	0	1. Bangladesh (4) 2. Algeria/Morocco (3) 3. Egypt/Ghana/India/Turkey (1) 4. - 5. -
Citizenship granted to beneficiaries of international protection	10	:	:	:	:

Source: MO Mol SR.

Note: This table concerns first instance decisions only.

* Subsidiary protection is a form of international protection, where the decision on its non/provision is taken within the asylum procedure (in case asylum was not granted).

** Asylum not granted – the number includes also decisions on rejected asylum applications as evidently unfounded and rejected asylum applications as inadmissible.

*** If the number is low, it is not provided due to protection of vulnerable persons.

326 BBFP PFP provided return statistics based on data provided to Eurostat for 2021. BBFP PFP collected statistical data in compliance with the Art. 7.1. of the Regulation No. 862/2007 on Community Statistics on Migration and International Protection and with current Eurostat technical instructions (Technical Guidelines for the Data Collection – Enforcement of Immigration Legislation EIL Statistics).

327 IOM Office in the SR collects statistics on assisted voluntary returns and reintegrations which are, compared to data above, listed on its website as number of AVR and reintegration cases. One case can include several persons.

Table 14: Third-country nationals relocated to the SR in 2021 (by sex, country of origin and EU Member State)

Indicator	Total	Male	Female	Minor	Country of origin of relocated TCNs	Relocations made from EU MS
Total	0	0	0	0	-	-

Source: MO Mol SR.

Table 15: Third-country nationals resettled to the SR in 2021 (by sex and original host country)

Indicator	Total	Male	Female	Original host country
Total	0	0	0	-

Source: MO Mol SR.

Table 16: Third-country nationals resettled through the SR to third countries in 2021 (by sex and by original host country)

Indicator	Total	Male	Female	Original host country	Destination country
Total	0	0	0	-	-

Source: MO Mol SR and IOM Office in SR.

Note: The SR carries out through its territory resettlement activities to other third countries (see Section 4.3). Humanitarian transfer of refugees through the territory of the SR is based on trilateral agreement among the Slovak Government, UNHCR and IOM.

Table 17: Unaccompanied minors in facilities* in the SR in 2021

	Male	Female	Total	Top nationalities	Left**
Unaccompanied minors placed to facilities in 2021	181	2	183	1. Afghanistan (142) 2. Ukraine (6) 3. Syria (5) 4. Morocco (5) 5. Algeria (4)	164
Total number of unaccompanied minors in facilities in 2021	192	2	194	1. Afghanistan (148) 2. Ukraine (6) 3. Morocco (6) 4. Syria (5) 5. Algeria (5)	166

Source: COLSAF.

Note: * Unaccompanied minors in socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship (SPCSG) facilities.

** Unaccompanied minors who voluntarily left the facility.

Table 18: Unaccompanied minors in the SR by sex and legal status in 2021**

Indicator	Male	Female	Total	Top nationalities*
Unaccompanied minors not applying for asylum	171	2	173	1. Afghanistan (128) 2. Ukraine / Morocco (6) 3. Algeria (5) 4. Syria (4)
Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum	21	0	21	1. Afghanistan (14) 2. Turkey (2) 3. Other nationalities only by 1 person.
Total	192	2	194	x

Source: MO Mol SR (applying for asylum) and COLSAF (not applying for asylum).

Notes:

* Due to the low number of unaccompanied minors and related security reasons we do not provide concrete numbers.

** Unaccompanied minors in the care of socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship.

Table 19: Human trafficking victims from third countries in the SR – selected indicators in 2021*

Indicator		Total	Male	Female
TCNs identified as victims of human trafficking³²⁸ or presumed victims of human trafficking³²⁹		2 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)
Presumed victims are provided in brackets.				
Age	18 years of age or more	2 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)
	Under 18 years of age	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Form of exploitation ³³⁰	Sexual exploitation	2 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)
	Labour exploitation	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Other	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Top nationalities of trafficked persons		Confiden- tial data	Confiden- tial data	Confiden- tial data
Tolerated stay granted		0	0	0
Directive 2004/81/EC		0	0	0
Other		0	0	0
Residence permits requested		0	0	0
Directive 2004/81/EC		0	0	0
Other (e.g. humanitarian grounds etc.)		0	0	0
Residence permits granted		0	0	0
Directive 2004/81/EC		0	0	0
Other (e.g. humanitarian grounds etc.)		0	0	0

Source: BBFP PFP and Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the MoI SR.

* If the number is low, it is not provided due to protection of vulnerable persons. The specific number is substituted by „Confidential data“ statement.

328 Identified victims are those who have been formally identified by the relevant authority (i.e. the national person/body authorised to formally identify victims). Slovak National Referral Mechanism states that only the law enforcement bodies are authorised to formally identify a victim of human trafficking in the Slovak Republic.

329 Presumed victims are persons who fulfil the definition of victim of trafficking in human being, as outlined in Directive 2011/36/EU, but whom have not been formally identified by the relevant authorities (i.e. the national person/body authorised to formally identify victims).

330 More than one form of exploitation may be associated with each victim, therefore the statistics presented in this section may not necessarily agree with the overall totals entered above.

Table 20: Traffickers in human beings in the SR – selected indicators in 2021

Indicator	Traffickers of human beings	
	Charged	Convicted
Total	39*	21**

Source: BBFP PFP (charged) and Ministry of Justice of the SR (convicted).

* Number of lawfully concluded cases.

** According to the § 179 of the Criminal Code No. 300/2005 Coll



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