

# Migration Policy in Lithuania 2021

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Migration trends

Emigration and return migration

Immigration and integration of foreigners

Asylum

Combating irregular migration

International cooperation

Institutional framework

# MIGRATION TRENDS

## Lithuania in 1990-2022:

Population of Lithuania:

1990

**3.693 mln.**

2022

**2.806 mln.**

Since 1990, the population of Lithuania has decreased by

**▼ 888,000**



due to migration:  
**659,000**

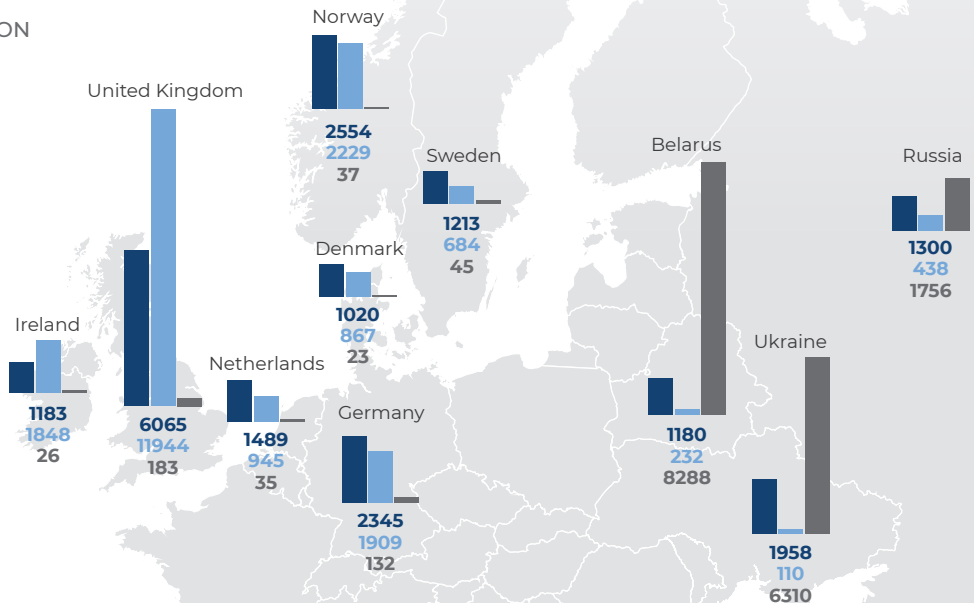


due to natural population change:  
**243,000**

The trend of positive net migration, which started in 2019, continued in 2021 with 19,700 more inhabitants coming to the country than leaving.

## Top countries by emigration and immigration in 2021

- EMIGRATION
- IMMIGRATION (Returning Lithuanians)
- IMMIGRATION (Foreigners)



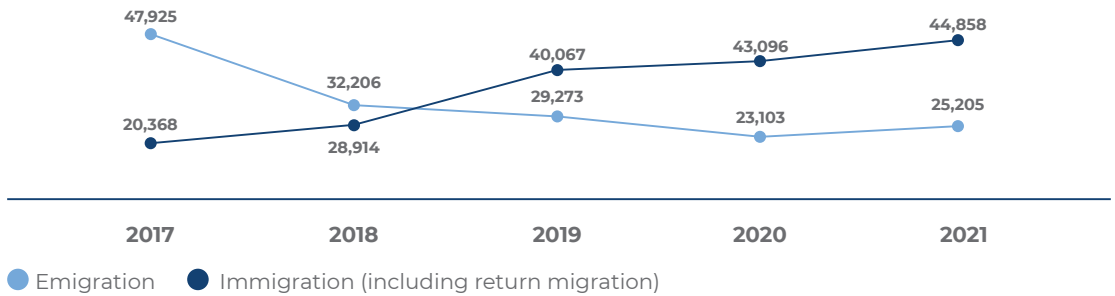
**53 %**

23,700

of immigrants were returning Lithuanian citizens

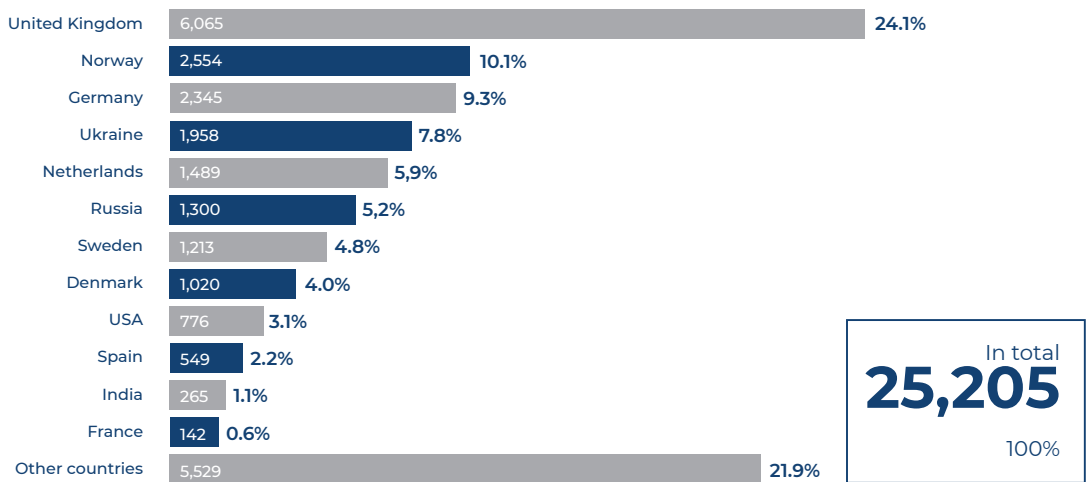
In 2020, the number of returning Lithuanians amounted to 20,800.

# Migration: a five-year overview

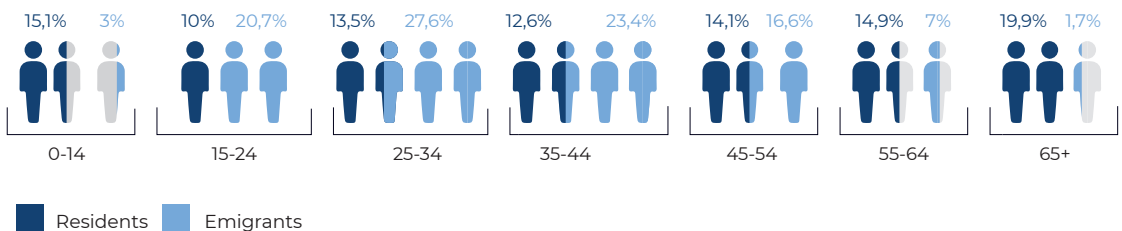


## EMIGRATION AND RETURN MIGRATION

### Emigrants by country of destination

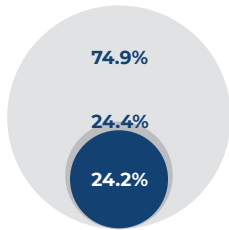
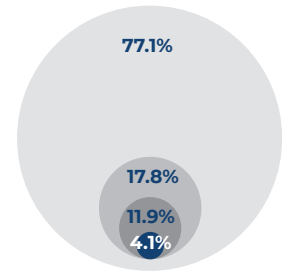


### Emigrants by age



## According to a [survey](#) of the Lithuanian diaspora (N=2073) commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Considers returning to Lithuania (3.7% fewer than in 2020)
- Plans to return to Lithuania (3.4% fewer than in 2020)
- Plans to return this year or in the next five years (2.1% fewer than in 2020)
- Plans to return this year or next year (0.7% fewer than in 2020)

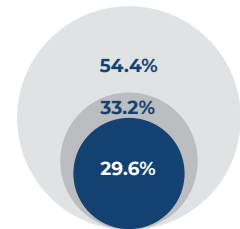


### Top 3 incentives for returning:

- Family and friends in Lithuania
- Wishing to raise children in Lithuania
- Wishing to work and create for Lithuania

### Top 3 obstacles and risks when planning a return:

- Low salaries
- Lack of tolerance in the society and xenophobia
- Feelings of insecurity and doubts if everything would work out / if reintegration would be successful



## Remittances to Lithuania

**658.2 mln. EUR**

1.3% of the GDP

The flow of remittances decreased by 43% in 2019-2021.

In comparison, the state budget allocated:

 national defense	 healthcare
<b>1.1 bln.</b>	<b>1.2 bln.</b>

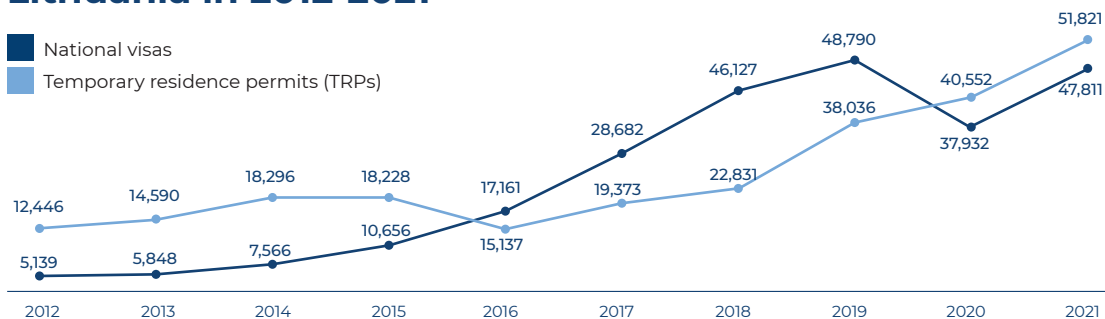
## Main areas of work and achievements:

- ▶ In 2021, the implementation of measures under the Demography, Migration, and Integration Policy Strategy for 2018-2030 and the Global Lithuania Program were continued. These measures seek to maintain economic, educational, cultural, and other relations with the Lithuanians abroad to encourage return migration.
- ▶ A mechanism was created for the transfer to Lithuania and integration support for citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, persons of Lithuanian origin and their family members who live in countries under humanitarian crises or find themselves in extreme situations and territories engulfed by a military conflict. By the end of 2021, 74 persons were transferred to Lithuania, while 160 persons were granted the transferee status.
- ▶ The Employment Service implemented a return migration project [Gal į Lietuvą?](#), which provides information to the Lithuanians residing abroad on Lithuania's labor market, employers and their expectations.
- ▶ In 2021, the Migration Information Center "I Choose Lithuania" continued carrying out activities funded by the Ministry of the Interior and implemented by International Organization for Migration (IOM) Vilnius Office:
  - The Center's website [www.renkuosilietuva.lt](http://www.renkuosilietuva.lt) had 943,931 visitors, which is 28% more than in 2020.
  - The number of consultations reached 11,929, exceeding the targeted number by almost 2,000. Most inquiries came from citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and persons of Lithuanian origin living in the UK, Norway, Germany, and Ireland. The topics of most interest included the social guarantees, the issuing of documents, returning to and living in Lithuania, healthcare, and the citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania.
  - The Migration Information Center provided 332 psychological consultations to migrants. Most consultations were given to foreigners residing in Lithuania and Lithuanians abroad who were considering returning or had returned to Lithuania.

# IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION OF FOREIGNERS

In 2021, nearly 70% of foreigners entered Lithuania from Ukraine and Belarus.

## Arrival of foreigners to Lithuania in 2012-2021



## Foreigners in Lithuania by grounds of entry (TRPs and national visas) in 2021



- Came with a temporary residence permit
- Arrived with the national visa
- Employment: highly qualified professionals
- Business: under the startup scheme

# Lists of shortage occupations in Lithuania in 2021



**Highly qualified employees**

**67** occupations

- Computer application engineers
- Software testers
- Software developers
- Graphic designers
- Aircraft operation professionals
- Ship operation professionals
- Others



**Qualified employees**

**96** occupations

- Drivers of international freight vehicles
- Welders
- Concreters
- Plasterers
- Ship metalwork fitters
- Bricklayers
- Others

Employees in these occupations enter under facilitated procedure.

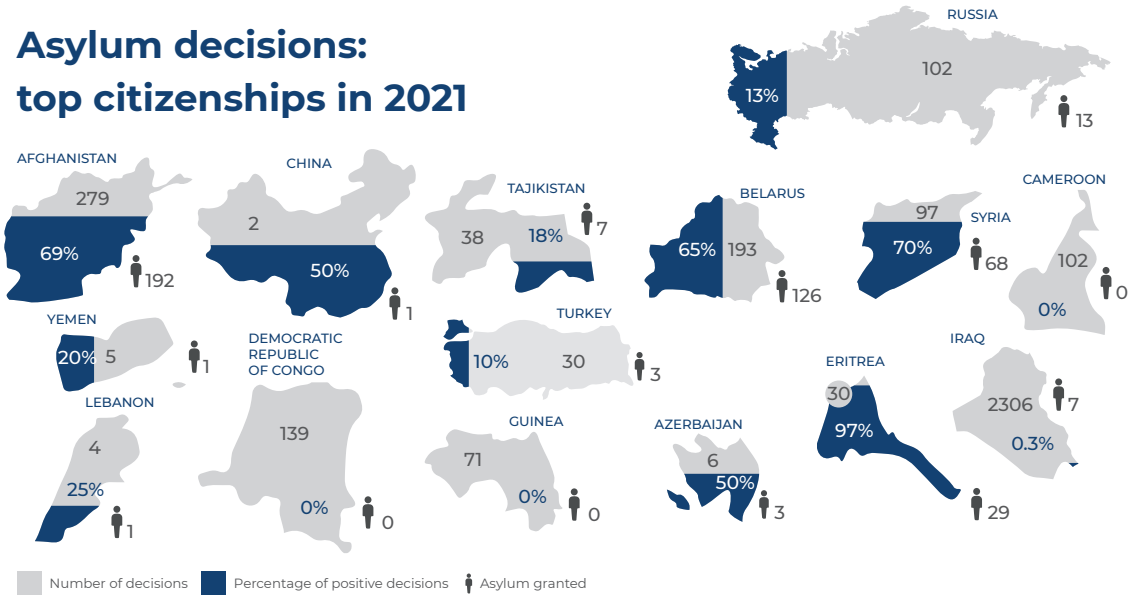
**1,301** third-country nationals participated in integration programs, which is 54% less than in 2020.

## Main areas of work and achievements:

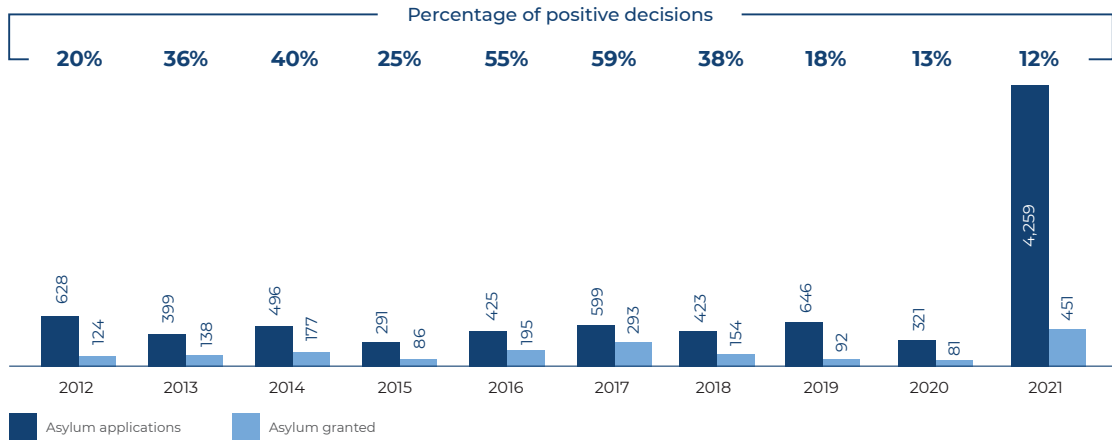
- ▶ Amendments to the Law on Investments came into effect on 1 January 2021, which provide for the issuing of temporary residence permits for up to three years to foreigners who come to Lithuania under an investment agreement that establishes special investment and business terms. This type of permits may be issued to investors, investor participants, and their family members.
- ▶ On 15 June 2021, the Law on Investments was amended to create more favorable conditions for companies in third countries to move their operations to Lithuania. The amendments established a new base for issuing temporary residence permits to third-country nationals who arrive in Lithuania as investors, investor employees, and their family members.
- ▶ In order to facilitate the requirements and conditions for foreigners who study or have completed their studies or do scientific research in Lithuania, the following amendments were made to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners:
  - Foreigners who have completed their studies or professional training programs and seek employment in Lithuania are no longer subject to requirements of work experience or employment within their profession.
  - Foreigners enrolled in masters or doctoral programs are allowed to work in Lithuania without the 20-hour per week limitation that applies to other students. They may also invite their family to Lithuania during their studies.
  - Foreigners who carry out scientific research and experimental development work in other EU Member States may engage in these activities in Lithuania and have the right to work as lecturers while waiting for the issue of a new temporary residence permit on a different basis.
- ▶ As of 2021, citizens of the United Kingdom and their family members are exempt from the terms and requirements for residence permits under the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners. Temporary residence permits for UK nationals are issued for 5 years, while long-term permits are issued for 10 years.
- ▶ Taking into consideration that foreigners arriving in Lithuania according to the List of Shortage Occupations do not always get employed in the country but use the facilitated procedure to enter the European Union, a [quota](#) has been set for this type of migration. The 2021 quota allowed for employing 32,200 foreigners under the facilitated procedure: 11,600 in services, 9,500 in industry, 9,100 in construction, and 2,000 in agriculture. The quota was used up only in the services sector.
- ▶ New programs were prepared for teaching third-country nationals the Lithuanian language and improving the skills of local teachers/experts. Furthermore, a [research report](#) was prepared on the experiences of teaching the Lithuanian language to third-country nationals and stateless persons, as well as available resources.
- ▶ The [International House Vilnius](#) was established to provide coordinated services to foreigners with high professional qualifications. Eight institutions joined the project and, by the end of last year, 1,115 consultations were given to facilitate the integration of migrants to the Lithuanian society.

# ASYLUM

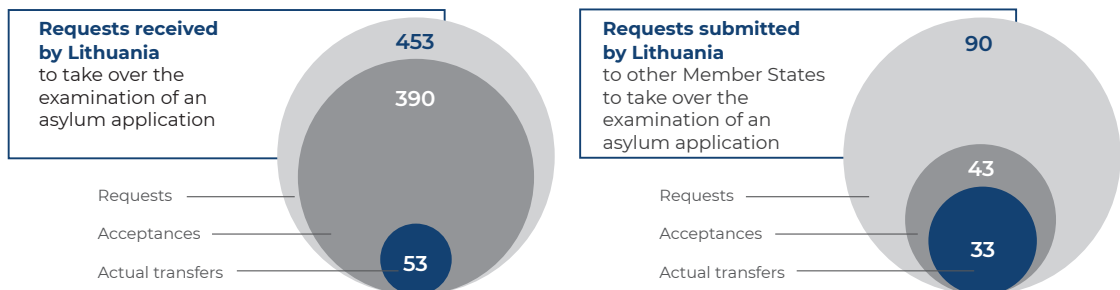
## Asylum decisions: top citizenships in 2021



## Asylum: a ten-year overview



## Transfers under the Dublin Regulation in 2021

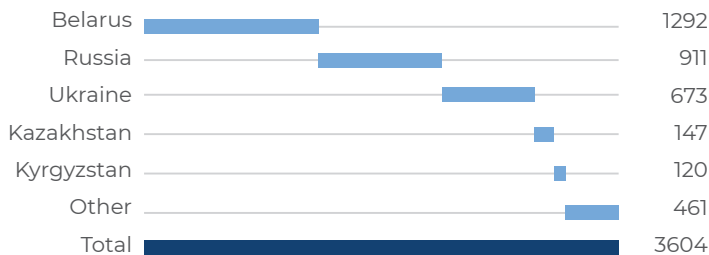


## Main areas of work and achievements:

- ▶ Due to the irregular migration flows organized by the Belarusian regime, the number of asylum seekers in Lithuania increased significantly in 2021 when 4,259 applied for asylum, which was 1226.8% more than in 2020.
- ▶ In response to the actions of the Belarusian regime, government institutions undertook the following decisions:
  - The Seimas made amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, which introduced different legal rules during periods of the state of emergency or extreme situations. The said amendments specified the procedures for the submission and examination of asylum applications and the accommodation of migrants, detailed the rights of foreign nationals, and regulated cooperation with non-governmental organizations.
  - It was provided that, during the state of emergency or extreme situation, asylum applications may be submitted at border control points and transit zones or at the diplomatic missions and consular agencies of the Republic of Lithuania. Exceptions were made on humanitarian grounds, taking into account the migrants' vulnerability and other individual circumstances.
  - Temporary mobile teams were set up for work with migrants and asylum seekers, which included employees of the Migration Department, the State Border Guard Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and the Office of the Government, who were supported by the EU Agency for Asylum.
  - Efforts were made to improve the reception conditions of the asylum seekers by building modular houses for their accommodation. The State Border Guard Service established two new registration centers in Medininkai and Kybartai, while the Ministry of Social Security and Labor opened a new refugee reception center in Vilnius.
- ▶ At the end of August 2021, when the government institutions assessed the threats arising from the Taliban's takeover of control in Afghanistan, Lithuania evacuated persons whose cooperation with the Lithuanian military put them in danger and their family members. All 179 persons who were evacuated from Afghanistan were granted refugee status in Lithuania.
- ▶ Last year Lithuania continued to show solidarity to other states by relocating and resettling foreigners in need of asylum. In 2021, 33 persons were transferred to Lithuania: 12 from Italy, 2 from Greece, 2 from Malta, and 17 from Ethiopia.

## COMBATING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

### Foreigners who were refused entry: top 5 citizenships in 2021



**0.34%**  
of all arriving foreigners  
were refused entry.

### Reasons for refusal of entry in 2021



**14%** (495)  
No valid document/  
a counterfeit document



**74%** (2,648)  
A threat to security or  
public order



**7%** (256)  
No documents justifying the  
purpose and conditions of stay



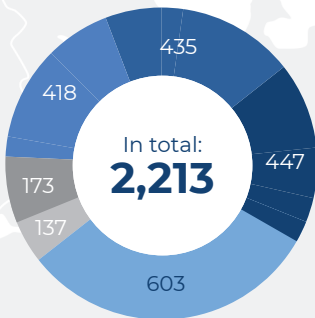
**5%** (183)  
Other

**100%** (3,582)



# Return and expulsion of foreigners

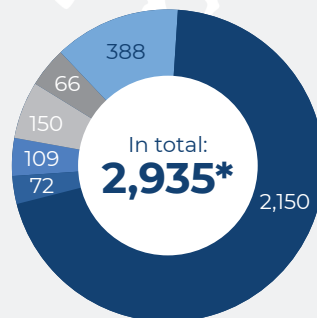
Return decisions by citizenship



- Belarus
- Ukraine
- Iraq
- Russia
- Kazakhstan
- Other

**Voluntary returns with the assistance of**  
 State Border Guard Service: 345  
 IOM Vilnius Office: 58

Expulsion decisions by citizenship



- Iraq
- Guinea
- Cameroon
- India
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Other

**Number of persons expelled: 44**

\* In cases when a foreigner agrees to return to his/her country of origin voluntarily, an expulsion decision could be changed to a return decision.

## Illegal employment

2021  
**3,800**

This is the number of illegal employment inspections carried out by the State Labor Inspectorate.



## Main areas of work and achievements:

In 2021, as a result of the Belarusian regime's instrumentalization of irregular migration to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, Lithuania experienced an unprecedented influx of migrants attempting to cross the state border illegally. In 2021, border guards detained a total of 4,339 persons who attempted to cross the EU border protected by Lithuania illegally, which was 60 times more than in 2020.

In order to strengthen the protection of the border with Belarus and establish control over irregular migration flows, various situation-stabilizing decisions were made, including the following:

- The Government of the Republic of Lithuania declared an extreme situation in the country, while the Seimas resolution established a state of emergency at the border with the Republic of Belarus, as well as in designated foreigner accommodation places and 200 meters around them.
- The installation of a physical barrier (barbed wire and sectional fences) in the most vulnerable areas of the border with Belarus. The installation of border monitoring devices is ongoing.
- The Seimas passed Resolution on Responding to the Hybrid Aggression, whereby the irregular migration flows organized by the Belarusian regime were declared to amount to hybrid aggression, and the Government was invited to use the Lithuanian military to support the protection of the state border with Belarus.
- The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated and the support of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency as well as the EUROPOL was received.

With the amendments of 20 May 2021 to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, it is now possible to ban foreigners from entering the Republic of Lithuania for up to 5 years in cases when there are grounds to believe that they actively support and (or) participate in activities of a foreign state that violate international law.

With amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners that came into effect on July 23, the Migration Department and the State Border Guard Service gained the right to provide financial support to foreigners who agree to voluntarily return to their country of origin. According to the procedure established by the Minister of the Interior, foreigners who entered the territory of the Republic of Lithuania from the Republic of Belarus illegally and who agree to voluntarily return to their country of origin are provided with travel tickets and granted a lump-sum payment of 300 euro. On December 8, the lump-sum payment amount was temporarily increased to 1000 euros (500 euros for children under the age of 14).

# INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

## Main areas of work and achievements:

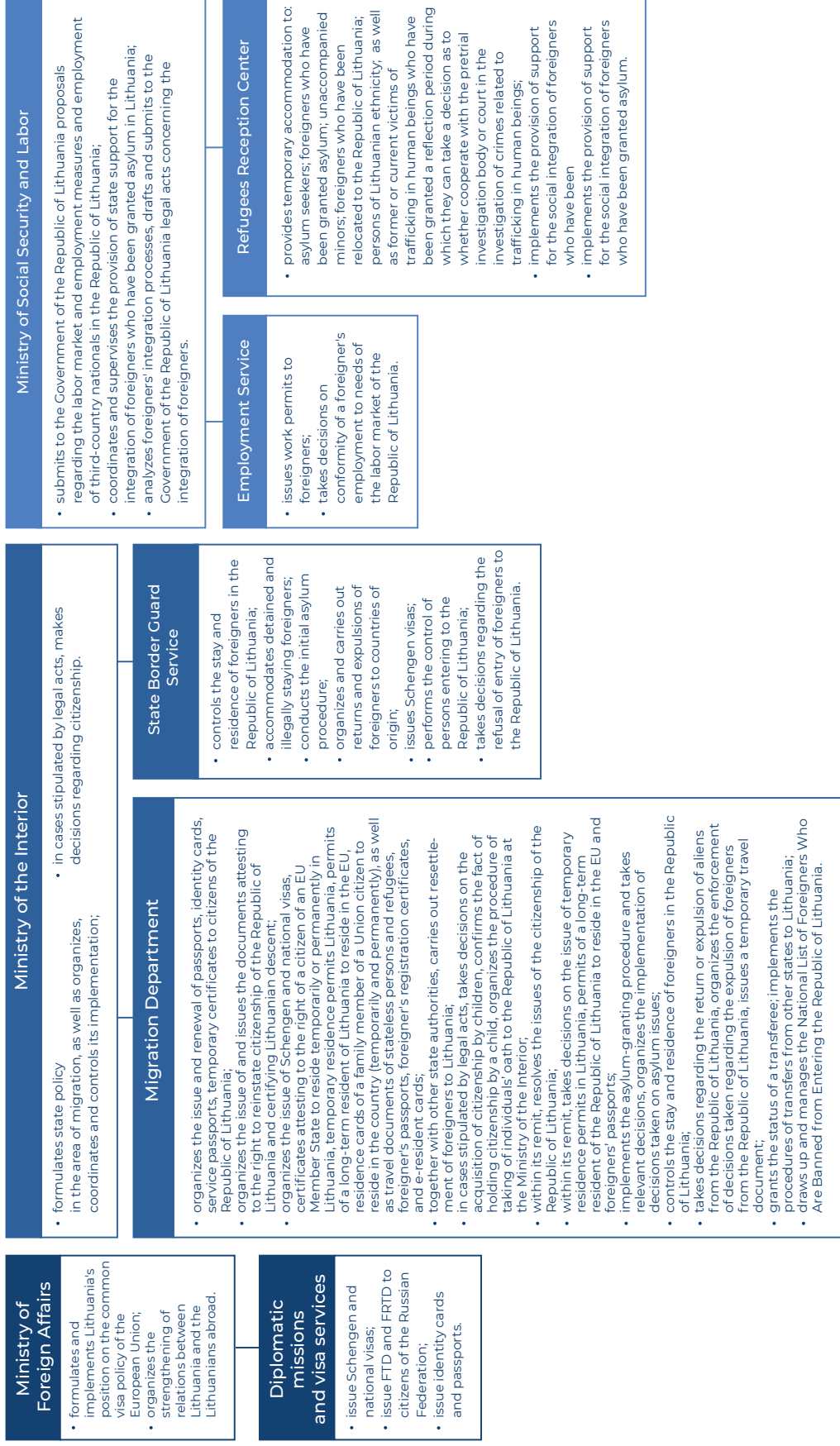
- ▶ In order to attract the attention of the international community to the irregular migration flows organized by the Belarusian regime, public letters and appeals to international institutions were prepared together with fellow EU Member States.
- ▶ Lithuania and the European Commission initiated negotiations with Iraqi government institutions regarding the return of Iraqi citizens who entered Lithuania from Belarus illegally.
- ▶ On 15 June 2021, the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Armenia signed the Protocol of the Agreement on Readmission.
- ▶ The governments of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Serbia coordinated the protocol of readmission agreement.
- ▶ Draft agreements on the readmission of illegally staying persons were sent to the governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for signing.
- ▶ As bilateral cooperation between the state border committee of the Republic of Belarus and the State Border Guard Service of Lithuania was suspended in practice, it became impossible to transfer irregular migrants to the border guards of the Republic of Belarus.

# INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

## Main areas of work and achievements:

- ▶ In 2021, the Global Lithuania Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created a separate unit for coordinating the implementation of measures encouraging diaspora's return and arrival to Lithuania.
- ▶ To improve the quality of services provided to the Migration Department's clients, new premises were opened in Kaunas. Renovations were carried out in the Migration Department's branch offices in Prienai, Skuodas, Neringa, Rietavas and Rokiškis.

# Key institutions in migration



This publication was prepared in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Vilnius Office, and the European Migration Network (EMN) in Lithuania. The publication was prepared according to the 2021 Report on the Implementation of the Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines and Monitoring of Migration Processes. The Migration Policy Guidelines are the main strategic document establishing the goals, principles and directions of the migration and asylum policy in Lithuania.

The European Migration Network (EMN) is an EU network of migration and asylum experts who work together to provide objective, comparable policy-relevant information and knowledge on emerging issues relating to asylum and migration in Europe. According to government resolution, Lithuania is represented in the network by IOM Vilnius Office working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania and its subordinate institutions.

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