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ANNUAL REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN 2020

Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic in 2020

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 of 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), Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (Department of International Relations and European Affairs), Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (Section of Social Statistics and Demography) and IOM.

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Preface

The report informs about the most significant changes, developments and activities in the field of migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2020. In the Slovak Republic, the report is a unique publication of its kind which annually maps all areas of migration of third-country nationals.

The report forms part of the EMN Synthesis Report with the same focus which is prepared at EU level, summarising the findings of national reports compiled by EU Member States and Norway on the basis of common specifications. Since 2015, the Synthesis Report fully replaced the European Commission's Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum. The report feeds also into EASO's Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU 2020 as well as EMN Country Factsheets 2020.

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 website of the Slovak EMN National Contact Point 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 – assisted voluntary return(s)
AVRR – Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme
BBFP PFP – Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium
BMVI – Border Management and Visa Instrument
CEAS – Common European Asylum System
CFC – Children and Family Centre(s)
CFC Medzilaborce – Children and Family Centre DLAŇ in Medzilaborce
COI – country of origin information
COLSAF – Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
Coll. – Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic
COMIN – Komunitné centrum pre pracovnú a vedomostnú mobilitu
CVEK – Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (Centrum pre výskum etnicity a kultúry)
DIREA – Department of International Relations and European Affairs (at the MoLSAF)
DM – diplomatic mission
EASO – European Asylum Support Office
ECRI – European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EEA – European Economic Area
EC – European Commission / European Community
ECHR – European Court of Human Rights
EMN – European Migration Network
EP – European Parliament
Eurostat – Statistical Office of the European Union
ETNAT – Tool for Analysis of Training Needs
EU – the European Union
FAD EPS MoI SR – Foreign Aid Department of the European Programmes Section of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
Frontex – European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GRETA – Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
HRL – Human Rights League
HW – hardware
IC MoI SR – Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
IOM – International Organization for Migration
ISF – Internal Security Fund
JAD – Joint Action Days
LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LLC – limited liability company
MEKOMIC – Inter-Ministerial Expert Committee for Labour Migration and Foreigners' Integration
MIC IOM – IOM Migration Information Centre
MIPEX – Migrant Integration Policy Index
MoESRS SR – Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic
MoFEA SR – Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

MoI – Ministry of Interior
MoI SR – Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
MoJ SR – Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic
MoLSAF – Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
MO MoI SR – Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
MS – EU member state(s)
NBS – National Bank of Slovakia
NC SR – National Council of the Slovak Republic
NGO – non-governmental organization
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
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
o.z. / OZ – civic association
PDCF(s) – Police Detention Centre(s) for Foreigners
PF – Police Force
PFP – Police Force Presidium
RCMS – Readmission Case Management System
SAMRS – Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation
SO SR – Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
SPCSG – socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship
SR – the Slovak Republic
TCN(s) – third-country national(s)
UAM(s) – unaccompanied minor(s)
UK – United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN – United Nations Organisation
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA – United States of America
V4 – Visegrad Group
VIS – Visa Information System

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

(:) – Data unavailable

(-) – The phenomenon did not occur

Methodology and Terms

Methodology and Elaboration

This report is compiled on the basis of common specifications which were prepared by EU Member States and the European Commission. Common specifications for all EU Member States and Norway enable comparability of national reports and their subsequent use for the European-wide EMN annual report and other outputs at 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 includes also national statistics including those which are not collected at EU level (through Eurostat or Frontex).

In terms of methodology, the report uses secondary research and has a descriptive nature. The report for Slovakia is based on available expert publications, statistics, legislation, Slovakia's policy documents, internet sources and media monitoring¹. Significant sources of information were reference documents and information obtained from the following state administration bodies: Ministerstvo vnútra SR (MoI SR (namely BBFP PFP, MO MoI SR, Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior, Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the MoI SR, FAD EPS MoI SR, Public Administration Section of MoI SR), MoLSAF SR, COLSAF (through MoLSAF SR), MoFEA SR, Ministry of Justice of the SR (through FAD EPS MoI SR), General Prosecutor's Office of the SR (through FAD EPS MoI SR), Statistical Office of the SR and 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.

Each chapter uses also media releases as sources of information. The text therefore contains links to media references to migration topics and activities carried out by public administration, nongovernmental sector and international organisations.

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

¹ IOM as the coordinator of the EMN National Contact Point for the Slovak Republic in cooperation with a news agency 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 expert terms used in this report largely correspond with the definitions in the *EMN Migration and Asylum Glossary*.² In case the definitions from this Glossary cannot be used for some terms, the terms are used pursuant to the national or EU legislation (regulations, directives).

Special attention in this report should be paid to the term *foreigner*, which under the Slovak legislation, namely Art. 2(2) of the Act on Residence of Foreigners³, is considered anybody who is not a national of the Slovak Republic. 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. The Slovak legislation, however, defines a foreigner who is not a national of an EU Member State as *third-country national*⁴. In this report, the term foreigner is therefore mainly used in texts and statistics which are related to or are kept in compliance with the national legislation. In such 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 term *migrant* is also used in the report, which, unlike the definition in the EMN Glossary⁵, is used as a synonym of the words foreigner or third-country national.

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

² Asylum and Migration Glossary 7.0 – a Tool for Better Comparability (2021). European Migration Network. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/alien_en (consulted on 11/05/2021).

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 Slovak Republic or an EU national. A third-country national is also a stateless person.

⁵ According to the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary, 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. In: Asylum and Migration Glossary 6.0 – a Tool for Better Comparability (2018). European Migration Network, Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en (consulted on 01/04/2020).

Executive Summary

The report informs about the most significant changes, developments, and activities in the field of migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2020. In the Slovak Republic, the report is a unique publication of its kind which annually maps all areas of migration of third-country nationals in the context of EU policies and legislation. The report also describes context of legal migration, international protection, minors and other vulnerable groups, integration, citizenship and situation of stateless persons, border control and management, visa practice, irregular migration including migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, returns and readmissions, as well as migration and development cooperation. In the annex, the report presents also selected statistics which are related to the above-mentioned areas.

During 2020, the SR was working on its new and updated migration policy and integration policy focused on labour market. Moreover, the SR also amended the Act on Residence of Foreigners as well as the Act on Employment Services and prepared amendments to the Act on Citizenship of the Slovak Republic. From the institutional and organizational point of view, the migration management system has not been significantly changed.

At a political level (election campaign included), attention was given mainly to labour migration from non-EU countries into the Slovak Republic, to EU relocation quotas for asylum seekers and to migration in general. Compared to the 2016 parliamentary elections, a number of political parties abandoned migration as a flagship topic and it was not prominently featured in the pre-election debates either. It did, however, rank among the top ten election topics in the online mainstream media and on disinformation websites.

Management of migration in Slovakia in 2020 was significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, the SR adopted various changes and measures in 2020 related e.g. to the change of opening hours at the Foreign Police Departments, limitation of acts related to the reception of residence permit applications and visa applications and handling of foreigners in person at the workplace (Foreign Police Departments or Diplomatic Missions), entry permits to the SR or border management.⁶

Amendments to the Act on Residence of Foreigners and Act on Employment Services introduced automatic prolongation of the validity period of TCN's residence permits which expired during the crisis situation as well as of the validity periods of employment permits or single work and residence permit certificates. TCNs who had been granted temporary residence for the purpose of business and who would apply for its renewal in 2021 will not be obliged to comply with the statutory requirement concerning the minimum income/profit in 2020.

The above-mentioned legislation was amended also with respect to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) from the EU (the so-called Brexit).

The SR did not transpose any piece of EU legislation directly related to third-country nationals' legal migration into its legal system in 2020.

The number of asylum applications and the number of various forms of international protection granted in the SR in 2020 remained low compared to previous years. In total 282 applications for international protection were submitted, asylum was granted to 11 applicants and the SR granted subsidiary protection to 27 persons. The SR did not participate in any relocation or re-settlement activities in 2020.

The international protection system in the SR was mainly adjusted to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Dublin transfers were suspended in spring 2020 in relation to general anti-pandemic measures, including the closing down of Slovak international airports.

The SR continued to support measures aimed at addressing the causes of irregular and forced migration in the countries of origin and transit. At the same time, the SR offered financial and humanitarian assistance to Greece to address the current migration situation, as well as the sending of Border and Foreign Police officers.

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 2020. Even though the number of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) placed in Slovak facilities has more than quadrupled since 2018, the number of UAMs applying for asylum has been decreasing and their voluntary departures from the facilities are still a challenge. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic a temporary group for UAMs was established in the CFC Kolárovo for UAMs to spend their quarantine period.

At the beginning of 2020, the updating of the Integration Policy of the SR document continued (updating was aimed at the labour market integration) but was temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Migration Policy of the SR for 2021 – 2025, which is currently being prepared, contains a part on the integration of foreigners.

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, several legislative measures were adopted aiming to mitigate the social impact of the pandemic both on the citizens of the SR and foreigners. This mainly concerned the provision of a so called pandemic parental allowance and the provision of a parental allowance during a crisis situation.

Related to the prevention of discrimination, The Conceptual Framework for Countering Radicalisation and Extremism by 2024, which identified several tasks focused specifically on migration and international protection, was finalized. Combatting extremism and xenophobia was also the topic of recommendations in the report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) from its sixth monitoring cycle on the state of human rights in Slovakia.

In 2020, the projects of various organisations, such as the provision of counselling and language courses via the IOM, 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. Many activities were transferred into online space, and consultations were provided especially by telephone or e-mail. Despite the pandemic, several online discussions, movie screenings and performances were organised in order to fight prejudice and stereotypes.

⁶ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire and MO Mol SR questionnaire.

Locally, the Concept of Social Inclusion for the Bratislava Self-Governing Region 2020 – 2030 was developed. This is the first document to ever define foreigners as a separate target group. Regarding non-governmental organisations, the Human Rights League (HRL) continued to devote their attention to local integration of foreigners by means of the KapaCity project. The Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture was also active in this topic and they published the *Cudzinci ako obyvatelia miest – zistenia z výskumu* [Foreigners as City Residents – Research Findings] report within the *Výskum integrácie cudzincov – bariéry, nástroje a postoje* [Survey of the Integration of Foreigners – Obstacles, Tools and Attitudes]. Apart from that they developed the *Situačná analýza migrácie a možností integrácie cudzincov v meste Nitra* [Situational Analysis of Migration and Integration Options for Foreigners in the City of Nitra] within the COMIN project by the City of Nitra.

In 2020, there was no new development of policies and legislation related to the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Within the activities to support their integration as well as to remove prejudice and stereotypes about migration and asylum, the implementation of several projects by state institutions or non-governmental organisations continued.

In 2020, the SR did not adopt any significant changes related to citizenship of third-country nationals or stateless persons. The Draft Amendment to the Act on Citizenship advanced to the inter-ministerial commenting procedure. It mainly concerned the moderation of conditions under which citizenship is lost as well as the facilitation of obtaining citizenship by foreigners.

As for the overall number of visas issued, in 2020 there was a steep decrease by 75.2% which was the result of the COVID-19 situation, as in the context of anti-spread measures the SR decided as of 12 March 2020 to stop accepting Schengen visa applications at all Diplomatic Missions (aside from cases worthy of special treatment) as well as by means of visa centres of external service provider (VFS Global).

Due to the transposition of European legislation, the SR has applied the new Visa Code⁷ since 2 February 2020. It modified the charging of fees and introduced changes to the form of the Schengen Visa application as well as other conditions for submitting this application.

In compliance with the National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for 2019 – 2022,⁸ the SR implemented several projects in 2020⁹ aiming to improve the technical equipping and automation of border controls. In 2020, several measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 were adopted. They have changed based on the current situation.

Measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 also affected the development of irregular migration in Slovakia in 2020. Its decrease was recorded compared to previous year, and fewer cases of unauthorized state border crossing and unauthorized residence were detected. As for the migration routes, there was an increase in the secondary transit migration along the Western Balkans route from Hungary and a decrease in the number of entries along the Eastern European route through Ukraine.

⁷ Source: MoFEA SR questionnaire.

⁸ Behúňová K., Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2020): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2019, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

⁹ All the projects were funded by the Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa and will continue in 2021.

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

In 2020, the cooperation between Slovak institutions working on combatting human trafficking and helping the victims of trafficking was strengthened. The SR updated its National Referral Mechanism from 2015 based on the practical experience and lessons learnt. The document offers a more comprehensive model of cooperation of various stakeholders at national level. The new Regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic on the Provision of the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme was approved in December 2020, which specifies, inter alia, provisions concerning foreigners (both children and adults). It creates conditions for the formulation of more comprehensible methods of identification of human trafficking victims and the follow-up cooperation mechanism at national level.

In November 2020, the Government of the SR approved an amendment to the Health Insurance Act which entered into force on 1 January 2021. The amendment made it possible for foreigners who are not holding health insurance in any other EU Member State and who had been granted tolerated residence to be entitled to health care costs reimbursement from the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme.

The results of foreign evaluation mechanisms which pointed to low punishments or often conditional punishments for human traffickers in Slovakia led to the preparation of 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]. The report contains all judgments of the Slovak courts related to human trafficking.

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 2020. Cooperation with the United Kingdom was predominant.¹⁰

In total however, the number of human trafficking victims coming from non-EU countries who were identified in Slovakia has remained very low. The victims were used mainly for forced begging and sexual exploitation. According to the authorities, the increase in the number of child victims was alarming.

The pandemic situation contributed to the suspension of the execution of return decisions until cancellation of the crisis situation and thus to a decrease in the number of returns. However, in the case of detained foreigners, the postponement of an execution decision did not result in release from detention. Regarding forced returns, detention and assisted voluntary returns number of projects were implemented.

In January 2020, the Government of the SR approved the Focus of Bilateral Official Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2020. Pursuant to this document, the SR is supposed to achieve the sustainable development goals in accordance with the Medium-Term Strategy of the Official Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic 2019–2023, and continually enhance and develop strategic partnerships with the developing countries in Africa and other de-

¹⁰ Source: information provided by Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior, BBFP PFP and MO Mol SR.

velopment cooperation priority countries. The SR will strive for the development stakeholders including the private sector to intensify their participation in specific development activities and raise awareness of how important it is for Slovakia to fulfil its developmental commitments among the Slovak public as well as the public administration.

In 2020, the SR helped countries of origin or transit of irregular migrants or refugees mainly through 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 2020. In 2020, however, the Slovak Republic continued to focus on addressing the causes of migration and contributed to the EU Trust Funds.



Introduction

The *EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (ARM)* informs about the most important changes, developments and activities in the field of migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2020, while focusing on third-country nationals.¹¹ The report serves as a basis for European-wide EMN Annual Report¹² which in 2015 fully replaced the *European Commission's Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum*¹³. The report will be also a source of information for the *EASO's Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU 2020*¹⁴ and *EMN Country Factsheets 2020*¹⁵ about developments in different Member States in 2020.

The report describes changes, developments and activities at the legislative, institutional, political and practical levels in the area of migration and international protection in Slovakia from 1 January 2020 till 31 December 2020, and sets them into the context of EU policies and legislation. The Report consists of 11 thematic chapters, which are focused on these areas: context for migration and asylum policy developments, legal migration, international protection, minors

¹¹ The description of the general structure of the political and legal system in the field of migration and international protection in Slovakia can be found in the updated version of the EMN study on Organisation of Asylum and Migration Policies in the Slovak Republic from 2014. Available at <https://emn.sk/sk/na-stiahnutie-emn/publikacie-emn/item/138-organizacia-azylovej-a-migracnej-politiky> (consulted on 02/04/2020).

¹² The latest EMN Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum 2017 available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/nationalreports_en (consulted on 02/04/2020).

¹³ The last 5th Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum 2013 available at: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/5th-annual-report-immigration-and-asylum-2013_en (consulted on 02/04/2020).

¹⁴ Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2019 overview available at: <https://www.easo.europa.eu/asylum-trends-easo-asylum-report-2020> (consulted on 02/04/2020).

¹⁵ EMN Country Factsheets 2019 available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/factsheets_en (consulted on 02/04/2020).

and other vulnerable groups, integration, citizenship and stateless persons, visa practice, control and border management, irregular migration including migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, returns and readmissions, migration and development. The Annex to the report contains also selected statistics including those which are not collected at the EU level through Eurostat or Frontex, as well as Bibliography.

The chapter *Overview of asylum and migration policy developments* provides a general picture which shaped migration policies and legislation in Slovakia in 2020. This overview describes the relevant political, legislative and institutional developments, (inter-)institutional cooperation, discussions related to measure- and policy-making, media discussions, as well as wider social context that influenced different areas of migration including international protection. List of conducted research on migration in Slovakia in 2020 forms part of this chapter.

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 socio-economic integration measures for third-country nationals, including persons granted international protection. It contains also measures related to awareness-raising actions about migration, non-discrimination, integration at local level and on migration as well as integration at the local level and through civic participation of foreigners.

The chapter *Citizenship and statelessness* is aimed at policies and measures dealing with acquisition of nationality and with status of persons without any citizenship 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 the field of border control and management.

The chapter *Irregular migration including migrant smuggling* includes information on 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 deals with the policies, legislation, international monitoring, national projects, campaigns, and other activities, as well as cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels in this field.

The chapter *Returns and readmission* 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 Slovakia on migration and international protection in 2020 including those which are not collected at EU level through Eurostat¹⁶ or Frontex agency¹⁷. The Annex shows statistics on foreigners including those employed, on issued residence permits and visas, on children of foreigners in education system, on obtained citizenships, on cases of irregular migration and apprehended third-country nationals, on smuggled persons, on residence permits to smuggled persons, on numbers of smugglers, return and reintegrations, numbers on various aspects of international protection, relocations and resettlements, on unaccompanied minors and victims of human trafficking from third countries, and residence permits granted to victims of human trafficking and on numbers of traffickers.

¹⁶ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics (consulted on 02/04/2020).

¹⁷ Available at: <http://frontex.europa.eu/publications/> (consulted on 02/04/2020).



Overview of Asylum and Migration Policy Developments

During 2020, the SR was working on its new, updated migration policy and integration policy focused on labour market. Moreover, the SR also amended the Act on Residence of Foreigners as well as the Act on Employment Services and prepared amendments to the Act on Citizenship of the Slovak Republic. From the institutional and organizational point of view, the migration management system has not been significantly changed. The Ministry of Interior of the SR was designated as a managing authority of the Internal Security Fund (ISF), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and of the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) for the next programming period 2021 – 2027.

At a political level (election campaign included), attention was given mainly to labour migration from non-EU countries into the Slovak Republic, to EU relocation quotas for asylum seekers and to migration in general. Compared to the 2016 parliamentary elections, a number of political parties abandoned migration as a flagship topic and it was not prominently featured in the pre-election debates either. It did, however, rank among the top ten election topics in the online mainstream media and also on disinformation websites.

Dominating the media in 2020 was again the topic of labour migration from non-EU countries into the Slovak Republic and mixed migration into the EU.

2.1. Migration Management System and Migration Policies

Management of migration in Slovakia in 2020 was significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. In connection with the abovementioned, the Government of the SR declared an emergency situation in the entire territory of the Slovak Republic on 11 March 2020, and a state of emergency lasting from 16 March to 14 June 2020 was declared in the health care system. A state of emergency was declared again as of 1 October 2020, and on 29 December it was extended for another 40 days.¹⁸ Within the scope of internal procedures, the SR focused, inter alia, on ensuring compliance with anti-pandemic measures and the prevention of spreading of COVID-19 in its migration and asylum system. For this reason, the SR adopted various changes and measures in 2020 related e.g. to the change of opening hours at the Foreign Police Departments, limitation of acts related to the reception of residence permit applications and handling of foreigners in person at the workplace, entry permits to the SR or border management.¹⁹

Non-profit organizations pointed out the lack of information on the COVID-19 population-wide testing targeted at migrants. Relevant information was initially only available in the Slovak language and through Slovak-speaking media channels. None of the governmental institutions took a proactive approach with respect to informing the migrant communities in Slovakia.²⁰ Asylum-seekers in the MO Mol's asylum facilities and persons with granted international protection within integration project have been informed.²¹

Policies and measures related to migration and international protection of third-country nationals (TCNs) in 2020 remained within the scope of authority of three ministries: the Ministry of Interior of the SR; the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR; and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR.²² The Ministry of Interior of the SR was designated as the AMIF, the ISF and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) managing authority for the next programming period 2021 – 2027 by Resolution of the Slovak Government No. 329 of 27 May 2020.²³

The SR follows several strategic documents in the field of migration:

- Migration Policy with a View till 2020 (2011),
- Integration Policy of the SR (2014),
- Strategy on the Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic (2018),
- National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for 2019 – 2022,
- National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and Promotion of the Slovak Republic (2015).²⁴

The SR prepared its new and updated migration as well as integration policy targeted at the labour market. *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a View till 2025* was subjected to the

¹⁸ Source: <https://www.mic.iom.sk/sk/novinky/639-covid-19-opatrenia.html> (consulted on 30/01/2021).

¹⁹ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire and MO Mol SR questionnaire.

²⁰ Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/slovakia-migrants-not-informed-sufficiently-of-new-covid-19-measures> (consulted on 24/05/2021).

²¹ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

²² Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/571-organizacia-azylovej-a-migracnej-politiky-prehľad-2020.html> (consulted on 24/05/2021).

²³ Source: FAD EPS Mol SR questionnaire.

²⁴ Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/571-organizacia-azylovej-a-migracnej-politiky-prehľad-2020.html> (consulted on 24/05/2021).

cross-sectoral consultation process in September 2020.²⁵ The material shall be a basic document of the Slovak Republic and a starting point for building a modern, comprehensive and effective policy of the Slovak government in all areas of migration, based on and as a continuation of the *Slovak Migration Policy with a View till 2020*. The material regulates the goals of the Slovak Republic in the field of labour mobility, reintegration of Slovak citizens coming from abroad, integration of foreigners into the Slovak society and an effective approach in the field of return policy. The document also points out the need for granting international protection and providing humanitarian assistance to developing countries.²⁶

The current setting of the asylum, migration and integration policies of the SR was analysed by the Human Rights League in 2020. The NGO published a list of recommendations for individual policies pertaining to regular and irregular migration, international protection, integration of migrants (including at the local and regional levels), citizenship and unaccompanied minors.²⁷

The migration system of the SR pertaining to non-EU countries nationals is governed mainly by the following legal acts:

- Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Foreigners, which, inter alia, governs the entry of foreigners, their stay and their fundamental rights and obligations, as well as their expulsion;
- Act No. 5/2004 on Employment Services, which regulates employment of foreigners; and
- Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum, which, inter alia, governs the asylum procedure.

Further legal acts pertaining to TCNs' migration regulate e.g. professional qualifications recognition, the granting of citizenship, illegal labour and illegal employment, health care, etc.²⁸ In 2020, the Act on Residence of Foreigners and Act on Employment Services were amended. The SR has also started to prepare changes to the Act on Citizenship of the SR (see the next sections).

2.2. Political Developments and (Inter)ministerial Cooperation

Similarly to the previous year, at a political level in 2020 attention was given mainly to labour migration from non-EU countries into the Slovak Republic, to EU relocation quotas for asylum seekers and to migration in general during the election campaign. Compared to the 2016 parliamentary elections, a number of political parties abandoned migration as their flagship topic and it was not prominently featured in pre-election debates either.²⁹

The official pre-election campaign before the elections held in February 2020 started in November 2019. According to the analysis by the think-tank GLOBSEC *Slovenské volby 2020 v informačnom priestore [Slovak Elections 2020 in the Information Space]*, migration ranked among the top ten election topics in the online mainstream media as well as on disinformation websites.³⁰

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

26 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

27 Source: https://www.hrl.sk/assets/files/obsah/961-Analyza_ju%CC%81n%202020.pdf (consulted on 25/05/2021).

28 Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/571-organizacia-azylovej-a-migracnej-politiky-prehľad-2020.html> (consulted on 24/05/2021).

29 Source: https://fmv.euba.sk/www_write/files/dokumenty/veda-vyskum/medzinarodne-vztahy/archiv/2020/3/mv_2020_3_292-309_beno-va.pdf (consulted on 01/06/2021).

30 Source: <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Slovenske-volby-2020.pdf> (consulted on 01/06/2021).

The *Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2020 – 2024* specifically addresses international migration, within which it aspires to “enforce solutions based on effective protection of the EU external borders, the application of a return policy and solving the causes of migration in the countries of origin”, while rejecting the compulsory relocations policy. In the *Manifesto*, the Government of the SR undertook to assess centralisation of the migration agenda in one place and prepare a new migration policy for the years 2021 – 2025.³¹

(Inter)ministerial Cooperation and Coordination

In 2020, no significant organizational or institutional changes were made in key state administration departments related to migration and international protection. By decision of the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Department of Migration and Integration of Foreigners of the MoLSAF SR was abolished with effect from 1 October 2020, while its entire agenda remained within the competence of the Department of International Relations and European Affairs (DIREA).

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 area. In addition to direct cooperation between other ministries, cooperation also took place through:

- *Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreigners*, whose only meeting on 30 June 2020 focused largely on the migration and asylum situation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, both globally and nationally. Another topic of the meeting was the preparation of a new Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a view to 2025, which stems from the Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a view to 2020.³²
- *Inter-Ministerial Expert Committee for Labour Migration and Foreigners' Integration (MEKOMIC)*³³, which in 2020 has not met due to COVID-19 pandemic although MoLSAF SR (via DIREA) continuously communicated with members of the commission via emails, via sharing news and relevant information.³⁴
- *National Contact Point of the EMN*³⁵ for the SR,³⁶ which implemented various activities in 2020, including the preparation of publications,³⁷ the submission of and responding to ad/hoc queries, and the organization of expert meetings³⁸, the number of which was influenced by the pandemic. These events focused on TCNs' migration and they are meant mainly for policy-makers, representatives of public authorities, research institutions, academia and the non-governmental sector.^{39, 40}

31 Source: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24756/1> (consulted on 04/06/2021).

32 Information provided by the MO Mol SR.

33 MEKOMIC is a coordination body of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the 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 organizations are invited to the MEKOMIC meetings as necessary.

34 Information provided by the MoLSAF SR.

35 The European Migration Network (EMN) provides up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum with a view to supporting policymaking in the EU and its member states. The EMN is composed of National Contact Points in all EU Member States and in Norway, in coordination with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs. EMN's activities concern topics related to the third-country nationals' migration.

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

37 Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie.html> (consulted on 31/05/2021).

38 Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/podujatia-emn.html> (consulted on 31/05/2021).

39 Information provided by IOM Office in the SR.

40 Source: www.emn.sk (consulted on 31/05/2021).

2.3. Public Attitude and Migration in the Media

According to the Gallup Institute, which compiles the Migrant Acceptance Index, the world has been growing slightly less accepting of migrants since 2016. In the survey, respondents⁴¹ expressed their opinion on whether migrants living in their country, becoming their neighbours and marrying into their families is a good or a bad thing. According to the results, even despite the more open attitude compared to the previous survey, Slovakia still ranks among the countries least tolerant towards migrants. Slovakia finished ninth from the end.⁴²

In recent years, the number of foreigners living in Slovakia has been rising, but the locals do not know them much. As shown by the survey commissioned by the Milan Šimečka Foundation NGO, which was conducted by the Focus Agency in June 2020 on a representative sample of 1,009 Slovak citizens, almost 50% of Slovaks know no foreigner personally, one-third of Slovaks knows one to five foreigners, and they are most likely to prefer a Ukrainian citizen as their neighbour.⁴³

Slovak media focused on various migration- and migrants-related topics in 2020. Similarly to the previous year, the topics that resonated the most in the media were those of labour migration from non-EU states into the SR and of the mixed migration flows into the EU and Slovakia. Slovak media also discussed migration in 2020 in relation to extremism and the parliamentary elections.⁴⁴

The NGO Človek v ohrození (People in Need) has been focusing on journalists' training on migration in the long-term. One of the outcomes of a project supported by a SAMRS⁴⁵ grant is a handbook on migration for future journalists published in 2020 under the title "People Between the Lines". The publication discusses the theoretical background important to understand the phenomenon of migration, related terms and data, as well as the specificities of media coverage of the topic of migration in Slovakia compared to other countries. The publication also includes practical reporting tips and procedures.⁴⁶

In 2020, the NGO Human Rights League prepared an analysis of the current state of play in the field of communication about the topic of migration and its perception in the Slovak media since 2015. The analysis is part of a guidebook entitled "Ako komunikovať témy migrácie a integrácie cudzincov na regionálnej úrovni" [How to Communicate the Topic of Migration and the Integration of Foreigners at the Regional Level].⁴⁷

41 The survey was carried out in 2019 with 140,000 respondents in 145 countries; and its results were published in September 2020.

42 Source: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/320678/world-grows-less-accepting-migrants.aspx> (consulted on 31/05/2021).

43 Source: <https://www.fjuzn.sk/spolocnost/cudzinci-zijuci-na-slovensku-do-akej-miery-sa-od-nich-distancujeme> (consulted on 31/05/2021).

44 Source: Unsorted IOM media monitoring 2020.

45 Source: <https://slovakaid.sk/projekty/ludia-medzi-riadkami/> (consulted on 31/05/2021).

46 Source: https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ludia_medzi_riadkami_WEB.pdf (consulted on 31/05/2021).

47 Source: https://www.hrl.sk/userfiles/files/1010-Strategia_HRL_final_krat.pdf (consulted on 04/06/2021).

2.4. Research of International Migration in Slovakia

In terms of research, focus on third-country nationals' migration in Slovakia in 2020 was directed towards a number of thematic areas. Research publications and other short outputs included, in alphabetical order:

- Ako komunikovať témy migrácie a integrácie cudzincov na regionálnej úrovni. Príručka pre samosprávy [Communicating of the Topics of Migration and Integration of Foreigners at the Regional level. A Handbook for Local Governments] (Human Rights League: https://www.hrl.sk/userfiles/files/1010-Strategia_HRL_final_krat.pdf)
- Analýza demografického vývoja oblastí a obcí podľa štatútu a veľkosti v SR [Analysis of the Demographic Development of Regions and Municipalities by Status and Size in the SR] (Infostat: http://www.infostat.sk/vdc/sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=16)
- Analýza migračnej, integračnej a azylovej politiky SR [Analysis of the Migration, Integration and Asylum Policy of the SR] (Human Rights League, project Migration Compass: <https://www.hrl.sk/o-nas/aktuality/vydali-sme-analyzu-azylovej-migracnej-a-integracnej-politiky-sr>)
- Cudzinci ako obyvatelia miest – zistenia z výskumu [Foreigners as City Residents – Research Findings] (Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) project Research of Foreigners' Integration – Barriers, Instruments and Attitudes: <http://cvek.sk/cudzinci-ako-obyvatelia-miest-zistenia-z-vyskumu/>)
- Fenomén odlivu mozgov a imigrácia vysokokvalifikovanej pracovnej sily do SR [The Brain Drain Phenomenon and the Immigration of a Highly Skilled Workforce into the SR] (Ambrela, project SDGs and Migration – Multipliers and Journalists Addressing Decision Makers and Citizens in the EU and Faces of Migration campaign: https://tvaremigracie.ambrela.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Ambrela_Brain_Drain_studia_FoM_april2021_Svk.pdf)
- Hlas menšín [Minorities' Voice] (Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK): <http://cvek.sk/hlas-mensin-nova-kniha-cveku/>)
- Komparácia významu témy migrácie v predvolebnom programe vybranej politickej strany v roku 2016 a 2020 [Comparison of the Importance of the Topic of Migration in the Electoral Programmes of Selected Political Parties in 2016 and 2020] (Zuzana Beňová, Slovak Journal of International Relations, 2020, issue no. 3: https://fmv.euba.sk/www_write/files/dokumenty/veda-vyskum/medzinarodne-vztahy/archiv/2020/3/mv_2020_3_292-309_benova.pdf)
- Ľudia medzi riadkami. Príručka o migrácii (nielen) pre budúcich novinárov [People Between the Lines. Handbook on Migration (not only) for Future Journalists] (People in Need, n.o. / World Between the Lines, project People between the lines: building skills for quality migration coverage: https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ludia_medzi_riadkami_WEB.pdf)
- Organizácia systému migrácie a azylu v Slovenskej republike [Organisation of the Migration and Asylum System in the Slovak Republic] (EMN Slovak Republic: file:///C:/Users/Notebook/AppData/Local/Temp/emn-sk_migration-overview_2020_en.pdf)
- Pôsobenie slovenských rozvojových dobrovoľníkov a dobrovoľníčok v oblastiach ovplyvnených migráciou [Activities of Slovak Development Volunteers in Areas Affected by Migration] (Ambrela, project SDGs and Migration – Multipliers and Journalists Addressing Decision Mak-

ers and Citizens in the EU and Faces of Migration campaign: https://ambrela.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Ambrela_Studia_Rozvojove_Dobrovolnictvo_2020.pdf)

- Prieskum o miere kontaktu s cudzincami a postojov voči nim [*Survey on the Extent of Contact with Foreigners and Attitudes towards Them*] (Milan Šimečka Foundation: <https://www.fjuzn.sk/spolocnost/cudzinci-zijuci-na-slovensku-do-akej-miery-sa-od-nich-distancujeme>)
- Situačná analýza migrácie a možností integrácie cudzincov v meste Nitra [*Situational Analysis of Migration and Integration Options for Foreigners in the City of Nitra*] (Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, City of Nitra project COMIN – Community Center for Work and Knowledge Mobility in Nitra: <https://comin.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Situa%c4%8dn%c3%a1-ana-l%c3%bdza-CVEK.pdf>)
- Skúsenosti v oblasti sociálnej práce v azylových zariadeniach [*Social Work Experience in Asylum Facilities*] (Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the SR: https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=migracny-urad-vydal-publikaciju-o-socialnej-praci-v-azylovych-zariadeniach&subor_spravy=394499)
- Slovenské voľby 2020 v informačnom priestore [*Slovak Elections 2020 in the Information Space*] (GLOBSEC think-tank analysis: <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Slovenske-volby-2020.pdf>)
- Výročná správa o migrácii a azyle v Slovenskej republike za rok 2019 [*Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic in 2019*] (EMN Slovak Republic: file:///C:/Users/Notebook/AppData/Local/Temp/emn-sk_ann-report-on-migr-asyl-policies-sr_2019_en.pdf)
- Získavanie a ochrana sezónnych pracovníkov v EÚ a v Spojenom kráľovstve – príspevok Slovenskej republiky [*Attracting and Protecting the Rights of Seasonal Workers in the EU and United Kingdom – Contribution of the Slovak Republic*] (EMN Slovak Republic: file:///C:/Users/Notebook/AppData/Local/Temp/emn-sk_study_seasonal_workers_en.pdf)

Selected results of some of these research publications are discussed in thematic chapters of this publication.

03

Legal Migration

The number of foreigners has been continuously growing in recent years. EU citizens together with third-country nationals comprised 2.75% of Slovak population in 2020. Of the total of 150,012 foreigners with valid residence in Slovakia, more than a half (60.53%) were from non-EU countries, representing 1.66% of the overall population of the Slovak Republic.

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic a number of legislative changes were adopted to amend some acts within the authority of the Ministry of Interior of the SR in such way that, in the application of these acts the risk to public health could be mitigated to the greatest extent possible and, at the same time, that the rights of citizens be affected as little as possible under the restricted regime of operation of some public authorities. Amendments to the Act on Residence of Foreigners and Act on Employment Services introduced automatic prolongation of the validity period of TCN's residence permits which expired during the crisis situation as well as of the validity periods of employment permits or single work and residence permit certificates. TCNs who had been granted temporary residence for the purpose of business and who would apply for its renewal in 2021 will not be obliged to comply with the statutory requirement concerning the minimum income/profit in 2020.

The amended Act on Provision of Health Care introduced the temporary professional stints option for foreign doctors (EU citizens and TCNs alike) after their training (diploma) is recognized in Slovakia. However, temporary professional stint employment was exclusively linked 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.

The Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Argentine Republic on a Working Holiday Scheme was approved in January 2020. Working holiday schemes promote youth mobility, allowing citizens of the SR and citizens of the other contracting party aged 18 – 35 years to obtain, in a simplified way, a work and residence permit in the given country valid for up to one year after they fulfil all the conditions stipulated in the bilateral agreement in question.

The number of Slovak government scholarships for countries affected by a conflict or for countries of origin of migrants increased from 24 to 25 in 2020. It is a result of efforts to fulfil (at least partly) the commitment of the SR to provide 550 scholarships for refugees until 2021 from the so-called Obama Summit (Leaders' Summit on Refugees on 20 September 2016 in New York). Until 2021, the SR provided 125 governmental scholarships for students from countries affected by war.

3.1. Statistics and Trends

The number of foreigners in Slovakia has been continuously growing in recent years. In 2020, EU citizens together with third-country nationals comprised 2.75% of population of Slovakia. More than half (60.53%) of the 150,012 foreigners with a residence permit in the Slovak Republic were from non-EU countries. Almost two-thirds of those (12,011) had been granted residence for various purposes related to paid activities. Thus, third-country nationals comprised 1.66% of the total population of the Slovak Republic in 2020. Among the most numerous groups were Ukrainian nationals (42,162), Serbian nationals (16,005), Vietnamese nationals (6,798), Russian nationals (5,658) and Chinese nationals (2,695) (see **Table 1**). The highest number of third-country nationals (more than one-third) resided in the Bratislava region in 2020 (see **Table 2**).

As of the end of 2020, there were 69,012 foreign workers employed in the Slovak Republic, 39,075 of whom were from non-EU countries – mostly from Ukraine (19,578), Serbia (10,174) and Vietnam (1,023) (see **Table 4**). Approximately one-third of these foreigners worked in Bratislava, followed by the cities of Trnava and Nitra. Since 2016 the number of non-EU foreigners working in the Slovak Republic has been growing by more than 10,000 annually. The pandemic year interrupted this trend, yet the number of working foreigners decreased only slightly – from 78,298 to 69,012 persons, 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 for foreign workers, including non-EU workers.

The first residence permits in the Slovak Republic in 2020 fell to 18,251, i.e. by 7% compared to the previous year 2019, when their number was 28,836. This decrease is related to the restriction of the movement of persons and other measures introduced in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. For family reasons, in 2012 the Slovak Republic granted 2,901 permits, for the purpose of education and study 2,332, for the purpose of remunerated activities 12,077 and for other activities 941 permits (see **Table 3** in the Annex)⁴⁸ The highest share of remunerated activities in 2020 is mainly related to the high share of TCNs' applications for a residence permit for the purpose of employment in the territory of the Slovak Republic. This is due to the continuing

⁴⁸ Source: Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2018): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2017. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

demand for low-skilled workers from abroad. This group of labour migration is dominated by Ukrainians and Serbs, as in 2019. The Slovak Republic also recorded a continuation of the growing trend of first permits for business purposes from 2019 (year-on-year increase of 64% in 2019), especially from Ukrainians and Vietnamese nationals.⁴⁹ In 2020, Slovakia records the only year-on-year increase in the first permits for business purposes, namely by 14%. For comparison, in 2018 the Slovak Republic issued a total of 20,989 first residence permits⁵⁰, in 2017 13,635⁵¹ and 10,304 in 2016⁵².

Compared to the previous year, the number of TCNs employed illegally in the SR decreased (see **Section 3.5**).

Number of foreigners employed in the SR in 2016 - 2020

	Situation as of 31/12/2016	Situation as of 31/12/2017	Situation as of 31/12/2018	Situation as of 31/12/2019	Situation as of 31/12/2020	Most numerous nationalities 2020
EU/EEA nationals	24,054	27,726	32,851	32,114	29,937	1. Ukraine (19,578) 2. Serbia (10,174)
Third-country nationals	11,036	21,752	36,265	46,184	39,075	3. Vietnam (1,023) 4. South Korea (736) 5. Bosnia and Herzegovina (730)
Total	35,090	49,478	69,116	78,298	69,012	

3.2. General Legislation Changes and Brexit

In legislation, the *Act on Residence of Foreigners*⁵³ was amended in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as with respect to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) from the EU (the so-called Brexit). The amendments entered into force on 9 April 2020 and 1 January 2021, respectively.⁵⁴ The *Act on Employment Services* was also amended, effective as of 21 May 2021. The SR did not transpose any piece of EU legislation directly related to third-country nationals' legal migration into its legal system in 2020.

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic a number of legislative changes,⁵⁵ were adopted to amend some acts within the authority of the Slovak Ministry of Interior in such way that, in the applica-

⁴⁹ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

⁵⁰ Source: Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2019): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2018. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

⁵¹ Source: Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2018): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2017. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

⁵² Source: Bachtíková, I., Oboňová, S. (2017): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum Policies. Slovak Republic 2016. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

⁵³ Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Foreigners and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts

⁵⁴ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

⁵⁵ Act No. 73/2020 on certain measures in the purview of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic in relation to COVID-19 was passed on the basis of the emergency situation declaration by the Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 111 of 11 March 2020 and the state of emergency declaration by the Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 114 of 15 March 2020 due to COVID-19 disease caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 in the territory of the SR.

tion of these acts the risk to public health could be mitigated to the greatest extent possible and, at the same time, that the rights of citizens be affected as little as possible under the restricted regime of operation of some public authorities.⁵⁶

Major legislative measures adopted in 2020 in the *Act on Residence of Foreigners* in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic include following changes pertaining to legal migration:

- All temporary residences, permanent residences or tolerated residences the period of validity of which expires during the crisis situation or within one month after the crisis situation is revoked, shall remain valid for two months following the revocation of the crisis situation. Moreover, each third country national that has entered the territory of the SR legally shall be allowed to stay within the territory of the SR until the elapse of one month after the crisis situation ends.
- A TCN staying outside of the territory of the SR during the crisis situation can apply for the renewal of their temporary residence or for the grant of permanent residence for an unlimited period of time at a diplomatic mission of the SR.
- Validity period of documents produced in a residence granting procedure or in a residence renewal procedure shall be now assessed in such way that if a TCN was unable to apply for the grant of residence or for the renewal of residence due to the crisis situation, it shall be sufficient if the condition stipulating that the documents must not be older than 90 days was complied with at the time the measures related to the threat to public health were imposed. This means that if a TCN comes to submit their application for the grant of residence or for the renewal of residence after the measures imposed are revoked, the police department shall be able to admit documents submitted even if they are older than 90 days at the moment of their submission, provided that the TCN did not leave the territory of the SR between the end of the crisis situation and the moment of residence application submission.
- The obligation to enter the territory of the SR within 180 days from the granting of a residence permit. This means that, in relation to the expiry of residence on the grounds of a TCN's failure to enter the territory of the SR within 180 days from the granting of the residence permit, the period of the crisis situation duration shall not be included. This applies to all types of residence.
- Time periods stipulated in the *Act on Residence of Foreigners* were legally extended to include the crisis situation period. Ministry of Interior of the SR was competent to also extend other time periods under the *Act on Residence of Foreigners*.⁵⁷

Basic legislative measures stipulated in the *Act on Employment Services* adopted in 2020 in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic⁵⁸, included following changes pertaining to regular migration, effective as of 21 May 2020 (Section 72ao):

- Validity periods of a confirmation of the possibility to fill a vacancy concerning a highly-skilled profession, confirmation of the possibility to fill a vacancy and of an employment permit the validity of which would have expired during the crisis situation⁵⁹ declared in relation to the COVID-19 disease or within one month from the revocation of the crisis situation was extended. It shall be extended until the elapse of two months from the date of revocation of the crisis situation.⁶⁰

56 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

57 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

58 Act No. 127/2020 Coll. amending Act No. 461/2003 Coll. on Social Insurance as amended by subsequent regulations and amending certain acts. Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2020/127/20200521> (consulted on 21. 1. 2021).

59 I.e. an emergency situation, state of emergency or state of exception declared in relation to COVID-19 disease.

60 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

IOM Slovakia started implementing the *Technical Support for the Preparation of Labour Mobility Scheme in the SR* project in 2020. The project lasts until 2021.⁶¹

Brexit

The Act No. 404/2011 on Residence of Foreigners⁶² was amended in 2020 concerned also the further residence of UK nationals and their family members. Resulting from the Agreement on the withdrawal is the obligation for Member States to decide whether they will use a constitutive or declaratory residence system. The SR opted for the declaratory system, which means that UK nationals and their family members who have exercised their right to free movement prior to 1 January 2021 and registered their residence at the competent Foreign Police Department shall have a legal right to be granted residence without the need for another decision. Their only obligation is to apply for the issuance of a residence document by 30 June 2021.

UK nationals who have exercised their right to free movement but have not applied to have their residence registered shall be able to do so at any time in future but they will have to prove they are eligible under the Agreement.

Family members who will want to join the UK nationals after 1 January 2021 will have to prove that their relationship with the UK national existed even before the end of the transition period.⁶³

Since June, the IOM has been providing advisory and assistance services to UK nationals and their family members. Advisory services mainly concerned the securing of their residence rights, as well as changes to employment, the conducting of business activities and studies and other areas of life in the Slovak Republic resulting from the UK's departure from the European Union. By the end of 2020, the IOM had provided 523 consultations by e-mail or phone. Advisory services under this programme were utilized by 168 UK nationals or their family members. The www.uknationals.iom.sk website, in the English language, with all relevant information, was visited 13,596 times. Clients looked mainly for support with registering their residence in the SR, exchanging their residence cards and with gathering the documents necessary to secure their residence status in the SR. The IOM's comprehensive support with securing residence rights in the Slovak Republic also included accompanying clients during their visits to the Foreign Police departments.⁶⁴

3.3. Work-Related Migration

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 2020:

(Highly) Qualified Workers

The validity period of the residence granted on the basis of a Blue Card meant for highly qualified workers that expired during the emergency situation was automatically extended until the elapse of 2 months from the end of the crisis situation declared in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁵

61 Source: IOM Office in the SR.

62 Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Foreigners and on Amendments and Supplementations to Certain Acts

63 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

64 Source: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1351-iom-activities-and-achievements-2020.html> (consulted on 15/05/2021).

65 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

The amended Act on Provision of Health Care⁶⁶ introduced the temporary professional stints option for foreign doctors (EU citizens and TCNs alike) after their training (diploma) is recognized in Slovakia. However, temporary professional stint performance was exclusively linked 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. Temporary professional stints were regulated directly by institutional health care providers in case they decided to admit an employee for such temporary stint. They only had a reporting duty towards the Ministry of Health of the SR. During the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 disease command of the official state language could be documented by a statutory declaration to that effect.⁶⁷ The SR has not registered any instance of a health care provider using this possibility in 2020.

The SR allowed for the establishment of the possibility of a temporary professional stint due to the lack of health care professionals. In the past, this institute was not enabled for non-EU county nationals after the recognition of their evidence of qualification, whose professional qualifications performed for the institutional health care providers are not recognized.⁶⁸

Intra-corporate Transferees

There were no developments in the SR in 2020 related to intra-corporate transferees.⁶⁹

Seasonal and Other Low/Medium Qualified Workers

Based on the Decision of the Government of the SR on the prevention of entry of foreigners into the territory of the SR as part of the measures to prevent the spreading of the COVID-19 disease, Foreign Police departments and missions of the SR abroad suspended acceptance of Schengen and national visa applications or new applications the grant of temporary residence during the crisis situation.

Conditions for the migration of workers between Member States became more difficult during the crisis situation, which particularly affected the agricultural sector. Seasonal workers had to go into state quarantine and they were only allowed to enter the territory of the SR on the basis of negative tests. The Slovak Minister of Agriculture requested to allow for “a free entry of foreign experts who are crucial for agriculture and food processing industry”. Based on the abovementioned, individuals from non-EU countries could apply for an entry permit if their stay in the territory of the SR was necessary and if they applied for an exemption issued by the Public Health Authority.⁷⁰

The European Migration Network (EMN) researched the topic of seasonal workers in 2020. According to its study, seasonal jobs in Slovakia are most frequently performed by Serbian and Ukrainian nationals, with males representing more than 70% of this workforce. The majority of them work in the field of “industrial production”, which has the status of one of the four seasonal work sectors in the SR. With regard to the season of the year (spring, summer, autumn), an increased demand for a seasonal workforce is indicated especially in agriculture, for harvest purposes. Seasonal workers from non-EU countries partially help to fill Slovak employers’ needs,

66 Act No. 133/2021 Coll. of 30 March 2021 amending and supplementing certain health laws in the context of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2021/133/> (consulted on 22/05/2021).

67 Source: <https://www.health.gov.sk/?uznavanie-kvalifikacii-docasna-odborna-staz> (consulted on 22/01/2021).

68 Source: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=469918> (consulted on 30/01/2021).

69 Information provided by MoLSAF SR and BBFP PFP.

70 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

which is proven by the thorough transposition of the Seasonal Workers Directive or by the fulfilling of the tasks resulting from the strategic material entitled Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a View till 2020”, which, within the scope of controlled economic migration, mentions seasonal employment as one of the possibilities for labour market development. The study also analyses protection and rights of seasonal workers.⁷¹

No legislative changes or other systemic measures were adopted in the SR in 2020 in the field of circular migration.⁷²

Entrepreneurs and Investors

If a TCN who has been granted temporary residence for the purpose of business and they apply for its renewal in 2021, they are not obliged to comply with the statutory requirement concerning the minimum income/profit in 2020. They have to submit a statutory declaration stating that their business activities were affected by the crisis situation in the course of the previous tax period with their application.⁷³ This measure serves to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the residence of entrepreneurs from non-EU countries

Act No 320/2019 Coll. amending Act no. 82/2005 Coll. on Illegal Work and Illegal Employment and on changes and amendments to some acts as subsequently amended⁷⁴, effective of 1 January 2020, extends the illegal employment and illegal work of family members exception also to limited liability companies (s.r.o.) with one partner only regardless of the number of employees (the so-called Single-Member LLCs). Before this amendment entered into effect, the illegal employment and illegal work exception concerned exclusively natural persons – entrepreneurs and their family members. As a limited liability company with one partner only represents de facto a natural person – entrepreneur, in order to ensure equal treatment, the exception was extended to also include so-called Single-Member LLCs. Consequently, as of 1 January 2020, a situation when a legal person that is a Single-Member LLC with one partner only, who is a natural person, employs a direct family member, a sibling or a spouse of said partner, provided that this direct family member, sibling or spouse holds pension insurance, is a pension recipient pursuant to specific regulations or is a pupil or a student under 26 years of age. This legislation may also marginally affect third-country nationals who are entitled to conduct business activities in the SR (as a self/employed person or as the only partner in an LLC) provided they meet the statutory conditions; hence the illegal employment of family members exception may affect third-country nationals in their position of an entrepreneur or of a family member. This, of course, only applies if all statutory conditions are met.⁷⁵

Even in 2020, the IOM provided training and advisory services to employers interested in learning how to employ foreigners, students and seasonal workers from both EU and non-EU countries in the SR. A total of 33 persons from 24 companies and institutions participated in the training between January and May 2020. Apart from the training, the IOM also provided personal/ phone and e-mail consultations in relation to the employment of foreigners in the SR, tailored to the needs of particular employers.⁷⁶

71 Source: <https://emn.sk/sk/novinky/560-studia-o-sezonnnych-pracovnikoch-z-krajm-mimo-eu.html> (consulted on 16/06/2021).

72 Information provided by BBFP PFP and MoLSAF SR.

73 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

74 Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2019/320/> (consulted on 21/01/2021).

75 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

76 Source: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1351-iom-activities-and-achievements-2020.html> (consulted on 15/05/2021).

Au pairs, Volunteers, Interns and Others

There were no changes related to au pairs, volunteers, interns or paid workers adopted in the SR in 2020 other than those mentioned above.⁷⁷

3.4. Students and Researchers

The number of Slovak government scholarships for countries affected by a conflict or for countries of origin of migrants increased from 24 to 25 in 2020. It is a result of efforts to fulfil (at least partly) the commitment of the SR to provide 550 scholarships for refugees until 2021 from the so-called Obama Summit (Leaders' Summit on Refugees on 20 September 2016 in New York). Until 2021, the SR provided 125 governmental scholarships for students from countries affected by war.⁷⁸

There were no legislative changes or new measures related to non-EU researchers adopted in the SR in 2020.⁷⁹

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.⁸⁰

3.6. Further Measures Related to Legal Migration

3.6.1. Working Holiday Schemes

On 22 January 2020 the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Argentine Republic on a Working Holiday Scheme was approved by the Government of the SR Resolution No. 19.⁸¹ Working holiday schemes promote youth mobility, allowing citizens of the SR and citizens of the other contracting party aged 18 – 35 years to obtain, in a simplified way, a work and residence permit in the given country valid for up to one year after they fulfil all the conditions stipulated in the bilateral agreement in question.⁸²

3.6.2. Population and Housing Census

In 2020, the SR continued preparations for the *Population and Housing Census* in 2021 under the leadership of the Statistical Office of the SR. The census concerns both Slovak nationals and foreigners – EU citizens, TCNs and stateless persons.⁸³

77 Information provided by MoLSAF SR and BBFP PFP.

78 Source: MoFEA SR questionnaire.

79 Information provided by BBFP PFP and MoLSAF SR.

80 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

81 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

82 Source: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/ministerstvo/medzinarodna-spolupraca/europska-unia/zmluvy-mobilite-mladych/> (consulted on 21/01/2021).

83 Information provided by SO SR.

In 2020, the SR claimed derogations concerning non-legislative measures related to amended information systems which process statistics, issued residence permits issued to persons from outside the EU disaggregated by gender and age (Article 6 of the amended⁸⁴ Regulation on Community statistics on migration and international protection).⁸⁵ The reason for the derogations was the fact that statistics in the required breakdown cannot be processed and provided on behalf of the Slovak Republic without a fundamental modification of the source information system. During the derogation period, several departments of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic will implement implementation measures (technical aspects related to definitions of new items, specifications of new statistical reports and variable lists and issues related to contractual relations with external service providers) so that after the derogation period breakdown and quality in accordance with the Regulation.⁸⁶

3.7. Information on the Possibilities and Conditions of Legal Migration

In 2020, 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

In 2019, the SR implemented a new online booking system⁸⁷, which enables users to register an application and book a visit at a Foreign Police Department – max. 14 days prior to the visit (<http://www.minv.sk/?objednavaci-system-na-ocp>). As this is a new system within the work of the Police with foreigners, its effectiveness and functionality was being enhanced in the following year. In 2020, the reservation system enabled registering the application and make an appointment reservation at a Foreign Police Department. After successful creation of the reservation, the foreigner was assigned a PIN code, which is used to print a serial ticket at the terminal on the appointment day.⁸⁸

Of the total of 75 diplomatic missions of the SR conducting consular activities, 52 missions carried out visa agenda and 57 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 in a way that they cover all Schengen countries.⁸⁹

In 2019, MoESRS SR approved the *Action plan for improving the quality according to the CAF model for 2019–2020*⁹⁰. Activity No 4 includes the development of website www.minedu.sk in English. At the end of 2019, the website was adjusted accordingly, and all information has been updated continuously. The website serves as informational portal for foreign applicants for study in the SR including applicants from third countries.⁹¹

84 Regulation (EU) 2020/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 amending Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 on Community statistics on migration and international protection. Published in the Official Journal of the European Union, L 198, on 22 June 2020.

85 Source: SO SR questionnaire.

86 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

87 Source: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=412554952783911> (consulted on 24/01/2020).

88 Information provided by BBFP PFP.

89 Information provided by MoFEA SR.

90 Common Assessment Framework

91 Information provided by the MoESRS SR.

3.7.2. International Organizations and Civic Sector

The IOM Migration Information Centre (MIC) funded by the AMIF⁹² provided 13,556 practical in-person, phone or e-mail consultations concerning stay, family, employment, business, education or citizenship of the SR in its Bratislava and Košice offices in 2020. The counselling services were used by a total of 8,237 clients, mainly from Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Serbia, India, the USA and Iran. The number of MIC clients increased by more than 2,000 people in 2020 compared to the previous year. The new *video guides*⁹³ explaining how to fill in the temporary or permanent residence permit application form for foreigners, how to submit them and detailing the obligations resulting from various types of residence for foreigners in Slovakia were among the most popular among the clients and the public. In 2020, a total of 408,852 searched for information at the MIC's www.mic.iom.sk website, and the website was viewed 1,230,087 times.⁹⁴ On its website, the MIC has created an *information section on measures to prevent the spreading of the COVID-19 disease in the SR*⁹⁵ and on the impact of these measures on foreigners' stay, work and other areas of life in Slovakia. Information on the anti-pandemic measures in the SR were updated and made available in English, Russian and Slovak.⁹⁶ The MIC has extended its offer of counselling services to include *online webinars*⁹⁷ which inform and respond to questions concerning the impact of anti-pandemic measures on foreigners' residence in the SR, family benefits and allowances foreigners can apply for, the first steps for foreign students or concerning conditions of foreigners' marriage and family reunification in the SR (see **Section 6.1**).⁹⁸

The *Visa Check web application services*⁹⁹ were used by 3,905 clients from 137 countries, and the Work Permit Check¹⁰⁰ web application services were used by 2,190 clients in 2020. 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.¹⁰¹

The supranational web portal *Danube Compass*,¹⁰² which was established in 2018, was finalized 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.¹⁰³

92 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. 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 a comprehensive integration, social and labour counselling, supports their inclusion into the labour market, organizes open Slovak language and social and cultural orientation courses, provides important information about life in Slovakia, and supports the community life of foreigners.

93 Available at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgWkt_s8RCEoD00O650Wkk_r9uzx4a-fo (consulted on 17/05/2021).

94 Information provided by the FAD EPS MoI SR and the IOM Office in the SR.

95 Available at: <https://www.mic.iom.sk/sk/novinky/639-covid-19-opatrenia.html> (consulted on 20/05/2021).

96 Available at: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1351-iom-activities-and-achievements-2020.html> (consulted on 20/05/2021).

97 Available at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgWkt_s8RCEoydcuiTRybH3g9TYe_C9zu (consulted on 20/05/2021).

98 Available at: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1351-iom-activities-and-achievements-2020.html> (consulted on 20/05/2021).

99 Available at: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1351-iom-activities-and-achievements-2020.html> (consulted on 20/05/2021).

100 Available at: <https://www.mic.iom.sk/workcheck/sk/domov/> (consulted on 20/05/2021).

101 Available at: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1351-iom-activities-and-achievements-2020.html> (consulted on 20/05/2021).

102 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. Project partner from the SR is the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

103 Source: <http://sk.danubecompass.org/?lang=sk> (consulted on 16/05/2021).



International Protection

The number of asylum applications and the number of various forms of international protection granted in the SR in 2020 remained low compared to previous years. The majority of a total of 282 applications concerned people from Afghanistan, Morocco, Syria, Algeria and Turkey. Nine applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors, predominantly from Afghanistan and Syria. In 2020, asylum was granted to 11 applicants from Libya, Afghanistan, Russia, Tunisia and Turkey. In the same period of time, the SR granted subsidiary protection to 27 persons who, similarly to the previous year, were mostly from Afghanistan. The SR did not participate in any relocation or resettlement activities in 2020.

The international protection system in the SR was mainly adjusted to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Dublin transfers were suspended in spring 2020 in relation to general anti-pandemic measures, including the closing down of Slovak international airports.

The SR continued to support measures aimed at addressing the causes of irregular and forced migration in the countries of origin and transit. In particular, the SR was interested in the situation in Greece, where several thousand unaccompanied minors are located. The possibility of a voluntary relocation of a group of these children to the SR was discussed. At the same time, the SR offered financial and humanitarian assistance to Greece to address the current migration situation, as well as the sending of Border and Foreign Police officers.

In the field of legislation, in November 2020 the SR passed the *amendment to Act on Health Insurance* effective as of 1 January 2021. The amendment transferred the obligation to pay for the

health care provided to TCNs who were granted subsidiary protection and who are not holders of public health insurance, from the Ministry of Interior of the SR to the health insurance company.

The Migration Office of the MO SR continued its cooperation with the Slovak Humanitarian Council within the scope of the new *Effective Services for Asylum Seekers in the SR III* project. The MO SR has also prepared a publication entitled *Social Work Experience in Asylum Facilities* about the work of social workers and culture mediators who come into contact with asylum seekers. The publication includes practical examples or case studies related to two communities accommodated in the MO SR asylum facilities in the past.

4.1. Statistics and Trends

Compared to the European average, the SR has been recording low numbers of visa applications and various forms of international protection granted in the long-term.^{104, 105} This trend has not changed in the last five years, although the number of asylum applications has been increasing slightly.¹⁰⁶ In 2020, a total of 282 asylum applications were submitted in the SR (267 of which were first applications and 15 were repeated applications), compared to 232 asylum applications in 2019, 178 applications in 2018, 166 asylum applications in 2017 and 146 asylum applications in 2016. The most numerous groups of asylum seekers in 2020 were from Afghanistan, Morocco, Syria, Algeria and Turkey (see **Table 13** in the Annex). Nine asylum applications concerned unaccompanied minors, most of whom were from Afghanistan and Syria (see **Table 18** in the Annex).

In 2020, the SR granted asylum to 11 people from Libya, Afghanistan, Russia, Tunisia and Turkey. In the same period of time, subsidiary protection was granted to 27 persons who, similarly to the previous year, were mostly from Afghanistan. The SR denied asylum in 79 cases and denied subsidiary protection in 21 cases. The SR granted citizenship to 14 persons who were granted international protection in 2020 (see **Table 13** in the Annex).¹⁰⁷

Asylum applications and international protection in the SR in 2016 - 2020

Indicator	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asylum seekers (of which first applications)	146 (99)	166 (153)	178 (155)	232 (214)	282 (267)
Asylum granted	167	29	5	9	11
Subsidiary protection granted	12	25	37	19	27
Citizenship granted	3	6	18	9	14

¹⁰⁴ Source: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics#Decisions_on_asylum_applications (12/05/2021).

¹⁰⁵ Source: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics (12/05/2021).

¹⁰⁶ Source: Behúňová, K., Mészáros, S., Oboňová, S. (2020): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2019. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

¹⁰⁷ Source: Štatistická správa Migračného úradu Ministerstva vnútra Slovenskej republiky – rok 2020. [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 16/04/2021).

4.2. National Policies and Legislation

In November 2020, the SR passed the *amendment to Act on health insurance*¹⁰⁸ effective as of 1 January 2021. The amendment transferred the obligation to pay for the health care provided to TCNs who were granted subsidiary protection and who are not holders of public health insurance, from the Ministry of Interior of the SR to the health insurance company with the highest number of insured persons. At the same time, the responsibility to issue entitlement cards for this particular group of people was also transferred to this health insurance company. The costs covered by the health insurance company will be reimbursed by the Ministry of Health of the SR.¹⁰⁹

In December 2020, the SR also approved the *National Strategy for Vaccination Against COVID-19 Disease in the Conditions of the Slovak Republic*,¹¹⁰ which put the vaccination of persons granted asylum into the third of the four phases planned for the vaccination of the Slovak population.¹¹¹ (Authors' note: The vaccination strategy was changed at the beginning of 2021 and the vaccination of persons granted asylum is not specifically mentioned in the currently valid version.)

The SR continued to support measures aimed at addressing the causes of irregular and forced migration in the countries of origin and transit. In particular, the SR was interested in the situation in Greece, where several thousand unaccompanied minors are located. The possibility of a voluntary relocation of a group of these children to the SR was discussed,¹¹² and the SR offered financial and humanitarian assistance to Greece to address the current migration situation, as well as the sending of Border and Foreign Police officers.¹¹³

4.3. Reception and Caring for Asylum Seekers

The international protection system in the SR was mainly adjusted to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The SR adopted several changes and internal procedures with the aim of ensuring compliance with the anti-epidemic measures against the spread of COVID-19 (e.g. limited movement, quarantine measures, isolating persons with positive laboratory results, limited indoor activities, disinfection) during this year.¹¹⁴

The situation concerning the reception and other capacities in Slovak facilities for asylum seekers remained stable in 2020. In autumn 2020 the SR reopened the Integration Centre in Zvolen serving persons granted international protection in their integration into Slovak society. The facility has 12 apartments with capacity from 25 up to 35 persons.¹¹⁵

The SR did not participate in any European or bilateral relocation activities in 2020 (see **Table 14** in the Annex). Similarly, the SR did not implement any relocation programme or other non-EU

¹⁰⁸ Act on Health Insurance No. 580/2004 Coll. on healthcare insurance and on amendment and supplementation to Act No. 95/2002 Coll. on insurance business and on amendments and supplementations to some acts as subsequently amended, amending and supplementing some acts. Available at: <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2020-393> (consulted on 21/01/2021).

¹⁰⁹ Source: MO SR questionnaire.

¹¹⁰ Available at: https://www.health.gov.sk/Zdroje?Sources/tlacove_spravy/covid-19/Strategia-ockovania-COVID-19.pdf (consulted on 21/01/2021).

¹¹¹ Source: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/25588/1> (consulted on 03/02/2021).

¹¹² Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=slovenska-republika-nadalej-podporuje-riesenie-pricin-migracie-v-krajinach-povodu> (consulted on 16/04/2021).

¹¹³ Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=slovensko-je-pripravene-pomoc-grecku-s-riesenim-migracnej-krizy> (consulted on 16/04/2021).

¹¹⁴ Source: MO SR questionnaire and BBFP PFP questionnaire.

¹¹⁵ Source: MO SR questionnaire.

refugee reception programme (see **Table 15** in the Annex), nor any special humanitarian refugee transfer through its territory (see **Table 16** in the Annex).¹¹⁶

Dublin transfers were suspended in spring 2020 in relation to general anti-pandemic measures, including the closing down of Slovak international airports.¹¹⁷

The Migration Office of the MO SR, which is responsible for international protection and refugee integration in the Slovak Republic, has prepared a publication entitled *Social Work Experience in Asylum Facilities*¹¹⁸ about the work of social workers and culture mediators who come into contact with asylum seekers. The publication also includes practical examples or case studies related to two communities accommodated in the MO SR asylum facilities in the past.¹¹⁹

The Migration Office of the MO SR continued its close cooperation with NGOs and in particular within the scope of EU funded projects. In 2020, the Slovak Humanitarian Council NGO implemented a new two-year project *Effective Services for Asylum Seekers in the SR III*.¹²⁰ Within the scope of the project, asylum seekers, including those residing in MO SR asylum facilities, were provided with both basic and subsidiary services. Special attention was given to the needs of vulnerable persons. Subsidiary services included teaching the Slovak language, psychological counselling, social work, leisure-time activities etc.¹²¹

The AMIF funded the national project *Capacity Building in the Field of Asylum*¹²² continued in 2020. The project will be implemented until the end of 2021. Due to pandemic measures, no training could be organized as they require the physical presence of participants (supervision and psychosocial training). The quality of the translated EASO training modules was checked.¹²³

The training of MO SR employees took place again, mainly through EASO training modules. In 2020, a total of three national trainers were trained, specifically for the following EASO modules: Interviewing of Vulnerable Persons, Conducting Interviews with Children and Medical Country of Origin Information (Med COI). In 2020, 4 national trainings were held for a total of 43 participants, for the following modules: Country of Origin Information (3 participants), Common European Asylum System (27 participants), Inclusion (10 participants) and Med COI online (3 participants). Two other participants took part in the EASO training webinars, specifically on the following topics: the EASO Webinar on communicating with and providing information to asylum seekers and the EASO Webinar on conducting distance interviews. In 2020, the MO SR staff also participated in the pilot project EASO Tool for Analysis of Training Needs (ETNAT).¹²⁴

116 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.

117 Source: MO SR questionnaire.

118 Available at: https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=migracny-urad-vydal-publikaci-u-socialnej-praci-v-azylovych-zariadeniach&subor_spravy=394499 (consulted on 16/04/2021).

119 Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=migracny-urad-vydal-publikaci-u-socialnej-praci-v-azylovych-zariadeniach> (consulted on 16/04/2021).

120 Project code: SK 2019 AMIF SC1.1/1. Project duration: 01/01/ 2020– 31/12/ 2021. Grant: €1,189,773. 62. Funding: AMIF and State Budget of the SR.

121 Information provided by the FAD EPS MO SR.

122 Project code: SK 2018 AMIF SC1.1. Project duration: 01/01/ 2019 – 31/12/ 2021. Grant: €41,553.08 . Funding: AMIF and State Budget of the SR

123 Source: MO SR questionnaire.

124 Source: MO SR questionnaire.

4.4. Court Decisions at the National and European Level

The Slovak Republic 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 2020, 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.¹²⁵

4.5. Cooperation on the Level of EU Member States and V4 Countries

Within the multilateral cooperation framework, regular online negotiations were held with the V4 countries under the Presidency of the Republic of Poland at various levels. The output of the V4 joint activity in 2020 was two letters from the Ministers of the Interior addressed to the EC in connection with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Through the Ministry of the Interior, the SR also actively participated in negotiations on legislative proposals presented by the European Commission together with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Due to the deteriorating pandemic situation, secondments of national experts to EASO Support Teams (AST) operating in EU Member States under migratory pressure were limited in 2020. Nevertheless, 6 postings took place in 2020 (2 to Greece, 2 to Malta, 1 to Cyprus and 1 to Italy).¹²⁶

Note: 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**.

125 Information provided by MO SR and BBFP PFP.

126 Source: MO SR questionnaire.

05

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 2020. Even though the number of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) placed in Slovak facilities has more than quadrupled since 2018, the number of UAMs applying for asylum has been decreasing and their voluntary departures from the facilities are still a challenge. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic a temporary group for UAMs was established in the CFC Kolárovo for UAMs to spend their quarantine period. The MIC IOM continued to provide counselling services for UAMs residing in socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship (SPCSG) facilities, including individual legal counselling, Slovak language courses and social and cultural orientation.

5.1. Unaccompanied Minors

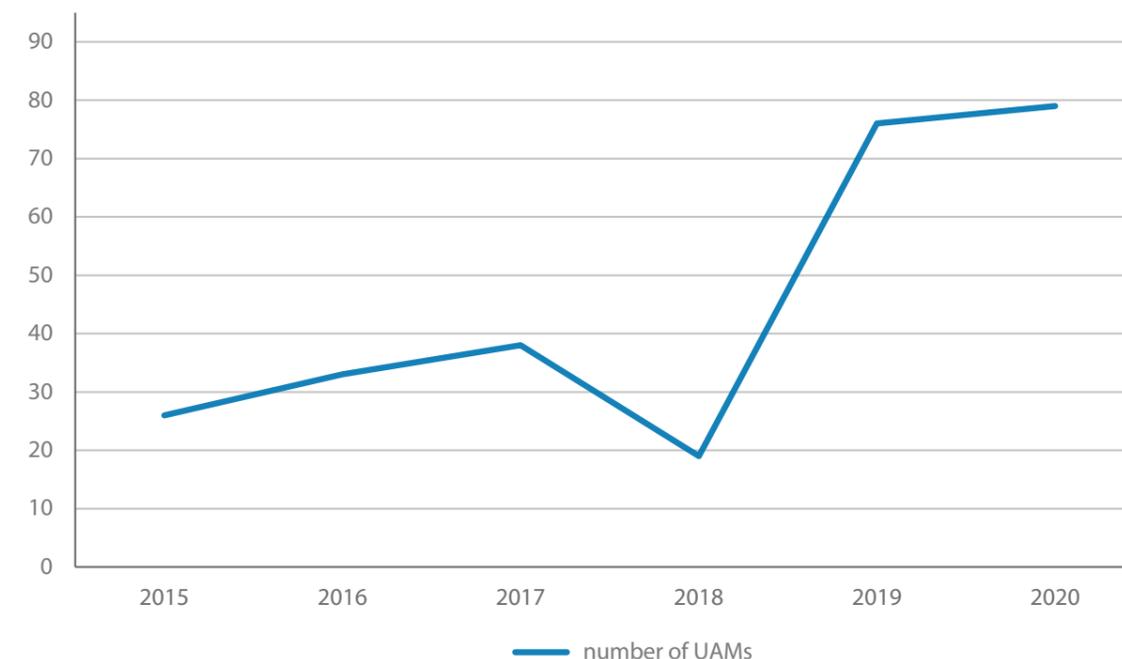
Statistics and Trends

The number of unaccompanied minors in the SR grew in the period of years 2015 – 2020. A total of 79 new unaccompanied minors were placed in SPCSG facilities in the SR in the course of 2020,¹²⁷ mainly from Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Ghana. This number

¹²⁷ In 2020, SPCSG bodies registered a total of 89 UAMs (4 of whom were girls).

represents only a minor increase compared to 2019, when the total number of new unaccompanied minors in the SR was 76. However, compared to years 2015 – 2018 it is a relatively significant increase, as the number of new UAMs was 19 in 2018, 38 in 2017, 33 in 2016 and 26 in 2015 (see Figure 1 and Table 17 in the Annex).

Figure 1: Unaccompanied minors in the SR 2015 – 2020

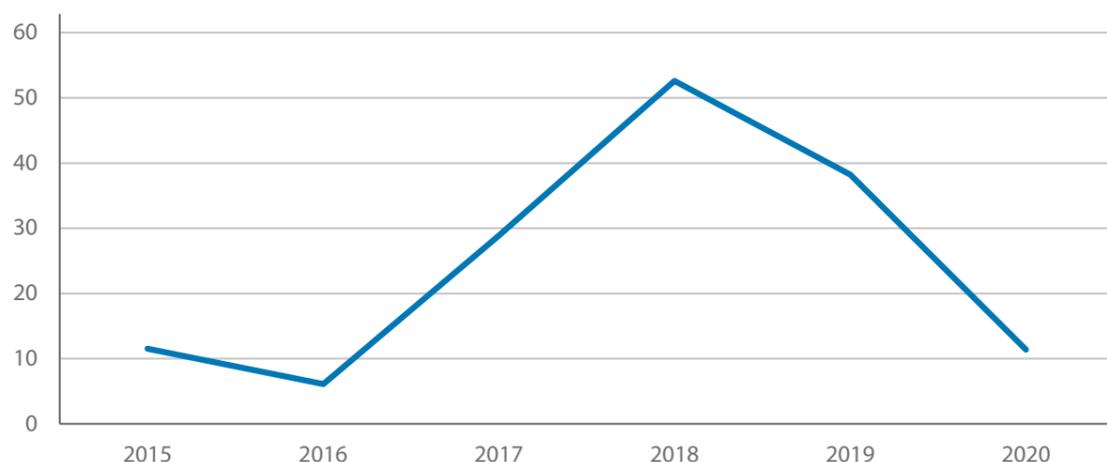


Source: MoLSAF SR

A total of 89 UAMs were registered in the CFC in Medzilaborce in 2020. Of these, 66 UAMs left the facility voluntarily to an unknown location (see **Table 17**).

Nine UAMs applied for asylum in 2020, which represents 11.4% of the total number of UAMs newly arriving in the SPCSG facility (see **Table 18**). This is a decline compared to the previous year, when 29 UAMs (38.2%) applied to enter the asylum procedure. Thus, the percentage of UAMs applying for asylum of the total number of UAMs placed in the facility has been decreasing since 2018 (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Proportion of UAMs applying for asylum of the total number of UAMs placed in SPCSG facilities in the period of years 2015 - 2020



Source: MO Mol SR

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 2020. The change that occurred was the fact that, pursuant to Act No. 179/2011 Coll. on Economic Mobilization and on Amendment and Supplementation to Act No. 387/2002 Coll. on the State Management in the Time of Crisis Situations Out of the Time of War and the State of War as subsequently amended, the MoLSAF SR, within the scope of its authority defined, inter alia, economic mobilization subjects, including Children and Family Centres (CFC) among them.

Despite the epidemiological situation, in the area of socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship (SPCSG), it was necessary to ensure the best possible care for UAMs. Therefore, the Government of the SR issued a Regulation¹²⁸ allowing the SPCSG bodies and Children and Family Centres to respond to both negative and positive development in the epidemiological situation in the area of SPCSG. The Regulation was applicable exclusively during an emergency situation and during the period immediately after the emergency situation ended. The Regulation directly proposed the duration of the period in relation to the individual measures. The Regulation specifies the possible changes in the arrangement of the individual groups in the Children and Family Centres (CFC) such as admission conditions, conditions for ensuring isolation, quarantine groups and deployment of specialised methods for these children.¹²⁹

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, UAMs were categorised as persons where early identification of positivity was ensured by PCR tests or, later, by AG tests. Testing in the first wave was carried out by the CFC and, subsequently, it was carried out within the scope of initial stage by the police forces.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Government of the SR Regulation No. 115/2020 Coll. of 7 May 2020 concerning certain measures to ensure implementation of socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship during the emergency situation, state of emergency or state of exception declared in relation to COVID-19 disease, modified on 17 June 2020.

¹²⁹ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹³⁰ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

In order to eliminate the risks of possible transmission and spread of COVID-19, a quarantine group for UAMs was established in the CFC Kolárovo as of 1 December 2020 with a capacity of 8 UAMs. UAMs were placed in this facility temporarily until a negative result on the presence of the virus was confirmed and their quarantine period ended. Subsequently, the UAMs were transferred from CFC Kolárovo to CFC Medzilaborce.¹³¹

Measures to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 virus resulted in the changes in the internal methodology of working with UAMs. The teaching of the Slovak language was carried out predominantly on a distance basis and the teaching of children attending school was carried out mainly online. Interpreting was carried out by means of a conference call, case conferences were conducted under strict anti-epidemiological measures and the contacts with external persons were reduced. Moreover, certain activities with UAMs (school enrolment, socialisation, interaction with peers, etc.) have become significantly limited due to the pandemic.¹³²

The MIC IOM continued to provide counselling and advisory services to UAMs in SPCSG facilities even in 2020. A total of 75 persons received services, which included mostly Slovak language courses, individual labour counselling and the involvement of the MIC IOM cultural mediator in integration measures and social and cultural orientation for the UAMs.¹³³

5.2. Minor Migrants

There were no developments in relation to measures concerning minor migrants in 2020. Similarly, there were no developments in the field of policies and legislation concerning vulnerable groups.¹³⁴

Important for this field was the sixth monitoring report on the situation regarding human rights in the Slovak Republic, the ECRI Report on the Slovak Republic (see **Section 6**), which includes a number of recommendations for the SR. The Report urges the SR to establish a functioning system to enable migrant children to learn Slovak. According to the Report, schools are using the funds earmarked for the teaching of the Slovak language to migrant children to a very limited extent only, and free Slovak language courses are not available. Moreover, the Report expresses a concern about whether the introduction of the obligation to register the parents' residential status at school enrolment, which was introduced as of 2019, does not discourage irregular migrants from enrolling their children at school. At the same time, however, the Report states, that the (Slovak) authorities informed that despite this not a single child was denied access to school. In addition, migrant families are also having problems in arranging childcare for their young children due to a shortage of childcare places, which can lead to a kind of structural discrimination against women - foreigners, who are thus unable to find a job. In its statement to the ECRI Report, which forms an integral part of the Report, the SR states that in line with the Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic for years 2020-2024, the Slovak government will pay special attention also to pupils with a different mother tongue as the language used in education process at school. The Government will include the lack of knowledge of this language in the criteria for special educational needs and at the same time will ensure sufficient support to these

¹³¹ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹³² Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹³³ Information provided by the IOM Office in the SR.

¹³⁴ This area was partially affected by the Regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic on the Provision of Support and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking Programme (see Section 10).

pupils. It will at the same time ensure increase in quality of the professional development, continuous education and personal development of teachers and professionals who are teaching at schools where the main language is the minority language or the minority language is taught with the focus on principle of inclusive education, intercultural and interethnic dialogue.¹³⁵

Shortcomings in the field of education of migrant children were also stressed in the MIPEX 2020 Report. According to MIPEX, there are no integration strategies and support available for migrant children. Schools receive no support to promote social integration and only weak support to help immigrant pupils participate in the education process. Similarly to ECRI, the MIPEX Report also points out that only migrant children with permitted residence can fully access schooling and general support for disadvantaged students.¹³⁶ In this regard it is important to stress, that in line with Article 146 par. 2 of the Act No. 245/2008 on upbringing and education (School Act), the upbringing, education, lodging and board in schools is provided to children of foreigners with a permitted stay in the SR. If the child does not have a legal stay in the SR, the school legislation does not apply to them.¹³⁷

According to the statistics of the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information, as of 15 September 2019 (i.e. in the 2019/2020 academic year) there were 633 TCN children in pre-school facilities, 2,686 TCN children in elementary schools (state, religious and private), 25 TCN children in special pre-school facilities and elementary schools and 1,662 TCN children in secondary schools (state, religious and private) in the SR.¹³⁸

5.3. Other Vulnerable Groups

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

In 2020 no legislative or organisational changes occurred in admission of vulnerable asylum applicants. In 2020 within identified vulnerability disabled persons, elderly persons, single parents with minor children, people with mental disorder were placed in asylum facilities. MO Mol SR prepared a publication entitled *Experiences in the area of social work in asylum facilities*¹³⁹ which deals with the practice of social workers and cultural mediators and describes also work with vulnerable groups.

Education of employees in this area was undertaken again mainly via EASO training module. In 2020 national trainers for EASO modules were trained: Conduct of interviews with vulnerable persons and Conduct of interviews with children.

¹³⁵ Source: ECRI Report on the Slovak Republic (sixth monitoring cycle), available at <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-6th-report-on-the-slovak-republic/1680a0a08a>, consulted on 27/04/2021.

¹³⁶ Source: Solano, Giacomo & Huddleston, Thomas (2020). Migrant Integration Policy Index 2020. Barcelona/ Brussels: CIDOB and MPG, part on the Slovak Republic, available at <https://www.mipex.eu/slovakia>, consulted on 27/04/2021.

¹³⁷ Information provided by e-mail on 6 November 2020 by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the SR to the EMN study on Responses to long-term irregularly staying migrants: practices and challenges (2020).

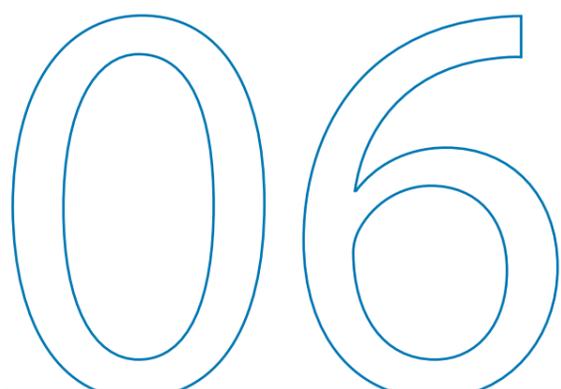
¹³⁸ Available at https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/zber-udajov/vykazy-typu-skol-msvvs-sr.html?page_id=9989 consulted on 04/05/2021. UK nationals are included in the statistics.

¹³⁹ Available at https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=migracny-urad-vydal-publikaciu-o-socialnej-praci-v-azylovych-zariadeniach&subor_spravy=394499 (consulted on 16/04/2021).

Experiences from the posting of national expert to EASO Support Team to Malta will be used in the process of revision of its own MO Mol SR tool to identify the vulnerability of the asylum applicant.

Civic association Qualed participated in the project Post-traumatic integration – basic psychosocial assistance and intervention for migrants. The main aim of the project is to increase the knowledge on the possibility of post-traumatic stress disorder among refugees and asylum applicants, about its symptoms or possibilities of basic mental intervention. Material as well as the mobile app are available online.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Available at <https://posttraumatic-integration.eu/sk/project/> (consulted on 09/07/2021).



Integration

At the beginning of 2020, the updating of the *Integration Policy of the SR* document continued (updating was aimed at the labour market integration) but was temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Migration Policy of the SR for 2021 – 2025, which is currently being prepared, contains a part on the integration of foreigners.

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, several legislative measures were adopted aiming to mitigate the social impact of the pandemic both on the citizens of the SR and foreigners. This mainly concerned the provision of a so called pandemic parental allowance and the provision of a parental allowance during a crisis situation.

Related to the prevention of discrimination, *The Conceptual Framework for Countering Radicalisation and Extremism by 2024*, which identified several tasks focused specifically on migration and international protection, was finalized. Combatting extremism and xenophobia was also the topic of recommendations in the report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) from its sixth monitoring cycle on the state of human rights in Slovakia.

In 2020, the projects of various organisations, such as the provision of counselling and language courses via the IOM, 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. Many activities were transferred into online space, and consultations were provided especially by telephone or e-mail. Despite the pandemic, several online discussions, movie screenings and performances were organised in order to fight prejudice and stereotypes.

Locally, the *Concept of Social Inclusion for the Bratislava Self-Governing Region 2020 – 2030* was developed. This is the first document to ever define foreigners as a separate target group. Regarding non-governmental organisations, the Human Rights League (HRL) continued to devote their attention to local integration of foreigners by means of the KapaCity project. They also took part in the new three-year Europe-wide *Successful Migrant Integration in Regions* project, in which the Czech Republic, Germany and Belgium participate. The Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture was also active in this topic and they published the *Cudzinci ako obyvatelia miest – zistenia z výskumu [Foreigners as City Residents – Research Findings]* report within the *Výskum integrácie cudzincov – bariéry, nástroje a postoje [Survey of the Integration of Foreigners – Obstacles, Tools and Attitudes]*. Apart from that they developed the *Situačná analýza migrácie a možností integrácie cudzincov v meste Nitra [Situational Analysis of Migration and Integration Options for Foreigners in the City of Nitra]* within the COMIN project by the City of Nitra.

In 2020, there was no new development of policies and legislation related to the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Within the activities to support their integration as well as to remove prejudice and stereotypes about migration and asylum, the implementation of several projects by state institutions or non-governmental organisations continued. The theatre play *DOMOV (kde je ten tvoj?) [HOME (Where is yours?)]* was renewed online. The multigenre and multicultural festival Fjúžň [Fusion] as well as the film festival *Jeden svet [One World]* were organized.

6.1. Integration of Third-Country Nationals

6.1.1 Policies and Legislation

At the beginning of 2020, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR continued to prepare and collect data related to the preparation of a new integration policy focusing specifically on labour market integration. This task was related to the fulfilment of the long-term measure titled “Updating of the Integration Policy of the SR” resulting from the Strategy on the Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic.¹⁴¹

In this regard, a thematic meeting by the EMN¹⁴² was organized on 31 December 2020 aiming to discuss with the key actors their experience with the integration of foreigners – third-country nationals into the labour market of the SR. Representatives of the MoLSAF SR, COLSAF, the National Labour Inspectorate, the MO MoI SR, the National Union of Employers, the Slovak Chamber of Trades, non-governmental organisations, and employers participated. Comments and measures proposed by the participants were collected as the basis for further processing during the preparation of the document while respecting the rights and needs of the foreigners working in the SR, employers as well as the wider public. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, further activity related to preparation of the material was temporarily suspended. However, some results of the event were utilized in the preparation of strategic documents within the sector or on the national level.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ More information available in: Behúňová, K., Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2020): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic for 2019. Európska migračná sieť, IOM, Bratislava.

¹⁴² EMN thematic meeting was organized by the MoLSAF SR and IOM as members of the EMN National Contact Point within the working programme for 2019 – 2020.

¹⁴³ Source: Reply to the Ad-Hoc Query of the EMN (2021.16) on 2020 Status report: Impacts of EMN activities in 2020 (Part II).

Related to the preparation of the Migration Policy of the SR for 2021 – 2025, whose adoption is declared in the Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2020 – 2024,¹⁴⁴ the MoLSAF SR actively participated in the preparation of the part concerning the integration of foreigners.¹⁴⁵

Regarding the legislation, amendment to Act No. 571/2009 Coll. on Parental Allowance was adopted. With the aim to mitigate the loss of a parent's source of income and ensure that children up to 3 years of age or children with long-term health problems up to six years of age receive proper care, the Act on the Parental Allowance has been amended¹⁴⁶ and entered into force on 1 January 2020. The provision of parental allowance has been modified and it has been increased¹⁴⁷. This amendment also applies to foreigners who are eligible and fulfil the residence conditions in the Slovak Republic - they are treated in the same way as Slovak citizens.¹⁴⁸

Within the measures adopted to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of the SR has modified their Regulation¹⁴⁹ with the aim to temporarily adjust the procedures, activities, and claims in the area of state social benefits, social assistance benefits, substitute alimony and compensation of the social consequences resulting from a severe disability if it is necessary to protect the clients' life and health and objectively justified, to guarantee material security for inhabitants during the worsened epidemiological situation despite the difficult conditions for the state administration to perform its tasks in the area.

Due to the worsened epidemiological situation, the following measures have been introduced, which apply to SR citizens and foreign nationals who are thereby eligible for the following:

- provision of the so-called pandemic parental allowance;
- during the crisis situation, provision of the parental allowance to the persons who will lose their eligibility for parental allowance during the crisis situation due to certain reasons^{150, 151}

Integration policies are critical for including foreigners into society. The SR received a MIPEX 2020 ranking of 39 points out of 100, which represents a 2-point improvement as compared to the previous assessment,¹⁵² while the MIPEX average is 50. The report states that public policies in Slovakia are more restrictive towards migrants compared to the majority of EU countries and are slightly below the EU13 average (41/100). It names several areas for improvement, especially the labour market, education, political participation and access to citizenship.¹⁵³

144 Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2020 – 2024: "The Government of the SR will devote their attention that the eligible interests of the SR are taken into consideration when formulating new European migration and asylum policy. The Government of the SR shall assess the option to centralize these agendas in one place and prepare and adopt new Migration Policy of the SR for 2021 – 2025."

145 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

146 Act No. 571/2009 Coll. on Parental Allowance and on changes and amendments to some acts

147 For the parents who received maternity benefits before their child was born, the parental allowance increased by 68.2% in 2019; for the other parents, it increased by 22.7%.

148 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

149 Effective as of 1 November 2020, the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 302/2020 Coll. Amended the Regulation of the Slovak Republic No. 102/2020 Coll. on some measures in the social affairs, family, and employment services in an emergency situation or state of emergency declared in relation to COVID-19.

150 If their eligibility for parental allowance has expired because their child has reached three years of age, or six years of age if the child suffers from a health condition in the long term, or the child is in foster care, or if three years have passed since the first decision on the custody of the child was issued. At the same time, it applies to persons who do not have income from employment, income from business or other type of self-employment, and do not receive social insurance benefits, old-age pension, or pension from the complementary retirement savings, social security benefits, care allowance, or are not eligible for parental allowance for another child (e.g. younger child) according to the law. These persons receive parental allowance in the same amount as before for the duration of the crisis situation at most.

151 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

152 The MIPEX 2015 report is available at <https://www.mipex.eu/slovakia>, consulted on 30/04/2021.

153 The MIPEX 2020 report is available at <https://www.mipex.eu/slovakia>, consulted on 30/04/2021.

6.1.2 Measures to Support Integration

In 2020, integration continued to be supported mainly by project activities. 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 2020, despite the anti-pandemic measures, the IOM Migration Information Centre provided not only their counselling services on legal questions (see **Section 3.7.2**), but also other services to support integration: labour and socio-cultural counselling, language and vocational education of foreigners, and the protection of UAMs' rights and support for their integration. Increased interest in the MIC services resulted to a certain extent from the negative impacts of COVID-19, as several foreigners living in Slovakia had their residence permit expired, in some cases lost employment, and were unable to leave the country or renew the permit. For this reason the MIC prepared several webinars on various topics, such as changes in the Act on Residence of Foreigners, family allowances that foreigners with permanent or temporary residence in Slovakia can also apply for, and the conditions of applying for residence for the purpose of family reunification.¹⁵⁴

The provision of free-of-charge legal assistance to foreigners seeking family reunification in Slovakia, focusing in particular on LGBTI foreigners, was the subject of the HRL's new *Prístup k spravodlivosti pri ochrane práva migrantov na rodinný a súkromný život, vrátane práv LGBTI migrantov* [Access to Justice When Protecting the Rights of Migrants to Family and Private Life, Including the Rights of the LGBTI Migrants] project.¹⁵⁵ Project activities included networking with other non-governmental organisations, lawyers, and legal representatives as well as organising a webinar/workshop. Spreading awareness on social media was also a part of the project.

Regarding the support to foreigners in their integration into the labour market in Slovakia, the MIC IOM in 2020 provided consultations to 698 clients (this number is comparable to 627 clients in 2019). 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 MIC IOM also provided financial support, based on which 44 clients took a retraining course.

Career counselling also became one of the main priorities for the Mareena civic association due to many foreigners losing their employment as a result of the pandemic. The association's volunteers provided mentoring and labour counselling to clients.¹⁵⁶

The extraordinary situation also influenced the way of conducting Slovak language courses, which were moved to online space. Slovak language courses were available to third-country nationals from private institutions on several online platforms.¹⁵⁷ Within the scope of the MIC

154 Source: Results and Achievements of IOM Slovakia in 2020 – International Organization for Migration (IOM) Slovakia, consulted on 16/04/2021.

155 The project is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the framework of Dutch development and foreign policy, more information about the project is available at *Prístup k spravodlivosti pri ochrane práva migrantov na rodinný a súkromný život, vrátane práv LGBTI migrantov* [Access to Justice When Protecting the Rights of Migrants to Family and Private Life, Including the Rights of the LGBTI Migrants] - Hrl.sk, consulted on 19/04/2021.

156 Source: Mareena: Kariérové poradenstvo a pomoc pre cudzincov v čase pandémie – Národná cena kariérového poradenstva [Career Counseling and Assistance for Foreigners during COVID-19 - National Career Counseling Award] (euroguidance.sk), consulted on 16/04/2021.

157 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 16/04/2021

IOM project, in 2020, 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 2020, 1,328 persons attended these courses, and **327 persons** participated in social and cultural orientation courses, which help foreigners navigate important areas of living in Slovakia. In addition, 16 Welcoming Slovakia meetings for more than 370 participants were organized in 2020 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.¹⁵⁸

The Mareena civic association also provided Slovak language and conversation courses in 2020 and English language courses in the first half of 2020, mainly for third-country nationals as well as other foreigners.¹⁵⁹ Elementary Slovak language courses were free-of-charge for beginners. They only paid a motivational deposit. Intermediate students had to pay the course fee.

Regarding the support to policy creation, the Human Rights League prepared *the Analýza migračnej, integračnej a azylovej politiky SR [Analysis of the Migration, Integration and Asylum Policy of the Slovak Republic]*, which provides an analysis of their current state as well as trends, challenges and recommendations for improvement.¹⁶⁰ The analysis was presented during the seventh year of *Integration Forum*,¹⁶¹ which brought together various experts on integration and the wider public.

Regarding the health of migrants, in 2020 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.¹⁶² The main goal of the project is 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. During 2020 the working groups active in various areas of prevention and timely and crisis intervention continued working. The project gives special attention to the health needs of vulnerable groups of people such as minors, pregnant women and victims of trafficking, torture and violence. The Ministry of Health of the SR operates in this regard a website <https://www.standardnepostupy.sk/zdravie-a-migracia/> where the outcomes of the project are available in Slovak and English language. The project duration is until 30 September 2021.¹⁶³

6.1.3 Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection

In 2020, there was no new development of policies and legislation related to the integration of beneficiaries of international protection.

Within activities focusing on support for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, implementation of the project of the MO Mol SR *Capacity Building in the Field of Asylum* con-

158 Source: Results and Achievements of IOM Slovakia in 2020 – International Organization for Migration (IOM) Slovakia, consulted on 16/04/2021.

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

160 More information on the Analysis is available at *Vydali sme Analýzu azylovej, migračnej a integračnej politiky SR [We published the Analysis of Migration, Integration and Asylum Policy of the SR]* - Hrl.sk, consulted on 19/4/2021.

161 More information about the Forum available at *Fórum o integrácii 2020 [Integration Forum 2020]* - Hrl.sk, consulted on 19/4/2021.

162 The project will be implemented by 30/09/2021 and is funded by AMIF.

163 Source: EPS Mol SR questionnaire.

tinued. 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.¹⁶⁴ In 2020, supervisions activities, social-psychological training and training on cultural differences between various nationalities were not held due to COVID-19. The quality control of translated EASO training modules was conducted.¹⁶⁵

However, the MO Mol SR organized informal meetings of asylum seekers and international protection beneficiaries with the MO staff in Bratislava and Košice with the aim of deepening the trust towards the MO as well as contributing to preventing possible social pathology or radicalisation.¹⁶⁶

Within the projects focused on supporting persons granted asylum or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, the project *Rifugio*¹⁶⁷ began being implemented in 2020 by the Slovak Humanitarian Council. Clients were provided social, labour and psychological counselling, legal and social aid or assistance in finding accommodation.¹⁶⁸ The Slovak language teaching took place in online form (if the pandemic measures allowed it also in person). Besides that, the clients were provided with food aid and the children whose education was conducted online were provided with technical equipment.¹⁶⁹

Supporting the labour market integration of refugees has been a topic of the new Human Rights League (HRL) project since July 2020. They examine various aspects 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.¹⁷⁰

In 2020, the Marginal o.z. civic association joined the project titled *V4NIEM 2020-2021: Towards Common Advocacy on Integration*. Its aim is to evaluate integration policies, strengthen them and improve the integration of refugees and beneficiaries of international protection in the V4 countries. The implementation of the project in each V4 country will include at least 5 professional meetings on the local or national level. At the end of the project a joint meeting of all partners as well as international conference will be held. Working on the comparative report *Housing Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic* is a part of the project, too.¹⁷¹

164 The project will be implemented by 31 December 2021 and is funded by the AMIF. More information about the project is available at *Budovanie kapacít v oblasti azylu [Capacity Building in the Field of Asylum]*, Ministerstvo vnútra SR - Európske programy (minv.sk), consulted on 21/04/2021.

165 Source: EPS Mol SR questionnaire.

166 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=neformalne-stretnutia-azylantov-s-migracnymi-uradnikmi-prispievaju-k-vzajomnej-dovere>, consulted on 21/04/2021.

167 The project will be implemented by 31 December 2021 and is funded by the AMIF. More information is available at *Migračný úrad MV SR sa aktuálne podieľa na nasledovných projektoch: [MO Mol SR is currently participating in the following projects:]*, Ministerstvo vnútra SR - Azyl a migrácia [Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic – Asylum and Migration] (minv.sk), consulted on 21/04/2021.

168 Source: EPS Mol SR questionnaire.

169 Source: MO Mol SR.

170 More information about the project available at *Podpora utečencov v ich integrácii na pracovný trh [Supporting the Labour Market Integration of Refugees]* - Hrl.sk, consulted on 20/04/2021.

171 Implementation of the second project phase: 2020 – 2021. The project is co-funded by the International Visegrad Fund. More information is available at *V4NIEM: VISEGRAD COUNTRIES NATIONAL INTEGRATION EVALUATION MECHANISM – Marginal civic association*, consulted on 30/04/2021.

6.1.4 Integration on the Local Level and Civic Participation of Foreigners

The availability of integration services locally is the topic of the *Cudzinci ako obyvatelia miest – zistenia z výskumu [Foreigners as City Residents – Research Findings]* research report.¹⁷² The report is a summary of the research conducted by the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture between April – September 2020. The research goal was to find out how local self-governments and other local players in Slovakia reflect on the fact that foreign migration is gradually influencing the composition of the population in their territory and if their policies and activities see foreigners as a part of the local community.¹⁷³ One of the recommendations of the research report is to define foreigners as a separate target group in strategic documents of self-governing regions when creating policies. According to the results, the foreigners were defined as a separate target group only in the new *Concept of Social Inclusion for the Bratislava Self-Governing Region 2020 – 2030*.

The Bratislava city and region are among the locations with the highest proportion of foreign nationals. They have created the *Concept of Social Inclusion for the Bratislava Self-Governing Region 2020 – 2030*, which addresses social inclusion of TCNs beside other vulnerable groups. The target group includes foreign nationals who have entered the territory of the SR and who live there temporarily or permanently, regardless of their age and sex and including foreign nationals' children who have Slovak citizenship. The concept identifies the four main priorities:

- to create a positive environment for the integration of foreigners,
- to improve foreigners' accessibility of basic information on how the society works,
- to improve the accessibility of institutional assistance for foreigners,
- removing the language barrier for foreigners.¹⁷⁴

The interest of self-governments in foreigners living in their territory has been on the rise. Thus in the City of Nitra the *Situačná analýza migrácie a možností integrácie cudzincov v meste Nitra [Situational Analysis of Migration and Integration Options for Foreigners in the City of Nitra]* was prepared within the COMIN project. The analysis was conducted by the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture. They made several recommendations in individual areas towards a more successful integration of foreigners.¹⁷⁵ The Community Centre for Work and Knowledge Mobility (COMIN)¹⁷⁶ continues their activity and in 2020 mainly informed foreigners about measures related to the COVID-19 and provided Slovak language courses in cooperation with the Mareena civic association.

Several other organisations were active in informing foreigners on current COVID-19-related measures. The HRL provided migrants with information from self-governments on the “mass testing”, which was organized in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, as well as on fi-

nancial aid available during the pandemic¹⁷⁷ and other anti-pandemic measures.¹⁷⁸ The IOM MIC and Mareena civic association organised several webinars to inform foreigners about the changes introduced in relation to COVID-19. The webinars were published on social networks, too.¹⁷⁹

Several projects of non-governmental organisations were concerned with the integration of foreigners on the local level. The implementation of the Human Rights League's project *KapaCITY project – the support of migrant integration on the local level*,¹⁸⁰ within which the *Ako komunikovať témy migrácie a integrácie cudzincov na regionálnej úrovni [How to Communicate the Topic of Migration and the Integration of Foreigners at the Regional Level]* handbook¹⁸¹ was prepared in 2020 and several media training sessions for self-governments were held in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Trnava, and Košice, came to an end. The handbook *Desatoro pre školy – na čo nezabúdať pri vzdelávaní detí cudzincov [Ten Recommendations for Schools – What to Keep in Mind When Educating Children of Foreigners]*¹⁸² was also created, and several stories of foreigners were published.¹⁸³

On a Europe-wide level, the Human Rights League participated in 2020 in the new three-year long *Successful Migrant Integration in Regions* project, in which 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 level and on the exchange of innovation among the EU MS and their adoption to local needs.¹⁸⁴ 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.

As of September 2020, the International Organization for Migration started to cooperate with *Staromestské noviny* monthly published in the Bratislava – Staré mesto city district. 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.¹⁸⁵

A case study by the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, which was published in 2020 and is included in the *Hlas menšín [Minorities' Voice]* publication, concerns the participation of migrants in the creation of public policies.¹⁸⁶ The case study describes the basic aspects

177 More information at Sociálna poisťovňa a nárok na sociálne dávky [Social Insurance Agency and the eligibility for social benefits] - Hrl.sk, consulted on 19/04/2021.

178 More information available at COVID-19 - Hrl.sk, consulted on 19/04/2021.

179 Webinars are available at IOM Slovakia - YouTube and Facebook, consulted on 21/04/2021.

180 The project is funded by AMIF and will be implemented by 31 March 2021. The project is implemented jointly by civil society organizations (Human Rights League, Milan Šimečka Foundation, Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture and civic association Marginal), local and regional self-governments (Bratislava, Trnava, Banská Bystrica, Košice Self-governing Region) and the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia.

181 Available at <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/o-nas/aktuality/ako-komunikovat-temy-migracie-a-integracie-cudzincov-na-regionalne-urovni>, consulted on 19/04/2021.

182 Available at <http://cvek.sk/desatoro-pre-skoly-na-co-nezabudat-pri.../>, consulted on 20/04/2021.

183 Available at Naomi Hužovičová: “Žiadna krajina nie je dokonalá, ale každá má svoje silné stránky a krásy; a je na nás ich nájsť” - Hrl.sk, consulted on 19/04/2021 and Yaroslav Lysenko: “Slovensko je najpriateľskejšou krajinou spomedzi susedných štátov Ukrajiny pre študentov každej vekovej kategórie” - Hrl.sk, consulted on 19/04/2021.

184 The project is implemented within the Erasmus+, key action 2: Strategic Partnerships. Information about the project is available at Úspešná integrácia migrantov v regiónoch [Successful Migrant Integration in Regions] - Hrl.sk, consulted on 19/04/2021.

185 Information provided by the IOM Office in the SR.

186 The publication was prepared within the national Podpora partnerstva a dialógu v oblasti participatívnej tvorby verejných politík [Supporting Partnership and Dialogue in Participative Creation of Public Policies] project in which the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture cooperated with the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Development of Civil Society. It resulted from qualitative research and contains studies on the inclusion of various minority groups into the creation of public policies on all public administration levels in the SR,

of how the idea and practice of migrants participating in public policy creation on the national level was formed, where the obstacles are, what would be needed to overcome them, and potential suitable forms of migrant participation in Slovakia. The findings suggest that currently there are no effective mechanisms that would provide for migrant participation in the creation of policies. Several obstacles preventing effective (or any) migrant participation in public policies creation were identified – state paternalism, securitization of migration and migrants, lack of participation of the entire society, the language barrier and access to information, insufficient possibilities to develop the social and cultural capital of migrant communities or the monopolization of state power. The authors, however, deem the non-existence of political will to support the participation of migrants in the creation of public policies as the most prominent obstacle.¹⁸⁷

6.2. Raising Awareness about Migration and Non-Discrimination

In 2020, The *Conceptual Framework for Countering Radicalisation and Extremism by 2024*¹⁸⁸ (hereinafter the Concept) was finalised. Based on the Concept, several tasks have been identified and some of them address specifically the area of migration and international protection.¹⁸⁹ The goal is to promote respect for universal values and prevent the development of prejudice, stereotypes, and hate speech attacking other people's nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, etc., and also to prevent the emergence and spread of attitudes and activities directed towards the promotion of racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance in a democratic society.

Combatting extremism and xenophobia was also the topic of the recommendations in *the Report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)* from its sixth monitoring cycle about the state of human rights in Slovakia. The report focused on combating racism, discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism, and intolerance.¹⁹⁰ The ECRI stated recommendations for Slovak authorities in various areas, such as inclusive education, education about human rights, protection of basic human rights of irregular migrants, preventing and combatting racism, homophobia and transphobia, as well as several recommendations related to integration.

In 2020, the MO Mol SR continued to eliminate prejudice and stereotypes related to migration and asylum. In cooperation with the Nová Scéna theatre, they renewed the theatre play *DOMOV (kde je ten tvoj?)* [HOME (Where is Yours?)] based on the work of Janne Teller. Due to COVID-19 it was only possible to watch the play online.¹⁹¹ The play premiered in 2018, and in 2019 a discussion of students with the MO Mol SR staff became a part of it. The discussion was part of the play also in its online version. The questions to the MO Mol SR employee were posed by the director of the play based on the experiences and questions from the previous performances.

Despite the pandemic, several other events were organized in 2020 aiming to increase sensi-

including migrants.

187 Source: Hlas menšín, consulted on 28/04/2021.

188 The Concept is available at https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewiHodmy7qLwAhWZhv0HHRenClSjAAegQIAhAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.minv.sk%2F%3Fzakladne-dokumenty-3%26subor%3D395760&usq=A0vVaw2DMB85eqc12CwVkJZ0zG_W5, consulted on 19/04/2021

189 Task 2.2 Description of the Task: To inform the public about asylum and migration, Task 3.9: To include in funding schemes of individual ministries the calls for projects focusing on: a) preventing and combatting radicalization and extremism, b) supporting social inclusion on local level to protect most threatened communities, c) educating about human rights and other topics included in the Concept, including the work with radicalized youth and other (more specified) target groups, Task 4.3: To update and print the "Nový štart v Slovenskej republike [New Beginning in the Slovak Republic], Task 4.4: To adopt systemic legislation concerning the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the SR.

190 The report is available at <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-6th-report-on-the-slovak-republic/1680a0a08a>, consulted on 20/04/2021.

191 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=divadlo-nova-scena-v-spolupraci-s-ministerstvom-vnutra-obnovilo-inscenaciudomov-kde-je-ten-tvoj-tentoraz-v-online-forme>, consulted on 21/04/2021.

tivity towards the topic of migration and asylum in the SR. In September, the multigenre and multicultural Fjúžn festival by the Milan Šimečka Foundation was held. Each year it focuses on migration and foreigners living in Slovakia.¹⁹² The MIND project continued, within which the Slovak Catholic Charity organized the *Živá knižnica s migrantmi* [The Living Library with Migrants] online discussion in 2020 as part of the *Čo je domov?* [What is Home?] campaign.¹⁹³ Within the November *Jeden svet* [One World] film festival organized by the Človek v ohrození [People in Need] non-profit organisation, a documentary screening followed by an online discussion about the resettlement of refugees was organized in cooperation with the IOM within the EMN activities.¹⁹⁴ 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 2019.¹⁹⁵

Within the *Faces of Migration* project activities the Ambrela – Platform for Development Organisations organized public events, 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 2020.¹⁹⁶ The MoFEA SR via Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation also supported an educational project for young programmers titled *Edugame Migration* from organisations Butterfly Effect and Impact Games. The aim of the project is by means of developed educational mobile game to contribute to public awareness raising about migration in the context of development and humanitarian aid. 40 second degree elementary school teachers and high school teachers in Slovakia should receive training on how to work with the game.

In order to bring harmony and more comprehensive and accurate information to the Slovak media and public debate, the *Ludia medzi riadkami* [People Between the Lines] publication¹⁹⁷ was established within the *Svet medzi riadkami* [World Between the Lines] initiative. The publication will serve as a textbook about migration for (future) journalists. *The Svet medzi riadkami* initiative is the result of cooperation of the *Hospodárske noviny* [Economic News] daily with Comenius University and the *Človek v ohrození* organisation with the goal of eliminating journalistic stereotypes (see **Section 2.3**).

Two MO Mol SR employees had a lecture (on 1 december 2020) for the Faculty of Arts of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica students within their course on translation and interpretation practice 1 and lectures cycle Ideal and reality: about interpretation and translation topic. The lecture was entitled *Interpretation for asylum applicants in Slovakia* in asylum procedure – during the asylum interview as well as during every days communication in asylum facility.

192 More information available at [fjúžn] festival 2021 (fjuzn.sk), consulted on 20/04/2021.

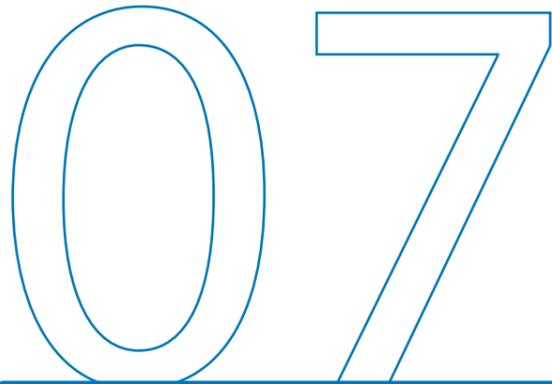
193 More information at Livestream: Živá knižnica s migrant | Facebook, consulted on 20/04/2021.

194 Source: Pozvánka na online premietanie filmu Jednosmerný lístok a diskusiu o pomoci utečencom [Invite to online screening of Jednosmerný lístok and discussion about helping refugees], 11. 11. 2020 - EMN. The report is available at <https://www.facebook.com/events/854464062027049/>, consulted on 20/04/2021.

195 Episodes of The Migration Compass podcast are available at LIGA ZA ĽUDSKÉ PRÁVA: PODCASTY - Hrl.sk, consulted on 21/04/2021.

196 Source: <https://slovakaid.sk/projekty/rozvojova-spolupraca-a-migracia/> consulted on 21/05/2021.

197 Available at: *Ludia medzi riadkami*_WEB.pdf (slovakaid.sk), consulted on 21/04/2021.



Citizenship and Statelessness

In the last five years, the number of third-country nationals who have been granted citizenship in the SR has been rising. In 2020, 626 persons acquired Slovak citizenship. They came mainly from Serbia, Ukraine, USA, Vietnam, and the United Kingdom. In 2020, the SR did not adopt any significant changes related to citizenship of third-country nationals or stateless persons. The *Draft Amendment to the Act on Citizenship* advanced to the inter-ministerial commenting procedure. It mainly concerned the moderation of conditions under which citizenship is lost as well as the facilitation of obtaining citizenship by foreigners.

7.1. Statistics and Trends

Third-country nationals currently comprise two-thirds of all foreigners acquiring citizenship in Slovakia each year. In the last five years, the number of citizenships granted to third-country nationals has been rising. While 2016 saw 316 third-country nationals acquire citizenship, in 2020 this was 626 persons. They came mainly from Serbia, Ukraine, USA, Vietnam, and the United Kingdom (see **Table 6** in the Annex). Citizenship of the SR can be obtained also by persons from non-EU countries to whom international protection was granted. In 2020, 14 persons granted asylum or subsidiary protection acquired Slovak citizenship (see **Table 13** in the Annex).

Citizenship of the SR acquired in 2016 - 2020

Indicator	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Citizenship of the SR acquired by third-country nationals	316	479	381	546	626
Citizenship of the SR acquired by all foreigners (including persons granted asylum or subsidiary protection)	611	814	1,071	913	916

* 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 the second half of 2020, Ministry of Interior of the SR elaborated and submitted for inter-ministerial commenting procedure¹⁹⁸ amendment of the Act on Citizenship¹⁹⁹. The amendment aims to relax the conditions based on which citizenship is lost and simplify the citizenship granting process for foreigners.²⁰⁰ Within the procedure, numerous comments were received (aside from the obligatory stakeholders also from the non-governmental organisations and public) which resulted in substantial changes of submitted document. It is presumed that the amendment will enter into force on 1 July 2021.²⁰¹

The amendment relates mainly to the Manifesto of the Slovak Government for 2020 – 2024 declaring that they “will enable citizens of the SR living long-term in another state to obtain citizenship of that country without losing their Slovak citizenship” and “will also deal with the situation of persons who, based on a currently valid act, lost their Slovak citizenship such that it would be returned to them based on standard European principles of obtaining citizenship and that they will relax the conditions of obtaining citizenship for Slovaks living abroad”.²⁰² The current legislation has been in force since 2010, when the option of dual citizenship was cancelled in Slovakia.

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

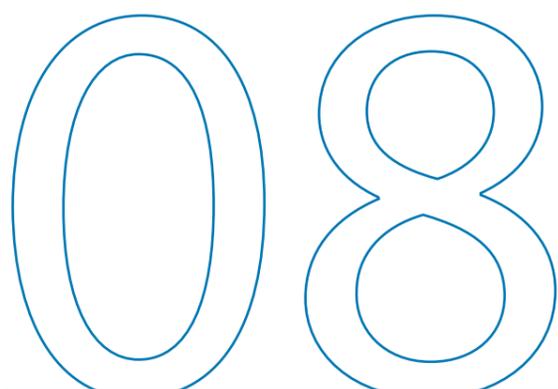
198 Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2020/304> (consulted on 21/1/2021).

199 Act of the NC SR No. 40/1993 Coll. on State Citizenship, as amended.

200 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=navrhovane-zmeny-v-zakone-o-statnom-obciansve-zmiernuju-podmienky-za-kto-rych-dochadza-k-jeho-strate> (consulted on 21/1/2021).

201 Source: Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior questionnaire.

202 Source: The Manifesto of the Government of the SR for 2020 – 2024.



Borders, Schengen, and Visa

8.1. Statistics and Trends

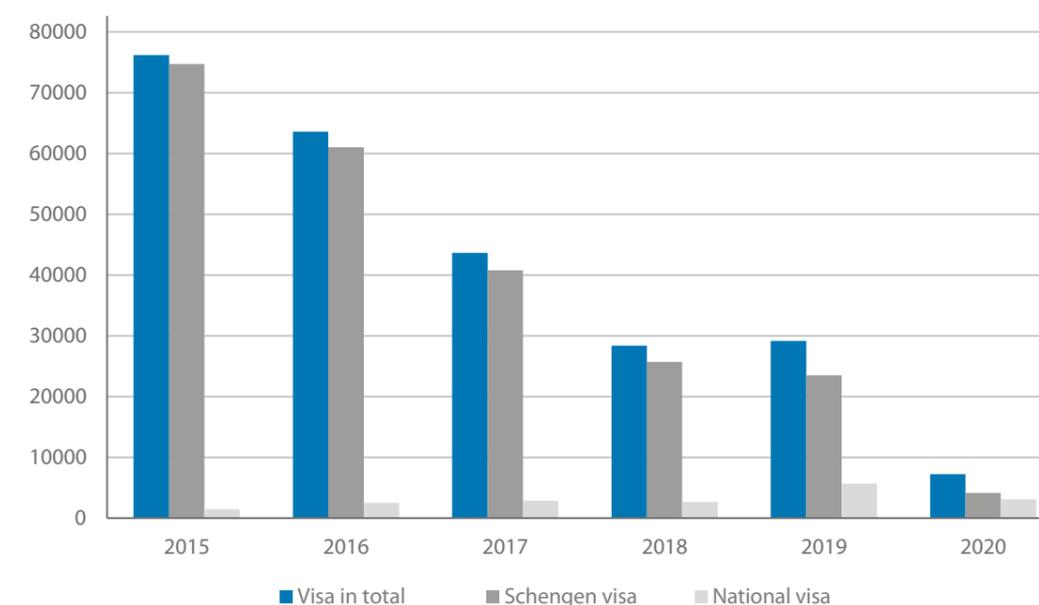
Between 2015 – 2020 the SR recorded mostly a decrease in the number of visas issued. The introduction of the visa-free regime with Ukraine in 2017 for its citizens who are biometric passport holders was one of the reasons (see **Chart 3**). The number of Schengen visas issued decreased proportionally to the overall number of visas issued, while the number of visas issued in 2015 – 2020 decreased by 952% (from 76,177 to 7,240) and the number of Schengen visas issued decreased by 1,709% (from 74,711 to 4,129). On the other hand, the number of national visas issued increased on average, while a more prominent year-to-year increase (by 111.87%) was recorded in 2019, when 5,640 national visas were issued, compared with 2,662 in 2018.

The main reason for this increase in issued national visas in the given period was the amendment to the Act on Residence of Foreigners in 2018. On its basis the TCNs could apply for national visa for the purpose of submitting their application for residence in the SR. In this sense it was possible to apply for residence not only at the Embassies abroad but also directly at the Foreign Police Departments of the Police Force in the SR. In practice it means that the TCNs after submitting all the documents required by the law received national visa based on which they came to Slovakia and subsequently submitted their application for residence at the Foreign Police Departments of the Police Force. Until then the national visa was issued only to those foreigners, who already had granted residence in the SR and the national visa enabled them to travel to Slovakia.

Based on the above the number of issued national visas significantly increased.

As for the overall number of visas issued, in 2020 there was a steep decrease by 75.2%. In 2020, the SR issued only 7,240 visas as compared to 29,148 visas issued in 2019.²⁰³ The steep decrease resulted from the COVID-19 situation, as in the context of anti-spread measures and based on the conclusions of the Central Crisis Management Staff, the MoFEA decided as of 12 March 2020 to stop accepting Schengen visa applications at all DM (aside from cases worthy of special treatment) as well as by means of visa centres of external service provider (VFS Global). Accepting Schengen visa applications and cooperation with external service providers is being gradually renewed, based on the epidemiological situation in the given country and taking into account current travel restrictions and agreement within the local Schengen cooperation with other Member States.²⁰⁴

Chart 3: Issued visas in years 2015 – 2020



Source: MoFEA SR

8.2. Border Control Policies and Measures

In compliance with the *National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for 2019 – 2022*,²⁰⁵ the SR implemented several projects in 2020²⁰⁶ aiming to improve the technical equipping and automation of border controls:

- The *ABC Gates – Automated Border Control System* project focuses on obtaining an automated border control system (ABC gates) which will enable automated border control of EU citizens when crossing external borders of the Slovak Republic at the M. R. Štefánik international airport in Bratislava. The aim of the project is to streamline and speed up the border control

²⁰³ Behúňová K., Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2020): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2019, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

²⁰⁴ Source: Správa o plnení úloh konzulárnej služby SR v roku 2020 [Report on the Activity of the Consular Service of the SR in 2020], available at 2020+-+Správa+o+konzulárnej+činnosti (mzv.sk) (13/04/2021)

²⁰⁵ Behúňová K., Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2020): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2019, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

²⁰⁶ All the projects were funded by the Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa and will continue in 2021.

process at the external Schengen Area borders as well as increase all security standards when introducing the ABC gates using the biometric system and modern equipment to read travel documents.

- The *Modernising and renewing hardware of the national SIS II part* project aims to improve the protection of external borders using modernisation and renewal of HW infrastructure of the national part of the SIS II. SIS II serves to quickly and effectively check persons and things at the external Schengen Area borders in order to support the process of Schengen Visa approval and to effectively communicate with relevant authorities in the relevant Schengen Area Member States when searching for persons or things.
- *Additions to and renewing of the technical equipment needed for border control at the external land border of the EU in the SR* project is aimed at additions to and renewal of the night vision devices and thermal cameras which are used by organisational units under the BBFP PFP. The units fulfil tasks in controlling and surveilling the Schengen Area external borders, including the control of irregular migration and other cross-border criminal activity. The aim of the project is to create conditions for more efficient task fulfilment when performing border controls and border surveillance at the Schengen Area external borders and during the fulfilment of specific operative, tactical and police tasks related to irregular migration.
- *Purchase of means of transport for specialized departments of the Financial Administration* project is focused on supporting and extending the existing capacity in external borders management as well as supporting and extending measures within the free movement related to external borders management, including the control of irregular migration and other cross-border criminal activity.
- The aim of the *Renewal of technical equipment for the second and third lines of document control* is to modernize technical equipment in the Police Institute of Criminalistics and Forensic Expertise training room. This involves the renewal of technical equipment for the second and third lines of document control as well as obtaining a forensic database of documents from various countries in order to make the expertise and training activity more efficient. The databases will provide a comprehensive overview of valid designs of travel identification documents and vehicle documents.
- In order to renew the special technical equipment needed for controlling borders, the *Exchanging of technical equipment for examining documents* project is being implemented. This will support the performance of the second line of document control as well as the process of detecting and documenting cases of forging or altering travel and other documents. This will also contribute to improving the quality of output information on detected cases of forging or altering travel and other documents and the level of uncovering criminal activity related to irregular migration through the EU external border. The project will also include the provision of expert retraining of the police officers who will use the technical equipment in their service.
- Thanks to the *Additions to and renewal of the technical equipment within the National Visa Information System (N-VIS) and Central Screening Console (CSC)* project, hardware equipment for the Border and Foreign Police units will be purchased. The project aims to ensure effective management of tasks related to visas as well as the full implementation and functionality of the Visa Information Centre.²⁰⁷

In 2020, in order to support the common visa policy, the MoFEA SR continued to implement the *National VIS hardware equipment*²⁰⁸ project, which focuses on ensuring the functionality of the NVIS systems by replacing the hardware components in the central part of the National Visa In-

²⁰⁷ Source: FAD EPS Mol SR questionnaire.

²⁰⁸ Funded by the Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa.

formation System and the national VIS interface, as well as replacing the hardware components at the Diplomatic Missions of the Slovak Republic abroad.²⁰⁹

The project²¹⁰ focused on the language education of Border and Foreign Police members in English, Russian and Ukrainian, with a focus on the Schengen acquis, in order to improve the level of PF members' proficiency in these languages when encountering the third-country nationals also continued.²¹¹

In 2020, several measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 were adopted. They have changed based on the current situation (such as limitations of movement, quarantine, isolating persons who tested positive, limiting the activities in facilities, disinfection etc.). All of the imposed measures and procedures were complying with the measures and guidelines of the Chief Public Health Officer of the Slovak Republic and the MoI SR Public Health Officer in cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic.²¹²

8.3. Visa Policy

Due to the transposition of European legislation, the SR has applied the new Visa Code²¹³ since 2 February 2020. It modified the charging of fees and introduced changes to the form of the Schengen Visa application as well as other conditions for submitting this application.

8.4. Cooperation with Third Countries in the Border Management

Based on bilateral agreements on the creation of joint patrols within joint operations, the SR in 2020 deployed 18 PF members to the North Macedonia. Further deployments to North Macedonia and Serbia were stopped until further notice due to the spread of COVID-19.²¹⁴

Based on the Multiannual evaluation programme for years 2014 – 2019 and the Annual evaluation programme for 2019 set by the European Commission based on the Council Regulation (EU) No. 1053/2013, establishing an evaluation and monitoring mechanism to verify the application of the Schengen acquis a group of experts from Member States and European Commission in the period from 2 to 6 December 2020 verified (in situ at the Diplomatic Mission in Minsk and Consulate General in Istanbul) and subsequently in the first half of 2020 evaluated how the SR applies the common visa policy. Evaluation report was approved by EU Member States during the meeting of the Schengen Committee on 9 July 2020. The Report states that the implementation of the visa policy by the SR is in line with the Visa Code and other relevant legislation in the majority of important aspects. The Evaluation Committee did not identify any breach of key Schengen principles and rules. The SR elaborated an action plan to resolve the found deficiencies, which is updated every 3 months. Most of the discovered deficiencies of the administrative or procedural nature are resolved. The remaining deficiencies mostly of technical nature are being solved.

²⁰⁹ Source: FAD EPS Mol SR questionnaire.

²¹⁰ Funded by the Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa.

²¹¹ Source: FAD EPS Mol SR questionnaire.

²¹² Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²¹³ Source: MoFEA SR questionnaire.

²¹⁴ Information provided by the BBFP PFP.



Irregular Migration including Smuggling

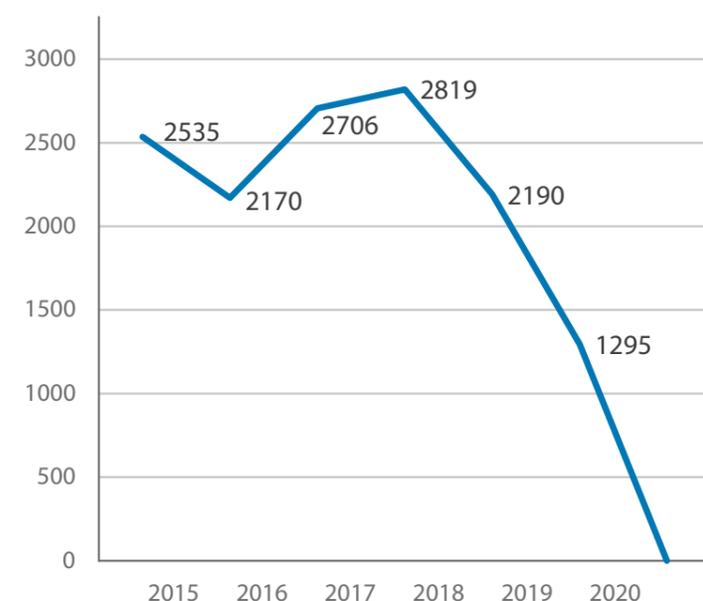
Measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 also affected the development of irregular migration in Slovakia in 2020. As in 2019, a decrease was recorded compared to previous year, and fewer cases of unauthorized state border crossing and unauthorized residence were detected. As for the migration routes, there was an increase in the secondary transit migration along the Western Balkans route from Hungary and a decrease in the number of entries along the Eastern European route through Ukraine.

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

9.1. Statistics and Trends

As compared to 2019, there was a year-on-year decrease in the irregular migration rate in Slovakia by 40.9% (from 2,190 to 1,295 foreigners). Even though the decrease in 2020 was to a great extent caused by measures related to the spread of COVID-19, a decreasing trend has been recorded since 2018 (see **Chart 4**).

Chart 4: Irregular Migration in Slovakia 2015 – 2020



Source: BBFP PFP

This year-on-year decrease was also recorded in unauthorized residence as well as unauthorized state border crossings. The number of foreigners who crossed the state border in an unauthorized manner, however, has for a long time been lower (several hundred a year) than the number of foreigners who stayed in the SR in an unauthorized manner. In 2020, a year-on-year decrease by 36.6% (from 213 to 135) in the number of unauthorized state border crossings was recorded. In 2015 – 2020, the number of unauthorized stays oscillated between 1,000 and 2,500 cases a year, while the year-on-year decrease was 41.3% (from 1,977 in 2019 to 1,160 in 2020). However, it is necessary to mention that in 2020, there was a pandemic measure introduced to automatically prolong the validity of residences during the crisis situation and for two months afterwards. This could have changed the trends in this area.

9.2. Cooperation with Third Countries

In 2020, the preparation of a joint project between the V4 countries and the Federal Republic of Germany to assist Morocco in managing irregular migration (expected contribution of EUR 30 million, of which EUR 3.75 million is the contribution of the SR) continued. The project proposal consists of two pillars – migration pillar (assistance in fight against cross-border irregular migration, migrants smuggling and trafficking in human beings by means of strengthening Morocco's capacities in the area of border surveillance, information collection and border management) and development pillar (provision of assistance in creation of conditions for economic infrastructure development in the country). The expected implementation period of the project is 4 years with the expected launch in spring 2021.

Activities with Ukraine were not realised in the monitoring period due to the pandemic.

9.3. Combatting Smuggling and the Prevention of Irregular Migration

In 2020, Slovakia did not adopt any legislative changes or measures related to combatting smuggling.

In 2020 there were 411 irregular migrants documented as smuggled in investigation files, and such acts were committed in previous years, too. Of the mentioned number 190 were captured in 2020 and detained as irregular migrants who had entered the territory of the Slovak Republic illegally with the help of smugglers. Most often they were citizens of Vietnam, Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

This amounted to a 40% increase compared with 2019; 113 irregular migrants entering the territory of the Slovak Republic illegally with the help of smugglers were detained.

Monitoring and Identification of Irregular Migration Routes

In 2020, the BFAP PFP did not introduce any new forms or ways of monitoring and identifying irregular migration routes. Regarding the monitoring of organized irregular migration and smuggling routes crossing the territory of the SR, a year-on-year decrease was recorded in 2020 with respect to the number of irregular entries through the external land border (the Eastern European route) and a **year-on-year 200% increase was recorded of detected cases of secondary transit migration** from Hungary to Slovakia as a continuation of the Western Balkans route.²¹⁵ The increase was caused by the flow of the secondary transit migration as the continuation of the Western Balkan route, which passes through the SR. In this manner the secondary transit migration considerably influenced also the overall irregular migration in 2020, while its proportion was 37% (in 2019 it was 6% and in 2018 only 2%). The development of the secondary transit migration in the upcoming period will mostly depend on the development on the Western Balkan route, in eastern Mediterranean (Turkey, Greece) and also in countries of the Silk route region (source countries of irregular migration). Also adopted measures in EU Member States along the route and pull factors in destination countries have a considerable influence on the level of transit migration effecting also the SR. The destination countries for migrants on this transit migration routes are Germany, France, Austria.

²¹⁵ 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.

Trafficking in Human Beings

In the last five years the number of human trafficking victims coming from non-EU countries who were identified in Slovakia has remained very low (the exact number is not stated in order to protect the victims). The victims were used mainly for forced begging and sexual exploitation. According to the authorities, the increase in the number of child victims was alarming. A *multi-language self-identification leaflet*²¹⁶ serves to improve access to help for potential victims, and in 2020 two more languages – Ukrainian and Serbian – were created.²¹⁷

In November 2020, the Government of the SR approved an amendment to the Health Insurance Act which entered into force on 1 January 2021. The amendment made it possible for foreigners who are not holding health insurance in any other EU Member State and who had been granted tolerated residence to be entitled to health care costs reimbursement from the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme.

In 2020, the cooperation between Slovak institutions working on combatting human trafficking and helping the victims of trafficking was strengthened. The SR updated its *National Referral Mechanism* from 2015 based on the practical experience and lessons learnt. The document offers a more comprehensive model of cooperation of various stakeholders at national level. The aim is to ensure victims are informed and, subsequently, that assistance can be provided to human trafficking victims, foreigners included. The new *Regulation of the Ministry of Interior*

²¹⁶ Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?obchodovanie-s-ludmi-a-slovenska-republika&subor=398318> (consulted on 08/05/2021).

²¹⁷ Source: Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior questionnaire.

of the Slovak Republic on the Provision of the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme was approved in December 2020, which specifies, inter alia, provisions concerning foreigners (both children and adults). It creates conditions for the formulation of more comprehensible methods of identification of human trafficking victims and the follow-up cooperation mechanism at national level.

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 2020. Cooperation with the United Kingdom was predominant.²¹⁸

The results of foreign evaluation mechanisms which pointed to low punishments or often conditional punishments for human traffickers in Slovakia led to the preparation of 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]*. The report contains all judgments of the Slovak courts related to human trafficking.

10.1. Statistics and Trends

In 2020, 62 victims of human trafficking were identified in Slovakia and nearly all of them were Slovak citizens. In the last five years the number of human trafficking victims coming from non-EU countries who were identified in Slovakia thus remains very low (we do not state the exact number in order to protect the victims) (see **Table 19** in Annex). The victims, among whom women predominated, were used mainly for forced begging and sexual exploitation. According to the authorities, the increase in the number of child victims was alarming.²¹⁹ Every fourth victim identified in the SR in 2020 was a child, while in 2019, child victims amounted to less than one-sixth of the overall number of victims. In 2020, nearly one-sixth of all identified victims entered the specialized *Provision of Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme* (12 persons: 6 men and 6 women).²²⁰

In relation to the crime of human trafficking²²¹ (see **Table 20** in Annex), the SR in 2020 filed charges against 33 persons and convicted 9 persons of committing this crime.²²²

Further information on trends and statistics is available in the situational reports of the MoI SR. In May 2020, the MoI SR published the newest *Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2019*, which also includes a description of specific activities and measures taken against human trafficking.^{223, 224}

218 Source: information provided by Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior, BBFP PFP and MO MoI SR.

219 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?aktuality-obchodovanie-s-ludmi&sprava=alarmujuci-pocet-detskych-obeti-obchodovania-s-ludmi-v-roku-2020> (consulted on 21/04/2021).

220 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?aktuality-obchodovanie-s-ludmi&sprava=nie-si-na-predaj-kampan-na-zvysenie-povedomia-sirokej-verejnosti> (consulted on 21/04/2021).

221 According to the Section 179 of Criminal Code.

222 Information provided by the NUCIM BBFP PFP and Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior.

223 Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality&subor=369874> (consulted on 13/05/2021).

224 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?aktuality-obchodovanie-s-ludmi&sprava=ministerstvo-vnutra-zverejnilo-situacnu-spravu-o-obchodovani-s-ludmi-v-sr-v-roku-2019> (consulted on 13/05/2021).

10.2. Policies, Legislation and International Monitoring

In 2020, the SR was implementing 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.²²⁵

Based on the Action Plan 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]*²²⁶ was created. The report contains all judgments of Slovak courts related to human trafficking. Preparation of the document related to the “foreign evaluation mechanisms which state that sentences imposed in the SR for the crime of human trafficking are too low and perpetrators often only have conditional sentences imposed on them.”²²⁷ The report, which was prepared by the Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the MoI SR, in cooperation with Ministry of Justice of the SR, states that:

- “almost 70% of convicted persons received a sentence lower than the lower limit of the penalty for the crime of human trafficking, i.e. 4 – 10 years according to Section 179 par. 1 of the Criminal Code;
- courts have imposed a suspended term of imprisonment on as many as 48 people (64% of all convicted);
- despite the fact that the actions of 68% of convicted persons (51 persons) met the merits of the crime of human trafficking, only 8 persons had corresponding penalties imposed on them, i.e. in the range of 7 – 12 years according to Section 179 par. 3 of the Criminal Code;
- in 77% of those convicted, the courts applied the provision for an extraordinary reduction of the sentence below the lower limit, including qualified facts;
- in almost half of the cases (19 out of 39) the court did not mention the injured parties’ claim for damages, which means that the injured parties did not claim it properly and in time during the preparatory proceedings.”²²⁸

In November 2020, the Government of the SR approved an *amendment to the Health Insurance Act*²²⁹ which entered into force on 1 January 2021. The amendment made it possible for foreigners who are not holders of public health insurance under this act and are not holding health insurance in any other EU Member State and, at the same time, who are foreigners granted tolerated residence placed in the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme, to be entitled to health care costs reimbursement (to the extent provided for in a specific regulation). Such health care is covered by the health insurance company with the highest number of insured persons which issues entitlement cards to those persons. The costs incurred by the

225 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

226 Available at: https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/mvsr/obchodovanie_ludmi/2021/Analiza%20rozsudkov%202015_2020_FINAL.pdf (consulted on 24/04/2021).

227 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?aktuality-obchodovanie-s-ludmi&sprava=analiza-rozsudkov-sudov-slovenskej-republiky-tykajucich-sa-obchodovania-s-ludmi-za-roky-2015-2020> (consulted on 14/05/2021).

228 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?aktuality-obchodovanie-s-ludmi&sprava=analiza-rozsudkov-sudov-slovenskej-republiky-tykajucich-sa-obchodovania-s-ludmi-za-roky-2015-2020> (14/05/2021).

229 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 20/01/2021).

health insurance company will be reimbursed by the Ministry of Health of the SR.²³⁰ The Act in practice applies also to the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (see **Section 4.2**).

International Monitoring

In 2020, the third evaluation round of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings implementation in the SR ended. The Council of Europe body on trafficking in human beings (GRETA) published a *national report*²³¹ for Slovakia in June, according to which the SR has improved since 2015 in adopting measures against human trafficking. However, it points to shortcomings, too, such as the need for all the victims to be able to access justice and compensation, as well as the leniency of sentences given to traffickers, which may not be discouraging enough. The report calls for the introduction of a recovery and reflection period when there are grounds to believe that the person has been the victim of trafficking. Tolerated residence status contained in the Act on Residence of Foreigners is equivalent to this recovery period. However, in practice, no third-country national has been granted this status since 2015 in the SR. Moreover, the report notes that the authorities need to pay more attention to detecting victims of trafficking amongst asylum-seekers and persons placed in immigration detention centres, as well as to the monitoring of temporary work agencies.²³²

In the last *Trafficking in Persons Report* (TIP) issued annually by the US Department of State, Slovakia in 2020 remains in Tier 2 of countries meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. It was placed there last year. The reason is mainly a lower number of identified victims and convicted traffickers as well as low rate of utilization of tools for aiding and compensating victims.²³³

10.3. Inter-institutional and International Cooperation

In 2020, the cooperation between Slovak institutions that work in combatting human trafficking and helping its victims was strengthened. The SR updated its *National Referral Mechanism*²³⁴ from 2015 based on practical experience and lessons learnt. The document offers a more comprehensive model of cooperation of various stakeholders at the national level. The aim is to ensure victims are informed and, subsequently, that assistance can be provided to human trafficking victims, foreigners included.²³⁵

The new *Regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic on the Provision of the Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme* was approved in December 2020, which specifies, inter alia, provisions concerning foreigners (both children and adults). It creates conditions for the formulation of more comprehensible methods of identification of human trafficking victims and the follow-up cooperation mechanism at national level.²³⁶

230 Source: Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior questionnaire.

231 Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/-/greta-publishes-its-third-evaluation-report-on-austr-1> (consulted on 08/05/2021).

232 Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?aktuality-obchodovanie-s-ludmi&sprava=greta-slovensko-zaznamenalo-pozitivny-posun-v-boji-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi> (consulted on 08/05/2021).

233 Source: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/slovakia/> (consulted on 08/05/2021).

234 Available at: http://www.minv.sk/?referencny_mechanizmus (consulted on 21/01/2021).

235 Source: Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior questionnaire.

236 Source: Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior questionnaire.

In 2020, 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 3.5**). The checks were conducted jointly by the BBFP PFP and COLSAF.²³⁷

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 2020. Cooperation with the United Kingdom was predominant.²³⁸ The SR participated in the EUROPOL Joint Action Days (JAD) on labour exploitation held in September 2020. During checks that were carried out no victims of trafficking in human beings from third countries were identified. The remaining JADs, which are usually organised throughout the year (on sexual exploitation, exploitation of children etc.), were cancelled due to COVID-19.²³⁹

In 2020, the SR also strengthened its capacities in combatting human trafficking by means of training for prosecutors, court trainees and judges and for social workers who work directly with the victims or with the homeless.²⁴⁰

10.4. Provision of Information and Assistance

In 2020, the Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the MoI SR started distributing 1,500 *self-identification leaflets*²⁴¹ for potential victims of trafficking in human beings, which was expanded from original six language versions by two new language versions, namely Ukrainian and Serbian language, for the needs of the Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the SR and the non-governmental organization Slovak Catholic Charity.²⁴²

In 2020, victims were referred to the Slovak Catholic Charity non-governmental organisation which operates a Reintegration Programme for the Victims of Human Trafficking as well as the National helpline for the victims of human trafficking (0800 800 818). The information line on human trafficking and safe travel was operated by the IOM Slovakia in 2020. 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.²⁴³

237 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

238 Source: Information provided by Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior, BBFP PFP and MO MoI SR.

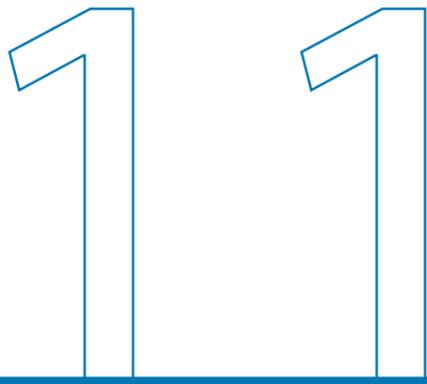
239 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

240 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

241 Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?obchodovanie-s-ludmi-a-slovenska-republika&subor=398318> (consulted on 08/05/2021).

242 Source: Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior questionnaire.

243 Source: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1351-iom-activities-and-achievements-2020.html> (consulted on 08/05/2021).



Returns and Readmissions

The pandemic situation contributed to the suspension of the execution of return decisions until cancellation of the crisis situation and thus to a decrease in the number of returns. However, in the case of detained foreigners, the postponement of an execution decision did not result in release from detention. Regarding forced returns, the *Forced Return – AMIF III and Capacity Building in the Field of Returns III* projects were implemented. Related to detention, the *KOMPAS III* project was implemented by the Slovak Humanitarian Council. This year, the IOM launched the implementation of *the Voluntary Return and Reintegration in the Country of Origin* project. All the projects will continue until the end of 2021.

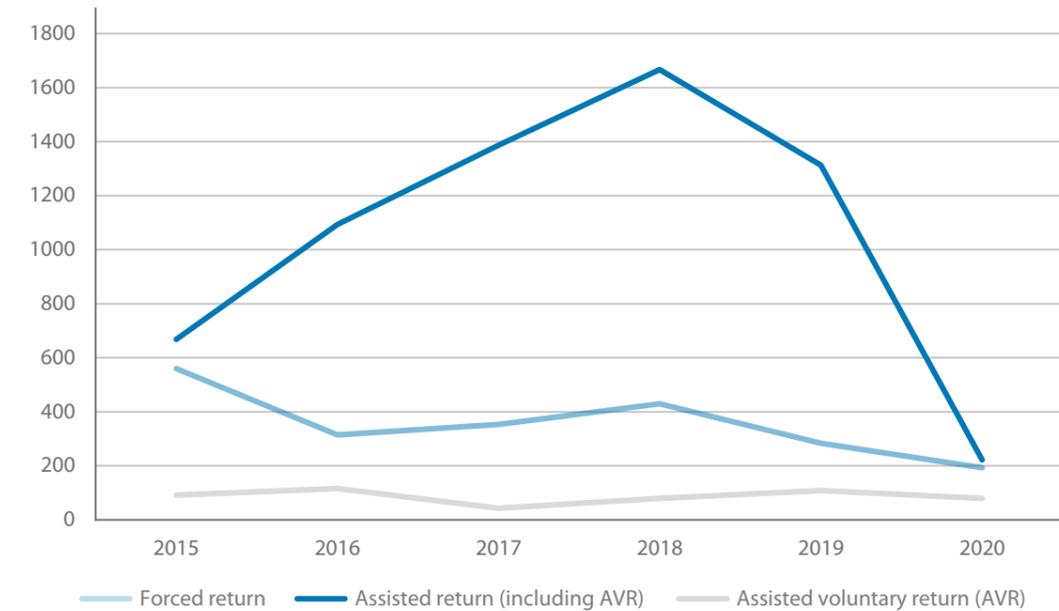
11.1. Statistics and Trends

Measures adopted to stop the spread of COVID-19 had an impact on forced returns, voluntary departures as well as assisted voluntary returns from the SR. The number of successful forced returns decreased by nearly 32% (from 283 in 2019 to 193 in 2020), while the returnees were mainly the nationals of Ukraine, Moldova, and Bangladesh. Most forced returns were into Ukraine, Moldova, and Serbia.

The most prominent decrease, by more than 83%, was recorded in the number of successful voluntary departures with a defined period for leaving the country (from 1,313 in 2019 to 222 in 2020) while nationals of Ukraine were most often concerned.

IOM-mediated assisted voluntary return was utilized by 80 migrants, most often citizens of Serbia and Ukraine. Reintegration aid was provided to 29 persons.²⁴⁴

Chart 5: Returns from the SR between 2015 and 2020



Source: BBFP PFP and IOM

A voluntary departure was ordered to 258 persons as compared with 1,313 persons in 2019, with Ukrainian nationals as the most numerous group.

11.2. Forced Returns and Readmissions

Under the measures imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the return of foreigners according to the readmission or other agreement between countries as well as Dublin transfers were suspended in 2020. These new legislative measures also influenced the implementation of administrative expulsion decisions. According to amendment of Act on Residence of Foreigners, enforcement of the administrative expulsion decision is suspended for the duration of the crisis situation and the obligation to travel laid down in the administrative expulsion decision does not apply until the crisis situation has been lifted.²⁴⁵ If the postponement of the decision on administrative expulsion applies to a detained TCN, the postponement does not represent a reason to release them from detention – only in cases when the purpose of detention has ceased to exist.²⁴⁶

As in the previous years, the implementation of BBFP PFP project continued in 2020.

²⁴⁴ The number of assisted voluntary returns did not significantly decrease in 2020 compared to the previous year due to the return of rather large group of migrants at the end of 2020.

²⁴⁵ Under the provision Section 131i Paragraph 7 of Act on Residence of Foreigners: "The obligations under Section 61a and Paragraph 4, of Section 62 par. 3, and of Section 83 par. 1 do not hold until lifting the crisis situation."

²⁴⁶ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

*Forced Return – AMIF III.*²⁴⁷ 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.) and contribute to the successful management and performance of return operations.

Regarding the building of capacities needed for forced returns, the *Capacity Building in the Field of Returns III* project was implemented. It focuses on educating employees through training focused on legislation and its practical implementation during the work of the Border and Foreign Police.²⁴⁸

The Slovak Humanitarian Council non-governmental organisation implemented the KOMPAS III project,²⁴⁹ which primarily focuses on the provision of dignified living conditions to persons placed in the BBFP PFP specialized facilities or 60 days following their release from these facilities, with a special emphasis on vulnerable groups. The project activities include 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) are provided, as are supplementary health care, material assistance, and translations and interpreting. Since 2013, the aid has been extended to the third-country nationals released from PDCFs for 60 days following their release. The aid to such persons includes 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 is provided based on consultation and a favourable statement of the PDCF. The above activities contribute to an effective return process for these persons.²⁵⁰

There were no changes in readmissions on the national level. At the EU level, the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Belarus entered into force on 1 July 2020.

In the context of the general trend towards electronic processing of readmission applications, the SR has been involved in the electronic readmission system with Sri Lanka, the e-RCMS (Electronic Readmission Case Management System). Participation in the e-platform with Sri Lanka was mandatory for EU MS and since 2020 readmission applications with Sri Lanka can only be submitted electronically via the e-RCMS information system, i.e. it is not possible to submit applications to the relevant embassy in paper format.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ The project follows the Forced Return – AMIF II which was implemented in 2017 – 2019. It is financed from the National AMIF programme until 31 December 2021.

²⁴⁸ The project follows the Capacity Building in the Area of Returns III which had been implemented in 2017 – 2018.

²⁴⁹ The project follows the KOMPAS II project which had been implemented from 1 December 2016 to 31 December 2019.

²⁵⁰ Pracros Girmanová, A., Ulrichová, N., Responses to long-term irregularly staying migrants: practices and challenges – contribution of the SR, IOM Bratislava, 2020.

²⁵¹ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

11.3 Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration

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*²⁵² project, which is financed by the AMIF until 31 December 2021. In 2020, there were 80 voluntarily returned persons of the target group, and 29 persons received reintegration assistance. The assistance was intended in particular for the provision of basic living needs and means of living after returning home as well as for the provision of temporary housing, reconstruction of houses, setting up small businesses, improving one's qualification by taking various courses or as a combination of several types of assistance. Reintegration assistance was provided to individuals or families from 7 countries: Georgia, Iran, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and, for the first time, also Morocco. In 2020, the IOM prepared a short video and a photo story which show how reintegration assistance simplified the return of migrants to their home country. Both stories are published at the assisted voluntary returns and reintegrations programme website (www.avr.iom.sk).

²⁵² The project was a natural continuation of the previous project titled *Voluntary Return and Reintegration in the Country of Origin*.



Migration and Development Cooperation

In 2020, the SR helped countries of origin or transit of irregular migrants or refugees mainly through 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 2020. In 2020, however, the Slovak Republic continued to focus on addressing the causes of migration and contributed to the EU Trust Funds. In 2020, in accordance with the payment plan, the SR contributed 1.61 mill. EUR into the FRiT – EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

In January 2020, the Government of the SR approved the *Focus of Bilateral Official Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2020*. Pursuant to this document, the SR is supposed to achieve the sustainable development goals in accordance with the *Medium-Term Strategy of the Official Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic 2019–2023*, and continually enhance and develop strategic partnerships with the developing countries in Africa and other development cooperation priority countries. The aim is to promote sustainability and visibility of its activities as well as the SlovakAid brand. The SR will strive for the development stakeholders including the private sector to intensify their participation in specific development activities and raise awareness of how important it is for Slovakia to fulfil its developmental commitments among the Slovak public as well as the public administration.

12.1. Development Cooperation

In January 2020, the Government of the SR approved the *Focus of Bilateral Official Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2020*. Pursuant to this document, the SR is supposed to achieve the sustainable development goals in accordance with the *Medium-Term Strategy of the Official Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic 2019–2023*, and continually enhance and develop strategic partnerships with the developing countries in Africa and other development cooperation priority countries. The aim is to promote sustainability and visibility of its activities as well as the SlovakAid brand. The SR will strive for the development stakeholders including the private sector to intensify their participation in specific development activities and raise awareness of how important it is for Slovakia to fulfil its developmental commitments among the Slovak public as well as the public administration.²⁵³

In 2020, the Slovak Republic again focused on addressing the causes of migration and contributed to the EU Trust Funds. In 2020, in accordance with the payment plan, the SR contributed 1.61 mill. EUR into the FRiT – EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey. Utilisation of the V4 contribution to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa allocated for the support of integrated management of Libyan borders (€ 35 mil) was modified following the agreement in July 2020²⁵⁴ due to the worsening security situation in Libya and the COVID-19 pandemic as follows:

- € 20 mil will be used to assist Libya in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate consequences of the crisis (through WHO, IOM and UNICEF with whom contracts have been signed);
- € 15 mil will be used for the originally intended purpose – strengthening of Libyan borders.²⁵⁵

Through SlovakAid the *Farming Opportunity for Uganda and Rwanda* development project was supported. The project focuses on strengthening the food self-sufficiency of local communities and refugees by supporting agricultural production (establishment of eco/organic farms and kitchen gardens) in the two countries. The target group in Uganda is refugees and settlers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, while in Rwanda the target group are families on the brink of poverty with children suffering from malnutrition. The project budget is 250,000 EUR.²⁵⁶

In 2020, the implementation of the joint project of the V4 countries in the coastal areas of Kenya continued. The main goal of the project is to support the development of coastal provinces by creating jobs and increasing food security in the region. The specific objective is to improve the socioeconomic situation of 15,000 small farmers and create new jobs through BIO and Fair Trade production of cashew nuts and sesame seeds. Particular emphasis is placed on supporting women and young people. The project has been implemented since 2017, and 16,010 farmers were involved in the project in 2020, 45% of whom were women.

In 2020, the cooperation of the SAMRS with Self-Help Africa continued on activities aimed at stabilizing and strengthening local communities, as well as preventing forced migration in East Africa. The cooperation is implemented within the framework of joint EU programming through

²⁵³ Source: <https://slovakaid.sk/aktuality/zameranie-rozvojev-poluprace-na-rok-2020-je-schvalene/> (consulted on 21/01/2021).

²⁵⁴ More information available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1244.

²⁵⁵ Source: MoFEA SR questionnaire.

²⁵⁶ Source: MoFEA SR questionnaire.

the KILIMO-VC segment of the AgriFI program, which contributes to reducing the food deficit and strengthens the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Kenya. The supported component aims to improve the integration of the value chain of small farmers and shepherds by providing incentives for investment in the agri-food sector. The contribution of the SR into the KILIMO-VC component in 2020 amounted to the sum of €625,000. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed down the implementation of activities, the end of the programme was postponed to June 2023.²⁵⁷

12.2. Humanitarian Assistance

In 2020, the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAMRS) published the call for applications for humanitarian assistance grant projects. Within the call, the proposals to reduce the consequences of armed conflicts were supported as well as those focusing on addressing the causes of migration by improving living conditions for the local inhabitants, as well as the prospects for helping them find a job in their domestic communities. Special attention was paid to improving the living conditions for the refugees and internally displaced persons, unfavourable economic situation, and to creating the conditions for their return as far as the situation in their country of origin or original place of residence allows it. Within the call, 5 projects amounting to the total of 1,049,459.45 EUR were approved. Two projects are being implemented in South Sudan²⁵⁸, two in Iraq²⁵⁹, and Iraq/Syria²⁶⁰, and one in Lebanon^{261, 262}.

The SR prepared a new methodology to calculate the eligible costs within ODA - "in-donor refugee costs" - in accordance with the new OECD rules. In-donor refugee cost for 2019 were reported based on this new national methodology.²⁶³

In 2020, the SR also continued to grant Government scholarships for countries affected by conflict or for countries of origin of migration, while increasing their number (see **Section 3.4**).

²⁵⁷ Source: MoFEA SR questionnaire.

²⁵⁸ Project title in Slovak: Zlepšenie dostupnosti a kvality pôrodnej starostlivosti pre matku a dieťa, Agangrial a Zníženie úmrtnosti ohrozených skupín obyvateľstva v Južnom Sudáne.

²⁵⁹ Project title in Slovak: Zabezpečenie pitnej vody pre obce Šekhka a Hasan Ava.

²⁶⁰ Project title in Slovak: Zmiernenie negatívnych vplyvov a migračnej a utečeneckej krízy spôsobenej vojnovými konfliktami a pretrvávajúcou krízou v regióne Iraku a Sýrie.

²⁶¹ Project title in Slovak: Základná zdravotná starostlivosť a nutričný program pre utečencov z tábora Dbayeh v Bejrúte.

²⁶² Source: MoFEA SR questionnaire.

²⁶³ MO Mol SR questionnaire.

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Annex: National Statistics

The Annex contains selected migration and international protection statistics for 2020, including those which are not collected at EU level through Eurostat²⁶⁴ or Frontex agency²⁶⁵.

National statistics for Slovakia are available mainly in the annual statistical overviews of BBFP PFP²⁶⁶ (legal and irregular migration, returns), annual statistical reports of MO Mol SR²⁶⁷ (international protection including UAMs applying for asylum), statistics of COLSAF²⁶⁸ (employment of foreigners, UAMs not applying for asylum), MoFEA SR²⁶⁹ (visa), SO SR²⁷⁰ (demographic data and international migration), Public Administration Section of Mol SR²⁷¹ (citizenship) and MoESRS SR²⁷² (education of children). Summary of the basic statistical data on migration in Slovakia for a calendar year from Eurostat provides the annual EMN Country Factsheet²⁷³ on developments in the area of migration and international protection or the website of the IOM Office in the SR²⁷⁴.

Table 1: Foreigners with valid residence in the SR in 2020 (by nationality and type of residence)

Indicator	As of 31 December 2020		Top nationalities of foreigners
Number of foreigners with valid residence	150,012		1. Ukraine (42,162) 2. Serbia (16,005) 3. Czech Rep. (12,246)
Share of foreigners in total population*	2.75 %		4. Hungary (9,492) 5. Romania (7,372)
Number of TCNs with valid residence	90,806	temporary residence: 69,978	1. Ukraine (42,162) 2. Serbia (16,005) 3. Vietnam (6,798) 4. Russia (5,658) 5. China (2,695)
		permanent residence: 20,775	
		tolerated stay: 53	
Share of TCNs in total number of foreigners	60.53 %		
Share of TCNs in total population	1.66 %		

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.

264 Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics (consulted on 06/04/2020).

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268 Available at: http://www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/zamestnavanie-cudzincov-statistiky.html?page_id=10803 (consulted on 06/04/2020).

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274 Available at: <http://www.iom.sk/sk/migracia/migracia-na-slovensku> (consulted on 06/04/2020).

Table 2: Third-country nationals with a valid residence by regions within the Slovak Republic in 2020

Region	As of 31 December 2020
Bratislava region	33,497
Trnava region	11,713
Košice region	11,183
Nitra region	8,955
Prešov region	7,646
Žilina region	6,602
Trenčín region	6,192
Banská Bystrica region	5,018
Total	90,806

Source: BBFP PFP.

Table 3: First residence permits issued in the SR to third-country nationals in 2020 by sex and purpose²⁷⁵

Sex	Total	Residence purpose			
		Family formation and reunification ²⁷⁶ (family reasons)	Education and study ²⁷⁷	Remunerated activities ²⁷⁸	Other reasons ²⁷⁹
Male	:	:	:	:	:
Female	:	:	:	:	:
Total	18,251	2,901	2,332	12,077	941

Source: BBFP PFP.

Note: Data are processed in a way and in line with subdivision as provided to Eurostat according to Regulation (EC) No. 862/2007 as well as in line with current Eurostat instructions.

²⁷⁵ 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, 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.

²⁷⁶ 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).

²⁷⁷ 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); special activities – Governmental or EU programme (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. 1a) – special activities (if the foreigner states the category study), Article 52 par. 1b) (foreigner states the category study);

²⁷⁸ 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; 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.

²⁷⁹ 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.

EU Citizens are part of the European residence statistics – Iceland, Norway, Lichtenstein, Switzerland with permanent residence for the purpose EU citizen, EU citizen – permanent, are included according to the filled category.

Table 4: Foreigners employed in the SR in 2020

	As of 31 December 2020	Top nationalities
EU/EEA citizens	29,937	1. Ukraine (19,578) 2. Serbia (10,174) 3. Vietnam (1,023) 4. South Korea (736) 5. Bosnia and Herzegovina (730)
Third-country nationals	39,075	
Total	69,012	

Source: COLSAF.

Table 5: Visas issued by the SR to third country nationals in 2020 (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			
	in third country	in other EU MS	in third country	in other EU MS
7,240*	3,513	616	3,048	63

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

* Out of the total number, Mo SR issued 74 visas (73 D type visa and 1 C type visa).

Note: Number of visas issued may differ from data contained in the BBFP PFP's publication Statistical Overview of Regular and Irregular Migration in the Slovak Republic in 2020. At the time of publishing of the overview, the number of processed visas in the system did not have to mirror the printed, i.e. issued 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 2020 (by sex and previous citizenship)

Sex	Total Slovak citizenship acquired	Top previous citizenships	Slovak citizenship acquired by third-country nationals**	Top previous citizenships
Male	486	1. Serbia (257) 2. Hungary (107) 3. Ukraine (101) 4. Czech Rep. (97) 5. USA (53)	341	1. Serbia (257) 2. Ukraine (101) 3. USA (53) 4. Vietnam (41) 5. United Kingdom (UK) (31)
Female	430		285	
Total	916		626	

Source: Mo 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 2019 (school year 2019/2020)

Indicator	Total	Out of which third country nationals	Top nationalities of third-country nationals
Foreigners in nursery schools	915	633	1. Ukraine (210) 2. Vietnam (97) 3. Russian Fed. (62) 4. South Korea (44) 5. China (43)
Foreigners in elementary schools	3,864	2,686	1. Ukraine (1,203) 2. Russian Fed. (306) 3. Serbia (302) 4. Vietnam (206) 5. South Korea (89)
Foreigners in special schools	40	25	1. Ukraine (11) 2. Russian Fed. (9) 3. - 4. - 5. -
Foreigners in high schools	1,958	1,662	1. Ukraine (1,011) 2. Serbia (169) 3. Russian Fed. (127) 4. South Korea (73) 5. China (47)
Foreigners total	6,777	5,006	1. Ukraine (2,435) 2. Serbia (509) 3. Russian Fed. (504) 4. Vietnam (303) 5. South Korea (206)

Source: Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information SR.

Table 8: Irregular migration in the SR in 2020

Indicator	Number of cases	Top nationalities of third-country nationals
Registered illegal border crossings	135	1. Bangladesh (34) 2. India (19) 3. Ukraine (12) 4. Turkey (8) 5. Syria (7)
Registered irregular stay	1,160	1. Ukraine (314) 2. Afghanistan (189) 3. Syria (145) 4. Serbia (133) 5. Morocco (63)
Total	1,295	1. Ukraine (326) 2. Afghanistan (191) 3. Syria (152) 4. Serbia (134) 5. Morocco (63)

Source: BBFP PFP.

Table 9: Smuggled persons in the SR in 2020²⁸⁰

Indicator	Male	Female	Total	Top nationalities of third-country nationals
Third-country nationals identified as smuggled persons	:	:	411/190*	1. Vietnam 2. Syria 3. Ukraine 4. Afghanistan 5. Iraq

Source: BBFP PFP.

* 411 irregular migrants were identified in investigation files in 2020, while the acts happened also in previous years. From the stated number in 2020, 190 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).

²⁸⁰ 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 2020

Indicator	Smugglers		
	Arrested as suspected/charged	Top nationalities	Convicted
Total²⁸¹	82*/65**	1. Slovak Rep. 2. Ukraine 3. Serbia / Romania	39***

Source: BBFP PFP, General Prosecutor's Office of the SR (arrested as suspected/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). 37 persons were charged with assisting in illegal entry and 28 persons were charged with assisting with illegal stay.

*** 20 persons were convicted based on Article 355 and 19 persons based on Article 356 of Act No. 300/2005 Coll. Criminal Code.

Table 11: Detained third-country nationals in the SR in 2020*

	PDCF Sečovce	PDCF Medveďov	Total
Number of placed TCNs as of 01/01/2020	19	0	19
Number of placed TCNs as of 31/12/2020	105	79	184
Number of placed TCNs during 2020	306	168	474

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

²⁸¹ 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 granted reintegration assistance within AVR			
	Total	M	F	Of which Min. 2	Total	M	F	Of which Min. 0	Total	M	F	Of which Min. 0***	Total	M	F	Of which Min. 1***
Total	193	185	8		258	162	96		80	40	40		29	23	6	
Top nationalities	1. Ukraine (64) 2. Moldova (23) 3. Bangladesh (22) 4. India (18) 5. Serbia (7)				1. Ukraine (194) 2. Georgia (8) 3. Serbia (40) 4. North Macedonia (4) 5. Morocco (3)				1. Serbia (38) 2. Ukraine (25) 3. Georgia (6) 4. Morocco / North Macedonia (3) 5. Algeria / Egypt / Mexico (1)				1. Ukraine (7) 2. Georgia (6) 3. Serbia (5) 4. Iran (4) 5. Morocco / North Macedonia (3)			
Top countries of return	1. Ukraine (149) 2. Moldova (18) 3. Serbia (7) 4. Russian Fed. (3) 5. Nigeria(3)				1. Ukraine (200) 2. Georgia (6) 3. Serbia (4) 4. North Macedonia (4) 5. Morocco (3)				1. Serbia 2. Ukraine 3. Georgia 4. Morocco / North Macedonia 5. Algeria / Egypt / Mexico				1. Ukraine 2. Georgia 3. Serbia 4. Iran 5. Morocco / North Macedonia			

Source: BBFP PFP²⁸² and IOM in the SR²⁸³.

* 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 2020 – selected indicators

Indicator	Total	Male	Female	Of which Minors	Top nationalities***
Applications for asylum (out of which first applications)	282 (267)	259 (:)	23 (:)	11 (:)	1. Afghanistan (50) 2. Morocco (41) 3. Syria (38) 4. Algeria (25) 5. Turkey (18)
Asylum granted	11	:	:	:	1. Libya 2. Afghanistan 3. Russia 4. Tunisia 5. Turkey
Asylum not granted**	79	:	:	:	:
Subsidiary protection provided*	27	:	:	:	1. Afghanistan 2. Syria 3. Mali
Subsidiary protection not provided	21	:	:	:	1. Iran 2. Vietnam 3. Pakistan / Turkey / Ukraine
Citizenship granted to beneficiaries of international protection	14	:	:	:	:

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.

282 BBFP PFP provided return statistics based on data provided to Eurostat for 2019. 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).

283 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 2020 (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 MoI SR.

Table 15: Third-country nationals resettled to the SR in 2020 (by sex and original host country)

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

Source: MO MoI SR.

Table 16: Third-country nationals resettled through the SR to third countries in 2020 (by sex and by original host country)

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

Source: MO MoI SR and IOM Office in the 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 2020**

	Male	Female	Total	Top nationalities	Left**
Unaccompanied minors placed to facilities in 2020	77	2	79	1. Afghanistan 2. Syria 3. Libya 4. Pakistan 5. Ghana / Bangladesh	66
Total number of unaccompanied minors in facilities in 2020	85	4	89	1. Afghanistan 2. Syria 3. Libya 4. Pakistan 5. Ghana / Bangladesh	

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 2020**

Indicator	Male	Female	Total	Top nationalities*
Unaccompanied minors not applying for asylum	68	2	70	1. Afghanistan 2. Syria 3. Libya
Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum	9	0	9	1. Afghanistan 2. Syria 3. Bangladesh / Ghana
Total	77	2	79	-

Source: MO MoI SR and COLSAF.

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 2020*

Indicator		Total	Male	Female
TCNs identified as victims of human trafficking²⁸⁴ presumed victims of human trafficking²⁸⁵		0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)
Presumed victims are provided in brackets.				
Age	18 years of age or more	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)
	Under 18 years of age	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)
Form of exploitation ²⁸⁶	Sexual exploitation	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)
	Labour exploitation	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)
	Other	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)	0 (Confidential data)
Top nationalities of trafficked persons		-	-	-
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.

²⁸⁴ 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.

²⁸⁵ 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).

²⁸⁶ 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 of human beings in the SR – selected indicators in 2020

Indicator	Traffickers of human beings	
	Charged	Convicted
Total	33*	9**

Source: BBFP PFP and Ministry of Justice of the SR.

* 33 persons are charged for the trafficking in human beings criminal act according to the § 179 of the Criminal Code.

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



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