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ANNUAL REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN 2022



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Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic in 2022

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

September 2023
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This report was prepared within the European Migration Network (EMN), which provides up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum in order to support policymaking in the European Union (EU) and EMN Member States – EU Member States except Denmark and EMN Observer Members, which include several non-EU countries. The EMN Slovakia is funded by the EU and the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (MoI SR).

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

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

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Preface

This report contains information on the most important changes, development and activities related to migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2022. It is the only publication in the Slovak Republic which annually maps all the dimensions of third-country nationals' migration.

This report is a part of the EMN Synthesis Report with the same focus, which was prepared at the EU level and summarizes the findings of national reports compiled by EMN Member States on the basis of common specifications. Since 2015, the Synthesis Report has replaced in full the European Commission's Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. The report also serves as a basis for the preparation of the Annual Report of the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) on the asylum situation in the EU for the year 2022, the EMN report on Children in Migration, and the EMN Overview Reports on developments in individual EU MS for the year 2022.

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

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List of Abbreviations and References

AMIF – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ARM – EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum
AVR(s) – assisted voluntary return(s)
AVRR – Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme
BBFP PFP – Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium
BMVI – Border Management and Visa Instrument
CEAS – Common European Asylum System
CFC Medzilaborce – Children and Family Centre DLAŇ in Medzilaborce
CFC(s) – Children and Family Centre(s)
Coll. – Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic
COLSAF – Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family
COMIN – Community Center for Work and Knowledge Mobility
CVEK – Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture
DFEA MIO SR – Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic
DIREA – Department of International Relations and European Affairs of the MoLSAF SR
DM(s) – diplomatic mission(s)
EASO – European Asylum Support Office
EC – European Commission/Community
EEA – European Economic Area
EMN – European Migration Network
EU – European Union
EU MS(s) – European Union Member State(s)
EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum
Eurostat – Statistical Office of the European Union
FAD EPS MoI SR – Foreign Aid Department of the European Programmes Section of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
FPD PF – Foreign Police Department of the Police Force
Frontex – European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GRETA – Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
HRL – Human Rights League
IC MoI SR – Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO – International Labor Organization
IOM – International Organization for Migration
IOM MIC – IOM Migration Information Centre
ISF – Internal Security Fund
KMV – Office of the Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic
LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MEKOMIC – Inter-Ministerial Expert Committee for Labour Migration and Foreigners' Integration
MJ SR – Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic
MO MoI SR – Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
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
MoH SR – Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
MoI – Ministry of Interior
MoI SR – Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
MoLSAF SR – Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
NC SR – National Council of the Slovak Republic
NCP – National Contact Point
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
o. z./OZ – civic association
ODA – Official Development Assistance
OLSAF(s) – office(s) of labour, social affairs and family
PAS MoI SR – Public Administration Section of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
PDCF(s) – Police Detention Centre(s) for Foreigners
PF – Police Force
PFP – Police Force Presidium
RCMS – Readmission Case Management System
SEP(s) – self-employed person(s)
SHC – Slovak Humanitarian Council
SO SR – Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
SPCSG – socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship
SR – Slovak Republic
TCN(s) – third-country national(s)
UAM(s) – unaccompanied minor(s)
UK/United Kingdom – United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN – United Nations
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund
USA – United States of America
V4 – Visegrad Group
VIS – Visa Information System

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

(:) – data unavailable

(-) – the phenomenon did not occur

Methodology and Terms

Methodology and Elaboration

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

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

In terms of methodology, the report is based on secondary research and has a descriptive nature. The authors of the report used available expert publications, statistics, legislation, Slovakia's policy documents, Internet sources and media monitoring¹. Reference documents and information obtained from the following state administration bodies were a significant source of information: Ministry of Interior of the SR (namely BBFP PFP, MO Mol SR, DFEA MIO SR, Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the Mol SR, FAD EPS Mol SR, PAS Mol SR), Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family (indirectly through MoLSAF SR), Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, Ministry of Justice of the SR (indirectly through DFEA MIO SR), General Prosecutor's Office of the SR (indirectly through DFEA MIO), Statistical Office of the SR and the IOM Slovakia. Materials, publications and websites of other state, European, international and non-governmental institutions also represent important sources of information. The report also refers to relevant EMN publications and activities conducted in 2022.

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

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

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

Terms and Definitions

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

Special attention should be paid to the term *foreigner*, which under the Slovak legislation, namely Art 2(2) of the Act on Residence of Foreigners³ means anybody who is not a citizen of the SR. According to the EMN Migration and Asylum 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 state⁴. Slovak legislation, however, denotes a foreigner who is not a national of an EU Member State as a *third-country national*.⁵ In this report, the term foreigner is therefore used mainly in texts and statistics which are related to or are kept in compliance with national legislation. In such a case, the term foreigner corresponds with the definition under Art 2 (2) of the Act on Residence of Foreigners, and not with the definition in the EMN Migration and Asylum Glossary.

The report also uses the term *migrant*. Unlike the definition in the EMN Migration and Asylum Glossary,⁶ in this text it is used as a synonym for foreigner or third-country national.

In the context of the war in Ukraine, the report uses terms such as *people fleeing the war in Ukraine*, many of whom have applied for temporary protection and some for asylum. The Temporary Protection Directive⁷ was transposed into the national legislation of the Slovak Republic in the process of adopting the Asylum Act in 2002. The term temporary protection has not been transposed literally and the name *temporary refuge* (*dočasné útočisko*) has instead been adopted. They are therefore presented as synonymous in the report. Those who have obtained the status of temporary protection holder are called "*odídenc*" by Slovak legislation. In this report they are referred to as *temporary protection holders*.

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

² EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary 9.0 (2022). European Migration Network. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/pages/glossary/alien_en (consulted on 08/05/2022).

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

⁴ EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary 9.0 (2022). European Migration Network. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/pages/glossary/alien_en (consulted on 04/04/2023).

⁵ Under Art. 2(4) of the Act on Residence of Foreigners, a third-country national is anybody who is not a national of the SR or an EU national. Stateless persons are also third-country nationals.

⁶ According to the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary, a migrant is defined as follows: "In the global context, a person who is outside the territory of the State of which they are nationals or citizens and who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate." Source: Asylum and Migration Glossary 7.0 – a Tool for Better Comparability (2018). European Migration Network. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary_en (consulted on 02/05/2022).

⁷ Directive 2001/55/EC of 20.7.2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof

Summary

This report summarizes information on the most important changes, development and activities related to migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2022. It is the only publication in the SR which annually maps all the dimensions of third-country nationals migration, including those related to the EU's policies and legislation. The report also describes legal migration, international protection, minors and other vulnerable groups, integration and inclusion, citizenship and the situation of stateless persons, border control and management, visa practices, irregular migration, including smuggling, human trafficking, returns and readmissions, as well as migration and development cooperation. One chapter deals specifically with the effects of the war in Ukraine on the migration situation, policies and measures adopted by the Slovak Republic. The Annex to this report includes selected statistics related to the above-mentioned areas.

Overview of Asylum and Migration Policy Developments

In 2022, the SR focused primarily on forced migration as a result of the war in Ukraine, the transit of irregular migrants through the territory of the SR to the western EU countries and on the EU external borders management. In addition to the war in Ukraine, the migration management system was also affected by the transiting irregular migrants, for whom the SR has set up a tent facility in the town of Kúty near the Slovak - Czech border, as well as by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022. On 29 October 2022, the first combined elections to municipal and regional self-governments were held, in which, similarly to the past, foreigners – both citizens from EU and non-EU countries – were also eligible to vote and be elected.

Almost all major changes to migration legislation, policies and measures in 2022 were related to addressing the impact of the war in Ukraine, but also to attracting qualified workforce from abroad. The Act on Residence of Foreigners, the Act on Employment Services, the Act on Asylum and the Act on the Citizenship of the Slovak Republic were amended and the Action Plan of the Migration Policy of the MH SR was adopted. The assistance provided by the international community was defined in the *Regional Response Plan (RRP)* of March 2022, which was later updated by UNHCR and other partners. The aim of the RRP was to support all states neighbouring Ukraine, including the SR, in hosting people fleeing the war in Ukraine. To implement the Regional Response Plan, UNHCR established several thematic working groups and sub-groups, consisting of state institutions, NGOs and international organisations, in Slovakia in 2022.

Two major changes have taken place on an institutional level. The Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreigners was restructured and transformed into the *Steering Committee for Migration, Integration and Inclusion of Foreigners* in November 2022. The members of the Committee changed, its scope of authority was expanded and a new statute was adopted. The consolidated statute helped to establish thematic working groups under the leadership of the relevant ministries (for the issues concerning housing, education, employment, social security, etc.). The *Steering Committee for the Implementation of the European Integrated Border Management*, established at the end of 2022, shall coordinate the implementation of the tasks contained in the relevant national strategy for 2023-2026 in the future.

Major media events related to the topic of migration and foreigners in 2022 included the war in Ukraine and the related mass displacement of the population, the integration of temporary protection holders in Slovakia, as well as the movement of irregular migrants across the territory of the SR and the related establishment of a temporary tent facility in the town of Kúty near the Slovak – Czech border. In 2022, opinion polls on migration in Slovakia focused exclusively on public attitudes towards people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The highly positive attitude of Slovaks towards the provision of aid to Ukraine at the beginning of the year was replaced by growing concerns about the integration of the temporary protection holders in Slovakia, fuelled by strong propaganda challenging the information about the armed conflict in Ukraine. Two surveys conducted by the Slovak Academy of Sciences in autumn 2021 and shortly after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 indicated that the war in Ukraine had softened Slovaks' views on migration and asylum policy, but not on foreigners themselves. The level of xenophobic and anti-immigration attitudes towards migrants and refugees remained high and almost unchanged even after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

According to the Police of the SR, in 2022 the Slovak Republic has been the target of the most intense disinformation and manipulation efforts since its inception. Even in 2022, the topic of migration and migrants ranked among the targets of disinformation and hoaxes originating mainly in the Russian Federation. The main topics included the war in Ukraine and people fleeing the war, and the situation of irregular migrants transiting through the territory of the SR.

The research focus in the field of migration of third-country nationals was on several areas in 2022, but the dominating themes were the war in Ukraine and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration policies and measures applicable to foreigners residing in Slovakia.

Responses to the Influx of Person Fleeing the War in Ukraine

After the outbreak war in Ukraine started on 24 February 2022, the SR was among those who had to react very quickly to the mass influx of people fleeing the war. In fact, the SR has adopted many legislative and non-legislative measures as soon as in the very first days. They regulated the legal status and integration of people coming into the SR and facilitated their practical life. Based on these measures, it was possible to provide the following assistance: temporary protection even without the decision of the Council of the EU, accommodation allowance for temporary protection holders, measures in the social area (material need benefit, child benefits, creation of "children groups"), educational measures (e.g. recognition of previous education), healthcare or labour market access (e.g. replacement of the Criminal record certificate needed for several professions by a solemn declaration, temporary professional internship was extended to apply to all categories of health professionals). Several measures were adopted also in the prevention of human trafficking, including retraining of first-contact workers, publishing informational leaflets etc.

Apart from the national level, there were many measures adopted on regional or local level, such as free public transport for temporary protection holders from Ukraine, remission of dog tax, accommodation tax and municipal waste fee etc.

In relation to the war in Ukraine, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the *Contingency Plan for Dealing with the Emergency Situation Related to the Mass Arrival of People from Ukraine to the SR Caused by the Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine for the period of October 2022 - March 2023*.

Civic society, private and bank sector and many individuals massively supported the provision of assistance for the temporary protection holders from Ukraine.

In November 2022, the cooperation with the civic sector resulted in the signature of the *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Addressing the Emergency Situation Related to the Arrival of a Large Number of People from Ukraine to the SR Caused by the Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine*. It was signed by the representatives of 11 non-governmental organisations and Ministry of Interior of the SR.

The Regional Action Plan to Respond to the Mass Influx of Refugees from Ukraine was developed at the regional level and in cooperation with international organisations.

In order to help temporary protection holders, the European Commission allocated emergency funds for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI).

Legal Migration

The number of foreigners in Slovakia has been continuously growing in recent years, while the year 2022 saw an increase by 2% caused mainly by the forced displacement due to the war in Ukraine. EU citizens comprised 5.13% of Slovak population in 2022, while in 2021 the number was 3.08%. Despite the increase, the ratio of foreigners from the EU and non-EU countries in Slovakia has been among the lowest in the EU for a long time. Before the war in Ukraine, about 170,000 foreigners lived in Slovakia. After the war, there was about 279,000 of them, while about 80% were from non-EU countries. Before the war, Ukrainians were the largest foreigner community – they comprised one-third (56,480 persons) of all the foreigners in Slovakia. Towards the end of 2022, their number tripled to 156,881 and they thus comprised more than a half (56%) of all the foreigners in Slovakia. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the SR registered a sharp increase in the number of persons granted temporary protection, which was also reflected in the increased numbers of employed Ukrainian nationals with this status. The citizens of Ukraine were the most numerous group of employed foreigners and this has not changed as compared with the situation before the war.

Apart from the nationals of Ukraine (156,881), the following were among the most numerous groups of nationals present in the SR: Serbian (18,215), Vietnamese (8,039), Russian (7,436) Northern Macedonian (2,842). Most third-country nationals (over two-thirds) lived in the Bratislava region in 2022.

The validity of all the residence permits, work permits, and confirmations of the possibility to fill a vacancy was prolonged also in 2022 – until the termination of the emergency situation, which had been declared in the SR in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

In 2022, several administrative processes were simplified for third-country nationals (TCNs) who work or plan to work or study in Slovakia.

As of 1 January 2023, the amendment to the Act on Employment Services facilitated the conditions under which the qualified labour force from non-EU countries can enter the Slovak labour market, in particular in the professions with a shortage of labour:

- the professions with a shortage of labour were determined and tied to regions instead of districts; the condition of registered unemployment rate having to be under 5% was left out;
- the option to keep employing TCNs during the period of deciding upon their application on the renewal of temporary residence permit for the purpose of employment in the same position and the same employer facilitated the renewal of such residence by leaving out the requirement of labour market testing in order to keep the qualified labour force in the same employment;
- it was made possible to employ TCNs through national visas in selected professions (from April 2022, truck and bus drivers⁸ and highly qualified professions⁹, from June 2022 relocated employees¹⁰ and their family members¹¹).

The possibility of a temporary professional stint for foreigners in healthcare sector has been extended to apply to all health professionals and the condition under which such stint could only be executed with providers of inpatient healthcare has been removed.

Universities do not have to collect fees for studies in foreign languages in order to increase the number of students taking study programmes conducted in foreign languages. If they decide to provide it free of charge, the costs will be reimbursed from the state budget.

From January 2022, the SR started to issue national visas for the period of studies, or for one year the most, to selected student groups (students using the Erasmus+, National Scholarship Programme, bilateral international agreements and cooperation programmes, CEEPUS a Government Scholarships of the SR). Previously, such students had to arrange for temporary residence for a stay exceeding 90 days.

TCNs who have been granted temporary residence for the purpose of family reunification, are allowed to find employment in Slovakia after 9 (used to be 12) months of uninterrupted stay in Slovakia.

Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the SR and the non-profit sector started to provide information on transit and protection/residence options for people fleeing to/through the Slovak Republic. Comprehensive information was provided through the newly launched www.ua.gov.sk portal. The Ministry of Education launched a portal about schools and education in Slovakia www.ukrajina.minedu.sk in Ukrainian language. Also the IOM and the Human Rights League provided legal counselling to this group of persons. Apart from information on their websites, they made available information hotlines in Ukrainian.

⁸ Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 270/2022 Coll. changing the Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 520/2021 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant a national visa to selected categories of third-country nationals as amended by the Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 94/2022 Coll., effective from 1 April 2022.

⁹ Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 521/2022 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant a national visa to highly qualified third-country nationals, effective from 1 April 2022.

¹⁰ It is a transfer of an employee from the enterprise of a foreign entity established outside the territory of the Slovak Republic to an employer which is an enterprise of the same foreign entity established in the territory of the Slovak Republic where the employee will, under the relocation, perform the function of a managing employee or an expert requiring exceptional professional knowledge, skills, abilities, know-how, qualification, and experience necessary for the operation or management.

¹¹ Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 269/2022 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant a national visa to relocated third country nationals and their family members for the purpose of employment, effective from 23 July 2022.

Based on the *Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Canada on Youth Mobility*, a reciprocity quote of 350 participants was agreed: they had the option to submit applications for 2023 (the quota remained as in 2022).

International Protection

The trend marked by low numbers of asylum applications and asylum grants in the Slovak Republic has remained unchanged, although the actual number of asylum applications has increased slightly in nominal terms over the last five years. In 2022, the number of asylum applications in the SR increased as a result of the war in Ukraine. Of a total of 547 applications (503 of which were first applications and 44 were repeated applications), 199 applications were submitted by people who had fled to the territory of the SR from Ukraine - mainly Ukrainian citizens, followed by citizens of Russia and other non-EU countries. Most of these procedures were discontinued (in part due to the temporary protection applications). People fleeing from Ukraine used grants of temporary protection allowing them to stay in the country and access services (the topic is addressed in a separate chapter of this report - see Chapter 3). Following Ukrainians, the most numerous group of asylum seekers in 2022 were nationals of Turkey (76), Morocco (73), Bangladesh (53) and Russia (40). Nine asylum applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors, predominantly from Afghanistan.

In 2022, the SR granted asylum to a total of 23 persons, mostly from Afghanistan. In the same period of time, the SR granted subsidiary protection to 48 persons, most of whom were from Afghanistan (similarly to the previous years) and Ukraine (due to the invasion in February 2022). The SR issued negative decisions in 76 cases in 2022. The SR registered an increase in the number of discontinued procedures (387) in 2022, most frequently due to the arbitrary departure of the applicant from the territory of the SR before the decision in the case was issued. The SR did not resettle or relocate any persons in need of international protection into or through its territory in 2022.

Effective as of 1 June 2022, the amendment to the Act on Asylum has systematically regulated the initial integration of asylum seekers and foreigners granted subsidiary protection by the SR (see the chapter on Integration). Moreover, the time limit for access to the labour market for asylum seekers has been shortened from nine to six months from the commencement of the asylum procedure. In line with the EU law, the hierarchy of protection statuses has changed in a sense that the need for international protection is considered first, and only if the conditions for the granting international protection are not met, the possibility of granting national status is considered.

In December 2022, the Government of the SR approved that, as of 1 January 2023, the provision and reimbursement of urgent healthcare for asylum seekers, persons granted temporary protection and persons involved in the assisted return programme will be covered by the largest health insurance company, whose costs will be subsequently reimbursed by the Ministry of Health of the SR. Previously, the provision and reimbursement of urgent healthcare was the responsibility of the Mol SR.

The SR and Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to share know-how in the field of asylum and the functioning of the asylum system via the programme of study visits established in 2021.

Minors and Other Vulnerable Groups

A significant development in the area of care for unaccompanied minors in 2022 is the amendment to the Asylum Act, which specifies the facts that need to be included in the instruction to the applicant for international protection having regard to his/her age and maturity level. In line with the practice so far, the amendment explicitly introduces the consideration of the best interest of a minor in the Asylum Act. The number of UAMs placed in Slovak facilities has increased, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine, but the number of departures from the facilities has also been high. The number of UAMs applying for asylum in the SR remains low.

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 2022.

Integration and Inclusion

In 2022, the SR adopted *The National Action Plan for Women's Employment 2022-2030*, which addresses the status of women with migration experience in the labour market.

By amending the Act on Asylum, the primary integration of asylum beneficiaries and foreigners was modified. Subsidiary protection was provided to them, too.

Projects of several organisations active in Slovakia in affairs related to migration (e.g. IOM, SHC, Mareena Civic Association or Human Rights League) were an important part of measures to support integration of third country nationals in 2022. They focused, among other things, on the provision of counselling, language courses or activities to increase the awareness of migration. The Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) has continued working in research. A study about the integration of women migrants was published within the EMN. All the organisations reacted to the needs of the temporary protection holders from Ukraine by many activities, which were in the forefront of their work in 2022 (see also Chapter 3).

Citizenship and Statelessness

In the last five years with the exception of "pandemic" year 2021, the number of third-country nationals who have been granted citizenship in the SR has been continually rising. Between 2018 and 2022, state citizenship was granted to approximately 400 – 600 third-country nationals a year. In 2022, the SR granted 515 of them, while most new citizens of the SR came from Serbia, Ukraine, USA, the United Kingdom and Russia. In 2022, 27 international protection beneficiaries became 27 new citizens of the SR.

Effective from 1 April 2022, the Act on State Citizenship made it easier for some foreigners to become citizens of the SR: in some cases, they do not have to prove knowledge of the Slovak language and applicant, who has been granted residence in the SR, can be granted the Slovak Citizenship without meeting the condition of 8 years of permanent residence, if the applicant was not a citizen of the SR and at least one of their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents was a Czechoslovak citizen born in the territory of the SR.

In 2022, the SR did not adopt any legislative or other measures which would significantly influence the situation of stateless persons.

Borders, Visa and Schengen

In 2022, the *National Strategy of European Integrated Border Management for 2023 – 2026* was approved. It sets out tasks for the SR in this area. The Steering Committee for European Integrated Border Management was also established. Regarding the visa policy, the SR acted in compliance with the regulations of the EU concerning non-granting the short-term visas to the citizens of Russia as a result of the military aggression in Ukraine. In 2022, the SR worked on creating a database of national experts/Schengen evaluators and prepared a communication account/address for direct communication with the EU and unified communication within the Police Force Presidium departments as regards the Schengen management.

Irregular Migration including Migrant Smuggling

In 2022, the SR was significantly affected by secondary transit migration along the Western Balkans route. As compared with 2021, there was an increase of 801.5%, with means almost 13 times the level of secondary transit migration during the migration crisis of 2015.¹²

In this respect, the personal capacities of the BBFP PFP were strengthened. Migration routes within the SR were monitored in a more intense manner and road and highway controls were performed more frequently, especially at the most active migration routes, in cooperation with other bodies.

Trafficking in Human Beings

Sexual and labour exploitation has remained the most frequent purpose of trafficking in the last five years. The number of foreigners, who were identified as human trafficking victims in Slovakia, has remained very low: in 2022, three foreigners were identified as victims. The SR filed charges against 34 persons and convicted 10 persons of committing this crime in 2022.

The threat that the people fleeing the war in Ukraine become victims of human trafficking after coming to the SR and succumb to labour exploitation was the most prominent topic of 2022. The SR created a working group, which shall define the borders between human trafficking for forced labour and bad working conditions by the end of 2023. The task stems from the *National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2019 – 2023*.

The information on trafficking in human beings, the support and protection programme for the victims of trafficking in human beings, including contacts to the National Help Line for the victims of human trafficking became a part of instructions to asylum seekers on their rights and obligations in May 2022.

As a result of the war, the SR prepared a training about identification of potential human trafficking victims for the State Border and State Customs Service of Ukraine, as the refugees coming from Ukraine to Slovakia might have become such victims. Due to the high level of vulnerability of people coming from Ukraine, the first contact workers, non-profit organizations, volunteers, armed forces etc. were also retrained through the Mol SR and IOM.

Based on the recommendation of GRETA, the SR trained the Police Detention Centres for Foreigners employees on how to identify the human trafficking victims among asylum seekers and

persons placed in the Centres. In 2022, also all the employees of Legal Aid Centres across Slovakia were trained in these topics.

On 18 October 2022 (European Anti-Trafficking Day), the SR in cooperation with Slovnaft, a. s. company launched a preventative informational campaign focused on combating human trafficking at petrol stations. The campaign informed also in Ukrainian language and focused on the temporary protection holders from Ukraine.

In 2022, the SR has continued to distribute a self-identification leaflet for potential foreign victims of trafficking in human beings in 8 languages. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the SR prepared and distributed an informational material on the risks of human trafficking in six languages in the entire country.

When cooperating with the EU MS or non-EU countries, the SR did not embark on new activities or adopt significant changes in 2022. The cooperation with the United Kingdom was predominant.

Return and Readmission

In 2022, there was rather prominent decrease of forced returns as compared with 2021. It was caused mainly by the war in Ukraine. On the other hand, there was a prominent increase in voluntary departures and assisted voluntary returns.

In 2022, Slovakia used the services of the Frontex agency for the first time. During the year, a Frontex return specialist was deployed in the Police Detention Centres for foreigners. He assisted the PF members daily in the preparation and implementation of returns.

As for the assisted voluntary returns conducted by the SR through the IOM, the target group was extended to the persons coming from Ukraine, who are members of non-EU countries and in the SR legally, so that they could use the services of the programme if interested.

Migration and Development

As compared with the previous years, in which the Slovak Republic directed the humanitarian interventions to a wide range of partner countries, the main recipient of the official humanitarian aid of the SR in 2022 was Ukraine. Since the outbreak of the military conflict, its value amounted to more than EUR 8 million in February 2022.

Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2022 has again confirmed the aim of the SR to address the causes of forced migration as close as possible to the countries of origin of the asylum seekers so that refugees could find protection as close as possible to their home. Regarding the humanitarian assistance, which is related to addressing the causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, Slovakia continued to consider (i) food security and agriculture and (ii) infrastructure and sustainable use of natural resources the key sectoral priorities. As for the climate change, the SR was supposed to contribute to the projects aiming to implement the Paris Agreement.

The SR and Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to use the study visits to exchange know-how on asylum and functioning of the asylum system. This started in 2021.

¹² Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.



Introduction

The *Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (ARM)* informs about the most important changes, development and activities related to migration and international protection in Slovakia in 2022, while focusing on third-country nationals.¹³ It serves as a basis for the European-wide EMN Annual Report,¹⁴ which since 2015, fully replaced the *European Commission's Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum*. It also serves as a source of information for the Annual Report of the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) on the asylum situation in the EU for the year 2022¹⁵, the EMN report on Children in Migration¹⁶, and the EMN Overview Reports¹⁷ on developments in individual EU MS for the year 2022.

The report describes changes, developments and activities related to the legislative, institutional, political and practical aspects of migration and international protection in Slovakia from 1 January 2022 until 31 December 2022. The described developments have been set into the context of the EU's policies and legislation. The Report consists of eleven thematic chapters focused on the following areas: overview of migration and asylum policy developments, responses to the influx of person fleeing the war in Ukraine, legal migration, international protection, minors and other

vulnerable groups, integration, citizenship and stateless persons, visa practice, border control and management, irregular migration, including migrant smuggling, human trafficking, returns and readmissions, migration and development. The Annex to this report includes selected statistics, including those not collected at the EU level through Eurostat or Frontex, as well as a bibliography.

The chapter *Overview of Migration and Asylum Policy Developments* provides a general picture of what shaped migration policies and legislation in Slovakia in 2022. This overview describes the framework political, legislative and institutional developments, (inter-)ministerial cooperation, discussions related to measures and policymaking, media discussions, as well as the wider social context that influenced different areas of migration, including international protection. This chapter contains a list of research on migration conducted in Slovakia in that year.

The cross-cutting chapter *Responses to the Influx of Person Fleeing the War in Ukraine* focuses on how the Slovak Republic reacted to the sudden influx of refugees from Ukraine and how it addressed the initial integration of persons who registered for temporary protection. The chapter contains relevant policies and legislation and describes how the Temporary Protection Directive has been specifically implemented in Slovakia (provision of temporary protection, registration and granting of documents to displaced persons, their access to the labour market, accommodation, health care, including mental health, social support, education). In addition, it deals with areas not related to the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive, family reunification, unaccompanied minors, returns, the provision of information by state institutions to displaced persons and cooperation with international and non-governmental organisations.

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 non-EU 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 non-EU countries as well as measures in the area of services provisions to other vulnerable groups.

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

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

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

¹³ The general structure of the political and legal system related to migration and international protection in Slovakia is described in the EMN's Organisation of Asylum and Migration Policies in the Slovak Republic study, the updated version from 2023. Available at <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/723-organizacia-migracnej-a-azylovej-politiky-prehľad-2023.html> (consulted on 07/09/2023).

¹⁴ The last EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2021 is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/emn-annual-reports_en (consulted on 08/3/2023).

¹⁵ The latest annual report for 2021 (EASO Asylum Report). <https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-knowledge/asylum-report> (consulted on 08/3/2023).

¹⁶ Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/665-deti-v-migracii-2021.html> (consulted on 08/3/2023).

¹⁷ 2022 reports (EMN Country Factsheets). https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/country-factsheets_en (consulted on 08/3/2023)

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

The chapter *Trafficking in Human Beings* informs about the policies, legislation, international monitoring, national projects, campaigns and other activities, as well as cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels in this area, national projects, campaigns and other activities, as well as cooperation in this field at bilateral and multilateral level concerning foreigners from non-EU countries.

The chapter *Return 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* 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 non-EU countries.

The Annex *National Statistics* summarises selected statistics for the SR on migration, international protection and integration in 2022, including those which are not collected at the EU level through Eurostat¹⁸ or the Frontex agency.¹⁹ The Annex presents statistical information related to the numbers of foreigners: the number of those employed, issued residence permits and visas, children of foreigners in the education system, obtained citizenships, cases of irregular migration and detained third-country nationals, smuggled persons, related granted tolerated stays and residence permits to smuggled persons, smugglers, returns and reintegrations, numbers related to various aspects of international protection and temporary protection, relocations and resettlements, unaccompanied minors and victims of human trafficking from non-EU countries, related granted periods for consideration and residence permits granted to human trafficking victims and of traffickers.

¹⁸ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics (consulted on 02/05/2022).

¹⁹ Available at: <http://frontex.europa.eu/publications/> (consulted on 02/05/2022).



Overview of Asylum and Migration Policy Developments

In 2022, the SR focused primarily on forced migration as a result of the war in Ukraine, the transit of irregular migrants through the territory of the SR to the western EU countries and on the EU external borders management. In addition to the war in Ukraine, the migration management system was also affected by the transiting irregular migrants, for whom the SR has set up a tent facility in the town of Kúty near the Slovak - Czech border, as well as by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022. On 29 October 2022, the first combined elections to municipal and regional self-governments were held, in which, similarly to the past, foreigners – both citizens from EU and non-EU countries – were also eligible to vote and be elected.

Almost all major changes to migration legislation, policies and measures in 2022 were related to addressing the impact of the war in Ukraine, but also to attracting qualified workforce from abroad. The Act on Residence of Foreigners, the Act on Employment Services, the Act on Asylum and the Act on the Citizenship of the Slovak Republic were amended and the Action Plan of the Migration Policy of the MH SR was adopted. The assistance provided by the international community was defined in the *Regional Response Plan (RRP)* of March 2022, which was later updated by UNHCR and other partners. The aim of the RRP was to support all states neighbouring Ukraine, including the SR, in hosting people fleeing the war in Ukraine. To implement the Regional Response Plan, UNHCR established several thematic working groups and sub-groups, consisting of state institutions, NGOs and international organisations, in Slovakia in 2022.

Two major changes have taken place on an institutional level. The Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreigners was restructured and transformed into the *Steering Committee for Migration, Integration and Inclusion of Foreigners* in November 2022. The members of the Committee changed, its scope of authority was expanded and a new statute was adopted. The consolidated statute helped to establish thematic working groups under the leadership of the relevant ministries (for the issues concerning housing, education, employment, social security, etc.). The *Steering Committee for the Implementation of the European Integrated Border Management*, established at the end of 2022, shall coordinate the implementation of the tasks contained in the relevant national strategy for 2023-2026 in the future.

Major media events related to the topic of migration and foreigners in 2022 included the war in Ukraine and the related mass displacement of the population, the integration of temporary protection holders in Slovakia, as well as the movement of irregular migrants across the territory of the SR and the related establishment of a temporary tent facility in the town of Kúty near the Slovak – Czech border. In 2022, opinion polls on migration in Slovakia focused exclusively on public attitudes towards people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The highly positive attitude of Slovaks towards the provision of aid to Ukraine at the beginning of the year was replaced by growing concerns about the integration of the temporary protection holders in Slovakia, fuelled by strong propaganda challenging the information about the armed conflict in Ukraine. Two surveys conducted by the Slovak Academy of Sciences in autumn 2021 and shortly after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 indicated that the war in Ukraine had softened Slovaks' views on migration and asylum policy, but not on foreigners themselves. The level of xenophobic and anti-immigration attitudes towards migrants and refugees remained high and almost unchanged even after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

According to the Police of the SR, in 2022 the Slovak Republic has been the target of the most intense disinformation and manipulation efforts since its inception. Even in 2022, the topic of migration and migrants ranked among the targets of disinformation and hoaxes originating mainly in the Russian Federation. The main topics included the war in Ukraine and people fleeing the war, and the situation of irregular migrants transiting through the territory of the SR.

The research focus in the field of migration of third-country nationals was on several areas in 2022, but the dominating themes were the war in Ukraine and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration policies and measures applicable to foreigners residing in Slovakia.

2.1. Migration Management System, Legislation and Migration Policies

In 2022, the measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic were still lingering. The emergency situation declared by the Government of the SR in March 2020 remained in force until the end of 2022. The SR continued to apply its anti-pandemic measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in its migration and asylum system. In migration and asylum facilities, several further measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 remained valid, subject to changes depending on the current situation (these included, e.g. testing, quarantine measures, isolation of those who tested positive, zoning of facilities, informing about the valid measures and protective equipment, vaccination possibilities, issuance of documents confirming COVID-19 vaccination, etc.). All of the applied measures and processes were in compliance with the measures and guidelines of the

Chief Public Health Officer of the SR and Public Health Officer of the MoI SR in cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the SR.²⁰ The research studying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on foreigners highlighted that there is a room for improvement in Slovakia when the meeting the specific needs of this vulnerable group of people is concerned, mainly in relation to their residency status, language and information barriers, social background or access to services and healthcare, including vaccination.²¹

The war in neighbouring Ukraine has had a significant impact on migration management in the Slovak Republic since February 2022, with over one million people fleeing it through or into the Slovak Republic, including almost 587,000 women and 260,000 children²². In this context, an emergency situation (crisis situation) was declared on 26 February 2022 and it remained in force throughout 2022. The migration management of the country was also affected by the transiting irregular migrants, for whom the SR has set up a temporary tent facility in the town of Kúty near the Slovak – Czech border.

Even in 2022, policies and measures related to migration and international protection of TCNs remained primarily 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. The Ministry of Interior of the SR acts as the managing body of AMIF²³, ISF²⁴ and of the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI)²⁵ for the programming period 2021 – 2027²⁶. It is also a competent authority for the Internal Security Fund (ISF) and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for the period of years 2014-2020. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the SR became a beneficiary of the emergency financial assistance from the AMIF and the BMVI.²⁷

The SR has followed several strategic documents in the field of migration:

- Migration Policy of the SR: Perspective until the Year 2025 (2021),
- Recovery Plan: Component 10: Attracting and Retaining Talents and Component 9: More Efficient Management and Strengthening of R&D&I Funding (2021),
- Integration Policy of the SR (2014),
- Strategy on the Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the SR (2018),
- Economic Policy Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2030 (2018),
- National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for years 2023 to 2026 (2022), laying grounds for the establishment of the *Steering Committee for the Implementation of the European Integrated Border Management* in 2022 (see Chapter 9),
- National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and Promotion of the Slovak Republic (2015).

²⁰ Source: BBFP PFP and MO MoI questionnaires.

²¹ Source: Gallo Kriglerová, E. et col. (2022): *Pandémia ako ľudskoprávna lekcia*. [Pandemic as a Human Rights Lesson] Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK, Bratislava, available at: <http://cvek.sk/pandemia-ako-ludskopravna-lekcia-2/> (consulted on 08/04/2023).

²² Source: MoFEA SR statistics (consulted on 20/09/2023).

²³ AMIF projects are aimed at provision of services to target groups including asylum seekers, third-country nationals who have been granted international protection or irregular migrants. The most frequently provided services include social and psychological counselling, integration counselling, Slovak language courses, basic material assistance and complementary healthcare.

²⁴ Projects aimed at financing activities within the scope of authority of the Border and Foreign Police, primarily concerning forced returns and external border protection. In the past, these have included e.g. projects aimed at reimbursing expenses related to the forced returns execution; vocational and language training for Border and Foreign Police officers; and material and technical support for Border and Foreign Police units.

²⁵ The projects proposed under the scope of BMVI are aimed at supporting effective European integrated border management at the external European borders through the purchase of a helicopter and through the information systems support.

²⁶ By the Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 329 of 27 May 2020.

²⁷ Source: Organisation of Migration and Asylum System in the Slovak Republic 2023, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava. Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/723-organizacia-migracnej-a-azylovej-politiky-prehľad-2023.html> (consulted on 08/04/2023).

The SR prepared the *Action Plan of the Migration Policy of the MH SR* in 2022. The Action Plan tasks include:

- Legislative change to the form of proof for eligibility for urgent medical care and reimbursement for such care for asylum seekers,
- Preparation of a Public Healthcare Early Response Plan applicable in the event of a migration wave and the establishment of a national coordination mechanism for migrant healthcare in cooperation with EUROHEALTHNET²⁸ and LANCET Migration European Hub²⁹, where the MH is represented, and
- Implementation of training strategies for the development and strengthening of health services sensitive to the needs of foreign nationals seeking international protection / foreign nationals granted international protection / migrants.³⁰

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

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

Other laws related to the migration of third-country nationals are concerned, for example, with recognition of professional qualifications, granting of citizenship, illegal work and employment, health care etc. In 2022, the Act on Residence of Foreigners, the Act on Employment Services, the Act on Asylum and the Act on Citizenship were amended (see the following chapters).

Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, the SR has adopted:

- a number of laws – the so-called *Lex Ukraine* – which govern the legal status and inclusion of people coming to the SR from Ukraine (e.g. the granting of temporary protection even without an EU Council decision, the provision of an allowance for accommodating refugees; social measures such as the provision of material need benefits, child allowance, the organisation of groups for children; previous education recognition, healthcare provision or access to the labour market); and
- *The Contingency Plan of the Slovak Republic for dealing with the emergency situation for the period from October 2022 to March 2023* (2022).

The following UN documents have been drafted at an international level:

- *Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan* (March 2022),
- *Ukraine Situation: Recalibration - Regional Refugee Response Plan* (October 2022),
- *Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation: Multi-Sector Needs Assessment – Slovakia 2022* (October 2022).

²⁸ <https://eurohealthnet.eu/about-us/membership/>

²⁹ <https://migrationhealth.org/regional-hubs/europe/about-us/>

³⁰ Source: MH SR questionnaire.

These documents have been coordinated and drafted by the UNHCR in cooperation with other UN agencies and with the SR.³¹

2.2. Political Development and (Inter)ministerial Cooperation

In 2022, the political elite in Slovakia focused primarily on forced migration, transit of irregular migrants through the territory of the SR to the western EU countries, and the EU external borders management. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the Slovak Parliament has passed a number of acts with the aim to quickly and effectively respond to the emerging crisis and humanitarian situation arising from the mass influx or transit of people fleeing the conflict.

On 29 October 2022, the first combined elections to municipal and regional self-governments were held, in which, similarly to the past, foreigners – both citizens from EU and non-EU countries – were also eligible to vote and be elected. Public media as well as the social media profiles of some municipalities and non-profit organizations informed about this opportunity.³² However, foreigners felt there was a lack of information about the candidates in some of the major languages or in their language of communication.³³ Voting took place in nearly 3,000 municipalities, towns and city districts.³⁴

(Inter)ministerial Cooperation and Coordination

In 2022, no significant organisational or institutional changes were made to the key state administration departments related to migration, including international protection, in the SR. The Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the SR opened a new asylum facility for temporary protection holders – the Humanitarian Centre in Gabčíkovo – as a temporary accommodation centre with a capacity of 1,000 persons, which continued to operate even after 2022.³⁵

In the area of migration and integration, close cooperation between the relevant ministries continued, especially so in relation to the temporary protection holders from Ukraine and to the challenges faced by the SR in migration management after the start of the war in Ukraine. Negotiations and working meetings took place, focusing on legislation and solving practical problems in the field. In addition to direct cooperation between relevant ministries, cooperation also took place through:

- *Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreigners*, which was restructured and transformed into the *Steering Committee for Migration, Integration and Inclusion of Foreigners*³⁶ in 2022, partly as a consequence of the war in Ukraine. In addition to the governmental, international and non-governmental partners, social partners (including the

³¹ Source: Organisation of Migration and Asylum System in the Slovak Republic 2023, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava. Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/723-organizacia-migracnej-a-azylovej-politiky-prehľad-2023.html> (consulted on 08/04/2023).

³² Source: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/v-jesennych-volbach-mozu-volit-aj/658589-clanok.html> (consulted on 03/04/2023).

³³ Source: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/23044794/volby-2022-cudzinci-informovanie-problemy.html> (consulted on 03/04/2023).

³⁴ Source: <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/3082060/> (consulted on 03/04/2023).

³⁵ Source: Organisation of Migration and Asylum System in the Slovak Republic 2023, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava. Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/723-organizacia-migracnej-a-azylovej-politiky-prehľad-2023.html> (consulted on 08/04/2023).

³⁶ By the Resolution of the Government of the SR of 16 November 2022, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/20511/1> (consulted on 08/04/2023).

Federation of *Slovak Industrial and Transport Associations*)³⁷ were also involved. The primary aim was to remove obsolete provisions in the Statute, update the list of permanent and ad-hoc members and nominate their representatives, and to facilitate the flexible establishment of expert working groups depending on the situation in question.

A total of 3 Steering Committee meetings were held in 2022: on 16 March, 20 June and 21 December. The Committee was used as a platform for information sharing and discussion on issues related to the provision of temporary protection. In the context of integration of temporary protection holders in Slovakia, the areas addressed included, e.g., education of temporary protection holders' children, provision of healthcare, and housing - provision of housing allowance. The participants were also informed about the possibility of using funds from the Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan (Component 10, which addresses integration of foreigners in Slovakia), as well as about the current situation in the MoI SR's asylum facility in Gabčíkovo, with the aim to coordinate the provision of services to satisfy the needs of the persons accommodated in the facility.³⁸

- *Inter-Ministerial Expert Committee for Labour Migration and Foreigners' Integration (MEKOMIC)*³⁹, which did not meet in 2022, though the MoLSAF SR (via DIREA) continuously communicated with the Committee members via emails, sharing news and relevant information.⁴⁰
- *Crisis Management Section of the MoI SR*, which prepared the Contingency Plan for Dealing with the Emergency Situation Related to the Mass Arrival of People from Ukraine to the SR⁴¹ after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and also established the Coordination Staff involving a number of relevant ministries. In the area of migration, this Section is responsible for emergency accommodation of temporary protection holders.⁴²
- *EMN National Contact Point*⁴³ for the SR⁴⁴, which implemented various activities in 2022, includ-

37 New permanent members of the Steering Committee: Director of the Institute for Administrative and Security Analysis of the Ministry of Interior of the SR, Director-General of the Office of the Minister of Interior of the SR, Director of the Department of Crisis Management and Security of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, Director of the Department of International Relations and European Affairs of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, Director-General of Section for Housing Policy of the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the SR, Director-General of the Office of the Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR, and Director-General of the Office of the Minister of Health of the SR.

The following are no longer permanent members of the Steering Committee: Director-General of the Section of Legislation and External Relations of the Ministry of Interior of the SR, Director-General of the Section of International Relations of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR and the Director-General of the Section of Public Diplomacy and Services to Citizens of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR.

The new ad hoc members of the Steering Committee shall be the delegated representatives of the following: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the SR, Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for the Development of the Civil Society, Ministry of Transport and Construction of the SR, Department for United Nations and International Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, Legal Aid Centre, International Organization for Migration (IOM), non-governmental and non-profit organizations active in the field of migration, integration and inclusion of foreigners, academia, scientific and research organizations active in the field of migration, integration and inclusion of foreigners (inclusion of foreigners was added among the thematic fields), Federation of Industrial Associations and Transportation, and the Slovak Chamber of Trades.

Delegated representatives of the following institutions are no longer the ad hoc members: Ministry of Education of the SR, Ministry of Health of the SR

38 Information provided by the MO MoI SR.

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

40 Information provided by the MoLSAF SR.

41 Available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/27750/1> (consulted on 29/11/2023).

42 Source: Organisation of Migration and Asylum System in the Slovak Republic 2023, European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava. Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/studie-a-policy-briefy-emn/item/723-organizacia-migracnej-a-azylovej-politiky-prehľad-2023.html> (consulted on 08/04/2023).

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

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

ing the preparation of publications⁴⁵, the submission of and responding to ad-hoc queries) and the organisation of the national conference on labour exploitation⁴⁶ and other expert meetings⁴⁷. These activities concern the migration of TCNs and are meant mainly for policy-makers, public administration representatives, research institutions, academia and the non-governmental sector. In the context of the war in Ukraine and the resulting crisis situation, at a pan-European level the EMN has published a series of ad-hoc questions (including contributions from the SR) on the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive and access to services for people fleeing the war. Based on the replies from the EU MS, EMN informs⁴⁸ were drafted which, together with the ad-hoc questions, served as a source of information for the EU MS, the EC and various working groups, committees or EU institutions. Thematically, these EMN outputs covered, e.g., areas concerning the registration and documentation of temporary protection, access of temporary protection holders to social security, healthcare services, free movement, housing, including private accommodation, education and to the labour market.^{49, 50}

The *Steering Committee for the Implementation of the European Integrated Border Management*, established at the end of 2022, shall coordinate the implementation of the tasks contained in the relevant national strategy for 2023-2026 in the future.

Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, UNHCR published the first *Regional Response Plan (RRP)* on 1 March 2022. The aim of the RRP was to support all states neighbouring Ukraine (including the SR) in hosting as many as 2.4 million Ukrainian refugees. The updated *Regional Refugee Response Plan*, drafting of which involved 21 Slovak and international institutions, covered the period between March 2022 and the end of 2022 and increased the amount allocated to Slovakia, set at USD 91.9 million. The SR welcomed the updated Regional Plan in May 2022 and praised the cooperation it had with all stakeholders.⁵¹ To implement the Regional Response Plan, UNHCR established several thematic working groups and sub-groups in Slovakia in 2022, which included representatives of state institutions, NGOs and international organisations, such as: *Refugee Coordination Forum*, *Refugee Coordination Forum – East*, *Protection and Inclusion Working Group* (with following sub-groups: *Anti-Trafficking Task Force*, *Child Protection Sub-Working Group* and *Inclusion Sub-Working Group*), *Cash Working Group*, *Health Working Group* (with *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support MHPSS Sub-Working Group*), *Information Management Working Group*, and the *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Task Force*.⁵²

45 Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie.html> (consulted on 03/05/2023).

46 Available at: <https://emn.sk/sk/novinky/737-na-letne-pocuvanie-podcasty-z-konferencie-emn-slovensko-o-pracovnom-vykoristovani-a-dostojnych-pracovnych-podmienkach.html> (consulted on 20/09/2023).

47 Source: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/podujatia-emn.html> (consulted on 03/05/2023).

48 Available at: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/informy-emn.html> (consulted on 20/09/2023).

49 Information provided by IOM Slovakia.

50 Source: www.emn.sk (consulted on 03/05/2023).

51 Source: <https://www.facebook.com/ministerstvovnutraSR/posts/373374368152635> (consulted on 20/09/2023).

52 Source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10785> (consulted on 03/05/2023).

2.3. Public Opinion and Migration in Media

Since 2015, the media in Slovakia have been covering international migration more extensively and actively communicating about it.⁵³ Major media events of 2022 related to the topic of migration and foreigners included the war in Ukraine and the related mass displacement of the population, including the foreign nationals residing in Ukraine; the integration of temporary protection holders in Slovakia; as well as the passage of irregular migrants across the territory of the SR and the related establishment of a temporary tent facility in the town of Kúty near the Slovak – Czech border.⁵⁴

In 2022, opinion polls on migration in Slovakia focused exclusively on public attitudes towards people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The highly positive attitude of Slovaks towards the provision of aid to Ukraine was shown by the surveys conducted under the scope of the *Ako sa máte, Slovensko? (How are you doing, Slovakia?)* project⁵⁵ in March and April 2022. The Milan Šimečka Foundation's survey carried out in June 2022 has shown a high level of public engagement in the provision of assistance (especially material and financial assistance) to the people fleeing from Ukraine, but also concerns that the refugees will represent a burden for Slovakia and that the long-term support provided to refugees will be detrimental to the Slovak population. Nevertheless, the public in Slovakia is willing to receive the people from Ukraine, but they have to adapt to the Slovak society and they must not differ too much from it.⁵⁶ The Foundation has carried out a representative survey prepared in cooperation with the Focus Research Agency four months after the outbreak of the war, between 20 and 27 June 2022, involving 1,005 male and female respondents.⁵⁷ Massive propaganda challenging the information about the armed conflict in Ukraine has played a role in the shaping of the negative public opinion towards people fleeing Ukraine. The public support for assistance to Ukrainians has been continuously declining in 2022, as shown in a publication detailing the Focus-conducted survey by Globsec.⁵⁸ Of all the V4 countries, respondents from Slovakia declared the most negative attitudes (more than 50% of the respondents), with almost a third of the respondents expressing an opinion that the arrival of refugees had had a negative impact on their lives and 68% saying that they would reduce the current volume of assistance provided in Slovakia.⁵⁹

Two surveys conducted by the Slovak Academy of Sciences in autumn 2021 and shortly after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, which involved 600 respondents, indicated that the war in Ukraine had softened Slovaks' views on migration and asylum policy, but not on foreigners. The high level of xenophobic and anti-immigration attitudes towards migrants and refugees remained almost unchanged even after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.⁶⁰ According to the authors, "general attitudes towards migrants may not explain sufficiently enough how

people feel about migration policies, especially in situations involving emotional tension and personal safety concerns".⁶¹

According to the Police of the SR, in 2022 the Slovak Republic has been the target of the most intense disinformation and manipulation efforts since its inception. Even in 2022, the topic of migration and migrants ranked among the targets of disinformation and hoaxes originating mainly in the Russian Federation. The main topics included the war in Ukraine and people fleeing the war, and the situation of irregular migrants transiting through the territory of the SR. The Police has recorded hundreds of false narratives concerning the war and the temporary protection holders from Ukraine, such as, for example:

- portraying temporary protection holders as dangerous criminals and accusing them of crimes they did not commit
- claims that temporary protection holders will trigger a new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic
- claims that temporary protection holders represent a health threat to the citizens of Slovakia
- claims that Ukrainians have brought various diseases to Slovakia, that they cause disorder, that they receive high allowances and benefits in Slovakia at the expense of the Slovak citizens, etc.

In addition to that, the disinformation campaign related to the increase in irregular migration and the establishment of a temporary tent facility in the town of Kúty, which was misused by politically exposed persons and extremists who organised a protest there, reached its climax and subsequently subsided at the end of 2022.⁶²

2.4. Research of International Migration in Slovakia

The research focus in the field of migration of third-country nationals was on several areas in 2022, but the dominating themes were the war in Ukraine and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration policies and measures applicable to foreigners residing in Slovakia. Research publications and other short outputs included (in alphabetical order):

- *Deti utečencov na školách – prvé kroky a princípy [Refugee Children in Schools – First Steps and Principles]* (Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK: <http://cvek.sk/deti-utecencov-na-skolach-prve-kroky-a-principy/>)
- *Informácie pre ľudí poskytujúcich pomoc ľuďom z Ukrajiny [Information for the providers of assistance to people from Ukraine]* (Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK: <http://cvek.sk/informacie-pre-ludi-poskytujucich-pomoc-ludom-z-ukrajiny/>)
- *Integrácia ľudí z Ukrajiny – návrhy riešení [Integration of People from Ukraine – Proposals for Solutions]* (Milan Šimečka Foundation with Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK, Human Rights League, People in Need and Mareena: <https://nadaciamilanasimecku.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Integracia-ludi-z-Ukrajiny-navrhy-rieseni.pdf>)
- *Mladí ľudia z menšín – identita, dôvera, vylúčenie, participácia [Young People from Minorities – Identity, Trust, Exclusion, Participation]* (Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK: <http://cvek.sk/mladi-ludia-z-mensin-identita-dovera-vylucenie-participacia/>)

53 Source: Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic for the years 2015 – 2021. European Migration Network, IOM Slovensko, Bratislava.

54 Source: Unsorted IOM media monitoring 2022.

55 Source: <https://www.akosamateslovensko.sk/ochota-pomoc-ukrajine-neklesa/> (consulted on 03/05/2023).

56 Source: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/PSqXkGs/vojna-na-ukrajine-co-si-myslia-slovaci-o-utecencoch-z-ukrajiny-prieskum/> (consulted on 03/05/2023).

57 Source: <https://fuzn.sk/v-mozaike-rastucich-obav-prieskum-postojov-verejnosti-voci-ludom-utekajucim-pred-vojnou-na-ukrajine/> (consulted on 03/05/2023).

58 Source: https://www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/GLTrends_Ukraine_refugees_summary%20v13%20spreads.pdf (consulted on 11/08/2023).

59 Source: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/K2GrMSE/slovensko-pre-ukrajinu-v-ukrajincoch-hladame-vinnikov-nasich-problemov-aj-preto-ich-podporujeme-menej/> (consulted on 03/05/2023).

60 Source: <https://dennikn.sk/2974816/vojna-na-ukrajine-zmiernila-nazory-slovakov-na-migracnu-politiku-no-nie-na-migrantov-a-utecencov/> (consulted on 03/05/2023).

61 Source: https://www.sav.sk/?lang=sk&doc=services-news&source_no=20&news_no=10523 (consulted on 03/05/2023).

62 Source: Správa Policajného zboru o dezinformáciách na Slovensku v roku 2022 [Police Force Report on Disinformation in the Slovak Republic in 2022]. Department of Communication and Prevention of the Police Force Presidium, Bratislava, available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=policia-zverejnila-prehľad-o-tvorbe-vyvoji-a-sireni-dezinformacii-a-manipulacii-na-slovensku-v-roku-2022> (consulted on 29/06/2023).

- Pandémia ako ľudskoprávna lekcia [*Pandemic as a Human Rights Lesson*] (Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture CVEK: <http://cvek.sk/pandemia-ako-ludskopravna-lekcia-2/>)
- Prvá až šiesta rýchla sektorová analýza potrieb ľudí utekajúcich z Ukrajiny - Displacement Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine and TCNs (IOM: <https://iom.sk/sk/aktivita/pomoc-iom-ukrajine/zber-dat.html>)
- Prvá a druhá analýza prieskumu medzi ľuďmi utekajúcimi z Ukrajiny a štátnymi príslušníkmi prekračujúci hranice na Ukrajinu - Displacement Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine and TCNs Crossing to Ukraine (IOM: <https://iom.sk/sk/aktivita/pomoc-iom-ukrajine/zber-dat.html>)
- Prvá a druhá analýza vysídlenia štátnych príslušníkov tretích krajín prichádzajúcich na Slovensko a odchádzajúcich zo Slovenska - Displacement Data Analysis on TCNs (IOM: <https://iom.sk/sk/aktivita/pomoc-iom-ukrajine/zber-dat.html>)
- Správa Policajného zboru o dezinformáciách na Slovensku v roku 2022 [*Police Force Report on Disinformation in the Slovak Republic in 2022*] (Department of Communication and Prevention of the Police Force Presidium: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=policia-zverejnila-prehľad-o-tvorbe-vyvoji-a-sireni-dezinformacii-a-manipulacii-na-slovensku-v-roku-2022>)
- Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2021 (EMN Slovakia: <https://emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyrocné-spravy-emn-o-migrácii-a-azyle/item/680-vyrocná-správa-o-migrácii-a-azyle-za-rok-2021.html>)

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



Response to the Influx of Persons Fleeing the War in Ukraine

After the outbreak war in Ukraine started on 24 February 2022, the SR was among those who had to react very quickly to the mass influx of people fleeing the war. In fact, the SR has adopted many legislative and non-legislative measures as soon as in the very first days. They regulated the legal status and integration of people coming into the SR and facilitated their practical life. Based on these measures, it was possible to provide the following assistance: temporary protection even without the decision of the Council of the EU, accommodation allowance for temporary protection holders, measures in the social area (material need benefit, child benefits, creation of “children groups”), educational measures (e.g. recognition of previous education), healthcare or labour market access (e.g. replacement of the Criminal record certificate needed for several professions by a solemn declaration, temporary professional internship was extended to apply to all categories of health professionals). Several measures were adopted also in the prevention of human trafficking, including retraining of first-contact workers, publishing informational leaflets etc.

Apart from the national level, there were many measures adopted on regional or local level, such as free public transport for temporary protection holders from Ukraine, remission of dog tax, accommodation tax and municipal waste fee etc.

In relation to the war in Ukraine, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the *Contingency Plan for Dealing with the Emergency Situation Related to the Mass Arrival of People from Ukraine to the SR Caused by the Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine for the period of October 2022 - March 2023*.

Civic society, private and bank sector and many individuals massively supported the provision of assistance for the temporary protection holders from Ukraine.

In November 2022, the cooperation with the civic sector resulted in the signature of the *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Addressing the Emergency Situation Related to the Arrival of a Large Number of People from Ukraine to the SR Caused by the Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine*. It was signed by the representatives of 11 non-governmental organisations and Ministry of Interior of the SR.

The Regional Action Plan to Respond to the Mass Influx of Refugees from Ukraine was developed at the regional level and in cooperation with international organisations.

In order to help temporary protection holders, the European Commission allocated emergency funds for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI).

3.1. Statistics

While before the onset of the conflict the average number of Slovak-Ukrainian border crossings amounted to approximately 2,000 persons a day, it has risen to 10,000 to 15,000 people a day even in the very first days of the conflict, thus approaching the maximum throughput of the border crossing points.⁶³ The situation stabilised approximately one month after the onset of the conflict and in the following months were nearly at the level from before the conflict.⁶⁴

From 24 February 2022 until the end of 2022, a total of 1,090,124 persons (nearly 587,000 women and 260,000 children) entered the SR from Ukraine, out of which 1,004,197 were Ukrainian citizens (see Table and Chart 21). In the same period, 875,589 persons left the SR for Ukraine, out of which 800,412 were Ukrainian citizens (see Table and Chart 22).⁶⁵

From 1 March 2022 to 31 December 2022, 104,764 persons applied for temporary protection in the SR, out of which 104,128 were Ukrainian citizens. Given the mobilisation of men aged 18 – 60 declared in Ukraine, the largest group was made up by women (51,689) followed by minors (37,451) (see Table and Chart 23). As of 31 December 2022, the number of valid temporary protections was 91,977. During 2022, 12,759 temporary protections expired in the SR.⁶⁶

As the SR was not impacted to a great extent by the 2015–2016 migration waves, the influx of temporary protection holders from Ukraine is the largest in the SR's history.

It is possible to monitor the influx using several other indicators, e.g. **Table 7** – Foreigners in the SR educational system, where the Ukrainian citizens are absolutely the most represented group of foreigners attending schools of all levels (kindergartens, primary, and secondary). In 2021,

there were 8,595 foreigners (including EU citizens) in the educational system of the SR, while in 2022 the number of foreigners (including EU citizens) rose to 19,385, out of which 13,607 were Ukrainian citizens.

Ukrainian citizens were the most represented group of nationals also among the UAMs in the Children and Family Centres (CFCs), where they accounted for more than half of newly placed UAMs in 2022 (see also Chapter 6). Ukraine has become the top country of origin also in the case of migrants illegally crossing the state border: they amounted to 93% (see also Chapter 10).

On the other hand, a decrease has been recorded for forced returns, as the returns to/through Ukraine were stopped after the outbreak of the war (see also Chapter 12). Before the war, Ukraine was the most frequent country of return.

According to the Social Policy Institute, the main analytical and counselling body of the MoLSAF SR, 25,078 temporary protection holders have found employment in Slovakia since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, which amounts to 67.9% of all working Ukrainians. They managed to find employment during the time of decreasing unemployment rate, which means that they filled the vacancies in which the citizens of the SR have not been interested for a long time. In the first month of the war, 11% of temporary protection holders aged 18 to 64 found work in Slovakia. The Institute estimated that a year later, i.e. in February 2023, the employment rate of temporary protection holders amounted to 34%. Of migrant workers who started to work in Slovakia during 2022, but before the war in Ukraine, 60.9% had already worked here at a point in the past. On the other hand, of the temporary protection holders who started to work here after the war had begun, only 3.1% had already worked here before. The differences in the highest attained education between migrant workers and temporary protection holders from Ukraine were negligible. As much as 94.3% of migrant workers and 92.5% of temporary protection holders attained at least secondary education.⁶⁷

Mass influx of refugees also put a strain on the statistical data collection system in the MoI SR systems. In order to ensure the registration, efficient data collection and the provision of current and timely information about the movements across the Slovak-Ukrainian state border as well as about the registered temporary protection holders and at the same time enable the control/verification of persons at the border, which was needed due to the increased danger at the border (human trafficking, arms trafficking, movement of persons of interest etc.), the following measures were conducted:

- relevant information systems were modified,
- the methodology of data entry procedure as well as checking of the huge amount of data entered into the IS was changed and subsequently corrected,
- the processing of relevant statistical information according to various factors for state and international authorities, EU institutions and media has started as well as the processing of specific datasets for analytical purposes across sectors.⁶⁸

⁶³ Contingency Plan for Dealing with the Emergency Situation Related to the Mass Arrival of People from Ukraine to the SR Caused by the Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine for the period of October 2022 - March 2023, available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/27750/1> (downloaded at 25 January 2023).

⁶⁴ Information provided by BBFP PFP.

⁶⁵ Source: BBFP PFP and MoFEA SR.

⁶⁶ Source: BBFP PFP; The number of valid temporary protections and expired temporary protections as of 21 December 2022 was updated as of 31 August 2023. The reasons for the expiration included mainly leaving the country, reporting for temporary protection in another MS, duplicate data etc.

⁶⁷ Source: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/3576271/pracovnym-migrantom-z-ukrajiny-sa-na-trhu-prace-dari-lepsie-ako-odidencom/> (consulted on 05/10/2023).

⁶⁸ BBFP PFP questionnaire.

3.2. Policies and Legislation

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 related to the mass influx of refugees required an immediate response from the SR. As soon as on 26 February 2022, emergency situation in relation to the mass influx of foreigners to the territory of the Slovak Republic caused by the armed conflict in the territory of Ukraine was declared by the Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 142/2022.⁶⁹ Consequently, the SR has adopted several acts, the “Lex Ukraine”, which regulated the legal status and integration of people coming into the SR and facilitated their practical life. It comprised the following acts: Act No. 55/2022 Coll. on Certain Measures in Connection with the Situation in Ukraine (hereinafter Act No. 55/2022), Act No. 92/2022 Coll. on Certain Other Measures in Connection with the Situation in Ukraine (hereinafter Act No. 92/2022) and Act No. 199/2022 Coll. on Certain Social Measures in View of the Situation in Ukraine (hereinafter Act No. 199/2022).⁷⁰ The Acts are further explained in the respective chapters below.

During 2022 after stabilising the situation after the first wave of temporary protection holders fleeing from war, the SR was preparing for a potential second wave. This resulted in the development of a comprehensive document: *Contingency Plan for Dealing with the Emergency Situation Related to the Mass Arrival of People from Ukraine to the SR Caused by the Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine for the period of October 2022 - March 2023*, which was approved by the Government on 26 October 2022.⁷¹

The Contingency Plan works with five strategic objectives. They are:

- to ensure a safe and dignified entry and residence for Ukrainian refugees and third-country nationals into the territory of the SR in compliance with the EU’s temporary protection transposed into the national law and to inform them about these facts,
- to ensure access to material, legal, psychosocial and health support for temporary protection holders,
- to pay increased attention to and provide increased protection of the persons with specific needs and most vulnerable social groups including the victims of violence,
- to ensure the provision of services in the reception and transit facilities and emergency accommodation centres,
- to ensure the capacity for the transport of many temporary protection holders with the aim to relieve the border crossing points and transit nodes within the SR.

The phases of the Contingency Plan activation depend of the number of persons crossing the border crossing points daily, the development of situation in the war zones and weather conditions.⁷²

The Plan introduces new elements related to the transfer of some services (transit or large-capacity centres) or the creation of new infopoints at key transport nodes (Michalovce, Košice, Bratislava). These are e. g. the first contact points in immediate vicinity of the border crossing

points at which basic services are provided and triage of temporary protection holders is carried out depending on their needs and interests and/or the transit centres with emergency accommodation.

The transit centres will serve to provide comprehensive services to the temporary protection holders, who have decided to remain in the territory of the SR or need to use a service (healthcare, psychological care, application for temporary protection, hot meals, material humanitarian aid, veterinary assistance, emergency accommodation up to 24 h) before commencing further transit.

The primary task of the large-capacity reception centres will be to receive applications for temporary protection. They can provide other services to the temporary protection holders as needed.

The emergency accommodation system will continue to be managed by the District Office Crisis Management Departments under the coordination of the MoI SR Crisis Management Department. Temporary protection holders shall be placed in emergency accommodation based on the emergency service of the respective District Offices in 48-hour cycles (for 10 days at the longest). Temporary protection holder shall then pass to the mid-term accommodation and enter the integration process.⁷³

In relation to the provision of the emergency assistance for the countries most affected by the migration of people due to the war in Ukraine, the SR through the MoI SR as a managing body for the Home Affairs financial instruments programmes asked the European Commission for emergency assistance from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) in 2022. The European Commission allocated to the SR EUR 9.3 mil. from BMVI and EUR 6.5 mil. from the AMIF instrument. Since December 2022, in the second round of the AMIF emergency assistance, further financial means of EUR 8.9 mil have been allocated to the SR for the purposes of initial reception and early integration measures.^{74 75}

3.3. Measures within the Implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive

3.3.1. Temporary Protection Provision in the SR

On 26 February 2022, the SR approved the Act No. 55/2022 Coll.⁷⁶, amending also the Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum, and made it possible to declare the granting of temporary protection even without an EU Council Decision. In line with the Resolution of the Government of the SR⁷⁷ temporary protection started to be granted from 1 March 2022 in the Slovak Republic under the Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum⁷⁸.

69 Available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/19926/1> (downloaded on 22/03/2023).

70 The Acts are available at <https://www.slov-lex.sk/domov> (downloaded on 22/03/2023).

71 The Contingency Plan is available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/27750/1>, (downloaded on 16/01/2023)

72 Phase 0 /standby/: the number of persons crossing the Slovak-Ukraine state border under 5,000 a day in two consecutive days.

Phase 1: the number of persons crossing the Slovak-Ukraine state border between 5,000 and 8,000 a day in two consecutive days or based on the evaluation of other criteria.

Phase 2: the number of persons crossing the Slovak-Ukraine state border over 8,000 a day in two consecutive days or based on the evaluation of other criteria.

73 MO MoI SR questionnaire.

74 Under the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022.

75 FAD MoI SR questionnaire.

76 Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/55/20220226> (consulted on 12/01/2023)

77 No. 144/2022 of 28 February 2022, available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/19928/1> (consulted on 12/01/2023).

78 Section 29 Paragraph 2. zákona č. 480/2002 o azyle, Available at <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2002/480/20230527> (consulted on 11/01/2023)

The Government of the SR⁷⁹ subsequently modified the provision of temporary protection in accordance with the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection. As of 17 March 2022, temporary protection thus applies to the following groups of persons:

- citizens of Ukraine and their family members⁸⁰, if the family resided in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022;
- foreigners who are not citizens of Ukraine and have been granted international protection or equivalent national protection granted in the territory of Ukraine before 24 February 2022 and their family members, if the family resided in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022;
- foreigners who are not citizens of Ukraine and have permanent residence in the territory of Ukraine granted before 24 February 2022 and cannot return to their country or region of origin under safe and stable conditions.⁸¹

The duration of temporary protection granting is governed by the relevant provisions of the Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof.

According to the Act on Asylum, the granting of temporary protection did not apply to persons granted permanent residence or temporary residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic, to persons granted asylum or subsidiary protection by the Slovak Republic, or to those who were asylum seekers. These types of residence or protection status remained in force. If such Ukrainian citizens were interested in being granted temporary protection, they first had to renounce in writing the granted residence, which subsequently expired. Persons who had applied for asylum and then decided to apply for temporary protection instead, had to first withdraw their asylum application. The law also regulated the details of the initiation of the procedure for granting temporary protection, including the decision deadlines, in view of the expected strain on the MO Mol SR capacities. This regulation also included situations in which the granting of temporary protection could be refused on the grounds of the foreigner's criminal activities or their being a threat to the security of the country.⁸²

Instead of temporary protection, temporary protection holders from Ukraine were also able to apply for international protection in the Slovak Republic or for any type of residence for which they met the conditions.

79 Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic č. 185/2022 zo 16. 3. 2022 Available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/27034/1> (consulted on 11/01/2023)

80 A family member of a citizen of Ukraine shall be:

- a spouse of a citizen of Ukraine,
- a minor child of a citizen of Ukraine or a minor child of the spouse of a citizen of Ukraine,
- a parent of a minor child who is a citizen of Ukraine,
- any other another close relative of a citizen of Ukraine who was living in the same household with the citizen of Ukraine at the time of the emergence of circumstances related to the mass influx of displaced persons and was wholly or partly dependent on the citizen of Ukraine.

81 MO Mol SR questionnaire.

82 BBFP PFP and Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic questionnaires.

3.3.2. Registration and Granting of Documents to Temporary Protection Holders in the SR

Citizens of Ukraine holding a biometric passport can enter the SR under the visa-free regime and stay on the territory of the SR without a visa for a maximum of 90 days in any 180-day period. After the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, entry was granted to all persons fleeing the war. Entry to the territory of the SR was also granted, after individual assessment, to persons who did not have a valid travel document (a biometric passport or visa)⁸³.

All persons entering the territory of the SR via external border are screened and registered in the information system of the Police Force of the SR.

When registering temporary protection status, BBFP PFP logs the personal data of an applicant for temporary protection in the national information system MIGRA (and, at the same time, also in the ECU – registration of foreigners information system (IS ECU)). Registered are the personal data, the person's photograph and fingerprints in case the person cannot prove his/her identity.

Different types of procedures (application for temporary protection, proof of tolerated stay in the territory of the SR, final termination of a procedure, termination of temporary protection) are subsequently registered by the MO Mol SR. In 2022, access to the ECU IS was also granted to individual municipalities due to the need to record changes of residence address in the system.

When registering temporary protection, persons were registered in large-capacity reception centres established for this purpose, or at the designated Foreign Police departments. The number and locations of the large-capacity centres varied during 2022 depending on the numbers of persons arriving from Ukraine.⁸⁴ At the beginning of the conflict, it was necessary to close the Foreign Police departments to regular clients, as their staff had to focus on the registration of applicants for temporary protection. Gradually, specialised large-capacity centres which served only the purpose of registration of temporary protection and the provision of assistance to persons arriving from Ukraine were established. Depending on their capacity, individual Foreign Police departments were then re-opened for regular clients.

If the applicant had a travel document, identification document or some other document when registering for temporary protection (e.g. a driver's licence and a birth certificate, an invalid travel document, an ID or any other document with a photograph accompanied by a birth certificate), temporary protection was granted to them immediately. If this was not the case, their registration was decided upon within 30 days at the latest.

A document on tolerated residence issued by the SR has a form of an A4 size paper document marked "TEMPORARY PROTECTION" (initially, the documents were marked "TEMPORARY PROTECTION HOLDER").⁸⁵ Validity of this document or of residence depends on the duration of temporary protection granting as set out in the Council Decision. Each temporary protection holder can print their new document with the new validity via the Mol SR website.

83 According to Article 6 Par. 5 letter c) of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code)

84 During 2022, the large-capacity centres were active based on the current situation and need in Humenné, Michalovce (Eastern Slovakia), Nitra, Žilina, and Bratislava.

85 Act No. 480/2002 on Asylum, Section 31(10).

The residence status of other foreigners was governed by the Act No. 92/2022⁸⁶ as follows:

- Validity of temporary residence, permanent residence or tolerated residence, which would otherwise expire during the emergency situation declared in connection with the mass influx of foreigners to the territory of the SR caused by the armed conflict in Ukraine,⁸⁷ shall be extended until the expiry of two months from the revocation of the emergency situation. In connection with the extension of the residence validity, in line with the preceding sentence, the Police Department shall, with the consent of the MoI SR and at the request of the TCN, issue a residence document with the validity determined by a specific date, if this is necessary for the execution of the residence.
- A TCN who has applied to the Police Department for temporary residence or permanent residence shall be entitled to stay in the territory of the SR until the decision on their application is made.
- The MoI SR may, in justified cases, forgive a missed deadline or extend the deadline under the Act on Residence of Foreigners if the relevant period expired during the emergency situation.
- The time limits provided for in the Act on Residence of Foreigners shall not apply to decisions on certain types of temporary and permanent residence during emergency situation.⁸⁸

3.3.3. Access to Labour Market

Temporary protection holders may work without any other permits in the SR, but they cannot engage in entrepreneurship.

Act No. 92/2022 Coll. introduced a number of measures relating to access to the labour market:⁸⁹

- a measure allowing the Government of the SR, for the duration of an emergency situation, state of emergency or state of extreme emergency and for a period of two months after their revocation, to establish, by a Decree of the Government of the SR, the conditions for the employment of TCNs and the validity of the certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy corresponding to a highly qualified job, the certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy, and the employment permit;
- the projects and programmes aiming to support integration of TCNs who are asylum seekers, who have been granted asylum or who have been granted temporary protection, with the aim to facilitate their social inclusion and integration into the labour market through the provision of tools and services supporting the improvement of their employability and integration into the labour market, implemented by the COLSAF or by the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, can be considered active labour market measures;
- a transitional provision, which:
 - extends the validity of the certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy corresponding to a highly qualified job, the certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy, and the employment permit until the expiry of two months after the revocation of the emergency situation in connection with the conflict in Ukraine;
 - allows the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family to issue a certificate of the possibility

of filling a vacancy for the purpose of issuing a new document "Additional information on employment" also at the request of an employer;

- allows an employer to employ a TCN whom they started to employ for the purpose of his/her training before the entry into force of this Law Act, even after the expiry of the six week period and until the end of the procedure for granting a temporary residence for the purpose of employment;
- allows an employer to employ a TCN in the same job even during the procedure for the renewal of temporary residence for the purpose of employment during the emergency situation in connection with the conflict in Ukraine and for a period of two months after its revocation;
- asylum seekers who are citizens of Ukraine or family members of citizens of Ukraine are allowed to take up employment immediately after they apply for asylum⁹⁰.

The following measures have been adopted within the scope of amendments to some other acts:

- temporary protection holders could replace the Criminal record certificate required for the exercise of public service and teaching professions with a solemn declaration. This applies to a natural person who is a citizen of Ukraine or a family member of a citizen of Ukraine, who is a temporary protection holder and who, for objective reasons, is unable to prove his or her good repute as stipulated by the original requirement laid down in the relevant law act. However, as concerns pedagogical staff and professionals in education, an obligation for the employer to request a psychological assessment from such employees has been added;
- the possibility of a temporary professional stint has been extended to apply to all health professionals and the condition under which such stint could only be executed with providers of inpatient healthcare has been removed. For the duration of the emergency situation, it has been made possible for the decision on recognition of the evidence of formal qualification to be replaced by a solemn declaration of the medical profession performance in another Member State, accompanied by the photocopies of the diplomas;
- citizens of Ukraine who were self-employed in the SR had their compulsory sickness and pension insurance suspended if they left for Ukraine due to their military duty. At the same time, however, they were given the opportunity to retrospectively top up their pension insurance premiums.⁹¹

In 2022, the SR prepared the 12th Revision of the Human Resources Operational Programme with one new priority axis included: CARE ESF/ERDF. The activities included in this specific objective responded to developments in selected areas of social and economic life resulting from the war in Ukraine. The planned activities and their scope are based on the actual needs of the temporary protection holders in real time. Following activities will be supported in the area of labour market integration: introduction of instruments for better integration of the temporary protection holders into the labour market, support for capacities providing support to persons from Ukraine in the area of their entry and integration in the Slovak Republic, building administrative capacities in charge of the organisation of reception and integration activities at the national level. Assistance and support were provided to refugees from Ukraine throughout the year 2022. The publication of the first calls under the reviewed CARE axis is planned for 2023.

⁸⁶ The amendment was incorporated in the Act No. 404/2011 on Residence of Foreigners, available at <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/92/20220330> (consulted on 11/01/2023)

⁸⁷ Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic č. 142/2022 z 26.2.2022, Available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolucia/19926/1> (consulted on 11/01/2023).

⁸⁸ BBFP PFP questionnaire.

⁸⁹ Article VIII amended the Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended.

⁹⁰ In other cases, asylum seekers can only access the labour market 9 or 6 months respectively (the time limit was shortened by the amendment to the Act on Asylum effective as of 1 June 2022) after filing their asylum application.

⁹¹ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

The continuity of support for TCNs and migrants from Ukraine will be ensured in the next programming period (2021–2027) through the Policy Objective 4 in OP Slovakia, under which activities for social inclusion of migrants, their access to language education, acquisition of skills and competences, social sensitization and sensitization of perception of migration and migrants within the majority population will be supported under the specific objective.⁹²

The SR represented by the MoLSAF SR has started implementing the “Helping temporary protection holders – counselling” and “Helping temporary protection holders” national projects since May 2022. In addition to providing basic information relevant for finding a job, the counselling services provide individual support to temporary protection holders when they contact potential employers, authorities or other organisations. Moreover, they are also provided support in drafting basic documents necessary for the job search (CV, motivation letter) in Slovak language. The “Helping the holders of temporary protection” project will be implemented by 31 December 2023 through four main measures:

- education (including the provision of financial contributions for training courses);
- mobility support (including the provision of financial contributions for partial reimbursement of travel costs);
- voluntary activities (including the provision of financial contributions for the execution of activation activities in the form of voluntary service);
- placement with an employer (including the provision of financial contributions for mentored training both for the employer and for the temporary protection holder, e.g. MH SR⁹³).

3.3.4. Access to Accommodation

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the SR has provided accommodation for persons fleeing Ukraine in all its forms, from short-term accommodation (overnight stays) in tent camps located near the border or in registration centres, through mid-term accommodation in asylum centres, state-owned accommodation facilities, children and family centres (CFCs), accommodation facilities operated by commercial businesses (individual persons and legal entities doing business under a specific regulation) to longer-term accommodation in privately owned accommodation facilities.

In case persons fleeing the conflict in Ukraine decided to stay in the territory of the SR, they were offered emergency accommodation. Relevant district authorities issued orders for the emergency accommodation facilities to be established, e.g. in gymnasiums or community centres, with a capacity of at least 50 beds per district. The persons fleeing the war were allowed to stay in those accommodation facilities for a maximum of 10 days. During this period, the locally competent OLSAF contacted them and presented the possibilities offered by the Slovak social welfare system. They could apply for temporary protection, and if they chose not to apply for this in one of the large-capacity centres, they were provided food and healthcare, social and humanitarian assistance.

The MoI SR also made its own accommodation capacities available outside of the above-mentioned reservation system. These included its own facilities in Košice and Bratislava, asylum facilities (1 reception centre, 2 accommodation centres, 1 humanitarian centre) and the MO Mol

SR integration centre. A humanitarian centre with a capacity of up to 1,000 persons fleeing the war in Ukraine was also established in 2022 in Gabčíkovo. The MoI SR also provided for reopening and management of the integration centre in Zvolen with the overall capacity of 25 persons max. intended for vulnerable persons, to whom temporary protection was granted and for accommodating foreigners with unauthorized status, the “Western border”.

After they were granted temporary protection, the staff of District Offices helped them look for accommodation via the dedicated reservation system (BOOKIO – a supplementary tool for finding accommodation among the providers of accommodation; the MoT SR profiled it and opened access to all the District Offices in the SR) in the homes of Slovak citizens or in guest-houses, hotels, hostels, etc., who voluntarily offered accommodation capacities.

Resolutions of the Government⁹⁴ of the SR introduced the reimbursement of the allowance for the accommodation for temporary protection holders directly to the accommodation providers, who are business entities. A part of the costs related to the accommodation of temporary protection holders was thus compensated while it was possible to make the accommodation provided paid.

Regulation of the Government⁹⁵ introduced the allowance for accommodating a temporary protection holder for both natural and legal persons, who are not business entities. The amount of allowance, as well as the conditions for payment and the range of eligible claimants were changed several times during 2022, either by legislation amendments or by government regulations. Under the amendment to the Act on Asylum effective as of 7 June 2022 and under the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 218/2022 of 16 June 2022, flats and family houses owners, the “short-term accommodation facilities”, municipalities and higher territorial units (regions) are entitled to apply for this accommodation allowance. The allowance is not primarily granted to temporary protection holders, but directly to natural and legal persons providing accommodation to them.

The only case when a temporary protection holder can be provided with the means to obtain accommodation comparable to that in a humanitarian centre is when it is not possible to place them in a humanitarian centre or in another asylum facility, and no allowance is provided to natural or legal persons providing accommodation to them.⁹⁶

In the case temporary protection holders are accommodated in asylum facilities operated by the MoI SR, they are provided with meals, hygiene items (and initially also pocket money)⁹⁷ similarly to asylum seekers.⁹⁸

⁹² MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

⁹³ Available at: <https://www.health.gov.sk/?UA-uznavanie-vzdelania> (consulted on 04/12/2023)

⁹⁴ Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 100/2022 Coll. and subsequently 219/2022 Coll. and 321/2022 Coll. as amended by the Regulation No. 415/2022 Coll.

⁹⁵ Regulation of the Government No. 99/2022 of 30 March 2022.

⁹⁶ Information from the MO Mol SR.

⁹⁷ In line with the amendment to the Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended, effective as of 7 June 2022, a foreigner applying for temporary protection or a temporary protection holder is not entitled for the pocket money, even if he/she is a member of a household receiving material need benefits or similar financial assistance. Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

⁹⁸ MoT SR and MO Mol SR questionnaires.

3.3.5. Access to Medical Care Including in Relation to Mental Health

Act No. 92/2022 has also introduced some relevant measures pertaining to healthcare provision to temporary protection holders as follows:

- A natural person who is not publicly insured, who resides in the territory of Ukraine and enters the territory of the Slovak Republic due to the armed conflict in the territory of Ukraine, is entitled to reimbursement of emergency healthcare provided until the day on which he/she applies for asylum, subsidiary protection or temporary protection, but no longer than 30 days from the date of their entry into the territory of the SR.
- A foreigner who is not publicly insured, who is not insured in another Member State and who is also a foreigner who is a temporary protection holder in the SR is entitled to reimbursement of emergency care. The Ministry of Health of the SR may determine the scope of medical procedures reimbursed beyond emergency care.⁹⁹

If the temporary protection holder is employed and earns at least a minimal monthly salary, they are publicly insured. Otherwise, they are entitled to medical care as per above.

The National Mental Health Helpline 0800 193 193, operated by the Ministry of Health of the SR, started to provide services in the Ukrainian language after the outbreak of the conflict, which included:

- psychological counselling, crisis intervention and a safe space to talk about insecurity, fears or mental health issues in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current military conflict;
- support for health professionals and volunteers who are experiencing excessive stress and are at increased risk of developing stress-related psychological disorders;
- counselling on the management of acute stress reactions or symptoms of developing post-traumatic stress reactions to extremely stressful events (e.g. the war conflict in Ukraine).¹⁰⁰

Support of mental health is also addressed in the MoLSAF SR's "Prevention of the emergence of crisis situations during emergencies relating to the war in Ukraine" project, which had started to be implemented in relation to the conflict in Ukraine in 2022. It includes the provision of the following:

- psychological support,
- support provided by a social worker,
- support provided by a supervisor,
- support provided by a special educator,
- support provided by a mediator,
- lectures, workshops and discussions on topics related to situations caused by the conflict in Ukraine.

Measures are implemented in the form of visits and communication of the project team with the staff at the site of the crisis situation and consultations with relevant experts.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Information from MH SR available at: <https://www.health.gov.sk/?pomoc-ukrajine> (consulted on 04/12/2023)

¹⁰⁰ Information from the MH SR, available at: <https://www.health.gov.sk/?Linka-PDZ> (consulted on 04/12/2023).

¹⁰¹ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

3.3.6. Access to Assistance in Terms of Social Welfare

People fleeing the war in Ukraine who have applied for or who have been granted temporary protection have been granted access to material need assistance¹⁰² under the same conditions as the Slovak nationals. Material need assistance consists of material need benefits and of the following allowances:

- Material need benefits:
 - EUR 68.80 per month for an individual;
 - EUR 130.90 per month for an individual with a child or up to four children;
 - EUR 119.60 per month for a couple without children;
 - EUR 179 per month for a couple with a child or up to four children;
 - EUR 191.20 per month for a single person with more than four children;
 - EUR 241.30 per month for a couple with more than four children.
- Protection allowance:
 - EUR 70.40 per month if it concerns a natural person who, for objective reasons (in particular age and health), is unable to secure or increase their income through their own work: they have reached the age required to qualify for an old-age pension; they are disabled due to a decrease in their ability to engage in gainful activity exceeding 70%; they are a single parent who cares for a child of up to 31 weeks of age personally, fully and properly; they care for a disabled person who is dependent on their care; they participate in resocialisation programmes in a residential resocialisation centre, within the scope of which they are unable to secure income through their own work; they are recipients of an early old-age pension;
 - EUR 38.70 per month if it concerns a member of the household who is a pregnant woman from the beginning of the eighth week before the expected date of childbirth, as determined by a medical doctor, or a natural person with adverse health conditions who is temporarily unable to work due to illness or accident or who is in quarantine for more than 30 days;
 - EUR 15.10 per month if it concerns a member of the household who is a pregnant woman from the beginning of the fourth month of pregnancy, or a parent of a child who personally, fully and properly cares for the child of up to one year of age.
- Dependent child allowance:
 - EUR 19.30 per month

In order to promote the possible integration of children from Ukraine, the conditions for the provision of certain subsidies from the MoLSAF SR have been modified so that they can also be provided to children from Ukraine who have been integrated into schools in the SR. In this context, a subsidy of EUR 1.30 per day for the support of child's dietary habits and a subsidy of no more than EUR 33.20 in the relevant financial year for the support of the child's education in the school year 2022/2023 may also be provided to a child attending a kindergarten or primary school.^{103, 104}

¹⁰² According to the Act No. 417/2013 Coll. on Assistance in Material Need and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended.

¹⁰³ The amounts are stated as of March 2022.

¹⁰⁴ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

At the same time, the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 93/2022 Coll. on Certain Measures in Social Affairs, Family and Employment Services in Times of Emergency Situation, State of Emergency or State of Extreme Emergency Declared due to the Mass Influx of Foreigners into the Territory of the SR Caused by the Armed Conflict in the Territory of Ukraine:

- modifies the conditions pertaining to the provision material need assistance - it has been established that a natural person who has been appointed by a court decision as a guardian of a minor child who has applied for temporary protection or is a person with special protection¹⁰⁵ may be considered a parent of that child. On the grounds of the above mentioned, this child can be considered for the purposes of material need assistance together with his or her court-appointed guardian;
- modifies the conditions pertaining to the provision of material need assistance in connection with the commencement and termination of financial assistance provision by international organisations (UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, ICRC), which was provided to temporary protection holders since 1 May 2022 until 15 September 2022, in order to prevent the duplication of support for the same households from the state budget and from the funds of international organisations. A household receiving assistance from the international organisations was not entitled to material need assistance, as its basic living conditions had been secured at the time from the international assistance provided.¹⁰⁶

In compliance with the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 93/2022, the SR provided the following state social benefits to the persons with special protection:

- childcare allowance: by the provision of this allowance, the State contributes to the parent to cover elevated costs of formal childcare, if the applicant is engaged in gainful employment. The allowance is provided up to three years of age or up to six years of age if the child has long-term adverse health condition;
- allowances by which the state supports foster care for the child (one-time allowance to a child when placed in foster care, repeated allowance to a child, repeated allowance to a foster parent).

The citizens of Ukraine, who are temporary protection holders, were not entitled to other state social benefits in the SR, e. g. childbirth benefit, parental allowance, child benefit etc. The citizens of Ukraine, who were holders of permanent or temporary residence in the territory of the SR and met the conditions laid down by the relevant legislation, could be entitled to all the state social benefits to which the citizens of the SR are entitled.¹⁰⁷

Act No. 92/2022 also made it possible for the people coming from Ukraine to receive social services. Specifically:

- the pool of social services recipients was temporarily modified and included the asylum seekers, subsidiary protection and temporary protection applicants;
- the conditions for the provision of selected types and forms of social services were modified;

¹⁰⁵ Pursuant to the Government Regulation, a person with special protection is defined as a natural person:

a) who is granted temporary protection in relation to the crisis situation,

b) who, in relation to the crisis situation, is an asylum seeker or applicant for temporary protection and the provision of temporary protection under the letter a) expired due to the submission of asylum or subsidiary protection application,

c) who obtained temporary residence and the provision of temporary protection under the letter a) to whom expired due to this reason.

¹⁰⁶ MoLSAF questionnaire.

¹⁰⁷ MoLSAF questionnaire.

- the provision of temporary housing was enabled also to the persons coming from Ukraine; in the facilities, which are subject to dependency;
- the conditions for carrying out evaluation activity for the purpose of proceedings on the dependence of natural persons coming from Ukraine on social services and the method of proving their income amount for the purpose of paying for social services were simplified;
- it was made possible to prolong or waive the deadlines in the administrative procedures led by the respective self-government bodies in social services and modify their territorial jurisdiction in the procedure;
- the qualification requirements for the work of a carer were modified as well as the ways to prove integrity.¹⁰⁸

By the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 326/2022 Coll..¹⁰⁹ the provision of subsidies to pay for the recipients of social services from Ukraine was modified (new purpose of subsidy provision to support humanitarian aid under Section 9 Paragraph 3 of the Act on Subsidies), i.e. EUR 508 for a recipient with special protection in a residential facility and EUR 305 in an outpatient facility, for the period from 1 March to 31 December 2022.¹¹⁰

The Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 416/2022 Coll..¹¹¹ made it possible to repeatedly grant subsidies to support humanitarian aid to a person with special protection and with serious impairment. It is a repeated monthly donation of either EUR 300 a month or EUR 508 a month, depending on the degree of serious impairment.¹¹²

By Act No. 199/2022 it was introduced that aids and lifting devices no longer used by individuals with serious physical impairment and returned to the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family can be given to the persons with special protection. In this way, temporary protection holders with disabilities are supported.¹¹³

In 2022, the MoLSAF prepared the 12th Revision of the Human Resources Operational Programme with one new priority axis included: CARE ESF/ERDF. The activities included in this specific objective responded to developments in selected areas of social and economic life caused by the war in Ukraine. The support in social area was implemented through the activities focusing on:

- the provision of comprehensive care and improving the availability of foster care facilities to the children from Ukraine,
- preventing the failure of families of temporary protection holders to care for their children and thus preventing the emergence, deepening and recurrence of child crisis situations,
- smooth integration of temporary protection holders into the host society including the persons with serious impairment.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ MoLSAF questionnaire.

¹⁰⁹ Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 326/2022 Coll. changing and amending the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 131/2022 Coll. in relation to the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 131/2022 Coll. on Certain Measures related to Subsidies within the Competence of the MoLSAF SR in Times of Emergency Situation, State of Emergency or State of Extreme Emergency Declared due to the Mass Influx of Foreigners into the Territory of the SR Caused by the Armed Conflict in the Territory of Ukraine

¹¹⁰ Dotazník MPSVR SR.

¹¹¹ Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 416/2022 Coll. changing and amending the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 131/2022 Coll. on Certain Measures related to Subsidies within the Competence of the MoLSAF SR in Times of Emergency Situation, State of Emergency or State of Extreme Emergency Declared due to the Mass Influx of Foreigners into the Territory of the SR Caused by the Armed Conflict in the Territory of Ukraine, as amended.

¹¹² MoLSAF questionnaire.

¹¹³ MoLSAF questionnaire.

¹¹⁴ MoLSAF questionnaire.

3.3.7. Access to Education

After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, mainly mothers with children started to leave the country, which brought about many challenges across educational institutions of all levels in the SR. More than one third temporary protection applications in the SR were submitted on behalf of minors (see Table 23).

After coming to the SR, the pre-schoolers and pupils of compulsory school age were included in kindergartens and elementary schools based on a request from a legal representative, if they accompanied the child. In order to remove language barriers, the elementary and secondary schools organised basic and intermediate state language courses.¹¹⁵ These courses were organisationally and financially supported by the respective Regional Education Administration Authority in cooperation with the territorial self-government bodies. If needed, intervention teams were available for schools. They included psychologists and special needs educators experienced in crisis intervention aiming to help both teachers and children with socialisation and adaptation activities for children or aid children scarred by the war directly.

As for education at secondary school or higher-education institution, the recognition of qualifications was conducted on an individual basis, either by the level of education obtained or by the aim of the recognition of qualifications, i. e. the continuation of studies at secondary school or higher-education institution, the performance of regulated professions/recognition of a degree.

Admission to study at a Slovak university was fully within the discretion of the university. By amending the Act on Higher Education Institutions¹¹⁶, effective from 25 April 2022, it was made possible to admit to higher education also the persons, who are not able to prove their previous studies completed at a secondary school due to the current situation in Ukraine. Recognition of completed education is carried out through legal processes and taking into consideration the purpose of recognition and individual situation of the applicant. For those who have their education certificates, are holders of temporary protection and could not submit the originals of their education certificates, several mechanisms were put in place allowing for the recognition of and access to higher or secondary education. At the end of the day, recognition of subjects taken during previous higher education was fully within the discretion of the university.¹¹⁷

Within the financial support for Ukrainian students, the legislative changes to the Act No. 396/2012 Coll. on the Education Support Fund¹¹⁸ ensured that also citizens outside of the SR or EU MS will be eligible for a loan. At the same time, a mechanism is introduced for reducing the principal amount owed if a person works in the SR at a position for which higher education is required.¹¹⁹

On kindergarten level, the Act No. 199/2022 created legal the creation of and the need to develop a new form of childcare: the children groups within the service to support the reconciliation of family and working life. On 11 June 2022, the Regulation of the Government of the SR¹²⁰,

which contains a special regulation of the conditions and provision of services to support the reconciliation of family and working life by caring for children in children groups during this crisis situation, came into effect. The legislative framework of the creation of such form of care applies to all the parents, who are interested in placing their child into such children group, no matter the nationality. Care in children groups is a new form of care provided to the children aged 0 to 5 (from birth up to the compulsory preschool education). Before introducing this form of care for age group specified in this way, there was no such option.¹²¹

By the Resolution of the Government of the SR,¹²² legal conditions were created in which it is possible to temporarily, during the crisis situation, increase the capacity of existing childcare facilities for the children up to three years of age by max. 10% as compared with the regulation stemming from the Act on Social Services, not only due to the need to provide care to the children coming from Ukraine, but also to provide care to all other children due to the limited capacity reasons.¹²³

As for the education for adults or post gradual study within the aid for Ukraine, the Office of the Government of the SR¹²⁴ launched a call for universities and research institutions for EUR 15 million. The aim of the call is to support the researchers threatened by the military conflict in Ukraine. Apart from the researchers from Ukraine it can to a lesser extent concern also the researchers from Russia, Belarus and Moldova.¹²⁵ The financial support of a maximum of EUR 3,670 can be applied for by a university or a research institution, which employed or will employ a researcher as a result of the situation in Ukraine. The funding was available for the researchers in various stages of their career:

- PhD students and candidates,
- post-doctoral research fellows,
- researchers,
- leading researchers including the university teachers.

The call was open from 19 May 2022 to the end of 2022.¹²⁶

Temporary protection holders were granted equal access to the educational system for adults than the citizens of the SR. In compliance with the existing Act on Lifelong Learning¹²⁷, it is possible to take the examination to verify professional competence after having first presented the officially certified copy of completion certificate of an accredited educational programme leading to a partial or full qualification whose verification the applicant is requesting, or an employer's confirmation of at least five years of experience in the given field. In exceptional cases such as the arrival of refugees without documents, a declaration on honour about their work experience is accepted. However, the examinations are conducted in the national language.¹²⁸

to the Mass Influx of Foreigners into the Territory of the SR Caused by the Armed Conflict in the Territory of Ukraine as amended by the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 130/2022 Coll.

121 MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

122 Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 210/2022 Coll. supplementing the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 109/2022 Coll. on Certain Measures related to Social Services in Times of Emergency Situation, State of Emergency or State of Extreme Emergency Declared due to the Mass Influx of Foreigners into the Territory of the SR Caused by the Armed Conflict in the Territory of Ukraine.

123 MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

124 as the implementor of the Component 9 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of Slovakia

125 The call was published at: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/vyzva-na-podporu-vyskumnikov-ohrozenych-konfliktom-na-ukrajine/>

126 Source: <https://vedanadosah.cvtisr.sk/podujatie/podpora-vyskumnikov-ohrozenych-konfliktom-na-ukrajine/> (downloaded on 23/03/2023).

127 Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning and on changes and amendments to some acts, Section 17 Paragraph 5 Letter b

128 Source: MoESRaS SR questionnaire.

115 According to Section 146 Paragraph 3 of the School Act.

116 Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on changes and amendments to some acts, Section 56

117 Source: MoESRS SR questionnaire and the related ad-hoc question submitted within the EMN activity.

118 The amendment of the Act effective from 1 June 2022, Sections 10 and 13

119 MoESRaS SR questionnaire.

120 Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 210/2022 Coll. supplementing the Regulation of the Government of the SR No. 109/2022 Coll. on Certain Measures related to Social Services in Times of Emergency Situation, State of Emergency or State of Extreme Emergency Declared due

3.3.8. Family Reunification

Temporary protection holder cannot be a sponsor of residence in the case of applying for family reunification in compliance with the Directive on the Right to Family Reunification. However, in this case the family member can apply for temporary protection in compliance with the Resolution of Government 185/2022 (part B1 – if the family was present and living in Ukraine before 24 February 2022): 1. the spouse of a Ukrainian citizen, 2. the minor child of a Ukrainian citizen or the minor child of a spouse of a Ukrainian citizen, 3. the parent of a minor who is a Ukrainian citizen, 4. another close relative of a Ukrainian citizen, who had been living in the same household at the time of the circumstances related to the mass influx of the displaced persons and was fully or partially dependent on them. In the case of a TCN with valid residence in the territory of the SR, their family member can apply for family reunification under the above Directive.¹²⁹

3.3.9. Unaccompanied Minors

After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, also the unaccompanied minors started to leave the country. Based on the COLSAF statistical data, the overall number of UAMs in facilities has increased in 2022, while the UAMs from Ukraine accounted for the largest proportion. On the other hand, 75% of all UAMs subsequently left the CFC, as they were placed in the custody of legal representatives (parents or other close persons of the unaccompanied minors) (see Table 17).

Unaccompanied minors from Ukraine, who cross the border without an adult parent or other adult person, who is a relative of the child or a person close to the child, are reported to the respective OLSAF (as a socio-legal protection of children and social guardianship body) by the Police of the SR. The OLSAF starts to address the situation of the child operatively and ensures the provision of care in the CFC. Decision on placing the child into the CFC is taken by the court.¹³⁰

The Act No. 199/2022 Coll. modified the creation of the conditions for operative adoption of measures in social and legal protection of children and social guardianship. The conditions of Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family working to fund the care for UAMs from Ukraine in a flexible and accurate manner changed also in the non-state Children and Family Centres (in the accredited entities). The conditions were created to address the elevated energy costs for the accredited entities and self-government Children and Family Centres.¹³¹

After the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, The Memorandum of Cooperation ("Letter of Exchange") between the MoLSAF SR and UNICEF was signed in May 2022 and declared the areas of cooperation of these entities. It concerns the specific material aid by UNICEF activities (not direct financial aid, which would be provided directly to the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Children and Family Centres or the Ministry), which will assist in working with rights and needs of the children from Ukraine (children, who live in the territory of the SR with their own parent/parents/other legal representatives appointed by the Ukrainian authorities, UAMs from Ukraine and the "non-separated" children, whose legal representative is not present in the territory of the SR, but to whom the Slovak courts appointed other close person as guardian). The cooperation according to the letter of exchange includes:

- search for, recruitment, training of and support of the "temporary" families for UAMs,
- immediate and long-term psychological support for the Ukrainian families with children,
- personnel capacity building: communication techniques with refugee children, basic psychological and social support, preparing relevant instructions/standards in order to set a unified approach,
- the creation of informational materials for children, women/families about social and legal protection of children and social guardianship and child rights,
- support for interpreting and costs for interpreting in order to improve the availability of services in the CFCs for the UAMs,
- the provision of ICT to support inclusion in the CFCs (to support the contact of Ukrainian children with family in Ukraine).¹³²

3.3.10. Returns

If a Ukrainian citizen decided to return to Ukraine, they were able to do so. From the perspective of the Slovak legislation, travelling (to any state including Ukraine) will not cause the termination of the temporary protection obtained in the SR. However, if the citizen does not plan to return to the SR, it is needed to renounce the temporary protection in writing.¹³³

As for the AVR, the target group of assisted voluntary returns was extended by the persons coming from Ukraine and present in the territory of the SR legally (as the legality of residence meant that the conditions for the eligibility to assisted voluntary return were not met previously). In 2022, 9 returns were conducted of TCNs, who were fleeing the war in Ukraine and went back from the SR to their country of origin.¹³⁴

3.3.11. The Provision of Information by State Institutions

Many state institutions as well as cities and municipalities started to provide information for temporary protection holders from Ukraine on their websites from the very first days of the conflict. The ua.gov.sk, the SR public administration portal was launched. It contains the most comprehensive information in Ukrainian, Slovak, and English. The website provides information covering various life situations connected to the arrival of temporary protection holders into the SR: entry into the country, instructions on how to register for temporary protection, searching for accommodation and work, information on social security, medical care, education as well as practical information on transportation within the SR, driving licences, banks etc.

The following institutions have also started to provide information for the temporary protection holders from Ukraine concerning all the practical aspects within their responsibilities connected to the arrival of temporary protection holders into the SR: [MoI SR](#) (registration of temporary protection, residence etc.), [MoLSAF SR](#) (provision of social support, support to persons with health impairment, searching for work etc.), [MoESRS SR](#) (methodical guidelines, measures, information on funding, enrolling into schools), [MT SR](#) (accommodation provision/offer), [MH SR](#) (provision of healthcare), [MoFEA SR](#) (travel recommendations, situation in Ukraine, positions of the SR).

¹²⁹ Source: BBFP PFP.

¹³⁰ Source: <https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/buxus/docs/KGR/SJ-Mbs.pdf> (downloaded on 23/03/2023).

¹³¹ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹³² MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹³³ IOM and BBFP PFP questionnaires.

¹³⁴ IOM and BBFP PFP questionnaires.

At the beginning of the war, the SR published [a leaflet](#), which was distributed at border crossing points, in large-capacity centres, and accommodation facilities. It continued basic information on registering temporary protection, accommodation, transport, educational system etc.

The ministries have also launched several information hotlines providing counselling also in the Ukrainian language.

The information was offered also by many non-governmental and international organisations.

3.4. Measures Taken Outside of the Temporary Protection Directive Implementation

After the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, the SR participated in repatriation of nationals of states other than Ukraine, who lived in Ukraine and after the outbreak of the war fled to Slovakia. During the war, the borders of the SR from Ukraine were crossed by persons from 150 different countries. Apart from the citizens of Ukraine and the EU, more than five hundred persons were registered in the case of the citizens of Nigeria, Morocco, India, Russia, USA, and China. In 2022, 15 repatriation flights were organized with a total of 2,380 passengers to India, Libya, Morocco, China, and Egypt. The original plan to organize repatriation flights into several other countries was prevented by the spontaneous transfer of their citizens into their home country or elsewhere outside of the SR. The repatriation was conducted in cooperation with the countries of origin including the countries with insufficient history of cooperation in readmission. Identification of citizens of these countries was a part of the cooperation.¹³⁵

In relation to the war in Ukraine, many measures connected to combatting human trafficking had to be adopted:

- the intensity of monitoring, checking and searching for potential victims of human trafficking, especially at border crossing points with Ukraine and large-capacity reception centres was intensified;
- the Guideline of the BBFP PFP Director for Regional PF Directorates to intensify monitoring and screening of suspicions of human trafficking in relation to the influx of refugees from Ukraine was issued;
- the Informational leaflet on Human Trafficking Risks was created in six languages and distributed to border crossing points in the SR and Foreign Police departments;
- cooperation with foreign partner police units in order to exchange operational information related to screening of suspicious activities which might be related to potential human trafficking in relation to the military conflict in Ukraine intensified;
- cooperation with Airbnb and Bookio to monitor suspicious activities during accommodating people from Ukraine was established.¹³⁶

More information is available in Chapter 11.

¹³⁵ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

¹³⁶ BBFP PFP questionnaire.

3.5. Cooperation with International and Non-Governmental Organisations

After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the non-governmental sector and international organisations have become massively involved in the efforts to help temporary protection holders. In the first days of the war, these were rather individual activities of individual actors, which later become official in the form of signed cooperation agreements or joint plans.

After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) established their offices in Slovakia. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has also strengthened their presence in Slovakia. All of these have started to provide various forms of assistance to the people fleeing Ukraine. International Organization for Migration (IOM), which had been present in the SR even before the conflict (since 1996) have extended their activities in direct humanitarian assistance from the very first days of the war. They have built on the existing services of the Migration Information Centre – provision of assistance and counselling to foreigners (see Chapter 7) as well as activities related to assisted voluntary returns and human trafficking prevention. The international organisations have been coordinating their activities in regular working groups and interinstitutional meetings.

The Regional Action Plan to Respond to the Mass Influx of Refugees from Ukraine, which was jointly presented on 11 May 2022 by UNHCR and MoI SR was one example of interagency cooperation of state authorities, non-governmental and international organisations in this area. 21 domestic and foreign institutions participated in its creation. It is an update to the Regional Response Plan, which was published by the UNHCR on 1 March 2022. The Plan aims to support all the states neighbouring with Ukraine including the SR in receiving refugees from Ukraine so that they have access to safety and international protection. The Plan also serves to ensure effective coordination of partners regionally and in individual countries. The attention is given to social cohesion, inclusion, and peace cohabitation. The Plan covers all the basic needs – material support, health, education, making a living, inclusion, logistics, and telecommunication, including the allocated budget. A similar plan was developed for 2023.

Assistance centres were established in several Slovak cities or extended their existing activities related in helping foreigners on the basis of cooperation among self-governments, non-governmental, and international organisations. The centres offer varying scope of services for temporary protection holders from Ukraine: option to arrange for documents, legal and work counselling, provision of practical information, assistance with accommodation or securing psychological and social counselling. Examples include the Assistance Centre in Bratislava¹³⁷, COMIN point of contact for foreigners in Nitra¹³⁸, integration centres in Košice and Michalovce, Camp Žilina alongside the Spilka Assistance Centre in Žilina or the BUBO travel agency.

The Who will Help Ukraine (Kto pomôže Ukrajne) was another example of cooperation of many actors: state, non-governmental sector, private companies as well as individuals. The initiative was established in the very first weeks after the outbreak of the war and covers various

¹³⁷ <https://bratislava.sk/bratislava-pre-ukrajinu/asistencne-centrum-bottova> (consulted on 24/03/2023)

¹³⁸ <https://www.ukrajina.comin.sk/> (consulted on 24/3/2023) COMIN has worked in counselling for foreigners even before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

forms of assistance for the citizens of Ukraine fleeing from war. The platform is a network of individuals and organisations helping Ukrainian citizens. It connects them directly to the people in need. Everyone interested was able to offer help via this platform depending on their possibilities: accommodation, transport, material, psychological or social support as well as financial contribution. In this way, it collected over EUR 2 millions, which were distributed through grants to various organisations helping the temporary protection holders, or used for volunteers, material aid, the operation of a call centre, etc.¹³⁹

The role of non-governmental organisations in providing various kinds of assistance and services have been of key importance since the very first days of the war. On 8 November 2022, the Memorandum of Cooperation between the MoI of the Slovak Republic and non-profit organisations in dealing with the emergency situation in Ukraine was signed. It clearly defines individual MoI SR and NGOs competences. Those concern mainly the coordination and provision of humanitarian aid, recruitment, training and coordination of volunteers, material and technical assistance from the Ministry or exchanging information about individual activities and plans. Extending the agreement to other emergencies or crisis situations, during which these non-governmental organizations will be able to provide similar type of cooperation and coordination as in dealing with the situation related to the war in Ukraine, was an important moment.¹⁴⁰

Mainly the organisations, which provided various types of assistance or support to foreigners in the SR or focused on developing development projects abroad and providing humanitarian assistance in the past, joined the efforts to help the temporary protection holders from Ukraine. They were mainly the non-profit organizations Human Rights League, Mareena, Slovak Humanitarian Council, People in Need, Slovak Catholic Charity, ADRA, Slovak Red Cross, Milan Šimečka Foundation, CVEK etc.

Organizations, which were rather active in charity area before the war, joined the support efforts, too: Slovak Scouting, Malteser Aid Slovakia etc., church organisations or organisations supporting mental health, such as IPčko.

These organisations provided information to temporary protection holders on their websites, via phone lines and online consultations, but also by offering assistance at border crossing points, in assistance centres, through publishing leaflets, brochures, providing interpreting, but also distributing material assistance, helping with accommodation search, provision of medical care including mental health care etc.

CVEK in cooperation with the Milan Šimečka Foundation, Human Rights League and the People in Need and Mareena organisations developed the Integrácia ľudí z Ukrajiny – návrhy riešení (Integration of People from Ukraine – Proposed Solutions), in which they point the attention to the fact that apart from the provision of humanitarian assistance it is also necessary to focus on the creation of integration options. The aim of the document is to provide basic framework, which identifies main obstacles and proposes basic measures. The authors point to the fact that current situation provides a unique chance to set up a functional integration system also for wider foreigner groups and to improve the services for all the citizens.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ <https://ktopomozeukrajine.sk/> (consulted on 24/03/2023)

¹⁴⁰ Available at <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=minister-vnutra-podpisal-memorandum-o-spolupraci-s-neziskovymi-organizaciami-pri-rieseni-mimoriadnej-situacie-v-suvvislosti-so-situaciou-na-ukrajine> (downloaded on 26/01/2023).

¹⁴¹ Available at <http://cvek.sk/integracia-ludi-z-ukrajiny-navrhy-rieseni/> (downloaded on 24/03/2023).



Legal Migration

The number of foreigners in Slovakia has been continuously growing in recent years, while the year 2022 saw an increase by 2% caused mainly by the forced displacement due to the war in Ukraine. EU citizens comprised 5.13% of Slovak population in 2022, while in 2021 the number was 3.08%. Despite the increase, the ratio of foreigners from the EU and non-EU countries in Slovakia has been among the lowest in the EU for a long time. Before the war in Ukraine, about 170,000 foreigners lived in Slovakia. After the war, there was about 279,000 of them, while about 80% were from non-EU countries. Before the war, Ukrainians were the largest foreigner community – they comprised one-third (56,480 persons) of all the foreigners in Slovakia. Towards the end of 2022, their number tripled to 156,881 and they thus comprised more than a half (56%) of all the foreigners in Slovakia. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the SR registered a sharp increase in the number of persons granted temporary protection, which was also reflected in the increased numbers of employed Ukrainian nationals with this status. The citizens of Ukraine were the most numerous group of employed foreigners and this has not changed as compared with the situation before the war.

Apart from the nationals of Ukraine (156,881), the following were among the most numerous groups of nationals present in the SR: Serbian (18,215), Vietnamese (8,039), Russian (7,436) Northern Macedonian (2,842). Most third-country nationals (over two-thirds) lived in the Bratislava region in 2022.

The validity of all the residence permits, work permits, and confirmations of the possibility to fill a vacancy was prolonged also in 2022 – until the termination of the emergency situation, which

had been declared in the SR in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

In 2022, several administrative processes were simplified for third-country nationals (TCNs) who work or plan to work or study in Slovakia.

As of 1 January 2023, the amendment to the Act on Employment Services facilitated the conditions under which the qualified labour force from non-EU countries can enter the Slovak labour market, in particular in the professions with a shortage of labour:

- the professions with a shortage of labour were determined and tied to regions instead of districts; the condition of registered unemployment rate having to be under 5% was left out;
- the option to keep employing TCNs during the period of deciding upon their application on the renewal of temporary residence permit for the purpose of employment in the same position and the same employer facilitated the renewal of such residence by leaving out the requirement of labour market testing in order to keep the qualified labour force in the same employment;
- it was made possible to employ TCNs through national visas in selected professions (from April 2022, truck and bus drivers¹⁴² and highly qualified professions¹⁴³, from June 2022 relocated employees¹⁴⁴ and their family members¹⁴⁵).

The possibility of a temporary professional stint for foreigners in healthcare sector has been extended to apply to all health professionals and the condition under which such stint could only be executed with providers of inpatient healthcare has been removed.

Universities do not have to collect fees for studies in foreign languages in order to increase the number of students taking study programmes conducted in foreign languages. If they decide to provide it free of charge, the costs will be reimbursed from the state budget.

From January 2022, the SR started to issue national visas for the period of studies, or for one year the most, to selected student groups (students using the Erasmus+, National Scholarship Programme, bilateral international agreements and cooperation programmes, CEEPUS a Government Scholarships of the SR). Previously, such students had to arrange for temporary residence for a stay exceeding 90 days.

TCNs who have been granted temporary residence for the purpose of family reunification, are allowed to find employment in Slovakia after 9 (used to be 12) months of uninterrupted stay in Slovakia.

Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the SR and the non-profit sector started to provide information on transit and protection/residence options for people fleeing to/through

the Slovak Republic. Comprehensive information was provided through the newly launched www.ua.gov.sk portal. The Ministry of Education launched a portal about schools and education in Slovakia www.ukrajina.minedu.sk in Ukrainian language. Also the IOM and the Human Rights League provided legal counselling to this group of persons. Apart from information on their websites, they made available information hotlines in Ukrainian.

Based on the *Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Canada on Youth Mobility*, a reciprocity quote of 350 participants was agreed: they had the option to submit applications for 2023 (the quota remained as in 2022).

4.1. Statistics and Trends

The number of foreigners in Slovakia has been continuously growing in recent years, while the year 2022 saw an increase by 2% caused mainly by the forced displacement due to the war in Ukraine. EU citizens together with third-country nationals comprised 5.13% of Slovak population in 2022, while in 2021 the number was 3.08% and in 2020 2.75%.

Despite the increase, the ratio of foreigners from the EU and non-EU countries in Slovakia has been among the lowest in the EU for a long time. Before the war in Ukraine, 167,519 foreigners lived in Slovakia. After the war, there was about 278,595 of them. Before the war, Ukrainians were the largest foreigner community – they comprised one-third (56,480 persons) of all the foreigners in Slovakia. Towards the end of 2022, their number tripled to 156,881 and they thus comprised more than a half (56%) of all the foreigners in Slovakia.

Of 278,595 foreigners in Slovakia, two-thirds (79.87 %) came from non-EU countries. Third-country nationals thus comprised 4.10% of entire Slovak population in 2022. Most numerous third-country nationalities comprised Ukrainian (156,881), Serbian (18,215), Vietnamese (8,039), Russian (7,436) and Northern Macedonian (1) (see **Table 1**). Most of them (over two-thirds) lived in the Bratislava region also in 2022 (see **Table 2**).

At the end of 2022, 87,998 foreigners were employed in Slovakia: 56,876 of them were from non-EU countries, in particular from Ukraine (33,419), Serbia (9,802), Georgia (1,485), India (1,305), and Russia (1,098) (see **Table 4**). About a third of foreigners worked in the Bratislava region followed by the Trnava and Nitra regions. The year-on-year increase in the number of foreigners from non-EU countries working in Slovakia has been more than 10,000 since 2016. The pandemic years 2020 and 2021, however, broke this trend. The outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, on the other hand, increased the number of employed foreigners by nearly 20,000. Before the pandemic in 2020, the several-year-long trend of increased interest of SR employers in foreign labour force including the workers from non-E countries persisted.¹⁴⁶

In comparison with 2021, first residence permits in the SR increased 4.5-times in 2022, mainly because of tolerated residence granted to the people from Ukraine registered for temporary protection. Without the cases of tolerated residence (105,007) the SR issued a comparable number of first residence permits – 26,960 as compared with 29,067 in 2021. In the year 2020 influenced by the pandemic, there was 18,251 which means 7% less as compared with 2019, when

¹⁴² Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 270/2022 Coll. changing the Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 520/2021 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant a national visa to selected categories of third-country nationals as amended by the Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 94/2022 Coll., effective from 1 April 2022.

¹⁴³ Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 521/2022 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant a national visa to highly qualified third-country nationals, effective from 1 April 2022.

¹⁴⁴ It is a transfer of an employee from the enterprise of a foreign entity established outside the territory of the Slovak Republic to an employer which is an enterprise of the same foreign entity established in the territory of the Slovak Republic where the employee will, under the relocation, perform the function of a managing employee or an expert requiring exceptional professional knowledge, skills, abilities, know-how, qualification, and experience necessary for the operation or management.

¹⁴⁵ Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 269/2022 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant a national visa to relocated third country nationals and their family members for the purpose of employment, effective from 23 July 2022.

¹⁴⁶ Source: Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2018 – 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

there was 28,836 of them.¹⁴⁷ Most first permits were issued for the purpose of paid activities also in 2022 (19,343), the rest were family reasons (4,169), education and study (3,448), and other reasons including tolerated residence (105,007) (see **Table 3** in Annex). Entrepreneurship comprised the highest proportion of the paid activities (nearly 64%) which was slightly lower than in 2021 (70%). This group of labour migration was dominated by the Ukrainians in 2022, followed by the Serbians, Georgians, Northern Macedonians, and Vietnamese. It confirms the continuation of the increasing trend of first residence permits for the purpose of entrepreneurship which started in 2019 (in 2019 the year-on-year increase of 64%). In 2020, only one year-on-year increase was recorded among all the purposes – first residence permits for the purpose of entrepreneurship. In 2021, the year-on-year increase in the number of first residence permits for the purpose of entrepreneurship was as high as 180%. To compare, the SR issued 20,989 first time residence permits in 2018.¹⁴⁸ The number of illegally employed TCNs in 2022 was comparable to the number of 2021 (see 10.1.).

Foreigners Employed in the SR in 2018 – 2022

	As of 31 December 2018	As of 31 December 2019	As of 31 December 2020	As of 31 December 2021	As of 31 December 2022	Most numerous nationalities – all foreigners, 2022	Most numerous nationalities – TCNs, 2022
EU/EEA citizens	32,851	32,114	29,937	29,595	31,122 (women 9,138)	1. Ukraine (33,419) 2. Serbia (9,802) 3. Romania (7,025) 4. Czech Republic (6,514) 5. Hungary (5,574)	1. Ukraine (33,419) 2. Serbia (9,802) 3. Georgia (1,485) 4. India (1,305) 5. Russia (1,098)
Third-country nationals	36,265	46,184	39,075	37,593	56,876 (women 24,016)		
Total	69,116	78,298	69,012	67,188	87,998 (women 33,154)		

Source: MoLSAF SR.

4.2. General Legislative Changes

In 2022, several administrative processes were simplified for third-country nationals (TCNs) who work or plan to work or study in Slovakia. No strategic document on migration or significant legislation change which would influence the nature of legal migration system in the SR was adopted in 2022.

In order to attract and maintain qualified labour force, in particular in the professions with a shortage of labour, the adoption of relevant legislation in 2022¹⁴⁹ simplified the conditions for the entry of third-country nationals to the Slovak labour market and allowed for the necessary measures to be taken to prevent and mitigate the impact of an extraordinary event related to the mass influx of foreign nationals to the territory of the SR resulting from the armed conflict in Ukraine.

¹⁴⁷ Source: Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2021): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

¹⁴⁸ Information provided by the BBFP PFP.

¹⁴⁹ Amendment to Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended

Following the amendment of Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Foreigners,¹⁵⁰ TCNs shall not be obliged to submit a marriage certificate when applying for permanent residence for five years, provided the marriage to a Slovak national with permanent residence in the territory of the SR took place in the territory of the SR or if it has been registered in a special registry and the applicant states the place of the marriage. Moreover, Section 62, Paragraph 2 Letter b) has been amended in the sense that it shall be sufficient for the applicant to submit the birth certificate of a child born in the territory of an EU Member State (not in the territory of the SR) with the application for residence under the abovementioned provision.¹⁵¹

4.3. Labour Migration

Transitional provisions of the Act on Employment Services and the Act on Residence of Foreigners allowing for the employment of foreigners during an emergency situation¹⁵², even after the expiry of the validity period of their residence and employment permits, provided they expired during the emergency situation, continued to apply in 2022 in the SR. The aim of the legislation was to prevent unauthorized residence in the SR. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the SR registered a sharp increase in the number of persons granted temporary protection, which was also reflected in the increased numbers of employed Ukrainian nationals with this status. The citizens of Ukraine were the most numerous group of employed foreigners and this corresponded to the state of affairs before the war.¹⁵³

In 2022, the SR focused on establishing conditions to facilitate employment of third-country nationals and the retention of foreign qualified labour force which should saturate the long-term shortage of labour force in Slovakia. As concerns employment of third-country nationals, the SR therefore adopted an amendment to the Act on Employment Services¹⁵⁴ in December 2022, which, as of 1 January 2023:

- facilitates the employment of third-country nationals by linking the identification of professions with a shortage of labour to the regional level with the removal of the condition stipulating that the registered unemployment rate should be less than 5%,
- introduces the possibility of employing a third-country national during the period of deciding on their application for renewal of temporary residence for the purpose of employment and facilitating the renewal of temporary residence for the purpose of employment by the removal of the requirement to consider labour market situation and to allow for the retention of skilled labour in the same occupation,
- provides for a shorter period of time (from 12 to 9 months) after which a third-country national who has been granted temporary residence for the purpose of family reunification may be employed in the SR without the need to issue the relevant certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy corresponding to a highly qualified job, the certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy and the employment permit,
- extends the period of time during which a third-country national may undergo training with an employer before being granted temporary residence for the purpose of employment (from

¹⁵⁰ Act No. 310/2021 Coll.

¹⁵¹ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

¹⁵² declared in relation to the mass influx of foreigners to the territory of the SR due to the armed conflict in Ukraine

¹⁵³ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹⁵⁴ On 6 December 2022, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted the Act No. 488/2022 Coll. changing and amending Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment services and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended, and on changes and amendments to some acts.

6 to 8 weeks in the case that emergency situation lasts during the entire duration of the procedure for granting temporary residence permit for the purpose of employment),

- removes the requirement to carry out a labour market test in case a third-country national applies for the renewal of a temporary residence for the purpose of employment for the same work position with the same employer and for the renewal of a Blue Card for the same work position with the same employer.¹⁵⁵

The possibility of a temporary professional stint has been extended to apply to all health professionals and the condition under which such stint could only be executed with providers of inpatient healthcare has been removed.¹⁵⁶

Highly Qualified Migrants

The Government of the SR adopted Regulation No. 521/2021 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant national visa to highly qualified third-country nationals. Under this regulation, as of 1 April 2022 highly qualified third-country nationals (who meet the stipulated criteria¹⁵⁷) shall be granted national visa for the purpose of looking for employment for a period of 90 days or for the purpose of employment (max. 1 year duration). As of 30 December 2022, 33 national visas were granted for the purpose of looking for employment and 70 national visa were granted for the purpose of employment under this Regulation. The Regulation is in compliance with the Reform No. 1 of the Component No. 10 of the SR's Recovery and Resilience Plan – the introduction of a fast-track scheme for national visa and simplification of administrative processes.¹⁵⁸

(Low) Skilled Migrants

As of 1 April 2022, the SR amended the granting of national visa in the interest of the Slovak Republic¹⁵⁹ to selected groups of third-country nationals who are the nationals of the Republic of Belarus, Republic of Serbia, Ukraine, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova in the following professions:

- bus driver (150 national visas for 2022),
- HGV/lorry driver (international transport) and HGV/lorry driver (domestic transport) (1,770 national visas for 2022).

The objective was to fast-track the processing of applications for selected professions with shortage of labour in order to employ third-country nationals¹⁶⁰

Seasonal Workers from non-EU Countries

Adoption of the amended Labour Code¹⁶¹ has simplified the employment and the reduction of wage costs for employers related to the employment of workers performing seasonal work in sectors of agriculture and tourism as of 1 January 2023.

¹⁵⁵ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹⁵⁶ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹⁵⁷ Graduates of the second degree of higher education in the Slovak Republic or in the Czech Republic, higher education of the world's leading universities as listed in Annex 1 of the Regulation or of the second or third degree of higher education at any higher education institution, provided they will be employed in highly qualified jobs as listed in Annex 2 of the Regulation by an employer in the Slovak Republic.

¹⁵⁸ Source: MoFEA SR and MoLSAF SR questionnaires.

¹⁵⁹ By Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 520/2021 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant a national visa to selected groups of third-country nationals (as amended by regulation of the Government of the SR No. 270/2022 Coll. of 20 July 2022)

¹⁶⁰ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹⁶¹ Parliament of the SR approved the amendment of the Labour Code No. 311/2001 on 15 June 2022.

A new levy deductible item for seasonal work has also been introduced. In the case of a Work Performance Agreement, the amendment provided for a special sub-type of agreement to be used for seasonal work. In the case of employing people for a short-term on an as-needed basis, depending on staff fluctuation (e.g. in case of extra work during harvesting), the employer shall have the option to conclude a Work Performance Agreement for the performance of seasonal work, which must be labelled as such. The seasonal work should be genuinely seasonal, i.e. the work should be carried out in a way that is dependent on the changing of seasons, it should occur repeatedly each year and its duration should not exceed 8 months in one calendar year. For this reason, the Work Performance Agreement for the performance of seasonal work shall be limited to 8 months. The number of hours that can be worked under this type of agreement is set at the maximum of 520 days per year, with the performance of seasonal work being cumulative. The maximum working time is set at 40 hours per week and the longest averaging period is 4 months.

The Work Performance Agreement for the performance of seasonal work shall be used in the field of agriculture mostly for growing and harvesting of selected types of fruits and vegetables.

The amendment stipulates that a natural person employed on the basis of a Work Performance Agreement for the performance of seasonal work shall be compulsorily insured for all employee's insurances, i.e. sickness, pension and unemployment insurance from the beginning of said legal relationship. A levy deduction was introduced, however, allowing for an exemption from the payment of old-age and unemployment insurance premiums. It amounts to 50% of the average monthly wage from 2 years prior (i.e. in 2023 the average monthly wage from 2021 will be relevant). If an employee's earnings from the Work Performance Agreement for the performance of seasonal work are equal to or less than the proposed levy deduction, neither the employee nor the employer shall be liable for old-age and unemployment insurance premiums. As the average monthly wage in 2021 was €1,211, the relevant amount in 2023 will be €605.50.

Considering the abovementioned, in such case the insured person (employee) shall not be entitled to early retirement pension, old-age pension and related survivors' pensions or to the unemployment benefit for the period when the premiums defined above are not paid. However, if the employee's monthly income exceeds 50% of the average monthly wage from 2 years prior, both the old-age and unemployment insurance premiums shall be payable by both the employee and the employer – but only on the difference between the monthly income and the levy deduction. In both cases, this shall mean a reduction in the levy burden for both the employee and the employer.¹⁶²

Intra-Corporate Transferees from non-EU Countries

On 23 July 2022, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted Regulation No. 269/2022 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant national visa to relocated third-country nationals and their family members. Under this Regulation, the Slovak Republic shall grant national visa to relocated TCNs for the duration of employment, for a maximum of one year, and to their family members for the duration of the validity of national visa of the relocated employee who is their family member. The family member of the relocated employee may study or be employed during the period of validity of the national visa. The amendment aimed at simplification of the arrival and settlement of relocated employees and their family members in the Slovak Republic.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Source: MoARD SR questionnaire.

¹⁶³ Source: MoFEA SR and MoLSAF SR questionnaires.

4.4. Students and Researchers

According to the amendment¹⁶⁴, universities no longer have to charge a fee for studies delivered in foreign languages. If a university decides to provide such studies free of charge, the costs will be reimbursed from the State Budget of the SR in accordance with the Methodology for Allocation of State Budget Subsidies. The amendment aimed to increase the number of students studying study programmes conducted in foreign languages.¹⁶⁵

In relation to the implementation of the *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education until 2030* and on the basis of a resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic, national visas for the period of their study or for a maximum period of 1 started to be granted to students of the categories/programmes listed below as of January 2022:

- Erasmus+
- National Scholarship Programme
- Bilateral international agreements and cooperation programmes
- Central European Exchange Programme for University (CEEPUS)
- Government Scholarships of the SR

The objective was to formally facilitate the arrival and studying of students in the SR. Beforehand, students had to obtain a temporary residence permit for stays exceeding 90 days.¹⁶⁶

The changes to the Act No. 396/2012 Coll. on the Education Support Fund¹⁶⁷ ensured that apart from the citizens of the SR, also citizens of EU MS and TCNs are eligible for a student loan. At the same time, a mechanism was introduced for reducing the principal amount owed if a person works in the SR at a position for which higher education is required.¹⁶⁸

Government Scholarships

In 2022, the Government of the SR supported 404 scholarship holders by government scholarships, while 117 students came from the countries affected by an ongoing armed conflict or from the countries of origin of forced migration (e.g. Ukraine – 31 scholarship holders, Afghanistan – 25 scholarship holders, Syria – 24 scholarship holders etc.)¹⁶⁹

4.5. Family Reunification

The SR has adopted a legislative change¹⁷⁰ which provides for a shorter period (of continuous residence in the territory of the SR since the granting of temporary residence for the purpose of family reunification from 12 to 9 months). After this period, a third-country national who has been granted temporary residence for the purpose of family reunification may be employed in

the Slovak Republic without the need to issue the relevant certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy corresponding to a highly qualified job, the certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy and the employment permit the possibility of filling a vacancy corresponding to a highly qualified job, a certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy or an employment permit. The change contributes to fulfilment of Measure No. 1.1 of the Action Plan of the Migration Policy in the domain of the MoLSAF SR, perspective until 2025¹⁷¹

4.6. Preventing Social Dumping and Lowering of Work Standards

In 2022, a working group was formed to address Task 17 of the National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2019-2023 entitled “Defining the boundary between trafficking in human beings for forced labour and poor working conditions”, with a deadline at the end of 2023. The objective of the working group is to analyse cases of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of forced labour and of violations of the Labour Code provisions related to poor working conditions, with the aim to establish a boundary and a recommend course of action for stakeholders involved in such situations. The Slovak Republic also reflected on this topic and the related need at the EMN Slovakia’s National Conference “Dignified Labour Conditions as a Tool to Fight Modern Slavery”, organized by IOM in its role of the EMN Slovakia coordinator on 1 December 2022 in Bratislava.¹⁷²

Controls of employment of third country nationals continued to be conducted on a limited basis. Controls were mainly carried out in relation to the funds paid within the projects for supporting employees, businesses and the economy. Termination of employment by law in the case of foreigners and stateless persons in cases linked to the duration of the residence permit in the SR or work permit continued not to be applied in practice.

Labour inspection continued to focus their controlling activity on legal employment of foreigners, especially the temporary protection holders from Ukraine and on checking their working conditions. In 2022, targeted checks of were carried out in order to check the compliance with the ban on illegal employment of third country nationals in relation to their mass influx to the territory of the Slovak Republic caused by the war in Ukraine. Another aim was to check misuse the residence permits of TCNs for the purpose of entrepreneurship for dependent labour and to observe the human trafficking indicators. Within this specific task, 247 employers and 714 workers were checked. Violation of the ban on illegal employment was found in 35 employers. 88 persons were illegally employed (of this number, 70 persons held the residence permit for the purpose of entrepreneurship, i.e. the cases of bogus self-employment).¹⁷³

¹⁶⁴ Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on changes and amendments to some acts

¹⁶⁵ Source: MoESRS SR questionnaire.

¹⁶⁶ Source: MoFEA SR questionnaire.

¹⁶⁷ The amendment of the Act effective from 1 June 2022, Sections 10 and 13

¹⁶⁸ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

¹⁶⁹ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

¹⁷⁰ By Draft Act No. 488/2022 Coll. on changes and amendments to Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Asylum Services and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended, and on changes and amendments to some acts, approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 6 December 2022.

¹⁷¹ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹⁷² Source: <https://emn.sk/sk/novinky/680-narodna-konferencia-emn-o-dostojnych-pracovnych-podmienkach.html>. Conference programme: https://emn.sk/images/phocadownload/Konferencia_EMN_Slovensko_2022_Dostojne_pracovne_podmienky_ako_nastroj_boja_proti_modernemu_otroctvu.pdf

¹⁷³ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

4.7. Other Measures Related to Legal Migration

4.7.1. Bilateral Agreements Related to Legal Migration

Based on the *Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Canada on Youth Mobility*, a reciprocity quote of 350 participants was agreed: they were had the option to submit applications for 2023 (the quota remained as in 2022).¹⁷⁴

4.7.2. Population and Housing Census

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic continued to process data from the *Population and Housing Census 2021 (PHS 2021)* and fill the basic databases (BD). The BD are a definitive set of microdata on each observed object, i.e. each house, flat, inhabitant, household (residential or census). The aim was to map the basic demographic characteristics of the population in the SR (sex, age, nationality, country of birth, education), economic indicators (current economic activity, employment status, occupation and sector of economic activity), including geospatial distribution. The census covered not only citizens of the Slovak Republic, but also foreigners – EU citizens, TCNs, and stateless persons.

In January 2022, after the publication of the basic results in December 2021, the publication of a population dataset down to the level of municipalities followed. In May 2022, extended results on houses and flats were published in multidimensional tables down to the municipality level. In August 2022, the basic population data were expanded to include 4 economic indicators (current economic activity, employment status, occupation and sector of economic activity) down to the municipality level. In October 2022, expanded population results were published and include 98 multidimensional tables. Geospatial data on houses, flats and inhabitants, i.e. statistics linked to location in relation to the territory of the SR, were also presented in December 2022.¹⁷⁵

4.8. Information on the Options and Conditions of the Legal Migration

The state institutions, international organisations and civic sector continued to provide information to third-country nationals also in 2022. The Foreign Police Departments continued to be the main source of information on the options and conditions of the legal migration in 2022. To illustrate, 74,318 clients who booked their appointments through the electronic system were processed at the Foreign Police Departments in the SR in 2022. This is comparable to 2021, when 72,918 clients were processed.¹⁷⁶

The system of appointments booking at the Foreign Police Departments (FPD) PF changed in 2022 in order to improve the client services:

- The services offered by the FPD's electronic booking system were extended and provided that clients apply for residence permit electronically, they can be handled in person at any FPD PF

workplace. As of 1 December 2022, the FPD's territorial jurisdiction has been changed, which means that a foreign national shall be entitled to make an appointment at any Foreign Police workplace when applying for temporary residence, permanent residence for the period of five years, tolerated stay or for national visa, and they are not tied to a specific FPD department.

- At the same time, possibilities of electronic appointment booking at the Foreign Police Departments were extended in 2022. The current offer of services which make it possible for clients to book an appointment for a specific date and time are listed and updated at the Mol SR website.¹⁷⁷

After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, a high demand for information on temporary protection, different types of residence and international protection, as well as on the education system in the SR from people fleeing Ukraine occurred. The SR and the non-profit sector started to provide information on transit and protection/residence options for people fleeing to/through the Slovak Republic. Comprehensive information was provided through the newly launched portal www.ua.gov.sk. A specific portal on schools and on education possibilities in Slovakia, www.ukrajina.minedu.sk, was launched by the Ministry of Education also in Ukrainian language. Those who are interested in working in the Slovak education sector, can register in the "Work in Education" section of the <https://ukrajina.minedu.sk/praca-v-skolstve/> section of the website.

Also the IOM (through their Migration Information Centre - MIC) and the Human Rights League provided legal counselling to this group of persons. Apart from information on their websites, they made available information hotlines in Ukrainian.

¹⁷⁴ MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

¹⁷⁵ Source: Questionnaire of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

¹⁷⁶ BBFP PFP questionnaire.

¹⁷⁷ Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?objednavaci-system-na-ocp> (consulted on 15/03/2023).

05

International Protection

The trend marked by low numbers of asylum applications and asylum grants in the Slovak Republic has remained unchanged, although the actual number of asylum applications has increased slightly in nominal terms over the last five years. In 2022, the number of asylum applications in the SR increased as a result of the war in Ukraine. Of a total of 547 applications (503 of which were first applications and 44 were repeated applications), 199 applications were submitted by people who had fled to the territory of the SR from Ukraine - mainly Ukrainian citizens, followed by citizens of Russia and other non-EU countries. Most of these procedures were discontinued (in part due to the temporary protection applications). People fleeing from Ukraine used grants of temporary protection allowing them to stay in the country and access services (the topic is addressed in a separate chapter of this report - see Chapter 3). Following Ukrainians, the most numerous group of asylum seekers in 2022 were nationals of Turkey (76), Morocco (73), Bangladesh (53) and Russia (40). Nine asylum applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors, predominantly from Afghanistan.

In 2022, the SR granted asylum to a total of 23 persons, mostly from Afghanistan. In the same period of time, the SR granted subsidiary protection to 48 persons, most of whom were from Afghanistan (similarly to the previous years) and Ukraine (due to the invasion in February 2022). The SR issued negative decisions in 76 cases in 2022. The SR registered an increase in the number of discontinued procedures (387) in 2022, most frequently due to the arbitrary departure of the applicant from the territory of the SR before the decision in the case was issued. The SR did not resettle or relocate any persons in need of international protection into or through its territory in 2022.

Effective as of 1 June 2022, the amendment to the Act on Asylum has systematically regulated the initial integration of asylum seekers and foreigners granted subsidiary protection by the SR (see the chapter on Integration). Moreover, the time limit for access to the labour market for asylum seekers has been shortened from nine to six months from the commencement of the asylum procedure. In line with the EU law, the hierarchy of protection statuses has changed in a sense that the need for international protection is considered first, and only if the conditions for the granting international protection are not met, the possibility of granting national status is considered.

In December 2022, the Government of the SR approved that, as of 1 January 2023, the provision and reimbursement of urgent healthcare for asylum seekers, persons granted temporary protection and persons involved in the assisted return programme will be covered by the largest health insurance company, whose costs will be subsequently reimbursed by the Ministry of Health of the SR. Previously, the provision and reimbursement of urgent healthcare was the responsibility of the MoI SR.

The SR and Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to share know-how in the field of asylum and the functioning of the asylum system via the programme of study visits established in 2021.

5.1. Statistics and Trends

Compared to the European average, the SR has been recording low numbers of asylum applications and various forms of international protection granted in the long-term. This trend has not changed in the last five years, although the number of asylum applications has been increasing slightly.¹⁷⁸ In 2022, the number of asylum applications in the SR increased as a result of the war in Ukraine. Of a total of 547 applications (503 of which were first applications and 44 were repeated applications), 199 applications were submitted by people who had fled to the SR from Ukraine. Most of these procedures were discontinued (see **Table 13a** and **Table and chart 13b** in the Annex). People fleeing from Ukraine used the temporary protection status allowing them to stay in the country and access services – temporary protection is addressed in a separate chapter herein (see Chapter 3). The most numerous group of asylum seekers in 2022, after Ukrainians, were nationals of Turkey (76), Morocco (73), Bangladesh (53) and Russia (40). Nine asylum applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors, predominantly from Afghanistan (see **Table 18** in the Annex).

In 2022, the SR granted asylum to a total of 23 persons, mostly from Afghanistan. In the same period of time, the SR granted subsidiary protection to 48 persons, most of whom were from Afghanistan (similarly to the previous years) and Ukraine (due to the invasion in February 2022). Negative decisions were issued in 76 cases in 2022. The SR registered an increase in the number of discontinued procedures (387) even in 2022, most frequently due to the arbitrary departure of the applicant from the territory of the SR before the decision in the case was issued. Some procedures were discontinued on the basis of the applicant's withdrawal of their asylum application. Some of these applicants subsequently applied for temporary protection. In 2022, the SR granted citizenship to 27 persons who were granted international protection (see **Table 6** in the Annex).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Source: Behúňová, K., Oboňová, S. (2021): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2020. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

Oboňová, S., Ulrichová, N. (2022): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum. Slovak Republic 2021. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

¹⁷⁹ Source: Statistical Report of Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic – year 2022. Available at: <http://www.minv.sk>

The SR did not resettle or relocate any persons in need of international protection into or through its territory in the period of years 2018 – 2022 (see **Tables 14 - 16** in the Annex).

Asylum applications and international protection in the SR in 2018 – 2022

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Asylum applicants (of which first applications)	178 (155)	232 (214)	282 (267)	370 (330)	547 (503)
Asylum granted	5	9	11	29	23
Subsidiary protection granted	37	19	27	13	48
Citizenship granted	18	9	14	10	27

Source: MO Mol SR (international protection) and PAS Mol SR (citizenship).

5.2. National Policies and Legislation

On 17 March 2022, Government of the SR adopted the amendment to the Act on Asylum¹⁸⁰, which, effective as of 1 June 2022, in particular:

- Regulates the hierarchy of protection statuses granted/provided to foreigners in the Slovak Republic under this Act; in particular it prioritises the consideration and granting of subsidiary protection on the grounds of serious harm over the granting of asylum for the purpose of family reunification, but also over the granting of asylum on humanitarian grounds. In line with the EU law, the hierarchy of protection statuses is changed in a sense that the need for international protection is considered first, and only if the conditions for the granting international protection are not met the possibility of granting national status is considered. If the previous legislation remained in force, priority would not be given to subsidiary protection on grounds of serious harm (a form of international protection) over national statuses (asylum granted for the purpose of family reunification, asylum granted on humanitarian grounds), as required by the relevant Directive.
- Systematically regulates the initial integration of asylum seekers and foreigners granted subsidiary protection (see also Chapter 7.1.3), whereby it:
 - introduces a one-off allowance of the same amount for foreigners granted subsidiary protection;
 - introduces an integration allowance for asylum seekers and foreigners granted subsidiary protection, for a period of six months;
 - allows the integration centre to also accommodate foreigners granted subsidiary protection;
 - provides for the provision of social counselling, psychological counselling and a cultural orientation course for asylum seekers and foreigners granted subsidiary protection based on their individual needs;

- Provides for social counselling, psychological counselling or other types of counselling and a cultural orientation course to be provided also to asylum seekers based on their individual needs. In the case of social counselling, psychological counselling and a cultural orientation course for asylum seekers, these services are provided within the framework of a project funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and are partially provided (except for psychological counselling) by the staff members of the Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.
- Shortens the time limit for access to the labour market for applicants to six months from the start of the asylum procedure, which gives them greater autonomy;
- Lays down that, for the purpose of assessing an asylum application, the data concerning the applicant's country of origin should be accurate, up-to-date and obtained from relevant sources, such as UNHCR or EUAA.¹⁸¹
- Provides for a new ground for suspension of the procedure for transfer of an applicant to another state - the procedure for transfer to another state shall be suspended even if another state is responsible for examining the asylum application and the foreigner's stay in the territory of the SR is unknown, for a maximum period of 18 months from the assumption of this responsibility; during the suspension of the procedure, the time limits under this Act shall not run during this period.
- Provides for a period of time for which the applicant shall be allowed to stay outside of an accommodation facility (the so-called long-term pass). In setting the statutory time limit for an applicant's stay outside an accommodation facility the application of Article 12(1)(a), namely that applicants must report to the competent authorities or appear before them in person, either immediately or at a specified time was also ensured.
- Specifies the details to be included in the instructions for asylum seekers. This provision ensures the application of Article 12(1)(a) of the Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, i.e. the guarantee that applicants shall be informed in a language which they understand or are reasonably supposed to understand of the procedure to be followed and of their rights and obligations during the procedure and the possible consequences of not complying with their obligations and not cooperating with the authorities. In line with the best interest of a minor principle, the note that the instruction and information shall be given in a manner which takes into consideration the age and maturity of such applicant shall also be included in the new provision.
- Provides for a new ground for the termination of asylum in connection with the adjustment of the hierarchy of statuses.^{182,183}

In May 2022, information on trafficking in human beings and on the programme for the support and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings, including the contact number for the national helpline for victims of trafficking, became a part of the instructions on the rights and obligations of asylum seekers, which they receive no later than 15 days after the initiation of the asylum procedure. Inclusion of the topic of trafficking in human beings in the instruction was related to the implementation of the tasks arising from the National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and the tasks arising from the monitoring mechanism of the Group of Experts on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA).¹⁸⁴

sk/7statistiky-20 (consulted on 15/03/2023).

180 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

181 The new provision is in line with Article 8(2) of the Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council and with the practice.
182 Source: Explanatory memorandum to Act No. 124/2022 Coll., available on: <https://www.najpravo.sk/dovodove-spravy/rok-2022/dovodova-sprava-k-zakonu-c-124-2022-z-z.html> (consulted on 24/05/2022)

183 Source: Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum and on changes and amendments to some acts, as subsequently amended, effective as of 01/06/2022, <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2002/480/20220601.html>

184 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

On 22 December 2022, the Slovak Government approved the amended version of the Act on Asylum¹⁸⁵, effective as of 1 January 2023.¹⁸⁶ The amendments concern the provision and reimbursement of urgent medical care for asylum seekers, temporary protection holders and persons in the assisted return programme, which, as of 1 January 2023, shall be provided through the largest health insurance company, with subsequent reimbursement of the costs by the MH SR. In the context of the abovementioned changes, as of 1 January 2023, the Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the SR no longer issues documents of entitlement to health care to asylum seekers ("yellow card"), foreigners applying for temporary refuge ("green card") and foreigners who have withdrawn their asylum application and applied for voluntary return ("blue card"). The above-mentioned persons shall only present their asylum-seeker's card, temporary refuge applicant's card or a certificate issued by the MoI SR (in case of voluntary return) when receiving healthcare. The amendment aimed to simplify the provision and reimbursement of healthcare processes. The amendment does not stipulate an extension of the scope of entitlement, but rather an administrative change in the reimbursement procedure which benefits the persons concerned as well as the providers of healthcare. Healthcare will be provided to the persons concerned by healthcare providers in the entire territory of the SR and the providers will subsequently invoice (electronically, via levies) these procedures to Všeobecná zdravotná poisťovňa, a. s. insurance company. Prior to this amendment urgent healthcare for this target group was provided through the Ministry of the Interior of the SR.¹⁸⁷

5.3. Reception and Caring for Asylum Seekers

After the beginning of the conflict in Afghanistan in August 2021, the SR evacuated 46 Afghan nationals to its territory, 32 of whom applied for asylum, and 12 more, who were received through Ukraine, also applied for asylum in the SR. Subsequently, continuing into 2022, these asylum seekers had the same opportunities for integration as other beneficiaries of international protection.¹⁸⁸

The SR did not participate in any European or bilateral relocation activities in 2022 (see **Table 14** in the Annex). Similarly, the SR did not implement any relocation programme or other non-EU refugee reception programme (see **Table 15** in the Annex), nor had it implemented any special humanitarian refugee transfer through its territory (see **Table 16** in the Annex).¹⁸⁹

In 2022, the SR continued with COVID-19 screening, the necessary isolation of asylum seekers in asylum facilities and continued to apply the established facility zoning model. The MO MoI SR regularly informed staff and applicants on the use of personal protective equipment, updated the COVID-19 measures on a regular basis depending on the changing recommendations through the leaflets for asylum seekers and by sharing up-to-date decrees for its employees, handled the issuing of documents related to COVID-19 vaccination (COVID passes, recognition of vaccination certificates by foreign countries, etc.) and prepared information leaflets on vaccination for applicants.

¹⁸⁵ Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum and on changes and amendments to some acts, as subsequently amended

¹⁸⁶ Source: Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum and on changes and amendments to some acts, as subsequently amended, effective as of 1 January 2023, <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2002/480/20230101.html>

¹⁸⁷ Source: MO MoI SR questionnaire.

¹⁸⁸ MO MoI SR questionnaire.

¹⁸⁹ 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 SR, 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.

In 2022, the SR continued to execute Dublin transfers to the states applying the Dublin Regulation, provided the requests of the Slovak Republic were accepted by the concerned Member State and the transfer decisions were enforceable pursuant to the applicable Slovak legislation. In 2022, 28 cases were transferred to the territory of the SR for further procedure and 44 persons were transferred from Slovakia to the Member States responsible for examining their international protection applications.¹⁹⁰

The Migration Office continued its close cooperation with non-governmental organisations, especially so within the scope of EU-funded projects. The Slovak Humanitarian Council continued to implement the *Effective Services for Asylum Seekers in the SR III* project¹⁹¹, which was prolonged by a year until the end of October 2023. Within the scope of the project, basic and complementary services were provided to all asylum seekers, including those in asylum facilities. Special attention was given to the needs of vulnerable persons. Complementary services included Slovak language teaching, psychological counselling, social work, spare time activities, etc.¹⁹²

As concerns the improvement of living and increasing the quality of services provided in asylum facilities, the reconstruction of the building SO 300 in the detention facility in Humenné was completed in January 2022. During the reconstruction, a barrier-free environment was created (a staircase platform lift was installed, barrier-free sanitary facilities were added, windows were lowered and doors were widened); and a project design for the reconstruction of one part of the accommodation centre in Opatovská Nová Ves was also prepared with the aim to create space for educational and social activities.

The training of MO MoI SR employees continued even in 2022, mainly through EUAA training modules. In particular, this involved two national trainings on Interviewing children and Interviewing vulnerable persons. During the reporting period, two trainers were trained for the modules Identification of potential Dublin cases and *Application of exclusion clauses to persons undeserving of international protection*. In relation to the war in Ukraine, MO MoI SR staff received EUAA thematic trainings on communication with displaced children, communication with traumatized people, providing information and communicating with displaced people from Ukraine, Temporary protection: Understanding the current situation in the context of the war in Ukraine, and an ad-hoc training on temporary protection. Other EUAA trainings completed in 2022 include Basic MedCOI (medical country of origin information), Trafficking in human beings, Introduction to ethical and professional standards, Introduction to communication for asylum and reception practitioners, Introduction to the legal framework on international protection in the EU, Continuing Professional Development on inclusion of international protection applicants from Afghanistan.

Cooperation with the Department of Social Work of the Faculty of Education of the Comenius University in Bratislava was established through UNICEF, specifically in the field of research and education of the Migration Office employees and staff members of other cooperating organizations, and volunteering of students in Humanitarian Centre in Gabčíkovo.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Source: MO MoI SR questionnaire.

¹⁹¹ Project code: SK 2019 AMIF SC1.1/1. Project duration: 01/01/2020–31/10/2022 31/12/2021, extended until 31/10/2023. Grant: € 1,189,773.62, increased to € 2,267,106.95 in 2022. Funding: AMIF and State Budget of the SR.

¹⁹² Source: Information provided by the FAD EPS MoI SR.

¹⁹³ Source: MO MoI SR questionnaire.

5.4. Court Decisions at the National and European Level

The SR continuously applies the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU as well as the European Court of Human Rights in its decision-making activities in granting international protection and national protection statuses.¹⁹⁴

5.5. Cooperation with EU Member States and with non-EU States

Cooperation of EU Member States

The so-called “gradual approach” to the Pact of the French EU Presidency, which, in addition to a political declaration on the modalities of the voluntary solidarity mechanism (SR did not join this declaration), led to the adoption of the Council’s general approaches to the EURODAC and screening proposals (SR abstained from voting), can be considered an effort to significantly advance in resolving the stalemate situation in the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The success of the Czech Presidency can be seen in the achievement of a partial general approach of the Council on the proposal for an Asylum Procedure Regulation (APR), as well as in the shift in the discussions on solidarity, where member states expressed their support for the flexible solidarity and responsibility concept.

There were 9 secondments of experts to EUAA Asylum Support Teams by the SR in 2022 (4 to Cyprus, 3 to Lithuania and 2 to Malta). These secondments took place mainly in the first quarter of the year, as, after the Russian aggression against Ukraine, it was necessary to deploy human resources in the SR.¹⁹⁵

Cooperation with non-EU States

The SR and Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to share know-how in the field of asylum and the functioning of the asylum system via the programme of study visits established in 2021 and also through the *Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina* of 17 September 2021:

- In October 2022, experts from the Procedural Department of the Migration Office of the Mol SR were deployed to the Asylum Sector of the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BaH). During the expert visit, the implementation of the asylum procedure in all its complexity and the challenges and specificities that both countries face in the field of asylum and migration policy were addressed. Several common challenges were identified, such as the diversity and unpredictability of migration flows, the lack of interpreters for selected languages, the complexity of processing some cases (e. g. the cases of application of exclusion clauses or of converts and LGBTQI+ persons), the evaluation of evidence in the asylum procedure or the particularities caused by factors such as the geographical location of the two countries (BaH as a country on the Western Balkans route and Slovakia as a country neighbouring Ukraine). In November 2022, a study visit of the partners from the Asylum Sector to Slovakia followed, during which they learned about the details of the practical implementation of the asylum procedure in the SR, the evaluation of evidence or the processing of Country of Origin

Information (COI). The experts also discussed the ongoing implementation of measures and harmonisation of asylum law in the context of the EU accession process of BaH.

- In November 2022, a study visit of partners from the Social Services Centre in Bihać to Slovakia took place. Based on the recommendations from the Migration Office of the Mol SR, the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAMRS - Slovak Aid) provided a subsidy of €30,000 in August 2022 to Social Services Centre in Bihać to upgrade their technical equipment and to cover the expenses for the wages of two social workers who will work in the Lipa Migration Centre as well as in the Bihać Centre. During the study visit, the experts familiarised themselves with the practical aspects of social work carried out in the asylum facilities of the Migration Office of the Mol SR and also discussed the challenges and specificities that both countries face in social work in asylum facilities. The exchange also aimed to provide methodological assistance and hand over internal materials pertaining to social work that have proved useful in the Migration Office’s facilities.¹⁹⁶

The SR provided humanitarian financial and in-kind assistance to cover the needs of migrants and refugees to several states in 2022 (see Chapter 13).

You can read more about the integration of persons granted international protection and about awareness-raising activities in the field of forced/irregular migration in Chapter 7. Legislative changes, measures and activities to address the situation of the people fleeing the war in Ukraine are described in a separate chapter (see Chapter 3).

¹⁹⁴ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹⁹⁵ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

¹⁹⁶ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.



Minors and Other Vulnerable Groups

A significant development in the area of care for unaccompanied minors in 2022 is the amendment to the Asylum Act, which specifies the facts that need to be included in the instruction to the applicant for international protection having regard to his/her age and maturity level. In line with the practice so far, the amendment explicitly introduces the consideration of the best interest of a minor in the Asylum Act. The number of UAMs placed in Slovak facilities has increased, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine, but the number of departures from the facilities has also been high. The number of UAMs applying for asylum in the SR remains low.

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 2022.

6.1. Unaccompanied Minors

Statistics and Trends

The number of unaccompanied minors in the SR grew in the period of years 2018 – 2022. A total of 270 new unaccompanied minors (UAMs) were placed in SPCSG facilities in the SR in the course of 2022¹⁹⁷, coming mainly from Ukraine due to the war there. UAMs from Ukraine accounted for more than half of all new UAMs placed in the facilities in 2022. Other UAMs were from the coun-

¹⁹⁷ SPCSG bodies registered a total of 290 UAMs (of which 43 were girls) in 2022.

tries usually represented in this migrant group, such as Syria, Afghanistan and Morocco. Despite the above mentioned circumstances, the increase in the number of UAMs in 2022 was not as significant as between 2021 (183 UAMs) and 2020 (79 UAMs). A growing trend in the numbers of new UAMs could already be observed since 2018, when the number of UAMs placed in the facilities was 19, while in 2019 it was already 76. However, it needs to be mentioned that a vast majority of these UAMs leave the SR after some time. In 2022, the number of such departures was 208, which represents more than 75% (see **Table 17**).¹⁹⁸

Nine UAMs applied for asylum in 2022, which represents only 3% of the total number of UAMs newly arriving in the SPCSG facilities (see **Table 18**). This is a decrease compared to 2021, when 21 UAMs applied for asylum.¹⁹⁹ In general, the number of UAMs who applied to enter the asylum procedure in the SR is low: 9 UAMs in 2020, 29 UAMs in 2019 and 10 UAMs in 2018.²⁰⁰

Policies, Legislation and Measures

There were no significant developments in relation to legislation or policies concerning unaccompanied minors in 2022. A majority of measures addressed the situations connected to the war in Ukraine (see also Chapter 3).

The IOM MIC continued to provide counselling and advisory services to UAMs in CFCs even in 2022. The services included mostly Slovak language courses and individualised labour counselling. The IOM MIC cultural mediators were also involved in integration measures and social and cultural orientation for the UAMs (for Afghan nationals and for Arabic speaking UAMs). In 2022, the IOM MIC updated the *Ahoj! Hello, Welcome to Slovakia* guide aimed at UAMs. The brochure with information is available in Arab, English, Dari, Hindi, Pashto, Urdu and Vietnamese. In 2022, the brochure was also prepared in Ukrainian language.²⁰¹ Moreover, the MIC IOM also organized two educational trips in East Slovakia (as the CFC for UAMs is located in Medzilaborce in East Slovakia) for UAMs, tutors, cultural mediators and the UAMs guardian.²⁰²

6.2. Minor Migrants

A significant development in terms of legislation in 2022 is represented by the amendment to the Act on Asylum²⁰³, which specifies, in more detail, the facts to be contained in the instruction for the applicant for international protection. In line with the best interest of the minor principle, the provision is supplemented by the specification that the instructions and information shall be provided in a manner which takes into consideration the age and maturity of the minor. In accordance with the previous practice, the best interest of the minor should be considered in the adoption of specific measures in proceedings under the Act on Asylum, in the provision of care for applicants in asylum facilities as well as in the initial integration measures. Thus, the amendment explicitly incorporates the best interest of the minor into the Act on Asylum.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Source: CoLSAF.

¹⁹⁹ Source: CoLSAF.

²⁰⁰ Source: MO Mol SR, available at: <https://minv.sk/?statistiky-20>, consulted on 18/04/2022

²⁰¹ Available at <https://www.mic.iom.sk/sk/na-stiahnutie/brozury-a-letaky/itemlist/category/80-maloleti-bez-sprivedu.html> (consulted on 30/03/2023).

²⁰² Information provided by the IOM office in the SR.

²⁰³ Changes to Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on asylum entered into effect as of 1 June 2022. In this context it concerned ensuring the application of Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection.

²⁰⁴ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

Similarly to previous years, even in 2022 the SR responded to the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) *Regarding the Implementation of the Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* (Third Evaluation Ground) by preparing information for the Committee of the Parties on the status of recommendations implementation. GRETA Recommendations no. 10, no. 15 and no. 19 focus on child victims of trafficking, namely ensuring adequate training and approach to/working with child victims of trafficking, prevention of trafficking in children, identification of child victims of trafficking and assistance provided to them.²⁰⁵

Based on the tasks arising from the National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and the tasks arising from the monitoring mechanism of the Group of Experts on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), in 2022 information on trafficking in human beings and on the programme for the support and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings, including the contact number for the national helpline for victims of trafficking, became a part of the instructions on the rights and obligations of asylum seekers.²⁰⁶

All MO Mol SR decision-makers who decide on applications for international protection took part in the EUAA training on Interviewing children and Interviewing vulnerable persons.²⁰⁷

6.3. Other Vulnerable Groups

On 17 March 2022, Government of the SR adopted the amendment to the Act on Asylum²⁰⁸, which, effective as of 1 June 2022, provides for social counselling, psychological counselling or other types of counselling and a cultural orientation course to be provided also to asylum seekers based on their individual needs and vulnerabilities. In the case of social counselling, psychological counselling and a cultural orientation course for applicants, these services are provided within the framework of a project funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and are partially provided (except for psychological counselling) by the staff members of the Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.²⁰⁹

The MO Mol SR in its asylum facilities creates adequate conditions for the accommodation and care of foreigners while taking into account the special needs of vulnerable persons which were detected based on the individual examination of their state. The term "adequate conditions" also includes the adoption of adequate measures to prevent assaults and violence as well as provision of protection to victims of trafficking in human beings. Where vulnerability or special needs were identified that required the adoption of special procedural safeguards or the adaptation of reception conditions, the necessary measures have been taken and, where appropriate, the asylum seeker has been referred (with his/her consent) to other professionals depending on their specific situation.²¹⁰ See also Chapter 5.3.

The training of MO Mol SR employees continued mainly through EUAA training modules. In 2022, two national trainings on Interviewing children and Interviewing vulnerable persons were organised. Other EUAA courses attended by the MO Mol SR staff in 2022 included the trainings in the area of vulnerability, e.g. Trafficking in human beings.

Cooperation with the Department of Social Work of the Faculty of Education of the Comenius University in Bratislava was established through UNICEF, specifically in the field of research, education of the Migration Office employees and staff members of other cooperating organizations, and volunteering of students in Humanitarian Centre in Gabčíkovo. Most of the educational activities focused on children or families with minor children.²¹¹

205 Source: DFEA Mol SR questionnaire.

206 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

207 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

208 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

209 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

210 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

211 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.



Integration and Inclusion

In 2022, the SR adopted *The National Action Plan for Women's Employment 2022-2030*, which addresses the status of women with migration experience in the labour market.

By amending the Act on Asylum, the primary integration of asylum beneficiaries and foreigners was modified. Subsidiary protection was provided to them, too.

Projects of several organisations active in Slovakia in affairs related to migration (e.g. IOM, SHC, Mareena Civic Association or Human Rights League) were an important part of measures to support integration of third country nationals in 2022. They focused, among other things, on the provision of counselling, language courses or activities to increase the awareness of migration. The Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) has continued working in research. A study about the integration of women migrants was published within the EMN. All the organisations reacted to the needs of the temporary protection holders from Ukraine by many activities, which were in the forefront of their work in 2022 (see also Chapter 3).

7.1. Integration of Third-Country Nationals

7.1.1. Policies and Legislation

In 2022, the National Action Plan for Women's Employment 2022-2030 was adopted.²¹² It aims to ensure that women and men, in all their diversity, have equal opportunities, prosper and are economically independent, paid equally for their work of equal value, have equal access to funding and receive fair pensions.²¹³ Selected parts of the document concern the status of migrant women on the labour market and the reconciliation of family and private life by improving the real availability of formalized childcare by setting up children's groups, at the time when parent or other natural persons entrusted by the court with the child's personal care are preparing to enter or return to the labour market, are preparing for a profession by studying at a secondary school or higher education institution or during the time of them carrying out gainful work. In this context, it proposes the creation of flexible forms of childcare, so-called children's groups.

With respect to the labour market, it also points to the need to improve digital and language skills of women, including migrant women, in compliance with the needs of and the development on the labour market. This is to be met e. g. by the provision of individual counselling (information about the Slovak labour market, communication with employers and other stakeholders, counselling about social aid and support for the refugees including the counselling about the inclusion of children into schools and preschools), education for temporary protection holders, supporting mobility, volunteering and placement/training with employers, following the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) through projects implemented by the Labour Offices.²¹⁴

In 2022, by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 718/2022 of 16 November 2022, the Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreigners was transformed to the Steering Committee for Migration, Integration and Inclusion of Foreigners. Its activities included not only governmental, but also international and non-governmental as well as social partners, representatives of social partners, self-governments at regional and local level, and the academia (see also Chapter 2).

From the perspective of legislation, amending the Act on Asylum was important development in 2022. It modified the primary integration of asylum beneficiaries and foreigners. Subsidiary protection was provided to them, too (see also Chapter 7.1.3).

7.1.2. Measures to Support Integration

In 2022, several changes to support integration happened at the state level. Several of them were related to the war in Ukraine, but influenced also other groups of migrants, not only the temporary protection holders from Ukraine.

²¹² The National Action Plan for Women's Employment 2022-2030 was adopted by the Gender Equality Committee in their Resolution No. 80 of 28 September 2022. Available at https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/sk/ministerstvo/spolocny-sekretariat-vyborov/vybor-rodovu-rovnost/dokumenty-udalosti/nap_zamestnanosti_zien_22-30.pdf (consulted on 11/01/2023).

²¹³ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

²¹⁴ Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

According to the School Act,²¹⁵ basic and extended state language courses are organized for the children of foreigners in order to remove language barriers. In this respect, the language course curriculum changed as of 1 April 2022: the number of lessons in the basic language course was increased from four to six a week. The school therefore provides 48 lessons per student for 8 weeks. If the student cannot keep up with the information covered or the pace of instruction, 48 lessons can be spread over longer period; however, at a minimum of 4 lessons a week.²¹⁶

Regarding the social aspect: by the Amendment to the School Act,²¹⁷ a social scholarship is granted to the students of study programmes in the first or second degree, who have permanent residence in the SR, have been granted asylum, subsidiary protection or temporary protection and have met the laid down conditions. The social scholarship contributes to the costs of study. The student is legally entitled to it.

Given the housing pool, which has not been sufficient for a long time and cannot meet the needs of Slovak population without state intervention and offer affordable rental housing for the people authorised to reside in Slovakia, in exchange for fair and predictable rent, the Act No. 222/2022 Coll. on State Support for Rental Housing came into effect on 1 July 2022. Rental housing can be applied for by each natural person with permanent, temporary or similar residence in the SR, including the foreigners. The SR plans to open non-binding registration at the beginning of 2023.²¹⁸

Within the policy objective 4 (a more social Europe) of the Programme Slovakia for the Programming Period 2021-2027,²¹⁹ the content of the specific objective i) was prepared within the priority Active Inclusion and Available Services aimed to support the integration of third-country nationals including migrants. The objective is to contribute to better integration of migrants into the society, to make the social services system available to them and help them obtain the language competence, skills and experience needed for their successful integration into the labour market. Another objective is to make the domestic population more sensitive to migrants across communities, using the best practice examples.²²⁰

In this respect, the integration support continued to be implemented mainly by project activities also in 2022. They focused on various integration areas and offered direct support to migrants, such as counselling, courses etc., or contributed to the creation of policies, measures or sensitive public discussion. As mentioned above, the activities of organisations active in this area have been largely affected by the war in Ukraine in 2022. Therefore, they reoriented their activities to assisting people fleeing Ukraine – by extending their existing or through new activities. In this chapter we will primarily address the support for integration of all third-country nationals, even though it is not possible to clearly separate these activities from the assistance provided to the temporary protection holders from Ukraine. More detailed information on the support for the temporary protection holders from Ukraine can be found in Chapter 3.

In 2022, the IOM Migration Information Centre continued to provide not only their counselling services in legal, work and socio-cultural areas, but also other services to promote integration,

such as language and vocational education of foreigners or protection of UAMs rights and support of their integration. The cooperation with migrant communities has also been developed. The work of IOM MIC was largely impacted by the war in Ukraine in 2022: they have adjusted their activities to the situation, in particular by extending their capacities and providing information through all the channels also in Ukrainian. Consultations about residence, family, employment, entrepreneurship, education or citizenship in the SR continued to be provided in person, via phone or e-mail, while the number of consultations provided have increased by 44% as compared to previous year. As a result of the war conflict, every other client of the IOM MIC was from Ukraine.²²¹

All the information is summarised in a comprehensive way on the IOM MIC website in Slovak, English, and Russian. Selected information was added also in the Ukrainian language. In 2022, the MIC continued the online webinars from 2021, which focused mainly on labour and family law in 2022.²²²

In 2022, the MIC IOM Visa Check²²³ a Work Permit Check²²⁴ web applications continued to be used actively. They provide information to foreigners from any country who want to come to Slovakia to find out if visa is needed to enter Slovakia and what kind of residence is required to study, work or engage in business in Slovakia.

As for counselling services, the IOM MIC started to provide consultations and services contributing to attracting and maintaining talents in the SR within the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR in 2022. The MIC thus extended their counselling services specifically to talents, highly qualified foreign workers, and foreign students from the EU and non-EU countries, as well as the Slovak returnees and employers who employ highly-qualified foreign workers from EU and non-E countries. They provided consultations and specialised trainings on employing foreigners.²²⁵

Free-of-charge legal assistance to migrants (counselling and representation) is provided by the Human Rights League (HRL), either pro bono or within their project focused on hate crimes victims and potential victims of such crimes – Muslims, refugees, asylum seekers and other groups of migrants living in the SR.²²⁶ The project activities include also the creation of a network of lawyers, attorneys, non-governmental organisations, and foreign experts addressing these topics (see also Chapter 7.2). Specific counselling and legal representation are provided for the refugees within a UNHCR supported project.

Also the HRL provided information for foreigners about various areas of life and residence in the SR on their website in 2022. The information was strongly focused on the temporary protection holders from Ukraine.²²⁷

In 2022, the IOM MIC continued to provide consultations about the labour market orientation, CV preparation, preparing for the job interview, communicating with employers, searching for

215 Sec. 146 Par. 3 of the School Act.

216 Source: MoSSER SR questionnaire.

217 Act No. 131/2002 on Higher Education Institutions and on changes and amendments to some acts

218 Source: IOM and the State Supported Housing Agency questionnaire.

219 Available at https://www.eurofondy.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Program_Slovensko_SK_verzia-1.0-1.pdf (consulted on 11/01/2023).

220 Source: MoLSAF SR questionnaire.

221 Source: IOM Office in the SR. Statistical data reflect also the number of the consultations provided in relation to the war in Ukraine.

222 Available at: IOM Slovakia - YouTube (consulted on 04/04/2023)

223 Available at: <https://mic.iom.sk/visacheck/en/home/> (consulted on 04/04/2023).

224 Available at: <https://www.mic.iom.sk/workcheck/sk/domov/> (consulted on 04/04/2023).

225 Available at <https://www.mic.iom.sk/novinky/780-rozsirenie-portfolio-bezplatnych-sluzieb.html> (downloaded on 04/04/2023).

226 The SalamSK project is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014 – 2020) and was implemented between January 2021 and December 2022. Available at: <https://www.hrl.sk/en/our-work/projects/old-projects/salamsk-combating-islamophobia-and-supporting-hate-crime-victims-in-slovakia> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

227 More information: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/co-robime/projekty/ukrajina/ako-pomahame> (downloaded on 04/04/2023).

job offers or arranging employment. They also provided a financial support for client retraining courses in order to improve the chances of success on the labour market.

The war in Ukraine has also influenced the Slovak language courses. About a half of them was specifically intended only for the temporary protection holders from Ukraine. The courses were held both online and in person in Bratislava, Košice, Medzilaborce (for the UAMs), and in other cities in Slovakia. Social and cultural orientation courses were also held. They help foreigners orient themselves in important areas of life in Slovakia. In 2022, the Welcoming Slovakia meetings continued to be organised in cooperation with cultural mediators – representatives of associations and foreigners' communities in Slovakia. Foreigners obtained practical and useful information about living in Slovakia at them.²²⁸

In 2022, the Slovak language and conversation courses were provided mainly to the third-country nationals and other foreigners also by the Mareena civic association in Bratislava and Nitra as well as Košice in the second half of 2022. As in the case of the IOM MIC, the courses were used mainly by the temporary protection holders from Ukraine in 2022.²²⁹

Counselling and Slovak language courses were offered by many other organisations in Slovakia in 2022 – with particular focus on the temporary protection holders from Ukraine (see also Chapter 3).

In 2022, the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) concluded their *Integration of foreigners – researching barriers, instruments and attitudes project*. Its main objective was to map the integration of foreigners, availability of integration services and perception of integration by the foreigners themselves and the majority population in a comprehensive way. The project was concluded by the conference titled *Slovakia and migration. Finding Pathways to Coexistence*. All the findings of the two-year research project were presented at the conference.²³⁰

7.1.3. Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection

On 17 March 2022, the Government of the SR adopted changes to the Act on Asylum, which came into effect on 1 June 2022. The amendment modifies primary integration of asylum holders and foreigners who are subsidiary protection beneficiaries in a systematic manner. It also unifies their status, while:

- introduces a one-off benefit in the same amount (1.5 times the subsistence minimum amount for one adult individual) also for foreigners who are subsidiary protection beneficiaries;
- introduces an integration benefit for asylum holders and foreigners who are subsidiary protection beneficiaries for a period of six months (equal to 1.75 times the subsistence minimum amount); In the case of the integration allowance, this is a formalisation of a similar allowance that is already provided in the SR in a comparable amount to asylum holders and foreigners granted subsidiary protection under an integration project financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund;
- allows the integration centre to also accommodate foreigners granted subsidiary protection;
- establishes the provision of social counselling, psychological counselling, Slovak language

²²⁸ Source: IOM Bratislava. As a result of the war in Ukraine, the majority of course participants were from Ukraine in 2022.

²²⁹ Source: www.mic.iom.sk

²³⁰ The project was funded by AMIF. The analyses are available at <http://cvek.sk/publikacie/> (consulted on 04/04/2023).

course and cultural orientation course for asylum holders and foreigners who are subsidiary protection beneficiaries, based on their individual needs and usually for 12 months following the granting of asylum or subsidiary protection, in the case of a minor child and if this is needed for their favourable development. This is also a formalisation of services provided within an integration project funded from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund;

The systemic approach of the Act on Asylum to the primary integration also provides the sustainability of this system if the EU funding is not available.²³¹

In 2022, the implementation of the *Rifugio* project by the Slovak Humanitarian Council continued. Their clients – asylum or subsidiary protection beneficiaries – were provided social, labour, and psychological counselling, legal and social assistance or the assistance in searching for accommodation, material or financial help, Slovak language teaching, and school integration.²³² At the beginning of the year, the project saw a sudden increase in the number of clients. Over 50 persons from Afghanistan were relocated by a government flying service to Slovakia, granted international protection and included into the integration process.

In the second half of 2022, the system of working with integration plans of the clients was deepened and a new Social and cultural orientation course was launched. It consisted of 9 individual interactive modules supervised by a cultural mediator and a social worker. There were some changes to the way the financial support is paid to the refugees in the first integration phase and transition to the integration contributions provided by the state. An integrated online client system was launched at the end of the year. It made the work with the clients in integration and in camp and residence facilities for asylum seekers more effective. A total of six integration activities were implemented: they focused on getting to know social and legal system of the SR, working conditions in the SR, possibilities of employment as a refugee and getting to know various foreign communities as a refugee.

Thanks to a closer cooperation with the Department of Social Work at the Comenius University, the integration project employees actively participated in trainings for social workers and assistants. International cooperation with the EUAA and OSCE was also established within trainings and educational guides. The project was joined by 271 persons. 19 events for beneficiaries of international protection and wider public were organised.²³³

The HRL in cooperation with IKEA continued to implement the three-year Skills for Employment project to support the international protection beneficiaries in Slovakia in 2022. The aim of the initiative is to help these people obtain new skills and work experience and thus improve their chances to find employment, either in IKEA or in other companies in Slovakia. The participants can also find better chances to integrate into their new host community. The program is composed of 16 hours of labour legislation education and learning skills needed when searching for a job, 4 months of language courses or conversations focused on improving the knowledge of the Slovak language, and a training focusing on the opportunities in IKEA, what the job interview

²³¹ If the current and the future Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund do not follow each other, it would not be possible to guarantee the provision of allowance for asylum holders and foreign nationals granted subsidiary protection. Moreover, the statuses of asylum holders and foreigners who are subsidiary protection beneficiaries within the primary integration (i. e. the provision of one-off benefit, the accommodation in the integration centre). also have not been equal. Information provided by the MO Mol SR.

²³² The project was implemented until 31 October 2023 and is funded from AMIF. Available at: <https://nasiutecenci.sk/rifugio/> (consulted on 04/04/2023).

²³³ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

and the selection process look like. IKEA is offering 19 vacancies in Bratislava to the beneficiaries of international protection. The project follows the global commitment of IKEA to support more than 2,500 refugees in 300 IKEA units in 30 countries by the end of 2022.²³⁴

In January – February 2022, the Mareena civic association continued to operate the social pop-up Mareena café, which offered work opportunities to women who are beneficiaries of international protection and foreigners from non-EU countries. During the rest of 2022, Mareena in cooperation with employees provided catering services to events such as the One World festival, the World between the Lines conference or the World Refugee Day in Tyršák. Mareena café aims to contribute to economic independence and social inclusion of the women, develop their potential and skills and help deepen the relationships between the Slovaks and the foreigners. During the year, they were looking for new premises for the café as the relaunch is planned for 2023.²³⁵

7.1.4. Integration at Local Level and Civic Participation of Foreigners

In 2022, the majority of activities directed towards the support for the integration of foreigners at regional and local level focused (as was the case in other areas) mainly on the temporary protection holders from Ukraine (see also Chapter 3). Among the activities which were not focused specifically on helping this group of people, the Europe-wide *Successful Migrant Integration in Regions* project, into which the HRL was included, is worth mentioning. Apart from the HRL, three partner organisations from the EU MS cooperate in the project: the Czech Association for Migration and Integration (SIMI), as the project leader, the Belgian City of Mechelen and AGABY - the working committee of migration and integration advisory councils in Bavaria, Germany (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ausländer-, Migranten- und Integrationsbeiräte Bayerns). The project aims at creating innovative tools to facilitate integration at regional and local level as well as at transferring innovations among the EU states and adjusting them to local needs. Plans for three years include: a methodology of integration workshops for local authorities will be created and piloted, a comparative study on the structural dimension of local integration will be made and the existing manual for local authorities will be extended.²³⁶

In 2021, the COMIN (Community Center for Work and Knowledge Mobility) continued their activities as the first contact spot for foreigners. They continued providing information to foreigners about various aspects of living in the city as well as in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. They also provided the language courses in cooperation with the Mareena Civic Association. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, they have extended their activities to the provision of services to temporary protection holders from Ukraine (see also Chapter 3).²³⁷

234 Source: <https://www.ikea.com/sk/sk/this-is-ikea/community-engagement/ikea-pomaha-utecencom-s-uplatnenim-na-trhu-prace-pub-2c2373f0> (consulted on 14/04/2022).

235 Available at <https://mareena.sk/mareena-cafe> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

236 The project has been implemented within the Erasmus+, key action 2: Strategic Partnerships. Information about project is available at: <https://www.hrl.sk/en/our-work/projects/projects/successful-migrant-integration-in-regions---> (consulted on 27/11/2023).

237 COMIN was established in October 2019 as the first contact point for foreigners with temporary or permanent residence in Slovakia. The Centre provides legal counselling and basic information for the life of foreigners in Slovakia. More information available at: <https://comin.sk/> (consulted on 01/05/2022).

7.2. Raising Awareness on Migration and Non-Discrimination

The activities of most of the traditional entities who work in migration, raising awareness on migration and non-discrimination, and tolerance building focused on assisting the temporary protection holders from Ukraine. The ongoing projects were extended by the elements of war in Ukraine and related assistance.

In 2022, the Hoaxy a podvody - Polícia SR (Hoaxes and Scams - Police of the SR) social media page refuted hoaxes and disinformation related also to migration, in particular in the context of the war in Ukraine. They inform about topics which are often publicly misused in the antimigration narrative.²³⁸

The MO Mol SR conducts public awareness activities about the migration and asylum related topics using lectures at music festivals: Dobrý festival (Prešov) – 17-18 June 2022, Slovenské alternatívne leto (Bzovík) – 15-16 July 2022. In March 2022, in connection with the war conflict in Ukraine, a performance of a play based on Janne Teller's "Domov, kde je ten Tvoj? (Home, where is yours?)" took place in cooperation with the New Stage Theater Bratislava. It was followed by a discussion about the current situation. The performance was held five times in 2022. The MO Mol SR participated in the Bratislava event on the occasion of the World Refugee Day also in 2022. They cooperate with the departmental schools: Academy of the Police Force and the Secondary Vocational School of the Police Force. In March 2022, a MO Mol SR representative held a discussion class with nine year old pupils at the Cádova Elementary School in Bratislava focusing on the perception of the situation related to the war in Ukraine, the perception of people fleeing their countries of origin, their potential reasons and needs. In October 2022, a MO Mol SR representative participated in the planned "Education for Teachers" (cooperation of MO Mol SR, MoESRS SR and UNHCR).²³⁹

The ongoing HRL's *SalamSK* project implemented in cooperation with the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, should help improve tolerance and non-discrimination in the Slovak society and relations with foreigners. It focuses on suppressing islamophobia in Slovakia, improving the awareness of public and supporting the victims of hate crimes. Informational videos with relevant legal information for target group in Slovak, English, Ukrainian, Serbian, Arabic and Farsi were created within the project. It also includes legal counselling and the creation of a network of lawyers (see Chapter 7.1.2). A series of podcasts was published, and several meetings and workshops organised. In 2022, the data on the presentation of Islam and Muslims in the Slovak media were published. In 2022, the Fórum integrácie (Integration Forum) conference was also organised within the project. It focused on the assistance for the people from Ukraine, as well as on hate crimes in the society.²⁴⁰

Other 2022 events aiming to approach the topic of migration and asylum in the SR in a sensitive manner included, for example, the Fjúžn multigenre and multicultural festival by the Milan Šimečka Foundation. Every year it focuses on the topic of migration and foreigners living in Slovakia.²⁴¹

238 Available at <https://www.facebook.com/hoaxPZ/> and <https://www.instagram.com/hoaxpz/> (consulted on 5/4/ 2023).

239 Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

240 The project is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014 – 2020). Available at: <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/co-robime/projekty/aktualne-projekty/salamsk-bojujeme-proti-islamofobii-a-podporujeme-obete-nenavistnych-trestnych-cinov-na-slovensku> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

241 More information available at: <https://festival.fjuzn.sk/index.php?lang=sk> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

Milan Šimečka Foundation in cooperation with many organisations active in this area and with the support of the MoI SR prepared the Staré mesto Umbrella March followed by the cultural programme and discussions, expo and many other activities on the occasion of the World Refugee Day.²⁴²

Also, the Mareena organisation worked on sensitizing the population in relation to migration in 2022: they organised community activities such as brunches, cafés, picknicks, iftari, movie screenings, or the Mareena festival. Apart from the community activities in Bratislava and Nitra, which have been working well for a long time, activities in Košice and (through the Outreach project) also in Banská Bystrica and Trenčín were renewed or organised for the first time. Mareena also continued to conduct informal teacher education and discussions with students in 2022.²⁴³

As for education, also the educational material *Aj my sme tu doma (We Are at Home Here)* for teachers and lecturers published in 2022 builds on the series of podcasts *Aj my sme tu doma (We Are at Home Here)* prepared by the IOM in 2021.^{244 245} It provides them flexible and user-friendly material with evidence based information, activities and references to further resources, with which they can work in a simple and interesting way and thus prepare and integrate the topic of migration and integration of migrants into education. In this respect, the IOM trained experts from 11 cities in 2022 – directors, teachers, social teachers, school psychologists and other workers. The trainings concerned how to create interesting education about migration and use the above *Aj my sme tu doma (We Are at Home Here)* teaching material.

Another educational training for teachers of elementary schools was introduced by the Milan Šimečka Foundation in 2022 by educational tools Farebná škola (Colourful School) and Stories that Move. They are educational tools and methods, which strengthen the skills of teachers and bring inspiration – how to work with the topics of identity, discrimination, prejudices, and migration in the class.²⁴⁶

People in Need also published a new publication in 2022: *Ako učiť o migrácii (How to Teach about Migration)*. It comprises methodical materials to support educational activities during and outside classes. It includes best practice examples and practical teaching tips tried and tested in Estonia, Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia.²⁴⁷

People in Need with the Slovak National Gallery created new educational video *Ľudia v pohybe (Moving People)* as a part of the *Výtvarná rozcvička (Artistic Warmup)* series. It explains the reasons for migration of people in various historical periods using playful animation and fine arts. The video can be used as an aid for opening the topic of refugees and war in Ukraine at schools.²⁴⁸

Also the EMN Slovakia worked to raise awareness about migration. In November 2022, about twenty young people participating in the EMN Youth Day joined the discussion on various mi-

gration topics and by means of video streaming connected with their peers from 10 European countries and the European Commission. The opinions of young people from individual countries including the SR were collected by the EC, which tries to more efficiently include them in understanding and formation of migration policies and narratives in the EU. Young people got the chance to try the Destination Europe educational activity within the event. As a minister, European commissioner, mayor or an NGO representative they found how they can influence the creation of migration and integration policies by their decisions and how these decisions can influence the lives of migrants.²⁴⁹

The EMN used the Destination Europe educational tool at various schools and meetings with youth to increase the awareness about migration in 2022. Students were able to try the educational activity in Bratislava and meetings are planned in other parts of Slovakia in 2023.

The Destination Europe material as well as EMN and migration in general were presented also during the Europe Day in Bratislava, which is organised by the Representation of the EC in Slovakia, the European Parliament Office in Slovakia and the European Investment Bank.²⁵⁰

In order to present information about migration, in 2022 the EMN prepared the videos and podcasts from the 8th *Educational Seminar on Migration: Migration in Multilateral World*, which was held in 2021.²⁵¹ The podcasts are available at the EMN Slovakia podcast channel.²⁵²

Podcasts about migration were also prepared by the People in Need non-governmental organisation through the *Svet medzi riadkami (World between the Lines)* series of activities in 2022. It is a media initiative with the main aim to support global imagination and ethics in journalism.²⁵³

In cooperation with the .týždeň daily, the HRL prepared new parts of the *Migration Compass* podcast, which has been informing the public and leaders about various topics related to migration in international and Slovak context since 2019.²⁵⁴

In 2022, the Ambrela – Platform for Development Organisations closed the three-year long project activities *Tváre migrácie (Faces of Migration)*. Their aim was to explain and illustrate migration to the public using thematic campaigns, educational trainings, and creation of expert analyses and short videos. In 2022, they published the media kit serving to inform the workers in the media as well as communication managers in partner organisations about the activities, outcomes and successes of the Faces of Migration awareness campaign.²⁵⁵

In 2022, Eduma continued in their educational activities within the *online Živá knižnica (Online Live Library)* website addressing the topic of inclusion including migration topics via storytelling.²⁵⁶

242 More information at <https://www.facebook.com/events/970007643681467> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

243 Information from Mareena.

244 Available at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgWkt_s8RCEq5WELIAMHDkbtEndg_JPLO (consulted on 05/04/2023).

245 Available at https://iom.sk/sk/publikacie/integracia-migrantov.html?download=162:mic/iom_instr-mat-aj-my-sme-tu-doma_2022-03-16.pdf (consulted on 05/04/2023).

246 Available at <https://www.nadaciamilanasimecku.sk/novinky/trening-interkulturneho-vzdelavania> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

247 Available at <https://globalnevezdelavanie.sk/migracia-prirucka/> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

248 Available at <https://www.webumenia.sk/edu/vytvarna-rozcvička-ludia-v-pohybe?fbclid=IwAR0LmV3qqI6mz2BN-IJEKHx6ta4Yp5Zr-LAAw2u1sQnGKTJa8qCrGOvWyMk> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

249 Available at <https://www.emn.sk/sk/novinky/691-diskusia-mladych-v-bratislave-na-migracne-temy.html> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

250 Available at <https://www.emn.sk/sk/novinky/653-emn-slovensko-odprezentovalo-novu-vzdelavacu-aktivitu-ciel-europa.html> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

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

252 Available at <https://emnslovakia.podbean.com/> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

253 Available at <https://globalnevezdelavanie.sk/svet-medzi-riadkami/> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

254 Individual parts are available at: <https://www.tyzden.sk/podcasty/rozne/> (consulted on 06/04/2023).

255 Available at <https://ambrela.org/projekty/rozvojova-spolupraca-a-migracia-slovakaid-projekt/> (consulted on 05/04/2023).

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

In 2022, Mareena organisation developed their volunteer programme. They recruited new volunteers in Bratislava, Nitra, and Košice and continued cooperating with those already involved. Within the programme, they helped individually include the beneficiaries of international protection or other foreigners. Community volunteers helped in many events organised by Mareena, such as language cafés, basketball, Turkish brunch, Ukrainian community kitchen, Mareena festival etc. Expert volunteers offered their knowledge and expertise. Recruitment and related awareness campaigns were conducted within the V cudzom meste (In a foreign city) campaign (Note of the authors: the title of a well-known singer's song. She participated in the campaign.). The campaign was awarded several advertisement awards.



Citizenship and Statelessness

In the last five years with the exception of “pandemic” year 2021, the number of third-country nationals who have been granted citizenship in the SR has been continually rising. Between 2018 and 2022, state citizenship was granted to approximately 400 – 600 third-country nationals a year. In 2022, the SR granted 515 of them, while most new citizens of the SR came from Serbia, Ukraine, USA, the United Kingdom and Russia. In 2022, 27 international protection beneficiaries became 27 new citizens of the SR.

Effective from 1 April 2022, the Act on State Citizenship made it easier for some foreigners to become citizens of the SR: in some cases, they do not have to prove knowledge of the Slovak language and applicant, who has been granted residence in the SR, can be granted the Slovak Citizenship without meeting the condition of 8 years of permanent residence, if the applicant was not a citizen of the SR and at least one of their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents was a Czechoslovak citizen born in the territory of the SR.

In 2022, the SR did not adopt any legislative or other measures which would significantly influence the situation of stateless persons.

8.1. Statistics and Trends

Third-country nationals currently comprise more than two-thirds of all foreigners acquiring citizenship in Slovakia each year. In the last years, the number of third-country nationals who have been granted citizenship in the SR has been continually rising²⁵⁷. “Pandemic” year 2021 is the only exception during which the SR granted the state citizenship to 480 third-country nationals. Between 2018 and 2022, state citizenship was granted to approximately 400 – 600 third-country nationals a year. Most new citizens of the SR came from Serbia, Ukraine, USA, the United Kingdom and Russia (see **Table 6** in Annex).

Citizenship of the SR can be obtained also by persons from non-EU countries to whom international protection was granted. In 2022, 27 asylum or subsidiary protection holders acquired Slovak citizenship (see **Table 6** in the Annex). They came mainly from Iraq, Cameroon, Somalia, Palestine, Ukraine, and Afghanistan.

Citizenship of the SR acquired in 2018 – 2022

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Citizenship of the SR obtained by third-country nationals	381	546	626	480	515	2,548
Citizenship of the SR obtained by all foreigners	1,071	913	916	707	797	4,404
Total	1,452	1,459	1,542	1,187	1,312	6,952
Out of which the citizenship of the SR granted to beneficiaries of international protection (asylum and subsidiary protection)	18	9	14	10	27	78

Source: MoI SR.

Note: Since 2020, the total number has been accounting for the post-Brexit situation. This means that the total number includes the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

8.2. Acquiring and Losing Citizenship

As of 1 April 2022, the following main changes were introduced into the Act on Citizenship²⁵⁸ (they include the persons with foreign nationality):

- Knowledge of the Slovak language does not have to be demonstrated by a foreigner who has successfully passed the secondary school leaving examination in the Slovak language, the state language examination in the Slovak language or the state examination at a higher education institution in a study programme conducted in the Slovak language, if no more than ten years passed since passing such secondary school leaving examination, state language examination or state examination on the day of filing the Application for Slovak Citizenship.
- Applicant, who has been granted residence in the SR, can be granted the Slovak Citizenship without meeting the condition stated in Paragraph 1 Letter a) (i. e. 8 years of permanent residence), if the Act does not state otherwise, if the applicant was not a citizen of the SR and at least one of their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents was a Czechoslovak citizen born in the territory of the SR.²⁵⁹

The Amendment main aim was to simplify obtaining state citizenship mainly for former citizens who had lost the Slovak citizenship by voluntarily obtaining foreign state citizenship and for foreigners holding the status of Slovaks living abroad.²⁶⁰

Similar to 2020 and 2021, in 2022, the SR did not adopt any legislative or other measures which would significantly influence the situation of stateless persons present in their territory.²⁶¹

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

Oboňová, S., Ulrichová, N. (2022): Výročná správa o migrácii a azyle v Slovenskej republike za rok 2021. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

258 Act No. 72/2022 Coll. amending Act of the National Council of the SR No. 40/1993 Coll. on the Citizenship of the Slovak Republic, as amended. Available at: <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2022-72> (consulted on 06/04/2023).

259 Source: IOM.

260 Source: Oboňová, S., Ulrichová, N. (2022): EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2021. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

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



Borders, Visa and Schengen

In 2022, the *National Strategy of European Integrated Border Management for 2023 – 2026* was approved. It sets out tasks for the SR in this area. The Steering Committee for European Integrated Border Management was also established. Regarding the visa policy, the SR acted in compliance with the regulations of the EU concerning non-granting the short-term visas to the citizens of Russia as a result of the military aggression in Ukraine. In 2022, the SR worked on creating a database of national experts/Schengen evaluators and prepared a communication account/address for direct communication with the EU and unified communication within the Police Force Presidium departments as regards the Schengen management.

9.1. Statistics and Trends

Between 2018 – 2022, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the mobility of people, as seen in the changing numbers of issued Schengen visas. While in 2018 and 2019 about 25,000 of them were issued (2018 – 25,681 and 2019 – 29,148), in 2020 there were only 7,240 Schengen visas. Further waves of the pandemic showed also in the number of issued Schengen visas in 2021, when 8,365 of them were issued. In 2022, due to the weakening of the pandemic, among other things, the number increased to 17,014, but did not attain the level from the pre-pandemic era (see **Table 5**).²⁶²

²⁶² Source: MoFEA SR and Mol SR.

The number of national visas granted in 2019 increased as compared with 2018: from 2,662 to 5,640. The significant increase was caused mainly by the amendment to Act on Residence of Foreigners based on which third-country nationals were able to apply for national visas for the purposes of applying for residence in the territory of the SR. This created the possibility to submit the application not only on diplomatic missions abroad but also directly to the Foreign Police departments within the SR. However, the COVID-19 pandemic repeatedly lowered the number of issued national visas to 3,111 in 2020. In 2021, a slight increase to 4,647 was recorded. As national visas for highly qualified workers and drivers of buses and trucks started to be issued, the year 2022 saw a further increase to a level higher than that of 2019. In 2022, 6,136 national visas were issued (see **Table 5**).²⁶³

9.2. Border Control Policies and Measures

In December 2022, the *National Strategy of European Integrated Border Management for 2023 – 2026*²⁶⁴ was approved and the Steering Committee for the Implementation of the European Integrated Border Management was created by the Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 765/2022. The adoption of the strategy flows from the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulations (EU) No. 1052/2013 and (EU) 2016/1624. The objective of the strategy is to follow the previous *National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for 2019 – 2022* and set new tasks for the Slovak Republic to fulfil in relation to European integrated border management creation in the upcoming four-year period.²⁶⁵

Among other things, the topics related to the development of the European Entry/Exit System were integrated into the National Strategy of European Integrated Border Management for 2023 – 2026. However, the legislative changes were not implemented in 2022. The launch on Europe-wide level is planned for the end of 2024.²⁶⁶

In compliance with the National Strategy of Integrated Border Management for 2019 – 2022,²⁶⁷ several projects were implemented in the SR in 2022²⁶⁸ aiming to improve technical equipment and automation of border controls. Specifically speaking, those were projects focused on e.g.: purchasing an ABC gate for automated border control of EU citizens crossing the SR external border at M. R. Štefánik airport in Bratislava, exchanging of technical equipment for examining documents, renewal of technical equipment for the second and third lines of document control, renewal of the technical and hardware equipment within the National Visa Information System (N-VIS) and Central Screening Console (CSC), modernising and renewing hardware of the national SIS II part, and purchasing means of transport or thermal cameras for border surveillance etc.

In 2022, the SR also sent 39 police officers to the external borders of Hungary in order to strengthen the border surveillance and within the cooperation between the MS and solidarity in addressing irregular migration in the Western Balkans. In 2022, seven contingents consisting of 61

²⁶³ Source: MoFEA SR and Mol SR.

²⁶⁴ Available at <https://www.minv.sk/?tlaclacove-spravy&sprava=kabinet-schvalil-narodnu-strategiu-europskeho-integrovaného-riadenia-hranic-do-roku-2026> (consulted on 11/01/2023).

²⁶⁵ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²⁶⁶ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²⁶⁷ Behúňová, K., Mészárosová, S., Oboňová, S. (2020): Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic 2019. European Migration Network, IOM, Bratislava.

²⁶⁸ All the projects are funded by the Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa and were implemented in 2020 – 2022.

police officers, who fulfilled tasks related to border surveillance, were deployed to the Northern Macedonia within bilateral deployments.²⁶⁹

9.3. Visa Policy and Applying the Schengen Acquis

The Government of the SR adopted the Regulations No. 520/2021 Coll. and No. 270/2022 Coll. on the interest of the Slovak Republic to grant a national visa to selected categories of third-country nationals, to whom a national visa started to be granted from 1 April 2022 instead of a residence permit. They were highly-qualified workers and buses and trucks drivers from selected countries.²⁷⁰ More information is available in Chapter 3.

In 2022, the SR acted in compliance with EU guidelines and regulations related to the granting of short-term visas to Russian citizens as a result of military aggression of Russia against Ukraine.²⁷¹ However, this was not reflected in the number of visa applications in the case of the SR, as the SR has been granting the Schengen visa to Russian citizens only for “essential travel” since 2020, in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The issuance of visas for tourist purposes has not been renewed.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²⁷⁰ Source: MoFEA SR and MoLSAF SR questionnaires.

²⁷¹ Council Decision (EU) 2022/333 of 25 February 2022 on the partial suspension of the application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation, Council Decision (EU) 2022/1500 of 9 September 2022 on the suspension in whole of the application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation, C(2022) 6596 final Communication from the Commission Providing guidelines on general visa issuance in relation to Russian applicants following Council Decision (EU) 2022/1500 of 9 September 2022 on the suspension in whole of the application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation.

²⁷² Source: MoFEA SR.



Irregular Migration including Migrant Smuggling

In 2022, the SR was significantly affected by secondary transit migration along the Western Balkans route. As compared with 2021, there was an increase of 801.5%, with means almost 13 times the level of secondary transit migration during the migration crisis of 2015.²⁷³

In this respect, the personal capacities of the BBFP PFP were strengthened. Migration routes within the SR were monitored in a more intense manner and road and highway controls were performed more frequently, especially at the most active migration routes, in cooperation with other bodies.

10.1. Statistics and Trends

Between 2018 – 2021, the SR has been recording decreasing trend in irregular migration: the overall irregular migration has decreased by 37% since 2018 (from 2,817 persons in 2018 to 1,769 persons in 2021). A more significant decrease was recorded mainly in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (1,295 persons). However, in 2022, there was a significant increase of irregular migration due to significant pressure of secondary transit migration along the route from the Western Balkans and the temporary reintroduction of internal border controls by the

²⁷³ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

Czech Republic and Austria at the sections of their borders neighbouring with the SR in September 2022. In 2022, the irregular migration thus increased to 11,791 persons (see **Table 8**).²⁷⁴

The 2022 increase of secondary transit migration from Hungary was only a continuation of the trend from previous years, but the renewal of border controls at the internal borders by the Czech Republic and Austria made it even more pronounced. As for irregular migration, the SR distinguishes two migration situations or categories: unauthorized residence including the secondary transit migration (95%) and unauthorized crossing of state border (5%). A year-on-year increase has been recorded in both: unauthorized residence by 620% (from 1,559 to 11,242) and unauthorized state border crossing by 161% (from 210 to 549). In the unauthorized residence category (including the secondary transit migration) the citizens of Syria were most represented (81%). In the unauthorized state border crossing category, the citizens of Ukraine were the most prominent group (93%), while they were mostly men trying to avoid conscription due to the mobilisation declared in Ukraine as a result of the war. On the other hand, the number of detained TCNs of non-Ukrainian origin decreased, as the worsened situation in Ukraine discouraged them from using Ukraine as an entry country into the EU and using this migration route (see **Table 8**).²⁷⁵

10.2. Developments in Policies and Legislation to Prevent and Tackle Irregular Migration

In 2022, there were no significant developments in the legislation related to this area.

10.3. Cooperation with Third Countries

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

In 2022, the cooperation of V4 and Italy within the “Support To Integrated Border and Migration Management in Libya” project via EUTF Africa has continued. One part of the project (EUR 20 mil.) was dedicated to mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic impact by means of helping the public healthcare system in Libya. These activities have been continuously implemented by multilateral organisations (WHO, UNICEF and ILO) in 2021 –2022 and take form of renewal, equipment and technical assistance for health protection posts in the context of migration flows at the southern border of Libya. The remaining €15 million is to be used to build capacities of the Libyan Coast Guard in border management and addressing irregular migration, mainly by means of procuring three ships (two were already delivered in 2021).²⁷⁶

In 2022, the SR prepared the Plan for the Development of Cooperation between the SR and Ukraine for 2023 – 2024. Departments involved in the implementation and deadlines are set for each area. Information exchange, analyses necessary to ensure security at the Slovak-Ukrainian state border and the implementation of and adherence to the Agreement between Ukraine and the European Communities on the readmission of persons is ensured at regular intervals.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Source: BBFP PFP.

²⁷⁵ Source: BBFP PFP.

²⁷⁶ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

²⁷⁷ The Plan is developed in two-year intervals and its objective is to continue developing cooperation and coordination when ensuring security at the Slovak-Ukrainian state border. Zdroj: Questionnaire from the BBFP PFP.

In order to initiate an international police cooperation in investigating crimes of smuggling along the Western Balkans migration route, which passes through the territory of the Slovak Republic, the National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration visited Serbia in June 2022. Representatives of both countries agreed to use a formal communication channel for the exchange of operational information in cases of the crime of smuggling.²⁷⁸

10.4. Combatting Smuggling and Prevention of Irregular Migration

In 2022, Slovakia did not adopt any legislative changes or measures related to combatting smuggling.

Given the enormous increase of smuggling cases from the Western Balkans route, the activity of the NUCIM BBFP PFP was reinforced by adding criminal services units of the respective regional Police Force directorates, especially if irregular migrants were apprehended, by an internal regulation of the MoI SR and based on a measure of the Police Force President.²⁷⁹

In 2022, a new obligation was introduced for the applicants for Schengen visas from Vietnam, Bangladesh, Iran and Morocco: they have to submit an invitation certified by a police department (in the past, notarised invitations were accepted). The objective of this measure is to prevent the irregular migration and lower the number of the nationals of these countries irregularly residing in the SR.²⁸⁰

On 3 October 2022, the SR joined the Agreement on the Establishment of a Joint Investigation Team between the Czech Republic and Hungary for the purpose of facilitating international cooperation when investigating and prosecuting in the CR, Hungary and the SR in relation to illegal smuggling. The Joint Investigation Team aimed to detect, dismantle and prosecute the perpetrators of the crime of smuggling active along the Western Balkans migration route.²⁸¹

In 2022, there were 3,489 irregular migrants documented as smuggled in investigation files, and such acts were committed in the previous years, too. This, again, is a significant increase as compared with 2021, when 834 such cases were recorded. Of the 3,489 migrants, 3,254 were captured in 2022 who had entered the territory of the Slovak Republic illegally with the help of smugglers. The citizens of Syria were significantly predominant (72%). These facts relate to the increase of the secondary transit migration along the Western Balkans route (see **Table 9**).²⁸²

Monitoring and Identification of Irregular Migration Routes

In order to prevent irregular secondary transit migration, the year 2022 saw a more intense monitoring of migration routes in the SR, more frequent road and highway controls conducted by the Police Force departments, especially in the most active migration routes; as announced security actions. From October 2022, other entities (custom officers, soldiers) apart from the PF members participated in police-security controls at the Slovak-Hungarian border in order to de-

²⁷⁸ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²⁷⁹ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²⁸⁰ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²⁸¹ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

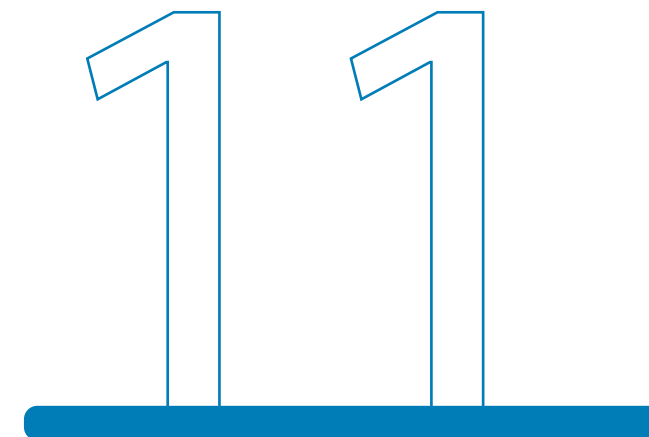
²⁸² Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

tect irregular transit migration.²⁸³

Increase of irregular transit migration expedited the planned improvements in the analytical and statistical activity within the BBFP PFP in this field, using the potential of past trainings of relevant BBFP PFP employees (such as MS Excel, work with data files etc.). This increased frequency, expanded structure and improved the quality of visualisation of provided statistical data on irregular migration focusing on secondary transit migration.

Reaction to the Increase of Migrant Numbers

Due to a significant increase of irregular migration due to significant pressure of secondary transit migration along the route from the Western Balkans and the temporary reintroduction of internal border controls by the Czech Republic and Austria at the sections of their borders neighbouring with the SR in September 2022, the MoI SR built a tent camp for irregular migrants in the western part of the SR. It is equipped with beds and heaters and food and urgent medical food is provided there. Many non-governmental organizations working in migration provided assistance to migrants, information, interpreting or helped secure other needs.



Trafficking in Human Beings

Sexual and labour exploitation has remained the most frequent purpose of trafficking in the last five years. The number of foreigners, who were identified as human trafficking victims in Slovakia, has remained very low: in 2022, three foreigners were identified as victims. The SR filed charges against 34 persons and convicted 10 persons of committing this crime in 2022.

The threat that the people fleeing the war in Ukraine become victims of human trafficking after coming to the SR and succumb to labour exploitation was the most prominent topic of 2022. The SR created a working group, which shall define the borders between human trafficking for forced labour and bad working conditions by the end of 2023. The task stems from the *National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2019 – 2023*.

The information on trafficking in human beings, the support and protection programme for the victims of trafficking in human beings, including contacts to the National Help Line for the victims of human trafficking became a part of instructions to asylum seekers on their rights and obligations in May 2022.

As a result of the war, the SR prepared a training about identification of potential human trafficking victims for the State Border and State Customs Service of Ukraine, as the refugees coming from Ukraine to Slovakia might have become such victims. Due to the high level of vulnerability of people coming from Ukraine, the first contact workers, non-profit organizations, volunteers, armed forces etc. were also retrained through the MoI SR and IOM.

²⁸³ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

Based on the recommendation of GRETA, the SR trained the Police Detention Centres for Foreigners employees on how to identify the human trafficking victims among asylum seekers and persons placed in the Centres. In 2022, also all the employees of Legal Aid Centres across Slovakia were trained in these topics.

On 18 October 2022 (European Anti-Trafficking Day), the SR in cooperation with Slovnaft, a. s. company launched a preventative informational campaign focused on combating human trafficking at petrol stations. The campaign informed also in Ukrainian language and focused on the temporary protection holders from Ukraine.

In 2022, the SR has continued to distribute a self-identification leaflet for potential foreign victims of trafficking in human beings in 8 languages. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the SR prepared and distributed an informational material on the risks of human trafficking in six languages in the entire country.

When cooperating with the EU MS or non-EU countries, the SR did not embark on new activities or adopt significant changes in 2022. The cooperation with the United Kingdom was predominant.

11.1. Statistics and Trends

Sexual and labour exploitation has remained the most frequent purpose of trafficking in the last five years. The number of foreigners, who were identified as human trafficking victims in Slovakia, has remained very low. In 2022, out of the 58 identified victims of human trafficking, three were foreigners, including two persons from non-EU countries (see **Table 19** in Annex). None of the foreign victims who entered the assistance programme were formally identified by the Police.

In 2022, more victims, approximately one-third of all identified entered the specialized Human Trafficking Victims Assistance and Protection Programme (compared to one-fourth in 2021 and not even one-sixth in 2020). Only a couple of victims a year act as victims in criminal proceedings and are also provided assistance and this applies also for 2022.²⁸⁴

In relation to the crime of human trafficking, the SR in 2022 filed charges against 34 persons in 19 cases (22 men and 12 women) and convicted 10 persons in 6 decisions of committing this crime (see **Table 20** in Annex).²⁸⁵

Further information on trends and statistics is available in the situational reports of the Ministry of Interior of the SR. Its *Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2022* describes specific activities and measures taken against human trafficking.²⁸⁶

284 Source: Situačná správa pre oblasť boja proti obchodovaniu s ľuďmi v Slovenskej republike za rok 2022 (Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2022), available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-pre-venciu-kriminality&subor=477141> (consulted on 21/04/2023).

285 Information provided by NUCIM BBFP PF and DFEA MIO.

286 Source: Situačná správa pre oblasť boja proti obchodovaniu s ľuďmi v Slovenskej republike za rok 2022 (Situational Report on Human Trafficking in the Slovak Republic for 2022), available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-pre-venciu-kriminality&subor=477141> (consulted on 21/04/2023).

11.2. Policies, Legislation and International Monitoring

The threat that the people fleeing the war in Ukraine become victims of human trafficking after coming to the SR and succumb to labour exploitation was the most prominent topic of 2022.

The SR created a working group, which shall define the borders between human trafficking for forced labour and bad working conditions by the end of 2022 (see also Chapter 3.6).

Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the Mol SR (IC Mol SR) fully continued to act as a national rapporteur for human trafficking in accordance with the 2011/36/EU Directive in 2022.²⁸⁷ In compliance with Articles 19 and 20 of the Directive, the IC Mol SR provided the Office of the European Anti-Trafficking Coordinator with the *Summary Report on the Status of the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019 – 2021*. The Report contains also the information about the foreigners, who became victims of this crime. The Report informed the Report on the Progress prepared by the Commission.²⁸⁸

International Monitoring

In the evaluating *Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP)* issued annually by the US Department of State, Slovakia in 2022 remained in Tier 2 of countries meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking. It was placed there in 2019. The reasons remain the same – mainly a lower number of identified victims and convicted traffickers (often conditional sentence without imprisonment), low rate of utilization of tools for aiding and compensating victims, and formal identification of victims solely in the hands of the Police. However, the report appreciates the efforts of the SR to actively improve the mentioned areas, e.g. investigating more trafficking cases, increasing the percentage of traffickers that received significant prison terms or increased funding for prevention activities.^{289 290}

11.3. Interinstitutional and International Cooperation

To implement the Regional Response Plan regarding the war in Ukraine, UNHCR established several working groups and sub-groups in Slovakia in 2022 (see Chapter 2.2), including the *Anti-Trafficking Task Force*. The sub-group was led by the IOM in 2022 and representatives of state institutions, non-governmental, and international organisations participated in it.²⁹¹

A training on human trafficking in the SR related to the war conflict in Ukraine for the members of the State Border Service of Ukraine and the State Customs Service of Ukraine was organised in September 2022. It focused mainly on the identification of potential human trafficking victims among the refugees fleeing the war conflict from Ukraine. The training resulted from the existence of potential threat to the refugees coming to the SR. The training was organised by the NUCIM BBFP PFP.²⁹²

287 Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/62/JHA (hereinafter Directive 2011/36/EU); available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/ALL/?uri=celex:32011L0036> (consulted on 21/04/2023).

288 Source: Questionnaire from the DFEA MIO.

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

290 Information on the Trafficking in Persons Report was submitted to the Government of the SR by the Minister of Interior as an initiative material at a meeting on 21 September 2022.

291 Source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/378?sv=54&geo=10785> (consulted on 09/05/2022).

292 Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

Cooperation Among the SR Institutions

In 2022, 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 ongoing pandemic situation and its impacts (see Chapter 10.1). The checks were conducted jointly by the BBFP PFP and Labour Inspectorates or COLSAF authorities.²⁹³

In 2022, the SR built their capacity in fighting human trafficking also by organising seminars and trainings for selected professional groups who encounter (potential) human trafficking victims:

- Trainings for the PF members and employees in the PDCF Medved'ov were organised in April 2022 (30 persons trained) and in the PDCF Sečovce in May 2022 (35 persons trained). The trainings focused on the identification of human trafficking victims among asylum seekers and persons detained in the Police Detention Centres for Foreigners. The need for the trainings resulted from the recommendations given to the SR by the Council of Europe's evaluation mechanism (GRETA) in the third evaluation round. The trainings were organised by the BBFP PFP.²⁹⁴
- In the first half of 2022, the police officers working at the Departments of Communication and Prevention of the Police Force Regional Directorates and at the Police Force District Directorates internal departments were trained. Since the second half of 2022, they have been using the obtained knowledge (identification of victims, reference assistance mechanism, options of prevention and assistance in this field) and applied it during the informational campaign among children in the Children and Family Centres in Slovakia. The trainings were organised by the IC Mol SR.
- From October 2022 to January 2023, educational activities have been organised for all the employees of the Centres for Legal Aid in the entire Slovakia, who come to contact with third-country nationals during their work. The activities were organised by the IC Mol SR.
- In December 2022, pilot educational activities were organised for hotel personnel. They focused on obtaining basic minimal information on how to identify trafficking in human beings, aid victims and about national reference mechanism. The activities were organised by the IC Mol SR.²⁹⁵

Also the non-governmental organisations and IOM organised trainings and educational events concerning the prevention of human trafficking and exploitation in 2022. Due to the high level of vulnerability of people coming from Ukraine, the first contact workers, non-profit organizations, volunteers, armed forces etc. were also retrained through the Mol SR and IOM.²⁹⁶

11.4. Provision of Information and Assistance

In 2022, the preventative, informational, and operational activities within combatting human trafficking focused mainly on the people fleeing the war in Ukraine and helping professionals who come into contact with them²⁹⁷:

- In relation to the war conflict in Ukraine an informational brochure was created in 6 languages.²⁹⁸ It was distributed in the entire territory of the Slovak Republic, focusing on the places, where the temporary protection holders from Ukraine or other third-country nationals are often present. The SR created the www.ua.gov.sk website for the temporary protection holders from Ukraine. A short notice is included there in the part "Warning", including the reference to the National non-stop helpline for victims of trafficking: <https://ua.gov.sk/sk.html?c-srt=9317728532932182706>²⁹⁹
- On 18 October (European Anti-Trafficking Day), the SR in cooperation with Slovnaft, a. s. company launched a preventative informational campaign focused on combating human trafficking at petrol stations. The campaign tools include stickers on the mirrors inside of both male and female toilets of Slovnaft, a. s. petrol stations and informational leaflet with a male and female face. The campaign materials also include the information in Ukrainian for temporary protection holders from Ukraine.³⁰⁰
- According to the IOM Ukraine surveys³⁰¹, every other Ukrainian was ready to accept a risky job offer and travel abroad. The SR, non-governmental sector and international organisations such as the IOM reacted to the potential threats of such work and built capacities of first-line workers who help people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The IOM devoted their trainings also to the protection from sexual abuse and exploitation.³⁰²

In 2022, same as in the previous years, the SR has also distributed a self-identification leaflet for potential foreign victims of trafficking in human beings in 8 languages.³⁰³

In 2022, the Slovak Catholic Charity and Greek Catholic Charity provided help and support to human trafficking victims within a specialised Reintegration Programme for the Victims of Human Trafficking based on a contract with the Mol SR.³⁰⁴ The Slovak Catholic Charity also continued to operate the National line to help victims of human trafficking 0800 800 818. The information line on human trafficking and safe travel was also operated by the IOM Slovakia in 2022. Their staff answered phone and e-mail queries about human trafficking, requests to vet labour agencies or requests for information on training to prevent human trafficking. The organisations also provided reintegration assistance to the victims.³⁰⁵

In May 2022, information on trafficking in human beings and on the programme for the support and protection of victims of trafficking, including national helpline for victims of trafficking in human beings contacts, became a part of the instructions on the rights and obligations of asylum seekers. Including the topic of human trafficking into the instructions was motivated by the tasks arising from the National Programme to Combat Human Trafficking and from the monitoring mechanism of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA).³⁰⁶

²⁹³ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²⁹⁴ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

²⁹⁵ Source: DFEA MIO questionnaire.

²⁹⁶ Source: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/1433-iom-slovensko-v-septembri-2021-vyskolila-dalsich-56-odbornikov-v-prevencii-obchodovania-s-ludmi.html> (consulted on 08/05/2022).

²⁹⁷ Source: https://www.facebook.com/policiaslovakia/posts/5450596991637145?ref=embed_post (consulted on 05/06/2023).

²⁹⁸ Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zakladne-informacie-6> (Documents for download)

²⁹⁹ Source: DFEA MIO questionnaire.

³⁰⁰ Source: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=pri-prilezitosti-europskeho-dna-boja-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-sme-spustili-infokampan-na-cerpacich-staniciach> (consulted on 05/06/2023).

³⁰¹ Available at: <https://ukraine.iom.int/news/every-second-ukrainian-risks-getting-exploited-amidst-devastating-impact-war> (consulted on 05/06/2023).

³⁰² Source: <https://iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/2093-iom-activities-and-achievements-2022.html#ochrana-2022> (consulted on 05/06/2023).

³⁰³ Available at: <https://www.minv.sk/?obchodovanie-s-ludmi-a-slovenska-republika-the-lower-part--documents-for-download> (consulted on 05/06/2023).

³⁰⁴ Source: https://www.minv.sk/?program_podpory_a_ochrany_obeti (consulted on 05/06/2023).

³⁰⁵ Source: IOM questionnaire.

³⁰⁶ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.



Return and Readmission

In 2022, there was rather prominent decrease of forced returns as compared with 2021. It was caused mainly by the war in Ukraine. On the other hand, there was a prominent increase in voluntary departures and assisted voluntary returns.

In 2022, Slovakia used the services of the Frontex agency for the first time. During the year, a Frontex return specialist was deployed in the Police Detention Centres for foreigners. He assisted the PF members daily in the preparation and implementation of returns.

As for the assisted voluntary returns conducted by the SR through the IOM, the target group was extended to the persons coming from Ukraine, who are members of non-EU countries and in the SR legally, so that they could use the services of the programme if interested.

12.1. Statistics and Trends

In 2022, there was rather prominent decrease of forced returns as compared with 2021: from 298 to 94. The decrease was caused mainly by the war in Ukraine. Between 2018 and 2021, Ukraine was the most frequent country of return while the citizens of Ukraine were among the top five nationalities most frequently using the forced returns. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the returns to Ukraine were stopped.

On the other hand, a significant increase has been noted in voluntary departures as compared with 2021: from 72 in 2021 to 139 in 2022. Assisted voluntary returns increased even more prominently, which was influenced also by the weakening of the Covid-19 pandemic, cancellation of related travel restrictions and renewal of many flights. Assisted voluntary returns thus increased from 9 returns in 2021 to 81 in 2022.³⁰⁷ Increased mobility of people and transit of Turkey and Tunisia citizens from the Mediterranean area who are the two nationalities most frequently using the assisted voluntary returns influenced this, too. On the other hand, the statistics do not include the citizens of Ukraine from the above reasons. In 2022, the SR saw the first returns conducted through the Frontex agency: there was 53 of them.³⁰⁸

Overall number of returns has decreased again as compared with the previous years: 2,097 returns in 2018, 1,596 returns in 2019, 451 returns in 2020, 370 returns in 2021, and only 233 returns in 2022 (see **Table 12**).³⁰⁹

12.2. Developments in Policies and Legislation

In 2022, a Frontex return specialist was deployed in the Police Detention Centres for foreigners. He assisted the PF members daily in the preparation and implementation of returns. He addressed the cooperation with the third countries, especially the identification of and issuance of replacement travel documents with the Embassy of Tunisia based in Budapest. He was also working with the Frontex information systems such as FAR/IRMA/RCMS and RIAT to support re-integration. Apart from that, he offered foreigners the option to use the Frontex services in the return process, including the motivation to voluntary return.³¹⁰

12.3. Forced Returns and Readmissions

In 2022, no new readmission agreements or protocols were signed on national level, nor are they in the preparation stage. The Protocol between the Government of the SR and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on the Implementation of the Agreement between the European Community and Ukraine on the Readmission of Persons remains in the final stage, expecting the consent of Ukraine.³¹¹

As in the previous years, the implementation of BBAP PFP's *Forced Return – AMIF III* project continued in 2022³¹². 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 effective management of migration flows. The project activities were mainly operative in nature (ensuring transport, flight tickets, accommodation, replacement of travel documents, interpreting, expert assessment of age etc.).

³⁰⁷ The number does not include 9 TCNs who had fled the war in Ukraine and were returned to their countries of origin through the AVR programme through the IOM.

³⁰⁸ Source: BBFP PFP and IOM.

³⁰⁹ Source: BBFP PFP and IOM.

³¹⁰ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

³¹¹ Source: BBFP PFP questionnaire.

³¹² The project follows the Forced Return – AMIF II which was implemented in 2017 – 2019. It was financed from the National AMIF programme and will be concluded on 31 October 2023.

The Slovak Humanitarian Council non-governmental organisation continued to implement the KOMPAS III³¹³ project in 2021, which primarily focused 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 included the provision of social and psychological counselling to the third-country nationals in PDCFs, leisure time activities and education (Slovak language and cultural orientation courses), supplementary health care, material assistance, and translations and interpreting. Third-country nationals released from PDCFs received assistance for 60 days following their release. The aid to such persons included basic care (provision of basic needs for a dignified life, such as hygienic needs, necessary health care, a food benefit, financial means for administrative costs, low threshold accommodation, travel expenses, field social care) and was provided based on consultation and a favourable statement of the PDCF. The above activities contribute to an effective return process for these persons.³¹⁴

12.4. Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration

In 2022, 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*³¹⁵ project. The activities included comprehensive services within the programme: informing the target group and cooperating institutions about the program, preparation and implementation of assisted voluntary returns to the countries of origin, and the provision of reintegration assistance to migrants following their return.

The target group was extended to the persons coming from Ukraine, who are in the SR legally, so that they could use the services of the programme if interested. In 2022, 9 TCNs who fled the war in Ukraine, were returned to their country of origin in this way through the AVR.³¹⁶

In 2022, a total of 90 TCNs from non-EU countries returned from the SR into 12 countries with the help of the IOM. It included the 9 TCNs who fled the war in Ukraine. Most returnees went to Turkey, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Vietnam. In relation to the war in Ukraine, the programme provided assistance with return to nine citizens of Armenia, Nigeria, Georgia, Panama, Libya, and Zimbabwe. The IOM also helps with reintegration, while in 2022 they have provided such help after returning from the SR to 18 returnees from Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.³¹⁷

³¹³ The project follows the KOMPAS II project which had been implemented from 1 December 2016 to 31 December 2019. The implementation period of KOMPAS III project started on 1 January 2020 and will be concluded on 31 October 2023.

³¹⁴ Pracros Girmanová, A., Ulríchová, N.: Responses to Long-Term Irregularly Staying Migrants: Practices and Challenges – contribution of the SR, IOM Slovakia, 2020.

³¹⁵ The project was a natural continuation of the previous project titled Voluntary Return and Reintegration in the Country of Origin project. The project is funded by AMIF and the original planned implementation period was by 31 December 2021. In 2021, by the decision of Ministry of Interior of the SR, the implementation was prolonged and set to end on 30 October 2022.

³¹⁶ Source: IOM Slovakia.

³¹⁷ Source: IOM Slovakia.



Migration and Development

As compared with the previous years, in which the Slovak Republic directed the humanitarian interventions to a wide range of partner countries, the main recipient of the official humanitarian aid of the SR in 2022 was Ukraine. Since the outbreak of the military conflict, its value amounted to more than EUR 8 million in February 2022.

Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2022 has again confirmed the aim of the SR to address the causes of forced migration as close as possible to the countries of origin of the asylum seekers so that refugees could find protection as close as possible to their home. Regarding the humanitarian assistance, which is related to addressing the causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, Slovakia continued to consider (i) food security and agriculture and (ii) infrastructure and sustainable use of natural resources the key sectoral priorities. As for the climate change, the SR was supposed to contribute to the projects aiming to implement the Paris Agreement.

The SR and Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to use the study visits to exchange know-how on asylum and functioning of the asylum system. This started in 2021.

13.1. Development Cooperation

Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2022, which was approved by the Government of the SR on 26 January 2022, has again confirmed the aim of the SR to address the causes

of forced migration as close as possible to the countries of origin of the asylum seekers so that refugees could find protection as close as possible to their home. Regarding the humanitarian assistance, which is related addressing the causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, Slovakia continued to consider (i) food security and agriculture and (ii) infrastructure and sustainable use of natural resources the key sectoral priorities. As for the climate change, the SR was supposed to contribute to the projects aiming to implement the Paris Agreement.³¹⁸ To improve the targeting of the assistance and also prevent the fragmentation of the resources for the development cooperation of the SR, which have been insufficient for a long time, the plan of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance of Slovakia for 2022 includes a decrease in the number of priority partner countries from 24 to 14 as well as a decrease of sectoral priorities in individual calls. The provision of subsidies through the SAMRS calls remained the key tool of bilateral development cooperation. In 2022, the means were allocated for the development projects in three programme countries (Georgia, Kenya, and Moldova) and for development and humanitarian projects in the regions Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, and the Near East.³¹⁹

The SR and Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to use the study visits to exchange know-how on asylum and functioning of the asylum system. This started in 2021 and followed also A Memorandum of Cooperation on Migration and Asylum between the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina which was signed on 17 September 2021. From 6 June to 10 June 2022, the SR deployed experts from the procedural department of the Migration Office of the Mol SR to the Asylum Sector of the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter BaH). The objective of the deployment was to exchange information and practical experience between the experts of the two countries related to the asylum procedure in all its complexity and to provide a closer look at the challenges and specifics, which the two countries have to face in relation to asylum and migration policy. The study visit also provided a closer look at the implementation of the asylum and migration policy of the BaH and enabled an active exchange of practical experience among the experts of the two countries. Several common challenges were identified, such as the diversity and unpredictability of migration flows, the lack of interpreters for selected languages, the complexity of processing some cases (e. g. the cases when the exclusion clauses are applied, or the converts or the LGBTI+ persons concerned), the evaluation of evidence in the asylum procedure or the particularities caused by factors such as the geographical location of the two countries (BaH as a country on the Western Balkans route and Slovakia as a country neighbouring Ukraine). In November 2022, the following took place:

1. A study visit of the partners of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Security Asylum Sector to Slovakia. During the visit they were able to get to know the practical implementation of the asylum procedure in the SR in detail, to learn about the evaluation of evidence, the processing of the COI (Country of Origin Information) and to eventually be inspired by the ongoing implementation of the measures and harmonisation of asylum law in the context of their EU accession process.
2. A study visit of partners from the Bihać Social Services Centre. The SAMRS provided a financial subsidy to the Bihać Social Services Centre in August 2022 based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Migration Office of the Mol SR. The subsidy is intended for the

modernisation of the technical equipment of the Centre and to pay for two jobs of social workers in the Social Services Centre Bihać, who will also work in the Lipa Migration Centre. Within the study visit, the partners were able to learn about the practical social work in asylum centres of the Migration Office of the Mol SR, get to know the challenges and specifics faced by the two countries in social work in asylum facilities, to inspire each other and draw on each other's experiences.³²⁰

In 2022, the SAMRS continued collaborating with the Self-Help Africa organisation to implement the AgriFI programme KILIMO-VC segment under the EU's joint programming aimed at stabilizing and strengthening local communities, as well as preventing migration in East Africa. The programme contributes to reducing the food deficit and strengthens the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Kenya. The supported component aims at improving the integration of the value chain of small farmers and shepherds by providing incentives for investment in the agri-food sector. By 2022, 37 of the planned 50 companies in 14 individual value chains, such as nut, cotton, coffee or pulses production and processing, implemented their projects under this programme. By November 2022, EUR 11.1 million of the planned EUR 18.3 million was paid to agribusinesses, while the initiative had a total impact on over 109 000 farmers and contributed to the creation of 2,000 jobs (full-time), 6,000 opportunities (part-time) and 7,000 seasonal jobs. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed down the implementation of activities, the end of the program was postponed to June 2023.³²¹

13.2. Humanitarian Aid

As compared with the previous years, in which the Slovak Republic directed the humanitarian interventions to a wide range of partner countries, the main recipient of the official humanitarian aid of the SR in 2022 was Ukraine. Since the outbreak of the military conflict in February 2022, its value amounted to more than EUR 8 million.

In addition to the continuously provided material assistance to Ukraine, the value of which amounted to more than EUR 5 million by the end of 2022, the SR supported four humanitarian projects in Ukraine aiming to provide basic living needs of vulnerable persons affected by the war conflict by providing a grant in the total amount of over EUR 1.3 million. Thanks to the SlovakAid projects implemented in Ukraine since August 2022, urgent needs for the people in need were provided: food and sanitary packages were distributed, and medical care and psychological and social support were provided. In order to continue providing for the vital needs of the population affected by the war, the SR through the SAMRS launched a second humanitarian call for projects in Ukraine in December 2022. Allocation is EUR 1 million. The SR supported Ukraine also through several international humanitarian (such as IOM, UNHCR, WFT, UNICEF and others) and local non-governmental organizations, providing financial assistance of more than EUR 1.5 million for their activities to aid people affected by the war conflict in Ukraine since February 2022. Thanks to the financial support of the SR, water and sanitary supplies for people temporarily displaced to the civil protection shelters in Dnipro, the reconstruction of an orphanage in Seredné, a medical facility for medically disadvantaged children in the town of Svaliava, safety courses and evacuations for journalists in Ukraine, as well as the construction of a centre for victims of sexual violence and many other things have been ensured.

³¹⁸ Source: Focus of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the SR for 2022, available at: <https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/vlastny-material-Zameranie-dvojstrannej-ODA-SR-2022.pdf> (consulted on 21/04/2023).

³¹⁹ Source: <https://slovakaid.sk/vlada-schvalila-zameranie-dvojstrannej-rozvojovej-spoluprace-na-rok-2022/> (consulted on 25/06/2023).

³²⁰ Source: MO Mol SR questionnaire.

³²¹ MoESRS SR questionnaire.

In relation to the Russian aggression in Ukraine and related unprecedented migration pressure on neighbouring countries, the SR provided support also to Moldova. Material assistance and financial contributions of the SR for Moldova contributed to covering urgent humanitarian needs and providing specialised medical services for Ukrainian refugees in the Republic of Moldova who had been displaced as a result of the Russian invasion to Ukraine.

In 2022, as in the previous years, the SR supported the implementation of five humanitarian projects in the Near and Middle East region (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon) through the SAMRS humanitarian call. Total value was EUR 1 million. The projects interventions implemented mainly in building water infrastructure and providing urgent medical care significantly contribute to the improvement of living conditions of the communities affected by armed conflicts and crisis situation in the mixed migration area. The monitoring mission of the MoFEA SR in Iraqi Kurdistan carried out in September 2022 contributed not only to a deeper understanding of the situation on the ground and the specific needs of the local population, but also to the ambition to expand the interventions of the SR in the region to include new activities in the food security sector, with a focus on cultivation in order to support the self-reliance and development of local communities affected by armed conflicts and the impacts of climate change. Slovakia's support to host communities, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) was provided also through a EUR 9,992 microgrant to support drinking water for 32 households including IDPs (through filtration devices) and an elementary school in the village of Mam-Rashan in the north of Iraqi Kurdistan. Through another microgrant of EUR 9,990, the SR ensured the purchase and installation of a solar power system to generate electricity in a medical facility providing emergency service and outpatient urgent care for the inhabitants of the El Chouf mountainous area, which has become a temporary home for thousands of refugees from Syria and Palestine. As in the last year, the SR provided a financial assistance of EUR 10,000 to support medical care for the children of Afghan refugees in Iran, provided by the Zanjireh Omid non-governmental organisation.

The SR is an active contributor to the EU Trust Funds, which were created in response to the refugee and migration crisis. In 2022, the SR contributed EUR 943,308 to the EU Refugee Facility in Turkey (FRiT), in accordance with the schedule. In cooperation with the V4 countries in development cooperation, projects aimed at helping countries of origin to combat irregular migration and support their sustainable development, funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Causes of Irregular Migration and Displacement in Africa (EUTF Africa), were completed in May 2022. One example is the V4 Kenya project initiated by the SR, which helped solve the causes of migration in Kenya by creating new jobs for young people and stimulated economic independence of inhabitants in agriculture (EUR 1.9 mil.). The project was successful in obtaining funding (EUR 580,000) through the AgriFI Kenya Challenge Fund for the construction of a cashew nut and sesame processing factory in Kilifi, as well as a grant from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (EUR 2.81 mil.) for the follow-up activities of the project. The cooperation of V4 and Italy within the Support To Integrated Border and Migration Management in Libya project via the Trust Fund for Africa has continued. One part of the project (EUR 20 mil.) was dedicated to mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic impact by means of helping the public healthcare system in Libya. These activities continued to be implemented by multilateral organisations (WHO, UNICEF and ILO) in the last year as renewal, equipment and technical assistance for health protection posts in the context of mixed migration flows at the southern border of Libya. The remaining EUR 15 million was used to purchase and repair service ships of the Italian Coast Guard for the Libyan Coast Guard in order to strengthen their capacities in managing borders and addressing irregular migration. Two of the three ships are in operation and the third is being prepared.

In 2022, the SR continued to support the refugees from Venezuela who found refuge in neighbouring Brazil. Thanks to a financial contribution of EUR 10,000 for Casa Venezuela, sewing and fashion design courses were organised, providing thirty Venezuelan immigrants in Sao Paolo with the opportunity to acquire new skills and increase their employability in the local labour market. In order to lend a helping hand to the countries of the Horn of Africa, whose populations are facing a deep food crisis and unprecedented famine caused by armed conflicts and climate change, the SR made a financial contribution of EUR 100,000 to support the World Food Programme's (WFP) activities in the Horn of Africa.

In 2022, the Government of the SR funded the costs of 404 scholarship holders, 117 of whom come from countries affected by armed conflict or from countries of origin of forced migration. Scholarships were mainly provided to students from Ukraine (31 scholarship holders in total, Afghanistan – 25 scholarship holders, Syria – 24 scholarship holders, Lebanon – 8 scholarship holders, Sudan – 6 scholarship holders, Ethiopia – 6 scholarship holders etc.)³²²

322 Source: MoESRS SR questionnaire.

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Act No. 72/2022 Coll. changing and amending Act of the National Council of the SR No. 40/1993 Coll. on the Citizenship of the Slovak Republic, as amended

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Annex: National Statistics

The Annex contains selected migration and international protection statistics for 2022, including those which are not collected at EU level through Eurostat³²³ or Frontex³²⁴ agency.

National statistics for Slovakia are available mainly in the annual statistical overviews of BBFP PFP³²⁵ (legal and irregular migration, returns, temporary protection), annual statistical reports of MO Mol SR³²⁶ (international protection including UAMs applying for asylum), statistics of COLSAF³²⁷ (employment of foreigners, UAMs not applying for asylum, temporary protection), MoFEA SR³²⁸ (visa), SO SR³²⁹ (demographic data and international migration), Public Administration Section of Mol SR³³⁰ (citizenship) and MoESRS SR³³¹ (education of children). Summary of the basic statistical data on migration in Slovakia for a calendar year from Eurostat provides the annual EMN Country Factsheet³³² on developments in the area of migration and international protection or the web-site of the IOM Office in the SR³³³.

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

(:) - not available (-) - the phenomenon did not occur

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331 Statistics are available upon request from the Ministry or from the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information, which processes and published these statistics.
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Table 1: Foreigners with valid residence in the SR in 2022 (by nationality and type of residence)

Indicator	As of 31 December 2022		Top nationalities of foreigners
Number of foreigners with valid residence	278 595		1. Ukraine (156 881) 2. Serbia (18,215) 3. Czechia (12,755) 4. Hungary (9,655) 5. Vietnam (8 039)
Share of foreigners in total population *	5,13 %		
Number of TCNs with valid residence	222 525	temporary residence: 98 281	1. Ukraine (156 881) 2. Serbia (18,215) 3. Vietnam (8,039) 4. Russia (7,436) 5. North Macedonia (2,842)
		Permanent residence: 28 794	
		Tolerated stay: 95 450 **	
Share of TCNs in total number of foreigners	79,87 %		
Share of TCNs in total population *	4,10 %		

Source: BBFP PFP and SO SR.
Note:
* The total population of the Slovak Republic represents number of persons with permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic irrespective of their citizenship. As of 31 December 2022 the total population was 5 428 792.
**The significant increase of foreigners with granted tolerated stay in the territory of the Slovak Republic compared to 2021 is related to the granting of temporary protection (mainly to Ukrainian nationals). Of the 95 450 tolerated stays, only 60 do not concern temporary protection (53 – for the purpose of unaccompanied minor and 7 – for the purpose of respecting private and family life).

Table 2: Third-country nationals with a valid residence by regions within the Slovak Republic in 2022

Kraj	Valid residences as of 31. 12. 2022	Of which tolerated stay (temporary protection)
Bratislava region	76 380	33 506
Košice region	28 233	12 870
Nitra region	25 576	9 372
Trnava region	24 400	8 679
Žilina region	21 048	9 930
Prešov region	18 638	7 653
Trenčín region	16 116	7 429
Banská Bystrica region	12 134	5 951
Total	222 525	95 390

Source: BBFP PFP and SO SR.

Table 3: Residence permits issued in the SR to third-country nationals in 2022 by sex and purpose³³⁴⁾

Sex***	Total (out of which first permits)	Residence purpose				Most common nationalities — total and for first permits
		Family formation and reunification ³³⁵ (family reasons)	Education and study ³³⁶	Remunerated activities ³³⁷	Other reasons ³³⁸	
Male	:	:	:	:	:	1. Ukraine (132 599) 2. Serbian (7 906) 3. Vietnam (3 906) 4. Russia (2,999) 5. Georgia (2 322)
Female	:	:	:	:	:	
Total* (out of which first permits**)	162 423 (131 967)	9 453 (4 169)	5 474 (3 448)	40 321 (19 343)	107 175 (105 007)	First permits: 1. Ukraine (114 784) 2. Serbia (4,350) 3. Georgia (1,973) 4. Russia (1,480) 5. Vietnam (1 352)

Source: BBFP PFP.
Notes:
* Total residence permits are understood all granted, renewed or extended residences in the given year.
** First residences (data in brackets) are understood residences which were granted in the given year in the SR for the very first time or in the period of minimum 6 month after the end of the previous residence.
*** The breakdown of data by gender is not available in the Slovak Republic. Out of a total of 162,423 stays, an estimated 55% are women and 45% are men. For the first permits, the ratio is: 60% women and 40% men.

334 Reasons for issuing residence are in accordance with the respective EU legislation (Commission Regulation (EU) No. 216/2010 of 15 March 2010 implementing Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection, as regards the definitions of categories of the reasons for the residence permits) and are divided into four categories: 1. Family formation and reunification,(family reasons) 2. Education and study, 3. Remunerated activities, and 4. Other reasons. National types of and reasons for residence permits are divided into these four categories.
335 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).
336 Category education and study following the Act on Residence of Foreigners No. 404/2011 as amended includes: 1. temporary residence for the purpose of study (study – student, study - pupil); study – student/Art. 24 par. 1b), study – student/Art. 24 par. 1c), study – student/Art. 34 par.1 b), study – pupil/Art. 24 par. 1a), special activities – Governmental or EU programme (only category study); special activities – international treaty (only category study); special activities – international treaty (only category study); special activities - traineeship within study outside of the SR; special activities – volunteering activities; for the purpose person with long term residence in another MS in line with Article 30 par. 1c) or in line with Article 30 par. 1d) (if the foreigner states the category study); Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states the category study); 2. permanent residence for 5 years - Brexit for 5 years (if the foreigner states the category study) – registered from 2020 onwards; 3 long-term residence for the unlimited period of time in line with Article 52 par. 1a) – Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states the category study); Article 52 par. 1b) – special activities (if the foreigner states the category study), Article 52 par. 1b) (foreigner states the category study);

Table 4: Foreigners employed in the SR in 2022

	As of 31 December 2022 (out of which female)	Top nationalities	Top nationalities (third-country nationals)
EU/EEA citizens	31 122 (9 138)	1. Ukraine (33 419) 2. Serbia (9,802) 3. Romania (7,025) 4. Czech Republic (6,514) 5. Hungary (5 574)	1. Ukraine (33 419) 2. Serbia (9,802) 3. Georgia (1,485) 4. India (1,305) 5. Russia (1 098)
Third-country nationals	56 876 (24 016)		
Total	87 998 (33 154)		

Source: COLSAF.

337 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.
338 Category remunerated activities following the Act on Residence of Foreigners No. 404/2011 as amended includes: 1. temporary residence for the purpose of business; business – start-up; employment in line with Article 23 par. 1 a 2, seasonal employment; special activities – journalist; special activities – lecturing; special activities – artistic activities; special activities – sport; special activities – international treaty (only category remunerated); special activities – Governmental or EU programme (only category remunerated), for the purpose of intra-corporate transfer (ICT – manager, ICT – specialist, ICT – trainee); person with a long-term residence in another MS in line with Article 30 par. 1a) and b) and also in line with Article 30 par. 1d) (if the foreigner states category remunerated); performing professional duties by civilian units of the armed forces in line with Article 28; EU Blue Card; Research and development; Research and development /Art. 34. par.1b); Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states category remunerated); 2. permanent residence for 5 years in line with Article 43 par. 1e) – interest of the SR; Brexit for 5 years (if the foreigner states category remunerated) – registered from 2020 onwards; 3. permanent residence for unlimited period of time in line with Article 46 par. 1a) – interest of the SR; 4. long-term residence in line with Article 52 par. 1a) - employment; Article 52 par. 1a) - business; Article 52 par.1a) – research and development; Article 52 par. 1a) – Slovak living abroad (if the foreigner states category remunerated), Article 52 par. 1a) – special activities (if the foreigner states category remunerated), Article 52 par. 1b) (if the foreigner states category remunerated); Article 52 par. 1c) – EU Blue Card holder; Brexit for unlimited period of time (if the foreigner states category remunerated) – registered from 2020 onwards.

Table 5: Visas issued by the SR to third country nationals in 2022 (by type of visa and previous residence)

Total	(Schengen) short stay visas (A and C and LTV types of visa)		National visas (D type of visa)*	
	previous residence			
	issued in third country	issued in other EU MS	issued in third country	issued in other EU MS
17 014	10 728	150	5 988	148

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

* Out of the total number, MoI SR issued 1 105 national visas.

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

Note: The number of visas issued may differ from the data presented in the Statistical Overview of Legal and Illegal Migration in the Slovak Republic – 2022 issued by BBFP PFP. The number of decisions taken on the visa application in the system at the time of processing the report, does not have to be reflected in the number of visas printed or issued.

Table 6: Acquired Slovak citizenship* in 2022 (by sex and previous citizenship)

Sex	Total Slovak citizenship acquired by foreigners	Top previous citizenships (foreigners)	Total Slovak citizenship acquired by third country nationals	Top previous citizenships (third country nationals)
Male	411	1. Serbia (171) 2. Ukraine (129) 3. Hungary (120) 4. Czech Republic (85) 5. Germany (35)	272	1. Serbia (171)
Female	386		243	2. Ukraine (129)
Total	797		515**	3. USA (32) 4. United Kingdom (30) 5. Russia (22)

Source: MoI SR

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

** Out of these, citizenship was granted to 27 beneficiaries of international protection.

Table 7: Foreigners in the school system in the SR as of 15 September 2022 (school year 2021/2022) – kindergartens, primary and secondary schools

Indicator	Total	Out of which third country nationals	Top nationalities – third country nationals
Foreigners in kindergartens	2 760	2 335	1. Ukraine (1 938) 2. Vietnam (96) 3. Russia (66) 4. Serbia (45) 5. USA (26)
Foreigners in primary schools	12 277	10 914	1. Ukraine (8 811) 2. Russia (458) 3. Vietnam (324) 4. Serbia (304) 5. Korean rep. (193)
Foreigners in special kindergartens and primary schools	182	145	1. Ukraine (112) 2. Russia (13) 3. Vietnam, Serbian, Iraq/USA
Foreigners in secondary schools	4 166	3 636	1. Ukraine (2 746) 2. Russia (257) 3. Serbia (168) 4. Korean Republic (80) 5. Kazakhstan (76)
Foreigners in universities	21 216	14 877	1. Ukraine (10 198) 2. Russia (960) 3. Serbia (638) 4. Norway (481) 5. Belarus (330)
Foreigners total	40 601	31 907	1. Ukraine (23 805) 2. Russia (1,754) 3. Serbia (1,158) 4. Vietnam (520) 5. Norway (481)

Source: Slovak Center of Scientific and Technical Information

Table 8: Irregular migration in the SR in 2022

Indicator	Number of cases	Top nationalities – non-EU countries
Registered illegal border crossings	549	1. Ukraine (508) 2. Turkey (6) 3. Syria/ Afghanistan (4) 4. Russia / Iran (3) 5. Georgia / Moldova (2)
Registered irregular stay	11 242	1. Syria (9,156) 2. Morocco (560) 3. Tunisia (418) 4. Turkey (272) 5. Afghanistan (174)
Total	11 791	1. Syria (9,160) 2. Ukraine (594) 3. Morocco (560) 4. Tunisia (418) 5. Turkey (278)

Source: BBFP PFP.

Table 9: Smuggled persons in the SR in 2022³³⁹

Indicator	Male	Fema- le	Total	Top countries
Third-country nationals identified as smuggled persons	:	:	3 489 / 3 254*	1. Syria (2,334) 2. Afghanistan (556) 3. Turkey (150) 4. Iran (122) 5. Ukraine (82)

Source: BBFP PFP.

* 3 489 irregular migrants were identified in investigation files in 2022, while the acts happened also in previous years. From the stated number in 2022, 3 254 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).

³³⁹ 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 2022

Indicator	Smugglers		
	Arrested as suspected/ charged	Top nationalities	convicted
Total ³⁴⁰	286*/222**	1. Ukraine (46) 2. Slovak Republic (37) 3. Syria (37)	63***

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

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

** Out of a total of 222 convicted persons, 197 were charged for illegal crossing of the state border, 6 for marriage of convenience, 8 for illegal work and 11 for illegal stay in the territory of the Slovak Republic / EU.

*** 31 persons were convicted based on Article 355 and 32 16 persons based on Article 356 of Act No. 300/2005 Coll. Criminal Code.

Table 11: Detained third-country nationals in the SR in 2022*

	PDCF Sečovce	PDCF Med- ved’ov	Total	Top nationalities
Number of placed TCNs during 2022	426	1 236	1 662	1. Morocco (420) 2. Tunisia (401) 3. Syria (294) 4. Turkey (158) 5. Afghanistan (70)

Source: BBFP PFP

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

³⁴⁰ 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 2022 (by type of return, nationality and country of return)

Indicator	Returned within forced return measures*				Returned voluntarily (including AVR)**				Returned voluntarily within AVR programme				Persons with provided reintegration assistance within AVR			
	Total	M	F	Out of which Min. 0	Total	M	F	Out of which Min. 11	Total	M	F	Out of which Min. 0	Total	M	F	Out of which Min. 0
Total	94	89	5	0	139***	121	18	11	90****	83	7	0	18	13	5	0
Top nationalities	1. Tunisia (23) 2. Ukraine (21) 3. Turkey/Serbia (8) 4. Afghanistan/Georgia (4) 5. Bosnia and Herzegovina/Albania / Syria / Moldova/Pakistan (3)				1. Turkey (104) 2. Tunisia (12) 3. Ukraine/Uzbekistan (5) 4. Vietnam (4) 5. Georgia (3)				Turkey (56) Tunisia (10) Uzbekistan (5) Georgian / Vietnam (4) Armenia (3)				Georgian / Uzbekistan / Vietnam (4) Armenia (3) Moldova (2) Zimbabwe (1) -			
Top countries of return	1. Ukraine (36) 2. Tunisia (23) 3. Serbia (8) 4. Turkey (6) 5. Georgia (4)				1. Turkey (104) 2. Tunisia (12) 3. Ukraine/Uzbekistan (5) 4. Vietnam (4) 5. Georgia (3)											

Source: BBFP PFP³⁴¹ and IOM in the SR³⁴².
* 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).
*** The number of 139 includes 53 voluntary returns under the new cooperation with Frontex, 81 voluntary returns through the IOM AVRR programme and 5 voluntary departures. The number of 139 does not include 9 foreigners who were returned through IOM as departed from Ukraine as they were not issued with a decision on administrative expulsion.
**** The number of 90 includes 9 foreigners who were returned through IOM as expatriates from Ukraine.
Explanations: AVR – Assisted voluntary returns, AVRR – Programme of Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration IOM, M – men, ML – minors, F – women

Table 13a: Asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection in the SR in 2022 – selected indicators

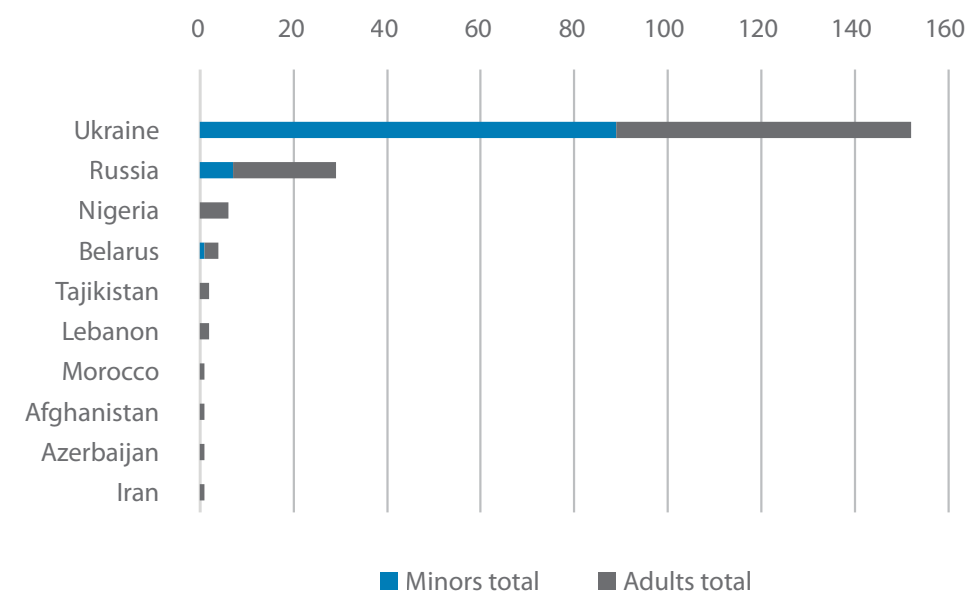
Indicator	Total	Male	Female	Out of which minors	Top nationalities ***
Applications for asylum (out of which first applications)	547 (503)	394 (360)	153 (143)	142 (132)	1. Ukraine (154) 2. Turkey (76) 3. Morocco (73) 4. Bangladesh (53) 5. Russia (40)
Asylum granted	23	15	8	7	1. Afghanistan (18) 2. Iran / Cameroon / Morocco / Nigeria / Syria (1) 3. - 4. - 5. -
Subsidiary protection provided*	48	21	27	16	1. Afghanistan (32) 2. Ukraine (13) 3. Azerbaijan / Yemen / Syria (1) 4. - 5. -
Negative decisions**	76	62	02.	0	1. Morocco (13) 2. Nepal (9) 3. Pakistan (8) 4. Russia (7) 5. Afghanistan (4)
Proceeding suspended***	387	286	101	99	1. Ukraine (136) 2. Morocco (74) 3. Bangladesh (50) 4. Turkey (34) 5. Russia (15)

Source: MO Mol SR.
Note: This table concerns first instance decisions only. The processing of statistics for 2022 is adapted to the changes resulting from the amendment to the Asylum Act.
Explanations:
* Subsidiary protection – protection against serious harm in the country of origin.
** Negative decisions – includes decisions on not granting asylum, not granting subsidiary protection and rejecting asylum applications as (i) manifestly unfounded or (ii) inadmissible. The statistics do not include decisions on rejected asylum applications as inadmissible if another Member State is competent for the asylum procedure, the so-called Dublin cases.
*** Proceeding suspended – termination of proceedings pursuant to § 19 of Act No. 480/2022 on asylum and on amendments to certain acts, as amended.

341 BBFP PFP provided return statistics based on data provided to Eurostat for 2021. BBFP PFP collected statistical data in compliance with the Art. 7.1. of the Regulation No. 862/2007 on Community Statistics on Migration and International Protection and with current Eurostat technical instructions (Technical Guidelines for the Data Collection – Enforcement of Immigration Legislation EIL Statistics).
342 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 and graph 13b: Number of persons who applied for asylum in the territory of the Slovak Republic in connection with the war in Ukraine (24/02/2022 – 31/12/2022)

Nationalities	Male	Female	Minor	Total
Ukraine	20	0	89	152
Russia	12	10	7	29
Other third countries	1	5	1	18
Total	44	58	97	199

Number of asylum applications related to the war in Ukraine

Source : BBFP PFP.

Table 14: Third-country nationals relocated to the SR in 2022 (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	11	0	-	0

Source: MO Mol SR.

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

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

Source: MO Mol SR.

Table 16: Third-country nationals resettled through the SR to third countries in 2022 (by sex and by original host country)

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

Source: MO Mol SR and IOM Slovakia.

Note: The SR carries out through its territory resettlement activities to other third countries (see Chapter 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 2022

	Male	Female	Total	Top nationalities	Left facilities
Unaccompanied minors placed to facilities	227	0	270	1. Ukraine (152) 2. Syria (55) 3. Afghanistan (29) 4. Morocco (11) 5. Turkey (10)	208
Total number of unaccompanied minors in facilities	247	0	290	1. Ukraine (152) 2. Syria (57) 3. Afghanistan (40) 4. Morocco (13) 5. Turkey (10)	224

Source: COLSAF – Preliminary statistics as of March 2023.

Note: * In 2022, unaccompanied minors – non-EU citizens – were placed in the Centre for Children and Families (CDR) in Medzilaborce.

Table 18: Unaccompanied minors in the SR by legal and sex status in 2022*

Indicator	Male	Female	Total	Top nationalities**
Unaccompanied minors not applying for asylum	238	0	281	1. Ukraine (152) 2. Syria (56) 3. Afghanistan (35) 4. Morocco (11) 5. Turkey (9)
Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum	1	0	9	1. Afghanistan 2. Morocco 3. Gambia / Syria 4. - 5. -
Total	247	0	290	1. Ukraine (152) 2. Syria (59) 3. Afghanistan (40) 4. Morocco (13) 5. Turkey (9)

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

Notes:

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

** If the number of unaccompanied minors is low, we do not give specific numbers for their protection.

Table 19: Human trafficking victims from third countries in the SR – selected indicators in 2022*

Indicator	Total	Male	Female
TCNs identified as victims of human trafficking³⁴³ or presumed victims of human trafficking³⁴⁴ Presumed victims are provided in brackets.	0 (2)	0 (0)	0 (2)
Age			
18 years of age or more	0 (2)	0 (0)	0 (2)
Under 18 years of age	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Form of exploitation ³⁴⁵			
Sexual exploitation	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (1)
Labour exploitation	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (1)
Other	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Top nationalities of trafficked persons	Confiden- tial data	Confiden- tial data	Confiden- tial data
Tolerated stay granted**	0	0	0
Directive 2004/81/EC	0	11	0
Other (e.g. humanitarian reasons, etc.)	0	11	0
Residence permits requested	0	0	0
Directive 2004/81/EC	0	11	0
Other (e.g. humanitarian reasons, etc.)	0	11	0
Residence permits granted	0	0	0
Directive 2004/81/EC	0	11	0
Other (e.g. humanitarian reasons, etc.)	0	11	0

Source: BBFP PFP (stays) and IC Mol SR.

* If the number is low, we do not provide it and also do not include other selected data on those victims for the protection of vulnerable persons. The specific number is substituted by „Confidential data“ statement.

** BBFP PFP does not record any tolerated stay that would be granted or extended in 2022 pursuant to § 58 par. 1 letter c) of Act no. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Foreigners.

343 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.

344 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).

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

Table 20: Traffickers in human beings in the SR – selected indicators in 2022

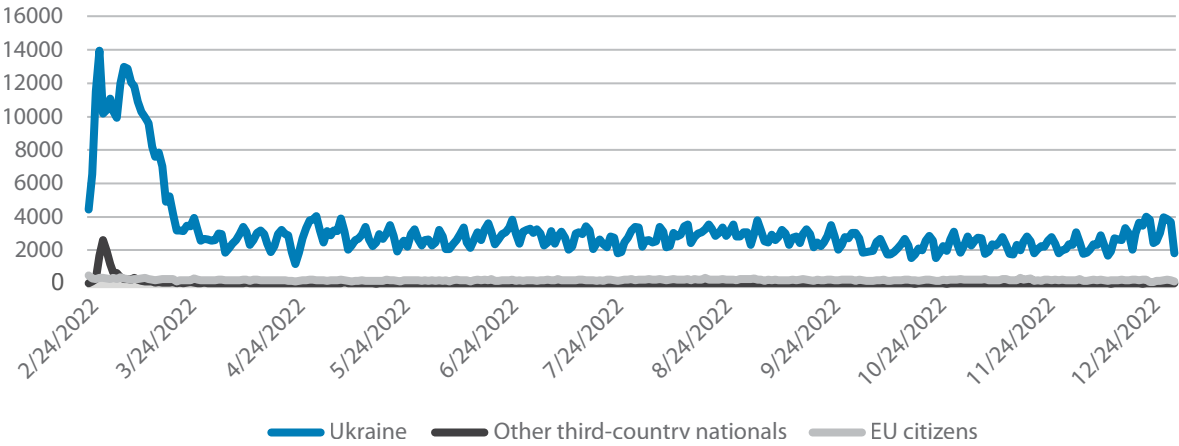
Indicator	Traffickers of human beings			
	Charged		Convicted	
Total	34*	22 male	10**	6 male
		12 female		4 female

Source: BBFP PFP (charged) and Ministry of Justice of the SR (convicted).
* Number of lawfully concluded cases.
** According to the § 179 of the Criminal Code No. 300/2005 Coll

Table and graph 21: Number of persons who entered the territory of the Slovak Republic from Ukraine since the outbreak of war in Ukraine (24.2.2022 – 31.12.2022)

Indicator	Nationalities			
	Ukraine	Other third-country nationals	EU citizens	Total
Number of persons	1 004 197	17 437	68 490	1 090 124

The flow of travelers from Ukraine through the common land border into Slovakia

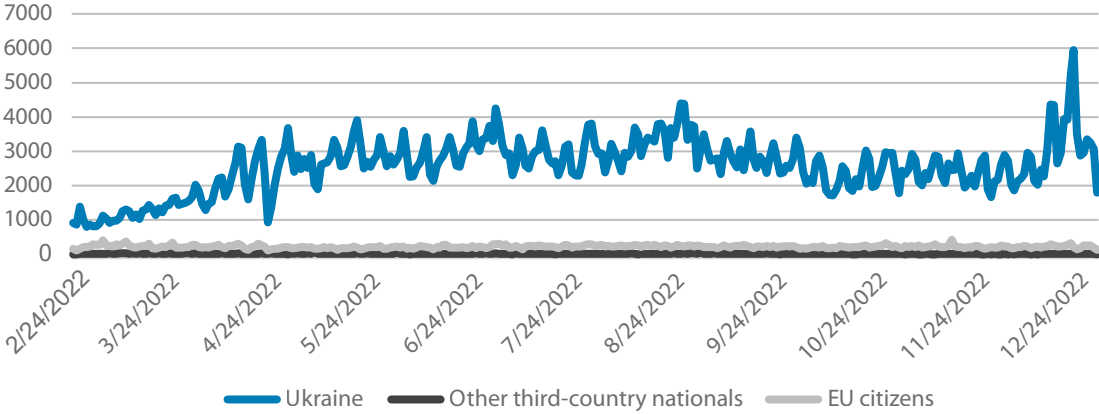


Source: BBFP PFP

Table and graph 22: Number of persons who have left the territory of the Slovak Republic towards Ukraine since the outbreak of war in Ukraine (24.2.2022 – 31.12.2022)

Nationalities			
Ukraine	Other third-country nationals	EU citizens	Total
800 412	5 324	69 853	875 589

Flows of travelers to Ukraine from Slovakia through the common land border

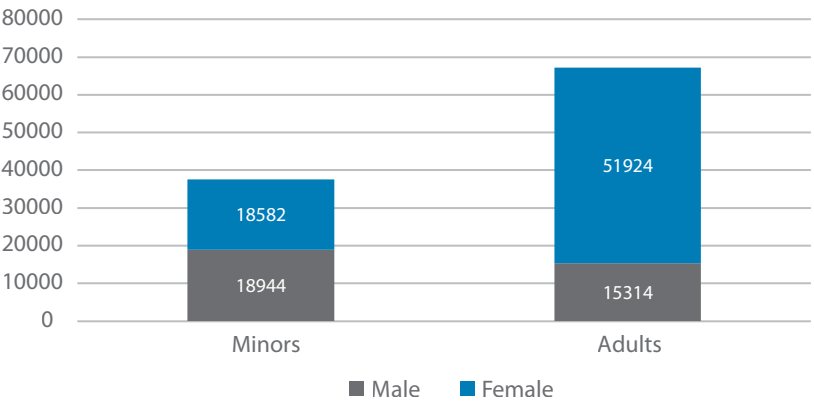


Source: BBFP PFP

Table and graph 23: Number of persons who applied for temporary protection in the territory of the Slovak Republic in 2022 in connection with the war in Ukraine

Nationalities	Adults		Minors	Number of applications for 2022 (from 1.3. to 31.12.2022) *
	Male	Female		
Ukraine	14 988	51 689	37 451	104 128
Russia	100	150	39	289
Other third countries	226	85	36	347
Total	15 314	51 924	37 526	104 764
	67 238			

Applications for temporary protection by age and gender



Source: BBFP PFP
* According to the status in the source information system (IS) MIGRA on 1.1.2023. The above statistics are variable, updated on a daily basis as well as retrospectively due to continuous monitoring and corrections made in the source IS. Therefore, there may be slight changes in the subsequently published numbers of applications for 2022.



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