

Migration in North Macedonia

A COUNTRY PROFILE 2021



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*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

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ACRONYMS

DESA	United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ESARNM	Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
JRC	European Commission – Joint Research Centre
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
MYLA	Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association
NGO	non-governmental organization
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SSO	State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WHO	World Health Organization

PREFACE

A migration profile is a country-owned tool, prepared in consultation with a broad range of both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, that can be used to enhance policy coherence, evidence-based policymaking and the mainstreaming of migration into development plans. This Migration Profile of the Republic of North Macedonia (2021) is developed in line with the IOM template for migration profiles as it appears in *Migration Profiles: Making the Most of the Process*,¹ an IOM-prepared practical guide for developing such documents. The template is intended for use as a flexible tool – that is, as a proposed framework that serves more as an “options menu” than a fixed structure that must be rigidly followed. In formulating the contents of this document, consideration was taken of the peculiarities of migration movements in, to and from North Macedonia, and especially external migration, to complement and put into context available statistics from both domestic and foreign sources.

The Migration Profile dedicates an entire section to a discussion of the country’s migration management framework and follows up on the visa liberalization road map presented by the European Commission to the Government of North Macedonia in 2008.²

The Migration Profile envisages the establishment of a mechanism for collecting relevant statistics about external (both “legal” and “illegal”)³ and internal migration, as well as a data processing and analysis system to help understand changes in the characteristics and features of migration movements during the decade 2009–2019. It identifies the impacts and implications of these movements, discusses progress in migration management in the country, and presents recommendations for future policies and activities in this and other areas of migration.

¹ IOM, *Migration Profiles: Making the Most of the Process* (Geneva, 2011). Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-profiles-making-most-process>.

² The country was provisionally referred to as “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and officially adopted the name “Republic of North Macedonia” (short name: North Macedonia) on 14 February 2019, upon final settlement on the differences described in United Nations Security Council resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the Parties.

³ The Migration Profile explains its use of the terms *illegal migration* and *illegal migrant*, as opposed to *irregular migration* and *irregular migrant*, in A.4. Illegal migration.

The Migration Profile was developed by a technical working group consisting of representatives of different institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations. The development of the Migration Profile was helped by as part of the Joint Programme on Evidence-based Migration Policy Planning and Discourse, supported by the United Nations Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, the goal of which is to support national institutions in improving demographic and migration policy management in their respective countries.

Figure 1. Map of the municipalities and statistical regions of North Macedonia



Vardar

1. Veles
2. Gradsko
3. Demir Kapija
4. Kavadarci
5. Lozovo
6. Negotino
7. Rosoman
8. Sveti Nikole
9. Chashka

East

10. Berovo
11. Vinitsa
12. Delchevo
13. Zrnovtsi
14. Karbintsi
15. Kochani
16. Makedonska Kamenitsa
17. Pehchevo
18. Probishtip
19. Cheshinovo - Obleshevo
20. Shtip

Southwest

21. Vevchani
22. Debar
23. Debrtsa
24. Kichevo
25. Makedonski Brod
26. Ohrid
27. Plasnitsa
28. Struga
29. Centar Zhupa

Southeast

30. Bogdantsi
31. Bosilovo
32. Valandovo
33. Vasilevo
34. Gevgelija
35. Dojran
36. Konche
37. Novo Selo
38. Radovish
39. Strumitsa

Pelagonia

40. Bitola
41. Demir Hisar
42. Dolneni
43. Krivogashani
44. Krushevo
45. Mogila
46. Novatsi
47. Prilep
48. Resen

Polog

49. Bogovinje
50. Brvenitsa
51. Vrapchishte
52. Gostivar
53. Zhelino
54. Jegunovtse
55. Mavrovo and Rostushe
56. Tearce
57. Tetovo

Northeast

58. Kratovo
59. Kriva Palanka
60. Kumanovo
61. Lipkovo
62. Rankovtse
63. Staro Nagorichane

Skopje

64. Aerodrom
65. Aracinovo
66. Butel
67. Gazi Baba
68. Gjorce Petrov
69. Zelenikovo
70. Ilinden
71. Karposh
72. Kisela Voda
73. Petrovets
74. Saraj
75. Sopishte
76. Studenichani
77. Centar
78. Chair
79. Chucher - Sandevo
80. Shuto Orizari

Source: Prepared by the SSO, North Macedonia.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the authors or the International Organization for Migration.

Table 1. Key data for North Macedonia

Geography						
Total land area: 25,436 sq km						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Human and social development						
Life expectancy at birth (years) ^a	75.41	75.40	75.57	75.95	76.34	75.74
Adult literacy rate (%) (persons aged 15+) ^b	97.8*	-	-	-	-	-
GDP per capita, RRR** (in USD thousands) ^c	4.843	5.133	5.432	6.087	6.022	5.888
Human Development Index ^d	0.753	0.757	0.758	0.759	0.774	-
Remittances and other financial flows						
Workers' remittance inflows (in USD millions) ^e	231.18	213.61	219.01	236.00	218.92	323.54
Workers' remittance outflows (in USD millions) ^e	15.77	17.97	20.73	18.66	19.00	23.71
Workers' remittance net flows (in USD millions) ^e	215.41	195.65	198.28	217.34	199.92	299.83
Foreign direct investments (in USD millions) ^e	230.3	349.4	198.5	713.3	404.0	232.8
Official development assistance (in USD millions) ^f	180	153	127	145	-	-
Total remittance inflows as % of GDP ^g	2.3	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.7	2.6
Workers' remittance inflows as % of total financial inflows ^{***}	36.0	29.8	40.2	21.6	-	-
Population	2005	2010	2015	2019	2020	
Total population estimate ^h	2 038 514	2 057 284	2 071 278	2 076 255	2 068 808	
Women ^h	1 016 116	1 026 404	1 033 677	1 036 539	1 033 590	
Men ^h	1 022 398	1 030 880	1 037 601	1 039 716	1 035 218	
Immigrant population in North Macedonia ^f	128 000	130 000	130 000	131 000	-	
International migration	2005	2010	2015	2019	2020	
Citizens living abroad (stock data) ^f	459 000	527 000	563 000	658 000	693 900	
Citizens of North Macedonia born abroad (live births) ⁱ	3 601	3 642	4 632	5 187	3 080	

Note: * Data is for 2014.

** RRR = reserve requirement ratio.

*** Total financial inflows are the sum of remittance inflows, foreign direct investments and official development assistance.

Sources: ^aSSO, 2017a, 2018a, 2019a and 2020a.

^bWorld Bank, 2021a.

^cWorld Bank, 2021b.

^dStatista, 2021.

^eNational Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2021.

^fJRC, 2020; DESA, 2019.

^gSSO, 2020a.

^hSSO, 2020b.

ⁱSSO, 2011a, 2016a and 2020c, and unpublished data shared by the SSO with the researchers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Migration Profile of the Republic of North Macedonia (2021) presents relevant statistical data on legal and illegal external and internal migration, analysed to reveal trends in migration movements during the decade 2009–2019. It both identifies the impacts of migration on the country, describes the country's progress as regards migration management, and presents recommendations for future policies and activities in the field of migration.

Section A: Characteristics of Migrants and Migration Trends presents data from which the following may be concluded.

- (a) External and internal migration are influenced by macro, meso and micro factors that act together to shape or determine an individual's decision to resettle. For citizens of North Macedonia, the **fundamental determinants** of internal migration and emigration (external migration) coincide significantly and are determined primarily by the degree of socioeconomic development at the national and regional levels. In addition, emigration is significantly shaped by tradition, migration networks and the migration policies of receiving countries. The fundamental reasons for immigration of foreigners to the country was found to be employment, studies, (professional) specialization, and family (e.g. family reunification). North Macedonia is also characterized by illegal migration and mixed migration movements, which include refugees, due to its geographic location as a transit country in the Western Balkans corridor.
- (b) The increase in migration flows out of North Macedonia and the entry of foreigners⁴ into the country have largely been due to changes in the **visa regime**, marked by visa liberalization and harmonization of migration legal

⁴ *Glossary on Migration* defines migrant as:

...an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students. (IOM, 2019)

No universally accepted definition of migrant exists. The above definition was developed by IOM for its own purposes and is not meant to imply or create any new legal category. National legislation of North Macedonia uses the term *foreigner* in its Law on Foreigners, which regulates the conditions of entry, exit, stay, departure and return of foreigners, as well as their rights and obligations in North Macedonia, and in the Law on the Employment and Work of Foreigners, which regulates conditions and procedures relating to the employment or work of foreigners in North Macedonia, unless otherwise determined by a ratified international agreement. For this reason, the drafters of the Migration Profile for the Republic of North Macedonia decided to use the term *foreigner* in this document.

frameworks with the European Union, as well as visa facilitation activities undertaken with numerous other countries. North Macedonia rejected a total of 34,648 visa applications by foreign individuals from about 180 countries, territories and other places of origin from 2009 to 2019.⁵ Citizens of Türkiye, China and India had the biggest combined share (25%) of the total number of issued visas. The Russian Federation, Ukraine, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt had a combined share of about 27 per cent.

- (c) There have also been some big changes in **cross-border mobility** (flows to neighbouring countries). During the 2009–2019 reference period, there was an increase of about 60 per cent in the combined entries of citizens and foreigners into North Macedonia, with about 90 per cent of foreigners coming from countries of the European Union.⁶ The number of citizens leaving the country doubled, while that of foreigners increased quarter-fold (25%).
- (d) **Migrant stock** data for North Macedonia is available only from national population censuses. According to the 2002 census, there was a total of 79,167 immigrants in the country on record until that census year. Data from *Atlas of Migration 2020* of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) shows that the total migrant population increased after 2005, reaching about 131,000 in 2019.
- (e) **Immigration for temporary residence or stay** in North Macedonia shows continued growth, albeit remaining relatively small. More than two thirds of immigrants come from five countries or places of origin – Albania, Greece, Serbia, Türkiye and Kosovo.⁷ Data from the State Statistical Office (SSO) shows a significant rise since 2015 in the number of foreigners temporarily staying in the country for reasons relating to employment, “professional engagement” (specifically, short-term consultancy not requiring a work permit), family (specifically family reunification), marriage and studies or academic specialization. The most significant increase is noted among foreigners on temporary stay for studies and specialization. During the 2009–2019 period, a total of 2,873 foreign individuals graduated from universities in North Macedonia, with 995 individuals acquiring master's degrees and 56 obtaining doctorate degrees.

⁵ Visa application count as until February 2019; data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia.

⁶ During the reference period of 2009–2019, the United Kingdom was still a member of the European Union. Thus, any references to “European Union countries” in the context of this period could include the United Kingdom.

⁷ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

- (f) From 2009 to 2019, a total of 12,660 individuals **acquired citizenship** in North Macedonia, most (11,829, or 93.4%) of whom through naturalization. According to data from the Ministry of Interior, 11,099 (98%) of new citizens are adults. Two thirds (67%) of all persons that have citizenship during this period came from just four countries or places of origin: Serbia, Türkiye and Kosovo.⁷ A total of 13,591 citizens of North Macedonia have been granted renunciation of their citizenship. About two thirds of them requested it for the purpose of acquiring citizenship in Germany, Austria and Slovenia.
- (g) The **emigration of citizens of North Macedonia** (temporary and permanent) during the decade 2009–2019 has also increased, with changes in its characteristics. The number of citizens who left to live abroad (flow data) was around 24,000 and 26,700 in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Foreign sources⁸ report that the total number of citizens staying abroad (stock data) rose from about 527,000 in 2010 to almost 700,000 (or almost a third of the country's resident population) in 2020. In *World Migration Report 2020*,⁹ North Macedonia ranked among the top 20 countries in the world with the highest emigration rates. Among European destination countries, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia had the biggest number of immigrants from North Macedonia. Australia, United States and Canada had received more than a total of 400,000 citizens of North Macedonia. Family, employment and studies remained the main reasons for emigration.
- (h) **Irregular migration** marked 2015, with the biggest migration movements (which even though they represented a global challenge) along the Western Mediterranean route, passing through North Macedonia and continuing towards countries of the European Union.¹⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for migrants, refugees, and border police and other stakeholders. The biggest numbers of illegal migrants in North Macedonia come from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic. As measures for preventing illegal migration tightened, the number of migrant smuggling cases increased. An effective component of the work of the Border Police of North Macedonia is the exchange of early-warning information, which has continuously been improved. A significant improvement in crime prevention and in discovering and prosecuting migrant smugglers has been achieved with the establishment of the National Unit (Task Force) for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, which improved

⁸ See, for example: JRC, *Atlas of Migration 2020* (Luxembourg, European Union, 2020). Available at www.europeansources.info/record/atlas-of-migration-2020.

⁹ IOM, *World Migration Report 2020* (Geneva, 2019), p. 27. Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020>.

¹⁰ European Parliament, "The Western Balkans: frontline of the migrant crisis", brief, January (Brussels, 2016). Available at [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573949/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)573949_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573949/EPRS_BRI(2016)573949_EN.pdf).

coordination between the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office.

- (i) **Readmission** has been an effective instrument or pathway for the return of citizens of North Macedonia who had been staying abroad illegally. Most readmitted citizens were returned from Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, France, Austria and Belgium through agreements with the governments of those countries.
- (j) **Asylum** applications submitted to North Macedonia numbered 719 in 2011 and had increased somewhat significantly since then: 1,364 in 2013, 1,249 in 2014 and 1,888 in 2015, the year that the European migrant and refugee crisis started and brought more than 800,000 migrants, including refugees, transiting through North Macedonia. The number of registered asylum seekers stabilized at several hundred a year in the following years. The COVID-19 pandemic caused changes in asylum procedures. The Asylum Department has started conducting online interviews with asylum seekers, helping speed up decisions on submitted applications.
- (k) **Return migration** of citizens remained very low, with most returnees belonging to the young (15–29) and younger middle-age population (30–39) and having completed at most secondary education.
- (l) **Internal migration**, in its various forms, as well as the characteristics (i.e. profile) of the migrant population, are shaped by the degree and nature of socioeconomic development and changes in the country's territorial organization. SSO data on internal migration during the 2009–2019 period shows that the number of persons who migrated within the country remains relatively small, with some discernible year-to-year fluctuations, with Skopje Region having the biggest share and number (43.2%; n=15,305) of internal migrants during the period overall. Rural–urban migration remained the dominant type of internal migration, with the share of rural–rural migration still relatively high. Negative migration balance in rural areas was 10 times higher than positive migration balance in urban areas. This confirms that a portion of those who left rural areas did not migrate to the cities but instead left the country.

Section B: Impacts of Migration discusses how migration affects demographic and socioeconomic development, the labour market, health and the environment in North Macedonia. The impacts of migration directly correlate with its volume, structural features and the cause-and-effect conditionalities between migration and demographic and socioeconomic development. Considering the relatively small volume of immigrants, who are mostly on temporary stay in North Macedonia, as well as the transient character of illegal migration, the impacts of

migration are considered mainly from the aspect of emigration (of which there is a huge volume). Analysis of the data shows the following:

- (a) Emigration has a significant impact on **population growth**, considering the volume of permanent emigration and the number of children of citizens of North Macedonia born abroad (about 48,700 children over the period 2009–2019). Due to young people's dominance of the population and the number of children born abroad, emigration has both direct and indirect impacts on demographic (or population) aging. In addition, having one of the highest levels of brain drain in the world¹¹ means that North Macedonia loses significant human capital to emigration. There are evidently heavy consequences of emigration at the macro (national) and meso (regional and municipal) levels; at the micro level (i.e. the household), these include an increasing number of one-person households and older-person households that have difficulties coping with daily errands.
- (b) It was hoped that migration would help address problems faced by the **labour force** and **labour market**; however, the expectation that emigration would alleviate long-term unemployment did not materialize. Despite the heavy outflow of labour, unemployment remains one of the country's biggest problems – which is now in an even less favourable context due to the resulting serious shortage of certain types of labour and skills needed to drive economic development.
- (c) The impact of migration on **socioeconomic development** is often expressed in short-term and insufficiently distinct development effects that are most often associated with the volume and use of remittances. Remittances from emigrants and persons temporarily working abroad have a broader macroeconomic significance in terms of boosting the country's foreign exchange potential, as they are an important source of funds in the current account of its balance of payments. Remittances thus contribute to maintaining a low current accounts deficit. While remittances are used mostly for personal expenses, and they do have a positive impact on the consumption and living standards of migrants' households, no long-term development effect is observed at a macro level by increasing consumption, especially of imported goods.
- (d) The unfavourable impacts of migration on **health** and the **environment** had previously been observed, becoming even more pronounced during the last decade. The number of doctors that left North Macedonia to work abroad – most of them in the United States, Germany, Slovenia, France and

¹¹ *TheGlobalEconomy.com*, "Human flight and brain drain in Europe – 2021", data set. Available at www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/human_flight_brain_drain_index/Europe (accessed 5 June 2021).

Switzerland – increased by about 60 per cent during the period 2010–2019. As a consequence of this medical emigration, there had been a growing shortage of physicians, as well as nurses, of various specializations. The emigration that had been going on for more than five decades resulted in a permanent depopulation of large areas of North Macedonia. There was a continuous increase in the number of settlements with no inhabitants, where no infrastructure was maintained and where there was no surveillance of the abuse or illegal use of arable land and forested areas and the emergence of illegal dumpsites – all of which have far-reaching, adverse implications for the environment.

Section C: Migration Management enumerates the legal, policy, institutional and cooperation frameworks that support migration management in North Macedonia, with the following major conclusions made:

- (a) **Coherence and coordination of migration-related activities** is relatively good and particularly evident in the following: (a) effective cooperation between the government and international organizations, as well as the implementation of a significant number of projects; (b) the work done by inter-agency (i.e. coordinative) bodies established to develop migration policies and strategic documents; (c) adoption of resolutions on migration-related policies and strategic documents; (d) identification of the need for interaction and coordination of migration-related policies and strategic documents with policies and strategic documents in other sectors; and (e) the adoption of the National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for Cooperation with the Diaspora 2019–2023, in order to increase the involvement of the diaspora in national development.
- (b) **Current national legislation on migration and migration-related issues** serve as sound legal basis for resolving cases of unauthorized stay involving any of various categories of persons and for approving individual applications for authorized stay in the country. North Macedonia has signed a number of multilateral and bilateral agreements on migration and is a signatory of both the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
- (c) **North Macedonia has ongoing fruitful international cooperation** with IOM, FRONTEX, Europol, Interpol, the European Union, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other organizations.

Section D: Key Findings, Migration Policy Impacts and Recommendations summarize the Migration Profile’s main findings, particularly with regard to migration characteristics and trends, frameworks supporting migration management and the impacts of migration policies in North Macedonia, and offer the following recommendations:

- (a) With regard to migration management, review whether it is necessary to draft and adopt a “Law on Migration Management”, which, among other things, will determine relevant principles, competent State bodies and a single system for collecting and exchanging data in this area.
- (b) Work towards integrating migration in sectoral policies, alleviating unfavourable impacts of migration and harnessing migration for national development – the strategy for cooperation with the diaspora has shown that there are numerous opportunities for these. Especially important among these opportunities are the productive use of foreign remittances and inflows of foreign exchange from migrants to stimulate investment; encouraging foreign trade and increasing exports of products to countries that receive citizens of North Macedonia; developing diaspora tourism; and engaging and cooperating with the scientific diaspora in the field of science and education.
- (c) Improve external migration statistics by collecting more accurate data and making disaggregated data available. Better statistics will be the basis for building evidence-based policies and will provide evidence of the legal identity and appropriate documentation for migrants.

SECTION A: CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION TRENDS

A.1. Key drivers of migration and cross-border mobility

A.1.1. Fundamental determinants of migration and changes in migration movements

Migration is a complex phenomenon whereby macro, meso and micro factors act together to influence or determine the decision to move either legally or illegally, within one's country (internal) or abroad (external or international). This perspective integrates the well-known and widely accepted push–pull theory of “rejection” and “attraction” factors or determinants of migration movement.

Among macro factors, the fundamental determinants or “main drivers” of migration are the political, demographic, socioeconomic and environmental developments surrounding the individual, who has no control over them. Among meso factors, information and communications technology, land as a resource for economic survival and ties with the diaspora play an important role. Social media and personal contacts in the diaspora, for example, serve to attract people in countries of origin by raising their awareness about living conditions in more developed areas of the world (even as the perceptions that they form often do not accurately reflect reality). Micro factors, such as education, religion, marital status and personal attitudes towards migration, also play a key role in an individual's decision to migrate. It must be emphasized that the stereotype of the “illiterate”, “poor” and “rural” migrant clambering to reach the border of a wealthy country has been abandoned. The poorest people simply do not have the funds to escape war and poverty, often remaining trapped in their country of origin or within its neighbourhood.

The reasons for legal internal and external migration in and from North Macedonia are numerous and very complex. Changes in macro, meso and micro factors may have brought about variations in the intensity of these movements and in the structural characteristics of migrant populations themselves during the last decade (2009–2019), but the fundamental determinants of migration have remained mainly the same. In addition, practically all surveys on either internal or external migration have confirmed that the drivers behind these two types of movements coincide.

The determinants of migration in the current context of North Macedonia relate mostly to the country's socioeconomic development in recent times, with the following groups of factors being the most significant: (a) the prevailing high rates of unemployment and the persistence of long-term unemployment (especially among young people), including the growth of unemployment among people with higher education (especially in a situation of massification of higher education); (b) higher salaries and better living standards in Skopje and in countries of destination; (c) little respect or regard for certain professions and types of work, as well as limited opportunities for career development, resulting in “intellectual migration” from less developed areas of the country to Skopje and “intellectual emigration” (i.e. to other countries); and (d) traditional migration patterns and the establishment of many diaspora communities that maintain relations and networks with citizens back home (a factor that remains an important “alleviating circumstance” for the latter and thus contributing to the continuing rise of emigration); and (e) favourable migration policies in receiving countries were, which is still a key determinant shaping the volume of migration and the structural features of the emigrant population (the attraction of the highly educated workforce and talent towards other countries has resulted in the intensification of intellectual emigration, which has become especially pronounced).

The rising rates of immigration to North Macedonia during the reference period 2009–2019 consisted mainly of temporary migration for (a) employment or (b) studies or academic specialization. Employment of foreigners in the country is continuously increasing due to increased foreign investment. Increased interest among foreign citizens to study in North Macedonia corresponds to the adaptation of university study programmes in the country to the needs of labour markets abroad and the organization of instruction in students' mother tongues. Marriage and other family reasons are traditional determinants of immigration from other countries in the Western Balkan region.

North Macedonia is a country of transit for illegal migration due to its location in the Western Balkans corridor, which is characterized by mixed migration movements, including of refugees, between countries of origin in the Middle East, Africa and Asia and destination countries in the European Union. International criminal networks often use these mixed migration movements to smuggle and traffic migrants. In addition to refugees and victims of trafficking, these migrant populations are made up of other vulnerable categories of people, such as unaccompanied children and people in need of international protection.

In a short period of time – from mid-2015 until March 2016 – North Macedonia faced a large influx of refugees, with hundreds of thousands transiting through the country as part of the Western Balkans corridor established by the European Union. It was a large, mixed migration wave that was unique in its structure, as it included large numbers of vulnerable categories of people. Among other things, it caused a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers in North Macedonia, with an uptrend starting after 2009 and reaching a peak in 2015.

North Macedonia remains a transit country for illegal migration because these migrants prefer countries where they have existing contacts (i.e. established migration networks) and in which the agricultural and construction sectors are developed. In addition, illegal migrants are less likely to stay in countries with high unemployment rates.

A.1.2. Visa issuance

A significant influx of foreigners into North Macedonia and migration flows from the country to those of the European Union characterized the period 2009–2019. This was a time of significant changes in the visa regime corresponding mainly to visa liberalization in the European Union,¹² followed by the harmonization of the country’s visa regime with that of the Union, as well as of activities undertaken with individual countries for certain types of visa facilitation. During this period, North Macedonia, as a candidate for European Union accession, conducted a number of activities aimed at further harmonization with the visa regime of the European Union, established through European Council Regulation No. 539/2001. A high level of harmonization was achieved through this regulation.

Activities were undertaken with numerous countries for certain types of visa facilitation, ultimately for the purpose of strengthening economic cooperation, increasing the number of foreign tourists and attracting foreign investment.¹³ Between 2015 and 2020, decisions were made for the European Union’s unilateral abolition of visa requirements for citizens of 24 countries (i.e. on the European Union’s so-called “White List”) to enter and stay for up to 90 days during a 180-day period, as well as for short-term stay for citizens of five countries (as

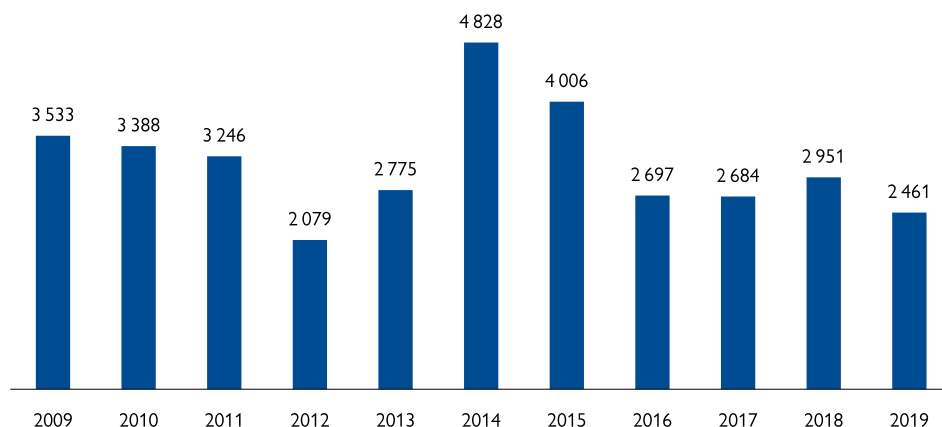
¹² On 19 December 2009, the European Union abolished the short-stay visa requirement for citizens of North Macedonia (see footnote 2) who were planning to visit Schengen countries, allowing them to stay for up to 90 days per 180-day period, counting from the day of their first entry.

¹³ From 2010 to 2014, the Government of North Macedonia (see footnote 2) adopted decisions to abolish entry and short-stay visa requirements (for a stay of up to 90 days) for citizens of places of origin listed in Annex 2 of European Council Regulation No. 539/2001. Decisions were also made for the temporary abolition of the short-term visa requirement for stays of up to one year (for citizens of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Ukraine) or even longer (e.g. for citizens of Ukraine).

specified in footnote 12). At the same time, agreements were signed between North Macedonia and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo⁷ regarding travel requirements for individuals from these places, specifically, the possibility for entry and short-term stay with a valid biometric national identity card in lieu of a valid passport. In addition, inter-State agreements and treaties were signed with several countries to abolish the visa regime for holders of diplomatic and service passports. Through parallel activities, border crossing points were equipped with additional workstations for the operationalization of the **National Visa Information System (N-VIS)** and video spectral comparators (VSCs)¹⁴ were installed for the detection of counterfeit documents as a form of secondary control.

All the aforementioned changes impacted, the number of approved visa applications in North Macedonia between 2009 and 2019 to varying degrees, with variations as well across visa types applied for and applicants' citizenships. During this decade, 34,648 visa applications were approved in all, with significant fluctuations across the years. From 2009 to 2011, the number was more than 3,000 annually, with approved visas reaching their highest numbers in 2014 and 2015, with 4,828 and 4,006, respectively (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Approved visa applications to North Macedonia, 2009–2019



Source: Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, North Macedonia.

¹⁴ These machines enable the direct examination of visas that have already been issued by diplomatic missions and consular posts abroad, as well as the issuance henceforth of electronic visas at border crossing points themselves.

All aspects of the issuance of visas for entry and stay in North Macedonia are regulated through the new Law on Foreigners (2018),¹⁵ specifically its articles 24 to 46. Three types of visas are issued under this law.

- (a) **Airport transit (“A visa”)**. Foreigners passing through an airport in North Macedonia, but not leaving the international transit area or the aircraft, normally do not need a transit visa. However, the Government of North Macedonia may decide to require it for citizens of certain States, with exemptions for the following categories of persons: family members of a citizen of North Macedonia, holders of diplomatic passports and aircraft crew members.
- (b) **Short stay and transit (“C visa”)**. This visa is issued to a foreigner for a single, double or multiple entries for travel of any purpose (except those requiring a type A or D visa) to North Macedonia not exceeding 90 days. If issued for purposes of transit, the foreigner has the right to a single stay of up to 5 days.
- (c) **Temporary residence (“D visa”)**. This visa grants a foreigner who intends to stay in North Macedonia a single entry and the right to a 30-day stay in the country for any of the purposes laid down in article 71 of the Law on Foreigners.¹⁶

Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shows that most of the approved and most of the rejected visa applications (64.3% and 74.2%, respectively) during the period 2015–2020 were for short stay and transit (Table 2).

Table 2. Approved and rejected visa applications for entry or stay in North Macedonia, 2015–2020

Approved/rejected visa applications, by type		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
A	Approved	62	14	36	28	8	0
	Rejected	5	3	1	1	0	0
C	Approved	2 039	1 615	1 867	2 029	1 744	411
	Rejected	520	400	320	397	289	85
D	Approved	1 913	1 072	783	903	446	126
	Rejected	292	202	103	50	28	13

¹⁵ The consolidated text of the new Law on Foreigners includes amendments made through Official Gazette Nos. 97/2018 and 108/2019.

¹⁶ A foreigner is required to register with the Ministry of Interior within five days from the date of entry in North Macedonia. The ministry shall issue the said foreigner a temporary residence permit within 25 days from the date of registration.

Approved/rejected visa applications, by type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of approved visas	4 014	2 701	2 686	2 960	2 198	537
Total number of rejected visas	817	605	424	448	317	98
Total number of cancelled visas	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Total number of annulled visas	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Total number of manually issued visas	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Total processed visa applications	4 831	3 306	3 110	3 408	2 515	635

Source: Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, North Macedonia.

The number of short-stay and transit visa applications fluctuated over the period covered, dropping sharply in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, there had been a significant drop in the number of temporary residence visa applications since 2015. As a result, the share of short-stay and transit visa applications increased from 50.8 per cent (2015) to 79.3 per cent (2019) of all approved visas, while that of temporary residence visas decreased from 47.7 per cent (2015) to 20.3 per cent (2019). There was an overall drop in the share of rejected applications for both categories.

There were significant fluctuations from 2009 to 2019 in the number of approved visa applications across applicant citizenships. Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shows that during this decade, visas for entry and temporary residence in North Macedonia were issued to citizens of about 180 countries. Table 3 provides data on the 30 countries or places of origin with the largest numbers of approved visa applications, organized in three tiers or groups.

Table 3. Approved visa applications to North Macedonia, by applicant's country of citizenship or place of origin, 2009–2019

Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total (all years)
Türkiye	1	2	2	2	387	1 334	726	506	493	610	232	4 295
China	111	135	227	207	250	305	317	252	312	319	202	2 637
Stateless	334	271	215	267	260	197	161	186	179	184	197	2 451
India	39	164	267	296	337	174	167	120	146	136	156	2 002
Russian Federation	964	599	142	71	14	25	22	3	1	3	1	1 845
Ukraine	650	772	227	43	4	36	36	11	1	0	2	1 782
Armenia	99	149	91	57	120	144	67	129	104	111	99	1 170
Republic of Moldova	162	182	204	131	123	181	182	1	2	0	0	1 168
Georgia	95	131	139	97	127	98	95	104	73	69	56	1 084

Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total (all years)
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	68	116	118	54	53	111	83	85	153	74	46	961
Egypt	9	81	85	65	94	100	148	105	53	66	118	924
Kazakhstan	75	91	148	4	0	3	1	0	0	187	165	674
Serbia	8	5	3	0	28	239	169	100	54	27	20	653
Syrian Arab Republic	29	26	26	37	88	78	82	46	63	45	45	565
Kosovo ⁷	27	21	4	3	31	141	163	65	17	24	16	512
Philippines	28	16	27	28	39	39	50	48	70	85	71	501
Belarus	185	73	61	70	9	6	10	10	15	9	9	457
Albania	5	0	2	2	39	177	96	24	46	28	28	447
Greece	0	0	0	0	52	214	84	25	5	3	2	385
Jordan	15	18	30	25	39	47	45	34	50	46	36	385
Kyrgyzstan	44	17	45	12	22	29	32	64	38	52	26	381
South Africa	27	27	35	26	39	33	67	40	38	29	15	376
Iraq	16	13	32	18	41	62	78	23	38	25	23	369
Thailand	25	11	37	13	10	28	18	36	43	34	59	314
Indonesia	27	24	30	47	43	24	28	23	19	19	23	307
Uzbekistan	44	11	16	18	27	39	19	19	21	39	24	277
Lebanon	14	17	18	27	26	25	63	23	22	21	12	268
Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	0	73	66	30	11	19	9	208
Azerbaijan	79	57	39	15	0	2	2	0	1	3	4	202
Germany	1	0	2	0	5	50	43	28	27	17	10	183
Total	3 490	3 380	2 707	2 060	2 775	4 828	4 006	2 697	2 684	2 912	2 461	34 000

Source: Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, North Macedonia.

The **first group** consisted of citizens of Türkiye, China, India, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt. The total number of approved visa applications for citizens of these countries during the period covered was 17,868, representing more than half (52.6%) of the total number (34,000) of visas issued.

The **second group** consisted of individuals with the following places of origin: Kazakhstan, Serbia, Syrian Arab Republic, the Philippines, Belarus, Albania, Greece, Jordan and Kosovo.⁷ Together they represented 5,227 (13.5%) of all visas issued during the period.

The **third group** consisted of citizens of Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, Iraq, Thailand, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Lebanon, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan and Germany. A total of 2,885 visa applications, corresponding to 8.5 per cent of the total number of issued visas, from citizens of these countries were approved during the period.

The citizens of these top 30 countries accounted for three quarters (75%) of all issued visas during the period 2009–2019. Some fluctuation is observed when analysing the data by year and country or place of origin. The fluctuations are especially pronounced among applicants from the Russian Federation, who had large numbers in the first couple of years that drastically dropped afterwards, and citizens of Türkiye, whose number grew continuously and significantly since 2013. The number of approved visa applications for stateless persons during the period analysed was also significant, reaching 2,451 (7.1% of the total).

Available data on the number and sex of successful visa applicants shows significant changes throughout the covered period, with shares of men and women being more or less equal only in 2009 (Table 4). Men's share oscillated from a period of increase from 2010 (56.1%) to 2015 (68.9%), followed by a decline until 2019 (56.5%).

Table 4. Approved visa applications to North Macedonia, by sex, 2009–2019

Year	Number of approved visa applications			Sex structure (% distribution)	
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
2009	1 773	1 760	3 533	50.2	49.8
2010	1 902	1 486	3 388	56.1	43.9
2011	1 975	1 271	3 246	60.8	39.2
2012	1 306	773	2 079	62.8	37.2
2013	1 841	934	2 775	66.3	33.7
2014	3 265	1 563	4 828	67.6	32.4
2015	2 762	1 244	4 006	68.9	31.1
2016	1 771	926	2 697	65.7	34.3
2017	1 608	1 076	2 684	59.9	40.1
2018	1 755	1 196	2 951	59.5	40.5
2019	1 390	1 071	2 461	56.5	43.5

Source: Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, North Macedonia.

This overall increase of men among successful visa applicants coincided with an increase in the number of applicants for entry visas into North Macedonia from Türkiye, China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt, who were predominantly men. Given their dominant share of the total number of applicants during the 2009–2019 period, they affected the sex structure of the total number of visa applicants.

Table 5. Percentage of approved visa applications to North Macedonia, by applicant's sex and country of citizenship, 2009–2019

Country of citizenship/Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total (all years)
Men (number of approved applications)	1 773	1 902	1 975	1 306	1 841	3 265	2 762	1 771	1 608	1 755	1 390	21 348
Armenia	47.5	73.2	40.7	33.3	72.5	52.8	49.3	58.9	52.9	66.7	75.8	58.8
China	91.9	71.1	81.5	73.4	66.0	67.2	72.9	73.0	61.9	60.2	69.8	70.0
Egypt	55.6	93.8	88.2	81.5	75.5	77.0	80.4	62.9	73.6	78.8	92.4	80.3
Georgia	52.6	50.4	54.7	56.7	58.3	57.1	49.5	45.2	45.2	56.5	55.4	53.0
India	66.7	73.8	80.9	78.7	68.8	77.6	77.8	80.0	78.8	74.3	71.8	75.8
Iraq	80.9	81.9	78.8	85.2	77.4	70.3	65.1	72.9	57.5	136.5	54.3	76.8
Republic of Moldova	50.6	52.2	53.4	42.7	52.0	46.4	44.5	0	0	0	0	48.9
Russian Federation	39.8	45.9	45.8	50.7	78.6	64.0	68.2	33.3	100.0	33.3	100.0	43.7
Türkiye	0	100.0	50.0	50.0	77.8	79.5	78.7	75.7	64.3	67.2	68.5	74.6
Ukraine	45.1	43.7	59.9	51.2	75.0	30.6	88.9	81.8	0	0	0	47.3
Stateless	54.2	56.8	51.6	52.8	53.5	48.2	52.2	59.7	52.5	57.1	51.8	53.7
Women (number of approved applications)	1 760	1 486	1 271	773	934	1 563	1 244	926	1 076	1 196	1 071	13 300
Armenia	52.5	26.8	59.3	66.7	27.5	47.2	50.7	41.1	47.1	33.3	24.2	41.2
China	8.1	28.9	18.5	26.6	34.0	32.8	27.1	27.0	38.1	39.8	30.2	30.0
Egypt	44.4	6.2	11.8	18.5	24.5	23.0	19.6	37.1	26.4	21.2	7.6	19.7
Georgia	47.4	49.6	45.3	43.3	41.7	42.9	50.5	54.8	54.8	43.5	44.6	47.0
India	33.3	26.2	19.1	21.3	31.2	22.4	22.2	20.0	21.2	25.7	28.2	24.2
Iraq	19.1	18.1	21.2	14.8	22.6	29.7	34.9	27.1	42.5	6.5	45.7	23.2
Republic of Moldova	49.4	47.8	46.6	57.3	48.0	53.6	55.5	0	0	0	0	51.1
Russian Federation	60.2	54.1	54.2	49.3	21.4	36.0	31.8	66.7	0.0	66.7	0.0	56.3
Türkiye	0	0	50.0	50.0	22.2	20.5	21.3	24.3	35.7	32.8	31.5	25.4
Ukraine	54.9	56.3	40.1	48.8	25.0	69.4	11.1	18.2	0	0	0	52.7
Stateless	45.8	43.2	48.4	47.2	46.5	51.8	47.8	40.3	47.5	42.9	48.2	46.3

Source: Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, North Macedonia.

With the entry into force of the European Union's visa liberalization policy, many citizens of North Macedonia seized the opportunity to travel visa-free to Schengen countries. Some of them abused this privilege for a variety of reasons – for example, by seeking asylum in countries of the European Union or Schengen zone despite having no valid grounds. Authorities in North Macedonia undertook a number of general and operational measures to deal with this situation and launched a public awareness campaign. The measures and activities have already yielded results: Eurostat data shows that the number of citizens of North Macedonia seeking asylum for the first time in European Union countries was in constant decline from 2015 to 2019: 10,545 (2015), 6,135 (2016), 4,250 (2017), 3,425 (2018) and 2,805 (2019).¹⁷ The number in 2019 represented a threefold drop from 2015, with almost all asylum applications (99%) submitted by citizens of North Macedonia rejected throughout the period.

A.1.3. Cross-border mobility

Passenger flow across State borders of North Macedonia during the reference period was characterized by a significant rise, but with different scopes and dynamics from the aspect of the entry and exit of its citizens and foreigners alike.

Data from the Ministry of Interior shows a continuous and considerable increase (39%) in the number of citizens of North Macedonia entering the country between 2009 and 2014, dropping in the next three years and reaching record numbers of more than 3.3 million people in both 2018 and 2019 (Table 6). On the other hand, the number of citizens of North Macedonia who left the country increased constantly every year throughout the reference period, almost doubling in 2019 (a growth of 95.2%) in comparison to 2009. This fundamentally resulted from the visa liberalization policy of the European Union, as well as the increased number of new airline routes and cheaper flights, among others.

¹⁷ JRC, *Atlas of Migration 2020* (see footnote 8).

Table 6. Passenger flows across State borders of North Macedonia, 2009–2019

Year	Entering citizens of North Macedonia	Exiting citizens of North Macedonia	Entering foreign citizens	Exiting foreign citizens
2009	2 254 259	2 701 746	4 819 026	3 965 658
2010	2 480 547	3 025 769	4 999 741	3 641 419
2011	2 690 183	3 337 484	5 563 795	4 198 162
2012	2 710 666	3 417 837	5 508 287	4 037 850
2013	2 920 403	3 572 007	6 031 826	4 242 819
2014	3 133 412	3 858 114	6 669 495	4 582 740
2015	3 095 826	4 016 161	6 457 152	4 196 618
2016	2 984 411	4 381 079	6 832 498	4 292 229
2017	2 978 732	4 480 585	7 025 013	4 165 433
2018	3 389 427	4 906 709	7 484 751	4 711 585
2019	3 600 783	5 272 537	7 693 532	4 954 861

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Significant increases were also evident in the flow of foreign individuals across the State borders of North Macedonia. The volume of entering foreign individuals was especially large and, although with some fluctuations, showed an overall trend of significant growth. In 2019, the number of foreigners entering the country was three fifths (59.6%) higher than in 2009. At the same time, the number of foreign individuals exiting the country via official crossing points at along State borders increased by 24.9 per cent.

From the aspect of mapping cross-border mobility, interesting information is provided by data on the continents and countries of origin of foreign individuals who crossed State borders of North Macedonia. Europe was the dominant continent, having the highest number of individuals either entering or exiting North Macedonia during the reference period, with increases in flow volume of 67 per cent for entry and 29.2 per cent for exit from 2009 to 2019. Most of the other continents were characterized by higher increases: Africa, with 216.6 per cent for entry and 204 per cent for exit; Asia, 133.5 per cent and 125 per cent; the Americas, 75.6 per cent and 51.6 per cent; and Oceania, 65.9 per cent and 36.4 per cent, respectively (Table 7).

Table 7. Authorized border crossings by foreign citizens entering and exiting North Macedonia, 2009–2019

Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of entering foreign citizens											
Europe	4 338 511	4 770 936	5 321 991	5 239 508	5 701 678	6 311 174	6 097 216	6 467 859	6 607 892	7 062 485	7 247 460
Asia	135 238	144 285	156 534	185 848	240 575	262 867	261 614	262 273	306 194	298 503	315 795
Africa	946	1 237	1 248	1 205	2 540	2 858	2 058	1 879	2 195	2 416	2 995
Americas	51 906	55 240	56 705	53 805	58 165	61 936	65 299	71 557	75 998	84 193	91 138
Oceania	18 772	20 517	23 468	24 556	25 031	26 428	25 751	24 415	28 112	31 581	31 144
Disputed States and United Nations protectorates	244	561	960	1 569	2 004	2 615	3 094	2 681	3 149	4 158	3 371
Entry with passports issued by international organizations	7 825	6 965	2 689	1 796	1 833	1 617	2 120	1 834	1 473	1 415	1 629
Total	4 553 442	4 999 741	5 563 795	5 508 287	6 031 826	6 669 495	64 57 152	6 832 498	7 025 013	7 484 751	7 693 532
Number of exiting foreign citizens											
Europe	3 551 054	3 458 484	3 992 303	3 812 002	3 972 226	4 287 626	3 903 440	3 982 271	3 845 654	4 358 514	4 588 773
Asia	115 972	111 414	134 565	158 936	198 332	220 008	215 866	226 199	230 536	252 774	260 857
Africa	825	825	1 072	1 056	1 762	1 962	1 649	1 576	1 757	2 054	2 509
Americas	47 264	45 434	46 239	42 109	45 621	48 316	48 764	56 674	58 928	65 181	71 649
Oceania	19 866	19 260	21 347	21 203	22 159	21 751	22 823	21 923	25 297	29 003	27 092
Disputed States and United Nations protectorates	227	455	897	1 529	1 629	2 052	2 849	2 315	2 418	3 236	2 877
Exit with passports issued by international organizations	7 012	5 547	1 739	1 015	1 090	1 025	1 227	1 271	843	823	1 104
Total	3 742 220	3 641 419	4 198 162	4 037 850	4 242 819	4 582 740	4 196 618	4 292 229	4 165 433	4 711 585	4 954 861

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Data for the top 10 countries and other places of origin, per continent, of foreign individuals who crossed State borders of North Macedonia in 2009, 2015 and 2019 are available in Annexes 1 and 2. Albania and Serbia stood out among European countries, representing a joint share of about two fifths (40%) of all authorized entries of individuals originating from the continent for these three years. Most entries (about 80%) by citizens of Asian countries were made by citizens of Türkiye, with large increases in the numbers of citizens of China, Israel, Japan and Malaysia entering North Macedonia through the years. Among African countries, Egypt and South Africa stood out as having the largest shares, which grew from 32.98 per cent (2009) to 33.72 per cent (2015) and 41.47 per cent (2019), respectively). As for the Americas, United States and Canada were dominant, having a combined share of more than 90 per cent. for Oceania, it was Australia and New Zealand (more than 99%, combined). With regard to the Americas and Oceania, the large increases could be attributed mostly to visiting citizens of North Macedonia who had resided overseas for a long time and obtained foreign citizenship and who entered the country with their foreign passports.

A.2. Immigration of foreigners to North Macedonia

Immigration of foreigners to North Macedonia is regulated by the Law on Foreigners, which has been amended several times in the last decade, with a new Law on Foreigners adopted in 2018.¹⁸ From the aspect of monitoring these migration movements, a distinction should be made between data referring to the total foreign population living in North Macedonia (migrant stock) and those pertaining to the two categories of immigrants (“migration flow”) recognized in the new law: (a) foreigners with temporary residence (longer than three months, i.e. 90 days) and (b) foreigners with permanent residence. According to the new law, permanent residence may be granted to a foreigner who has been continuously residing within the territory of North Macedonia for at least five years based on an approved temporary residence prior to the submission of the application for permanent residence (unless otherwise provided by the new law), as well as other grounds.¹⁹

¹⁸ Government of North Macedonia, Consolidated Text of the Law on Foreigners of 1 September 2019 (with amendments made through Official Gazette Nos. 97/2018 and 108/2019). Available at www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=6290d0774&skip=0&query=consolidated%20text%20law%20on%20foreigners&coi=MKD.

¹⁹ Under the same conditions, permanent residence of persons under international protection is granted for purposes of family reunification (but only to immediate family members), as well as to foreigners whose stay is in the interest of the Republic of North Macedonia.

A.2.1. Migrant stock

Data on the migrant stock of North Macedonia can only be obtained from population censuses. Based on data from the 2002 census, the total population that had immigrated into the country was 79,167 people.²⁰ According to *Atlas of Migration 2020*, the migrant stock increased slightly from 2015 to 2019, reaching about 131,000 (Table 8). The total migrant population originating from countries of the European Union was small and remained static (3,000 persons) throughout this period. Most of the immigrant population thus came from other countries.

Table 8. Migrant stock of North Macedonia, 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2019

Country of citizenship/Place of origin	2005	2010	2015	2019
European Union countries	3 000	3 000	3 000	3 000
All other countries	125 000	127 000	127 000	128 000
Total	128 000	130 000	130 000	131 000

Source: JRC, 2020; DESA, 2019.

A.2.2. Immigrants with temporary or permanent residence

Data from the State Statistical Office (SSO) shows rising trends in foreigners immigrating to North Macedonia on temporary and permanent (or extended) residence (or stay) during the reference period 2009–2019, which was especially noticeable after 2015 (Table 9). The number of foreigners with either temporary or permanent residence in 2019 (2,811 and 1,782, respectively) was almost three times higher than in 2009 (1,000 and 598, respectively). Given the almost equal rates of increase in the numbers of immigrants with temporary and permanent residence, no major changes were observed in their respective shares of the total number of foreigners. Notwithstanding fluctuations, the share of immigrants with temporary residence in North Macedonia remained dominant throughout the said period.

Table 9. Immigrants in North Macedonia with temporary or extended residence, 2009–2019

Category	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Foreigners with temporary residence	1 000	1 356	1 747	2 072	1 941	2 273	3 617	2 481	2 322	2 557	2 811
Foreigners with permanent/extended residence	598	1 056	1 115	1 319	1 560	1 670	1 482	1 979	1 760	1 684	1 782
Total	1 598	2 412	2 862	3 391	3 501	3 943	5 099	4 460	4 082	4 241	4 593

²⁰ SSO, Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2002, final data (Skopje, 2002). Available at www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigalX.pdf.

Category	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Percentage distribution											
Foreigners with temporary residence	62.6	56.2	61.0	61.1	55.4	57.6	70.9	55.6	56.9	60.3	61.2
Foreigners with permanent/extended residence	37.4	43.8	39.0	38.9	44.6	42.4	29.1	44.4	43.1	39.7	38.8

Source: SSO, 2012a, 2016b and 2018b.

In terms of places of origin of immigrants in North Macedonia (those with either temporary or permanent residence), the following five dominated the overall reference period, with fluctuations in the annual numbers: Türkiye, Albania, Serbia, Greece and Kosovo⁷ (Table 10). Their combined share of the total number of immigrants was at least around two thirds, with a range of 64.8 per cent (2010) to 72.6 per cent (2019).

Table 10. Countries of citizenship or places of origin with the highest shares of North Macedonia's immigrant population, 2009–2019

Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Türkiye	407	611	716	912	982	1 125	1 745	1 355	1 540	1 456	1 831
Albania	306	390	478	474	466	590	619	514	327	423	462
Serbia	348	499	423	363	382	375	519	508	428	464	433
Greece	38	59	61	84	213	268	227	105	84	75	62
Kosovo ⁷	n.d.	4	185	381	304	333	492	490	438	447	547
Total	1 099	1 563	1 863	2 214	2 347	2 691	3 602	2 972	2 817	2 865	3 335
% of the total immigrant population	68.8	64.8	65.1	65.3	67.1	68.2	70.6	66.6	69.0	67.6	72.6

Source: SSO, 2012a, 2016b and 2018b.

Note: Countries are arranged from highest to lowest total shares for 2009–2019.

Data from the **Ministry of Interior** for 2015–2020 shows that the number of foreigners with temporary residence in North Macedonia ranged from a low of 9,838 (2018) to a high of 10,378 (2015), and those with permanent residence ranged from 779 (2015) to 822 (2019) (Table 11).

Table 11. Immigrants with temporary or permanent residence in North Macedonia, 2009–2019

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Foreigners with temporary residence	10 378	10 298	10 024	9 854	9 838	9 846
Foreigners with permanent/extended residence	779	797	806	817	822	807

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Foreigners holding permanent residence in North Macedonia during the 2015–2019 period (reviewed by year) for purposes of family reunification (more than 50%) and other reasons (about 30.0%) have a dominant share, and the share of immigrants who received permanent residence permits on the basis of origin from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is relatively small.²¹ Table 12 presents the 10 countries with the largest numbers of citizens holding permanent residence in North Macedonia during the period 2015–2019. Citizens of Serbia, Türkiye and Germany had the largest shares among foreigners with approved permanent residence in North Macedonia. The number of citizens of Bulgaria and Greece and those from Kosovo⁷ was markedly smaller.

Table 12. Foreigners with permanent residence in North Macedonia, by country of citizenship or place of origin, 2015–2019

Country of citizenship/Place of origin	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Serbia	129	131	132	133	133
Türkiye	122	127	128	128	128
Germany	84	92	94	95	98
Bulgaria	48	48	49	50	51
Greece	47	45	49	49	49
Bosnia and Herzegovina	29	29	30	30	32
Poland	28	28	28	28	28
Russian Federation	25	25	25	26	26
Austria	17	19	20	20	20
Kosovo ⁷	36	36	37	39	39
Total	779	797	806	817	822

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Note: Countries are arranged from highest to lowest total number for the period. A discrepancy was noted in the collected data on the number of immigrants in North Macedonia. The relevant institutions are working on identifying the reasons for this and how to rectify it.

²¹ Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

A.2.3. Characteristics of the immigration of foreigners for temporary residence

The new Law on Foreigners from 2018 comprehensively regulates the temporary residence of foreigners on various grounds: employment or work; attending school or studies (for regular students, as opposed to exchange students); participation in international student exchange programmes; academic specialization; professional development or practical training; volunteering; scientific and research activities; medical treatment; accommodation or care in institutions for elderly people; family reunification; and humanitarian reasons, among others.²² With the 2018 amendments to the Law on Foreigners, a temporary residence permit may be issued on the basis of ownership of real estate in North Macedonia.²³

SSO data for 2009, 2015 and 2019 show changes in foreigners' reasons for immigrating to North Macedonia (Table 13). Since 2015, there has been a significant increase in the number of foreigners with temporary residence in the country across all grounds – employment, marriage, schooling/studies, “professional engagement” (i.e. short-term consultancy that does not require a work permit) and family reasons. Even though there were more foreigners in 2015 (than in previous years) with temporary residence permits issued for employment, marriage and family reasons, their share of the total number of immigrants that year (57%) was still lower than in 2009 (89.3%). Foreigners with temporary residence in North Macedonia for the purpose of studies or academic specialization had the largest absolute and relative growth after 2015.

²² In addition, temporary residence may be granted to (as per the Law on Foreigners): (a) a foreigner who is an immediate family member of a citizen of North Macedonia; (b) a foreigner who is originally from North Macedonia; (c) a child of a foreigner born in North Macedonia; (d) a foreigner who is a resident of a European Union or OECD member State and who has acquired the right of ownership to an apartment, residential building or house within the territory of North Macedonia worth at least EUR 40,000, under conditions established by law.

²³ The application for a temporary residence permit in North Macedonia is submitted to the appropriate diplomatic mission or consular post. As an exception, a request for family reunification can be submitted to the appropriate organizational unit within the Ministry of Interior. During the checks conducted before a decision can be made to grant temporary residence to a foreigner, all institutions relevant to the reason(s) for which residence is requested are contacted.

Table 13. Immigrants with temporary residence in North Macedonia, 2009, 2015 and 2019

Year	Total	Reason for immigration to North Macedonia						
		Employment	Concluding a marriage	Education and (academic) specialization	Professional engagement	Family reasons	Medical treatment	Others
2009	1 000	332	411	87	16	150	0	4
2015	3 617	892	808	1 427	78	361	41	10
2019	2 811	852	687	900	83	250	5	34
Percentage distribution								
2009	100.0	33.2	41.1	8.7	1.6	15.0	0	0.4
2015	100.0	24.7	22.3	39.5	2.2	10.0	1.1	0.3
2019	100.0	30.3	24.4	32.0	3.0	8.9	0.2	1.2

Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

The evolution of immigration to North Macedonia on temporary resident visas can be seen in SSO data disaggregated by ground for immigration, as well as by country of origin.²⁴

A.2.3.1. Immigration for employment or professional engagement

The immigration of foreigners to North Macedonia under a temporary resident visa for the purpose of employment or “professional engagement” (i.e. short-term consultancy not requiring a work permit) has been growing – with such growth being a part of foreign investment dynamics in the country. In 2015 and 2019, their numbers were more than 150 per cent higher than in 2009 (Table 14).

Among countries and other places of origin, Türkiye consistently had the highest number of its citizens who were immigrants in North Macedonia for the purpose of employment in 2009, 2015 and 2019. They also had the largest percentage increase from 2009 to 2019. Almost half (47.3%) of immigrants in 2019 who came to the country for employment were from Türkiye, with Albania, Serbia and Kosovo⁷ having relatively high shares, amounting to about a quarter (24.5 %), combined.

²⁴ The 10 countries with the largest shares of immigrants from North Macedonia are presented in tables throughout the Migration Profile; full country listings are available in the statistical tables in the annexes.

Table 14. New immigrants with temporary residence in North Macedonia based on employment, by country of citizenship or place of origin, 2009, 2015 and 2019

2009			2015			2019		
Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share
Türkiye	171	51.5	Türkiye	166	18.6	Türkiye	403	47.3
Serbia	24	7.2	Greece	128	14.3	Albania	76	8.9
Greece	21	6.3	Serbia	82	9.2	Serbia	67	7.9
Bulgaria	15	4.5	Bosnia and Herzegovina	65	7.3	Kosovo ⁷	66	7.7
Austria	14	4.2	Albania	59	6.6	Bulgaria	20	2.3
United States	12	3.6	Kosovo ⁷	51	5.7	Greece	19	2.2
China	8	2.4	Croatia	36	4.0	Croatia	18	2.1
Croatia	7	2.1	Bulgaria	35	3.9	United States	16	1.9
Slovenia	7	2.1	Ukraine	26	2.9	Germany	12	1.4
United Kingdom	6	1.8	Russian Federation	24	2.7	Ukraine	11	1.3
Others	47	14.2	Others	220	24.7	Others	144	16.9
Total	332	100.0	Total	892	100.0	Total	852	100.0

Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

In the discussion of immigration to North Macedonia for employment, it is important to point out the movement of immigrants because of a “professional engagement” (short-term consultancy). Although they numbered 10 times lower in 2019 than immigrants who were in the country for employment-related reasons, they showed dynamic growth during the preceding decade (i.e. the reference period), growing five times since 2009 (Table 15).

Table 15. New immigrants with temporary residence in North Macedonia based on professional engagement, by country of citizenship, 2009, 2015 and 2019

2009			2015			2019		
Country of citizenship	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship	Number of persons	% share
United States	6	37.5	United States	19	24.4	Türkiye	20	24.1
Serbia	3	18.8	France	10	12.8	United States	13	15.7
Albania	2	12.5	Albania	8	10.3	France	8	9.6
Germany	1	6.3	Serbia	5	6.4	Germany	6	7.2
Bulgaria	1	6.3	Germany	5	6.4	Serbia	4	4.8
China	1	6.3	Türkiye	4	5.1	Poland	3	3.6
Italy	1	6.3	Croatia	3	3.8	Albania	2	2.4

2009			2015			2019		
Country of citizenship	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship	Number of persons	% share
Republic of Korea	1	6.3	Czechia	3	3.8	Bulgaria	2	2.4
Others	0	0	Bulgaria	2	2.6	Greece	2	2.4
			Romania	2	2.6	Austria	2	2.4
			Others	17	21.8	Others	21	25.3
Total	16	100.0	Total	78	100.0	Total	83	100.0

Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

The growing number of immigrants from Türkiye, particularly those moving for employment and professional engagement, coincides with the growing number of investment activities in North Macedonia from this country of origin. This trend can be expected to continue in the coming years, with the tendency for temporary residence to transform into something longer and more permanent.

Employment of foreigners in the country has been continuously rising in recent years. According to data from the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia (ESARNM), this is due to increased foreign investment in the North Macedonia and the simplified procedure for the employment of foreigners in the country. Although the procedure for obtaining a work permit is now easier than in previous years, like in many other countries, it remains seen as complex and lengthy.

A total of 6,616 employed foreigners were registered in North Macedonia over the period 2015–2019, of whom 6,415 (around 97%) had temporary residence and 201 (3%) had permanent residence.²⁵ ESARNM registered 72 unemployed foreigners (of whom 64 had regulated temporary residence and 8 had permanent residence). During this period, 48 foreigners were beneficiaries of employment-related rights, measures and services.

Breaking down the number of foreign employees by occupation, data from ESARNM shared with the researchers showed most of them to be company managers, directors and CEOs, with that of general workers, seamstresses, mechanical technicians and economists increasing in recent years. As regards education, most foreigners working in North Macedonia had either finished

²⁵ These and other data, as well as information on the structure of the foreign employee population, including countries of origin, are taken from the following European Union-funded report: Naziv Avdi, Irena Zdravkova and Dime Gorceovski, "Analysis of the policies and services available to the foreigners in the Republic of North Macedonia" (Skopje, MYLA, 2020), pp. 22–26.

secondary school or had a university degree, with the number of doctorate and master's degree holders also significant. In terms of country of origin, most employed foreigners came from Türkiye, with the next largest national groups originating from Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria – countries with the biggest foreign investments in the country. The number of employed foreigners from Kosovo⁷ and Albania had increased significantly in recent years.

A.2.3.2. Immigration for marriage and family reasons

Immigration for marriage (termed “marriage migration” in the field of demographics) and for various other family reasons have always been among the most important significant forms of immigration to North Macedonia. While they showed varying intensity in previous decades, they demonstrated an overall rising trend during the 2009–2019 reference period. The number of marriage-based immigrants grew almost twice from 2009 to 2015, shrinking 15 per cent by 2019 from its 2015 level (Table 16).

Table 16. New immigrants with temporary residence in North Macedonia based on marriage, by country of citizenship or place of origin, 2009, 2015 and 2019

2009			2015			2019		
Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share
Serbia	169	41.1	Albania	250	30.9	Kosovo ⁷	205	29.8
Albania	114	27.7	Kosovo ⁷	168	20.8	Serbia	126	18.3
Bulgaria	18	4.4	Serbia	131	16.2	Albania	97	14.1
Türkiye	15	3.6	Bulgaria	30	3.7	Türkiye	30	4.4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	12	2.9	Russian Federation	23	2.8	Bulgaria	20	2.9
Germany	11	2.7	Bosnia and Herzegovina	21	2.6	Russian Federation	19	2.8
Russian Federation	10	2.4	Germany	19	2.4	Bosnia and Herzegovina	19	2.8
Montenegro	10	2.4	Ukraine	19	2.4	Germany	18	2.6
Ukraine	6	1.5	Türkiye	14	1.7	United States	15	2.2
United States	5	1.2	United States	14	1.7	Philippines	13	1.9
Others	41	10.0	Others	119	14.7	Others	125	18.2
Total	411	100.0	Total	808	100.0	Total	687	100.0

Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

The migrants usually came from neighbouring countries or countries in the Western Balkan region. The data in Table 16 shows that during the decade 2009–2019, most marriage-based immigrants in North Macedonia came from Albania, Serbia and Kosovo.⁷ Their joint share of the total number of immigrants on these grounds was 68.9 per cent in 2009, 67.9 per cent in 2015 and 62.3 per cent in 2019.

As uptrend was also evident in immigration for family-related reasons, but at a significantly lower scale and with a different set of origin countries (Table 17). Of the 150 new immigrants in 2009 in this category, more than half (52.7%) were from Türkiye, Serbia and Germany; in 2015, 41.6 per cent (of 361) were from Türkiye, Serbia, Germany and Kosovo;⁷ and in 2019, 45.6 per cent of the 250 immigrants were from Türkiye and Kosovo.⁷

Table 17. New immigrants with temporary residence in North Macedonia based on family reasons, by country of citizenship or place of origin, 2009, 2015 and 2019

2009			2015			2019		
Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share
Türkiye	36	24.0	Türkiye	63	17.5	Türkiye	75	30.0
Serbia	22	14.7	Kosovo ⁷	30	8.3	Kosovo ⁷	39	15.6
Germany	21	14.0	Serbia	29	8.0	Albania	19	7.6
United States	17	11.3	Germany	28	7.8	Russian Federation	12	4.8
Russian Federation	9	6.0	Russian Federation	20	5.5	Serbia	11	4.4
India	6	4.0	Croatia	19	5.3	Austria	11	4.4
Hungary	6	4.0	Albania	17	4.7	Ukraine	9	3.6
Bulgaria	4	2.7	United States	17	4.7	United States	8	3.2
Ukraine	4	2.7	Greece	12	3.3	Poland	7	2.8
United Kingdom	4	2.7	Ukraine	12	3.3	Bulgaria	6	2.4
Others	21	14.0	Others	114	31.6	Others	53	21.2
Total	150	100.0	Total	361	100.0	Total	250	100.0

Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

The immigration of foreigners to North Macedonia for marriage and family-related reasons is expected to continue well into the future due to a strong culture of close family ties in the region and the persistent traditional patterns of marriage migration.

A.2.3.3. Immigration for education and specialization

Education is a way of improving one's, as well as the family's or household's, economic situation. With the growing importance of education, migration movements driven by the search for better education are increasing around the world, consisting mainly of young people and families with school-age children. This rising trend was observed in North Macedonia as well, with the number in 2015 many times higher than in 2009. Even though there was a drop in the number of migrants in this category from 2015 to 2019, their number in 2019 was still 10 times that in 2009 (Table 18).

Table 18. New immigrants with temporary residence in North Macedonia based on education or academic specialization, by country of citizenship or place of origin, 2009, 2015 and 2019

2009			2015			2019		
Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share	Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	Number of persons	% share
Türkiye	74	85.1	Türkiye	1 065	74.6	Türkiye	713	79.2
Serbia	6	6.9	Serbia	133	9.3	Albania	49	5.4
Albania	4	4.6	Kosovo ⁷	92	6.4	Serbia	34	3.8
Germany	1	1.1	Albania	36	2.5	Kosovo ⁷	21	2.3
Ukraine	1	1.1	Montenegro	22	1.5	Montenegro	15	1.7
Belgium	1	1.1	Germany	8	0.6	Spain	13	1.4
Others	0	0	Bulgaria	7	0.5	Bulgaria	10	1.1
			China	7	0.5	Italy	7	0.8
			Slovenia	5	0.4	Azerbaijan	6	0.7
			Croatia	4	0.3	Germany	5	0.6
			Others	48	3.4	Others	27	3.0
Total	87	100.0	Total	1 427	100.0	Total	900	100.0

Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

The large increase in immigration for education/specialization was unique because the most dominant part of this group – more than 80 per cent in 2009 and more than 70 per cent in both 2015 and 2019 – came from just one country: Türkiye. Other places of origin with relatively high shares of immigrants in this category were Serbia, Albania and Kosovo.⁷

The number of foreign students at higher education institutions in North Macedonia increased in the last decade across all levels. From 2009 to 2019, 2,873 foreign students in the country graduated with bachelor's degrees, 1,954 (68.0%) between 2015 and 2019 (Table 19). A total of 995 foreigners obtained master's degrees during the same 11-year period, 705 (70.9%) doing so between 2015 and 2019. New doctorate recipients numbered 206 for the entire reference period, of whom 150 (72.8%) were for 2015–2019. In 2019 alone, 56 foreign citizens obtained their doctorate degrees from higher education institutions in North Macedonia. Most foreign citizens who studied at higher education institutions in North Macedonia came from either Türkiye or elsewhere in the region – Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo.⁷

Table 19. Foreign students obtaining bachelor's, master's or doctorate degrees in North Macedonia, 2009–2019

Degree	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Bachelor's degree	173	137	86	171	156	196	334	293	467	435	425
Master's degree	7	10	45	65	89	74	115	97	158	165	170
Doctorate degree	5	15	12	10	10	4	14	14	27	39	56

Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

A.2.4. Acquiring citizenship

Acquisition and renunciation of citizenship in North Macedonia are regulated through the Law on Citizenship (1992) and its amendments from 2004, 2008, 2011 and 2016. The provisions of and amendments to the law represent efforts to strike a balance between principles of international law, the interests of individuals and the interests of the State in matters of citizenship. The law is a solid legal framework for resolving citizenship issues arising as a consequence of either State succession (North Macedonia being a successor State to the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) or some other factor(s).

Analysis of data from the Ministry of Interior on the number of persons who have acquired citizenship in North Macedonia and the basis on which they acquired it shows a relatively stable trend in the last decade despite some oscillations observed from year to year. A total of 12,660 persons acquired citizenship during the 2009–2019 period, with the lowest number recorded in 2009 and the highest in 2019 (Table 20).

Table 20. New citizens of North Macedonia, by ground for acquiring citizenship, 2009–2019

Year	Ground for acquiring citizenship				
	Total	Origin	Birth within the territory of North Macedonia	Naturalization	Others
	1–4	1	2	3	4
2009	846	85	0	761	0
2010	1 179	87	0	1 089	0
2011	1 243	74	0	1 169	0
2012	1 098	60	0	1 039	0
2013	1 260	143	0	1 117	0
2014	1 166	93	0	1 073	0
2015	1 065	89	0	976	0
2016	1 276	70	0	1 206	0
2017	1 145	55	0	1 090	0
2018	1 297	43	0	1 254	0
2019	1 085	30	0	1 055	0
Total	12 660	829	0	11 829	0

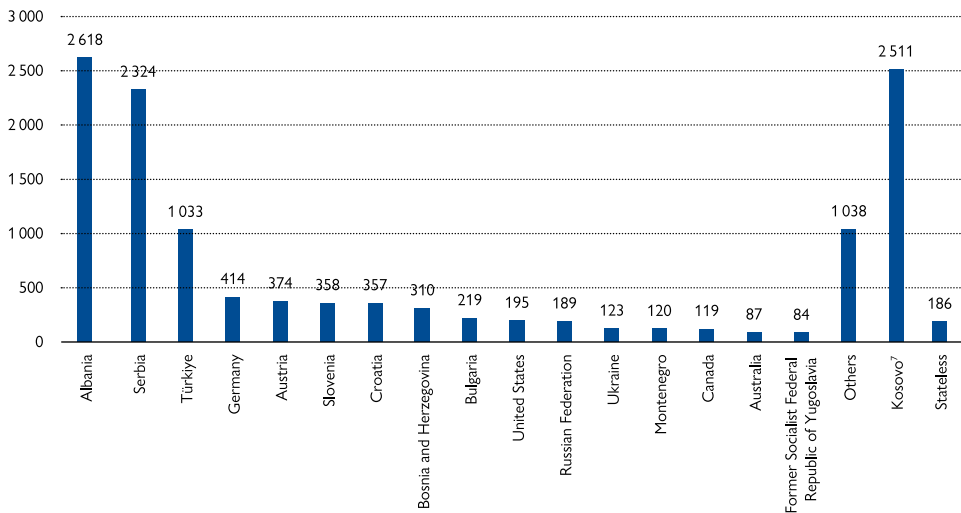
Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

One may acquire citizenship in North Macedonia on the basis of: (a) origin (i.e. if one or both parents are citizens), (b) birth within the country's territory, (c) naturalization or (d) some other grounds (e.g. international treaties). The first and the third categories dominated in the last decade (2009–2019), with most new citizens during the said period acquiring citizenship through naturalization (11,829 persons, or 93.4% of 12,660); naturalized citizens' share of the annual number of approved citizenship applications ranged from 88.7 per cent (2013) to 97.2 per cent (2019). On the other hand, the number and share (829 persons, or 6.6%) acquiring citizenship based on origin was and remains very small.

Analysis of the previous citizenships of new citizens of North Macedonia shows changes in scope and dynamics from previous decades.²⁶ Two thirds (67.0%) of the total number of persons who acquired citizenship in the period 2009–2019 (n=12,659) came from only four countries or places of origin: Albania, Serbia, Türkiye and Kosovo⁷ (Figure 3). Almost half (47.2%, or 5,980) of those who acquired citizenship during this period were from either one of the successor States to the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or Kosovo.⁷ Of this number, most (about 80%) were from either Kosovo⁷ (2,511) or Serbia (2,324).

²⁶ Detailed information on these is available at: IOM, *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Migration Profile* (Geneva, 2007). Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mp_macedonia_2007.pdf.

Figure 3. New citizens of North Macedonia, by country of former citizenship or place of origin, 2009–2019



Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Albania and Türkiye stood out among countries of origin that have significant shares – just under 20.7 per cent (2,618 persons) and 8.2 per cent (1,033), respectively – of the total number of persons who acquired citizenship in North Macedonia during the said period (n=12,659 persons), for a combined share of around 28.8 per cent.

The annual number of citizenship applicants and of those who acquired citizenship in North Macedonia was variable throughout the 2009–2019 period, even for the same country of origin (Table 21). The 10 countries and other places of origin with the largest numbers of successful citizenship applicants during the period (n=12,659) are as follows: (in descending order) Albania, Kosovo,⁷ Serbia, Türkiye, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bulgaria. The United States, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Canada and Australia also stand out as countries with large numbers of citizens applying for citizenship in North Macedonia, which is interesting for analysing other aspects of migration. Foreigners who had previously obtained regulated residence and ended their integration in North Macedonia with the acquisition of citizenship represented almost half of all successful citizenship applicants during the period.

Table 21. New citizens of North Macedonia, by country of former citizenship or place of origin, 2009–2019

Country of former citizenship/Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total number of persons	% share
Albania	187	301	298	216	240	231	202	236	217	332	158	2 618	20.7
Kosovo ⁷	4	131	181	225	262	270	254	309	247	318	310	2 511	19.8
Serbia	359	364	251	210	177	146	144	196	163	163	151	2 324	18.4
Türkiye	31	47	109	80	54	134	77	101	106	148	146	1 033	8.2
Germany	32	0	58	42	51	37	37	42	52	30	33	414	3.3
Austria	50	46	55	44	44	29	22	38	28	12	6	374	3.0
Slovenia	13	29	24	30	27	38	44	38	43	38	34	358	2.8
Croatia	24	44	35	42	51	29	20	32	31	25	24	357	2.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	33	35	32	21	27	25	36	28	20	19	310	2.4
Bulgaria	24	27	20	14	14	21	14	30	18	16	21	219	1.7
United States	8	12	8	4	101	14	14	11	0	12	11	195	1.5
Russian Federation	7	11	24	20	14	18	20	17	14	22	22	189	1.5
Stateless	0	0	0	0	33	31	20	47	13	28	14	186	1.5
Ukraine	6	16	13	10	5	13	16	11	8	11	14	123	1.0
Montenegro	10	12	9	15	12	10	10	6	11	10	15	120	0.9
Canada	0	3	7	3	52	5	42	2	0	3	2	119	0.9
Australia	0	8	0	10	17	26	0	0	9	7	10	87	0.7
Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	5	1	30	27	2	0	3	1	15	0	0	84	0.7
Others	52	91	86	74	83	87	101	125	142	102	95	1 038	8.2
Total	846	1 176	1 243	1 098	1 260	1 166	1 065	1 276	1 145	1 297	1 085	12 657	100.0

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

North Macedonia has consistently carried out activities to care for stateless persons, in accordance with the United Nations' 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, which the country, as a successor State of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, has effectively signed and ratified.²⁷ As a result of this commitment, 186 stateless persons became citizens of North Macedonia from 2009 to 2019.

Data from the Ministry of Interior shows that most of the newly admitted citizens of North Macedonia (11,099 persons or 98%) during this period were adults (Table 22).

Table 22. New citizens (adults and children) of North Macedonia, 2009–2019

Year	Total granted citizenships	Adults	Children/Minors	Total persons
2009	636	666	21	687
2010	944	988	36	1 024
2011	1 095	1 130	33	1 163
2012	1 028	1 061	55	1 116
2013	1 124	1 173	60	1 233
2014	944	968	36	1 004
2015	898	926	24	950
2016	1 118	1 129	31	1 160
2017	1 014	1 026	27	1 053
2018	1 057	1 058	10	1 068
2019	971	974	11	985
Total	10 829	11 099	344	11 443

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Data from the Ministry of Interior shows that a total of 13,591 persons relinquished their citizenship in North Macedonia during the 2009–2019 period. About two thirds requested the renunciation to acquire citizenship in Germany, Austria or Slovenia.

²⁷ Government of North Macedonia, Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia, 2015–2020, (Official Gazette No. 8 of 16 January 2015), pp. 33–34. (See footnote 2.)

A.3. Emigration of citizens of North Macedonia

North Macedonia is a traditionally emigration-prone area, with people moving from the geographic area it now occupies for more than a century. “Modern emigration”, on the other hand, began in the mid-1960s and continues to grow to this very day. There is no relevant data on “past” migration in the country’s long history of emigration, nor on the descendants (second and third generations) of those early migrants or those who have since returned to the country.

Another persistent problem with regard to statistical data on emigration from North Macedonia in recent decades is the lack of relevant data from domestic sources. This is due to the fact that only a small proportion of citizens of North Macedonia officially declare their temporary and permanent residence abroad. Hence, their enlistment in the database of the Ministry of Interior, which is also used by the SSO in its publications on external migration, is very limited, with the database covering only the population of citizens who have officially registered their departure and residence abroad.²⁸ Regardless, any available data – such as counts and structural characteristics – on the population who have moved abroad provide indications of changes in their demographic structure (including in terms of socioeconomic status and related variables), as well as revealing the reasons for their movements.

Under such circumstances, data from foreign sources provide more realistic information about the scope, trends and peculiarities of the emigration of citizens of North Macedonia. At any rate, changes in and the current volume (i.e. after the period 2009–2019) of emigration from North Macedonia, as well as its conditionalities, are analysed based on available domestic and foreign data sources.

A.3.1. Emigration of citizens of North Macedonia

Data from the SSO shows that 7,954 citizens of North Macedonia moved abroad during the 2009–2019 reference period (Table 23). Annual numbers ranged from a low of 141 (2017) to a high of 1,330 (2012).

²⁸ Research on the migration of the population in North Macedonia is conducted in accordance with the Statistical Research Programme (Official Gazette Nos. 11/08, 141/2010, 24/2014 and 50/2017) and based on the Law on State Statistics (Official Gazette Nos. 54/97, 21/07, 51/2011, 42/2014, 192/2015 and 27/16), the Law on Registration of Residence and Stay of Citizens (Official Gazette Nos. 36/92, 12/93, 43/2000 and 66/2007) and the Law on Foreigners (Official Gazette Nos. 35/2006, 66/2007, 117/2008, 92/2009 and 156/2010).

Table 23. New immigrants from North Macedonia, by receiving country, 2009–2019 (SSO data)

Receiving country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Europe	532	679	733	792	480	318	407	277	98	139	561
Albania	24	57	8	5	6	2	23	8	0	0	0
Austria	31	23	49	41	7	3	14	13	11	8	40
Bulgaria	12	35	65	52	23	18	23	16	4	8	3
Denmark	15	22	10	15	11	4	11	16	1	0	1
Germany	124	107	168	208	183	101	121	110	40	36	214
Italy	96	130	82	75	42	29	44	16	11	15	69
Netherlands	12	18	24	23	15	11	10	2	1	0	5
Serbia	54	42	38	35	47	23	27	16	2	4	5
Slovenia	16	38	46	32	20	14	14	12	3	12	64
Sweden	19	14	61	61	25	31	28	6	0	2	21
Switzerland	77	83	88	166	53	39	39	25	14	30	75
Others	52	110	94	79	48	43	53	37	11	24	64
Asia	3	0	2	1	1	5	2	2	0	0	3
Qatar	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1
United Arab Emirates	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	2
Others	3	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
Africa	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Africa	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Americas	98	142	147	240	229	234	230	131	42	5	38
Canada	14	16	18	38	32	32	23	16	2	0	1
United States	84	126	129	202	197	202	206	115	39	5	37
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oceania	136	102	257	297	235	183	128	30	1	0	10
Australia	136	101	254	295	234	182	127	27	1	0	10
New Zealand	0	0	3	2	1	1	1	3	0	0	0
Others	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	769	923	1 143	1 330	945	740	767	440	141	144	612

Source: SSO, 2021b.

Although the data in Table 23 does not show the full volume of emigration,²⁹ it gives a strong indication that the most common European destinations for citizens of North Macedonia are Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Slovenia. As for countries outside the continent, the data confirms that there is still great interest in emigrating to Australia, the United States and Canada. At the same time, interest in emigrating to other receiving countries (Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, among others) is growing.

Foreign data sources, such as international organizations and institutions (United Nations, World Bank, Eurostat, etc.) and receiving countries, provide more realistic estimates of the number of citizens who have left North Macedonia during certain years. Eurostat data confirm that the number is many times larger than what SSO data show (Table 24). In addition, after 2015, a trend is evident towards a continuous and very large rise in the number of those who have left the country.

Table 24. New immigrants from North Macedonia in European countries, 2009–2019 (Eurostat data)

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Austria	n.d.	516	711	n.d.	871	1 171	1 120	1 107	970	1 037
Belgium	649	1 382	603	382	407	398	343	382	440	427
Bulgaria	n.d.	n.d.	145	277	247	270	294	452	882	684
Croatia	188	185	260	241	270	240	173	205	798	1 462
Cyprus	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Czechia	100	64	112	81	70	98	264	230	344	555
Denmark	71	66	54	100	85	94	115	130	123	119
Estonia	1	1	0	1	1	1	4	6	4	5
Finland	14	21	15	33	19	14	20	17	23	18
France	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Germany	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Greece	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Hungary	49	32	39	50	68	111	93	132	110	106
Iceland	0	0	3	9	6	3	6	5	21	6
Ireland	3	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Italy	3 359	2 932	2 632	1 946	1 843	1 761	1 767	1 835	1 904	2 111
Latvia	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	2	n.d.	n.d.	2	4	0
Liechtenstein	1	2	8	4	1	0	3	0	2	3
Lithuania	3	0	1	1	1	0	4	2	3	5
Luxembourg	25	356	82	42	42	44	69	39	29	36

²⁹ There are no official statistics from the SSO for some countries (e.g. Malta).

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Malta	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Montenegro	440	560	287	323	218	198	85	198	164	228
Netherlands	80	105	94	89	129	136	159	146	190	23
Norway	69	75	69	70	62	86	104	86	83	117
Poland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Portugal	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Romania	6	9	1	46	382	76	35	57	56	n.d.
Slovakia	14	14	10	16	18	18	9	17	19	10
Slovenia	1 145	1 016	1 080	822	745	709	862	1 007	1 456	1 595
Spain	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Sweden	252	305	346	267	310	348	428	511	560	481
Switzerland	1 159	1 209	1 284	1 287	1 329	1 441	1 565	1 667	1 627	1 597
United Kingdom	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Total	7 628	8 850	7 836	6 087	7 126	7 217	7 522	8 233	9 812	10 625

Source: Eurostat, 2021a.

Eurostat does not have data on emigration from North Macedonia to many receiving countries (such as Germany, the United Kingdom and Malta, among others) for the entire reference period; thus, even as Eurostat data show higher numbers of immigrants from North Macedonia to European countries overall, it does not show the full extent of emigration from North Macedonia to certain specific countries. At any rate, the general trend of increased emigration intensity is corroborated by data in *Atlas of Migration 2020* on the number of first residence permits issued (during the course of the year) to citizens of North Macedonia in receiving countries, as follows: 12,129 (2015); 13,948 (2016); 16,404 (2017); 24,040 (2018) and 26,718 (2019).³⁰ (When estimating the number of citizens of North Macedonia who have moved abroad, however, one should take into account the fact that some of them leave with Bulgarian passports.) Eurostat data, just like SSO data, confirms an increase in emigration from North Macedonia to certain receiving countries like Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Slovenia, but with the numbers much larger. The number of citizens of North Macedonia who have left for Croatia, Czechia and Sweden, among other receiving countries, has likewise increased significantly.

³⁰ JRC, *Atlas of Migration 2020* (see footnote 8); DESA, "International migrant stock 2019", data set, available at www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock (accessed on 10 June 2021).

A.3.2. Citizens who reside abroad, total number and by country (migrant stock data)

Foreign data sources confirm that the total number of citizens of North Macedonia residing in receiving countries around the world is growing. This increase is due to the large number of citizens who have been living abroad for a long time, the increased intensity of permanent emigration, and the continuous increase in the number of children born abroad. According to data from *Atlas of Migration 2020*, the total number of citizens of North Macedonia living abroad has been rising constantly and significantly in the last decade, reaching an estimated 693,900 in 2020 (Table 25). Absolute figures (i.e. counts of people) confirm that emigration from North Macedonia – to other European countries and beyond – after 2010 continued with increased intensity. The share of those in European Union receiving countries grew from 35.3 per cent in 2010 to 37.5 per cent in 2019, while those in all other countries dropped from 64.7 per cent to 62.5 per cent during the same period.

Table 25. Immigrants from North Macedonia (migrant stock) in European and other receiving countries, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2019 and 2020 (JRC and DESA data)

Receiving countries	2005	2010	2015	2019	2020
European receiving countries	136 000	186 000	216 000	247 000	n.d.
Other receiving countries	323 000	341 000	347 000	411 000	n.d.
Percentage distribution					
European receiving countries	29.6	35.3	38.4	37.5	n.d.
Other receiving countries	70.4	64.7	61.6	62.5	n.d.
Total	459 000	527 000	563 000	658 000	693 900

Source: JRC, 2020; DESA, 2019.

Eurostat data also show that the total number of citizens of North Macedonia residing in **European receiving countries** grew from 229,366 in 2010 to 299,506 in 2020 – an increase of about 70,000 (Table 26). The increase is probably actually higher, considering the incomplete coverage – that is, the lack of Eurostat data for the part of or the entire reference period for certain countries (for example, there is no data for Malta, where the number of citizens of North Macedonia with permanent or extended residence is estimated to be around 10,000, as per the Minister without Portfolio in charge of Diaspora Affairs). In addition, Eurostat data on the number of citizens of North Macedonia staying in European receiving countries do not include those holding Bulgarian passports.

Table 26. Immigrants from North Macedonia (migrant stock) in European receiving countries, 2009–2020

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Austria	17 929	n.d	n.d	18 883	19 377	20 135	20 852	21 723	22 354	23 056	23 372	24 088
Belgium	2 931	3 290	5 976	5 990	5 625	5 147	5 078	4 977	4 950	4 977	5 149	5 061
Bulgaria	1 242	1 291	1 335	1 223	1 111	1 228	1 289	1 368	1 453	1 712	2 474	2 936
Croatia	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d
Cyprus	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d
Czechia	1 817	1 989	1 854	1 770	1 733	1 808	1 884	1 945	2 097	2 033	2 253	2 316
Germany	66 196	66 651	n.d	61 794	66 731	72 182	78 597	91 684	88 655	94 406	102 052	111 786
Greece	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d
Denmark	2 259	2 337	2 416	2 499	2 653	2 962	3 175	3 344	3 372	3 466	3 592	3 763
Estonia	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	1	2	6	5	9	14	17	20
Finland	170	192	199	218	215	228	232	228	220	224	225	235
France	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	4 551	4 704	4 987	5 098	5 742	5 330
Hungary	81	128	144	126	140	153	175	241	243	305	304	322
Iceland	n.d	25	24	19	19	25	20	23	28	32	51	54
Ireland	68	65	64	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	77	74	75	74
Italy	65 809	69 208	71 315	73 972	76 608	78 424	77 703	73 512	67 969	65 347	60 581	55 816
Latvia	n.d	n.d	n.d	2	5	8	5	9	9	11	12	10
Liechtenstein	125	130	132	135	141	146	149	142	141	139	143	142
Lithuania	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	2	1	1	2	2	4	8
Luxembourg	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	507	479	447	402	398

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Malta	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d
Montenegro	n.d	n.d	434	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d
Netherlands	717	764	775	843	856	856	897	934	1 019	1 064	1 162	48
Norway	505	513	559	600	657	674	704	752	823	871	954	1 102
Poland	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d
Portugal	19	20	11	12	21	15	21	27	33	43	55	66
Romania	n.d	n.d	n.d	219	0	181	188	208	207	202	210	220
Slovakia	337	353	366	392	403	355	377	405	421	442	466	480
Slovenia	7 818	9 087	8 817	9 079	9 550	9 829	10 105	10 422	10 835	11 346	12 329	13 324
Spain	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d
Sweden	1 434	1 517	1 660	1 683	1 780	1 818	1 925	2 020	2 208	2 394	2 691	2 938
Switzerland	59 909	60 043	60 116	60 741	61 668	62 633	63 516	64 448	65 486	66 076	66 629	67 108
Türkiye	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	1 773	1 920	2 078	2 129	1 936	1 984	1 861
United Kingdom	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d	n.d
Total	229 366	217 603	156 197	240 200	249 294	260 584	273 370	285 707	280 206	285 717	292 928	299 506

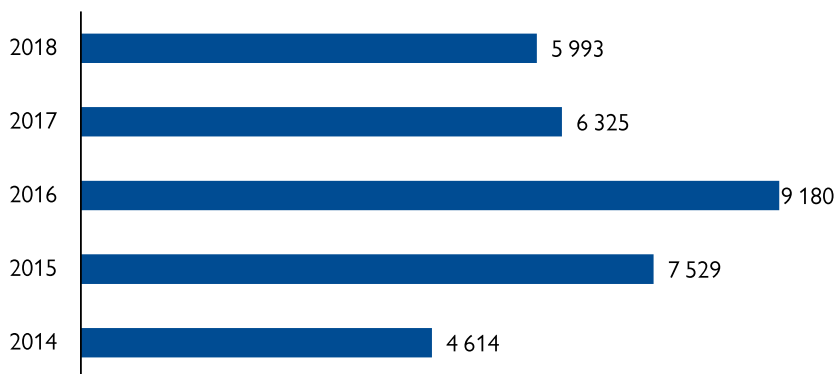
Source: Eurostat, 2021a.

Regarding the **geographic distribution of citizens of North Macedonia in European receiving countries**, Eurostat data shows that by the end of 2010, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia had the largest numbers of immigrants from North Macedonia, totalling 217,661. By 2020, that number grew to 272,122, representing a 25-per-cent increase (or about 54,500 people).

United Nations and World Bank data show that around 411,000 citizens of North Macedonia had moved to non-European (“overseas”) receiving countries by 2019. However, this and numbers for individual countries, especially for the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, may be underestimates. Official data from these receiving countries show that the number of immigrants from North Macedonia is much higher than what data from the United Nations, the World Bank and other international organizations say.

Significant changes in the data have been observed in the last decade as regards the **naturalization of citizens of North Macedonia in host countries**. For instance, between 2014 and 2018, 33,641 citizens of North Macedonia acquired citizenship in another European country. The annual numbers, from 2014 to 2018, are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Citizens of North Macedonia who have acquired citizenship in European receiving countries, 2014–2018



Sources: JRC, 2020; DESA, 2019.

The total number of citizens of North Macedonia currently residing abroad is estimated to be at least 700,000. In the absence of relevant data on the country's current population, its emigration rate could not be realistically determined. In any case, *World Migration Report 2020* puts North Macedonia's emigration rate at around 25 per cent, placing the country among the top 10 in terms of this metric.³¹

A.3.3. Reasons for the emigration of citizens of North Macedonia

In the absence of comprehensive data on its scope and dynamics, the reasons for emigration from North Macedonia cannot be precisely determined. This is especially true of data from the SSO and can be attributed to both the general insufficiency of data on migrants and the large number of emigrants who had not declared their reasons for residing abroad (Table 27).

Table 27. Emigrants from North Macedonia, by reason for emigrating, 2009–2019

Year	Reason for emigrating							Total (all reasons)
	Employment	Concluding a marriage	Family reasons	Education/ Academic specialization	Others			
					No reason specified in the response	Unknown	Total	
2009	184	88	338	35	124	0	124	769
2010	192	77	300	30	318	6	324	923
2011	314	119	497	26	185	2	187	1 143
2012	247	101	614	32	336	0	336	1 330
2013	127	65	383	19	342	9	351	945
2014	85	42	292	14	306	1	307	740
2015	83	54	263	18	346	3	349	767
2016	43	36	78	6	275	2	277	440
2017	21	6	29	5	80	0	80	141
2018	31	7	65	1	40	0	40	144
2019	145	19	139	11	296	2	298	612
Percentage distribution								
2009	23.9	11.4	44.0	4.6	16.1	0	16.1	100.0
2010	20.8	8.3	32.5	3.3	34.5	0.7	35.1	100.0
2011	27.5	10.4	43.5	2.3	16.2	0.2	16.4	100.0
2012	18.6	7.6	46.2	2.4	25.3	0	25.3	100.0

³¹ IOM, *World Migration Report 2020* (see footnote 9).

Year	Reason for emigrating							Total (all reasons)
	Employment	Concluding a marriage	Family reasons	Education/ Academic specialization	Others			
					No reason specified in the response	Unknown	Total	
2013	13.4	6.9	40.5	2.0	36.2	1.0	37.1	100.0
2014	11.5	5.7	39.5	1.9	41.4	0.1	41.5	100.0
2015	10.8	7.0	34.3	2.3	45.1	0.4	45.5	100.0
2016	9.8	8.2	17.7	1.4	62.5	0.5	63.0	100.0
2017	14.9	4.3	20.6	3.5	56.7	0	56.7	100.0
2018	21.5	4.9	45.1	0.7	27.8	0	27.8	100.0
2019	23.7	3.1	22.7	1.8	48.4	0.3	48.7	100.0

Source: SSO, 2010a, 2011b, 2012a, 2013a, 2014a, 2015a, 2016b, 2017b and 2018b.

Among those who had stated their reasons for emigrating, family reasons dominated until 2015; the share of those who emigrated for employment was relatively high throughout the reference period but dropped from 2016 to 2018; and a low, yet significant, number of citizens left for purposes of education. Since 2017, emigration for employment increased again; that for family reasons fluctuated; and the number of those who emigrated for education was relatively lower.

These findings have been confirmed, to some extent, by foreign data sources. Data on the number of residence permits issued by European Union receiving countries, for example, confirm that “family reasons” was the dominant ground for the issuance of such permits to citizens of North Macedonia throughout the 2015–2018 period, despite a (general) downtrend in their share (Table 28). The number of citizens of North Macedonia who were issued their first residence permits in European Union receiving countries based on employment increased significantly from 2017 to 2019, which was also the case for those who received their first permits on the ground of education from 2018 to 2019.

Table 28. First residence permits issued to citizens of North Macedonia in European Union receiving countries, by ground for issuance, 2015–2019

Year	Ground for the issuance of the permit (%)				Total number of permits issued
	Employment	Family reasons	Education	Others	
Residence permits issued for the first time (during the year)					
2015	0	68.0	0	0	12 129
2016	18.0	58.0	9.0	15.0	13 948
2017	28.0	52.0	5.0	15.0	16 404

Year	Ground for the issuance of the permit (%)				Total number of permits issued
	Employment	Family reasons	Education	Others	
Residence permits issued for the first time (during the year)					
2018	41.0	42.0	5.0	12.0	24 040
2019	43.0	36.0	14.0	17.0	26 718
Valid residence permits (at the end of the year)					
2018	17.0	49.0	1.0	33.0	215 244
2019	18.0	47.0	2.0	33.0	220 846

Source: JRC, 2020; DESA, 2019.

“Family reasons” was a dominant ground for the issuance of residence permits (new and existing residents combined) to citizens of North Macedonia in European Union receiving countries in 2018 and 2019 (49% and 47%, respectively; counts made at the end of the year). The share of citizens of North Macedonia with valid employment-based residence permits in European countries was relatively high (17% in 2018 and 18% in 2019). For a third (33%) of these migrants, the reason for living abroad is unknown. Data from *Atlas of Migration 2020* shows that of the total number of citizens of North Macedonia with valid residence permits by the end of 2018 and 2019, 132,789 (61.7%) and 132,252 (59.9%), respectively, had long-term residence.

A.4. Illegal migration

The term *irregular migration* is preferred in international legal instruments. This is also the case in IOM publications. IOM, in particular, defines the term as the “movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination.”³² An *irregular migrant* or *migrant in an irregular situation* is, therefore, a “person who moves or has moved across an international border and is not authorized to enter or to stay in a State pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party.”³³

Notwithstanding, in North Macedonia, the term *illegal migration* is used to refer to irregular migration. For this reason, the drafters of the Migration Profile for North Macedonia decided to use the term “illegal migration” in this document.

³² IOM, *Glossary on Migration*, International Migration Law No. 34 (Geneva, 2019).

³³ *Ibid.*

A.4.1. Cross-border mobility: illegal migration

A.4.1.1. Border checks and border surveillance

The year 2020 marked the outbreak of COVID-19, which significantly affected the implementation of and participation in international activities with stakeholders in the country and the Western Balkan region. The Border Police of North Macedonia had these priorities during that year:

- (a) Dealing with COVID-19 by implementing measures and decisions to prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus;
- (b) Coping with migration pressures;
- (c) Combating migrant smuggling and other types of cross-border crime;
- (d) Cooperation with FRONTEX based on previously determined activities in various areas of cooperation (operational cooperation, situation awareness and monitoring, return, research and development, horizontal training and improvement of cross-border cooperation with the Government of Greece).

In 2020, a joint border crossing with Kosovo,⁷ at Belanovce-Stancic, was opened to international road traffic. Thus, North Macedonia now has 21 border crossings, of which 17 are traversed by road and 2 by railway, with the other 2 being the airports in Skopje and Ohrid. An agreement with the Government of Greece to open another border crossing, at Markova Noga Majdan, has been signed and ratified.

In order to achieve effective bilateral cooperation with border authorities of neighbouring countries, 817 meetings and other forms of (informal) contact were made in 2020 across all organizational levels of the Border Police, and 80 mixed patrols were conducted. Joint contact centres for police cooperation with Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and Kosovo⁷ are operational and have been effective.

An effective tool in the work of the Border Police is the exchange of information. In 2020, 3,595 pieces of information³⁴ and early-warning messages were exchanged in order to jointly fight all forms of cross-border organized crime.

³⁴ Ministry of Interior, *Annual Report 2020* (Skopje, 2021), p. 22 (in Macedonian). Available at https://mvr.gov.mk/Upload/Editor_Upload/Годишен%20извештај%202020%20кopi.pdf.

In this context, participation in international programmes and projects is recognized as an important activity of the Ministry of Interior. In recent years, good foundations have been created for cooperation and partnership with friendly foreign services, European agencies responsible for border operations, and international and regional organizations,³⁵ as well as scientific institutions, as part of programmes of the European Union. The established relationships have enabled the adoption of new, more advanced methodologies, as well as greater integration and connection, and increased trust among these partners. These activities will continue in the future.

A.4.1.2. Illegal migration: the situation at the borders

North Macedonia's northern border with Serbia is used for illegal exit from the country, towards European Union countries, with the number of illegal exit attempts in this area increasing by 42 per cent from 2019 to 2020. The eastern border, with Bulgaria, is covered by the East Regional Centre of the Ministry of Interior and has shown increased migrant-smuggling case detection. In this area, smugglers use routes through Valandovo, Strumica, Radovis and Stip, with most illegal border crossing attempts in 2020 still registered at the border with Greece, which, at 27,971, was an increase of 27.4 per cent from 2019.³⁶

The number of illegal border crossing attempts into North Macedonia in 2020 grew in comparison to the previous three years: 32,100 attempts were prevented,³⁷ with as much as 85 per cent (in the case of the border with Greece)

³⁵ The Ministry of Interior has participated actively in international programmes and projects, namely: (a) Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management Systems in the Western Balkans and Türkiye (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance 2014–2020 (IPA II)), specifically the European Union-funded twinning project on “Aligning the national systems with the EU and Schengen requirements for border management” and the IOM project, Special Measure on Supporting the Republic of North Macedonia to Improve Border and Migration Management Capabilities (European Union Special Measure 4) (until October 2020); (b) the Border Security Programme of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) (since November 2020); (c) joint action of the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on “Promoting rule of law and good governance in the region through targeted border control measures at ports and airports” (implemented in cooperation with the Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP)); (d) the ICMPD project, Short-Term Technical Assistance on Asylum, Migration, Mobility in Western Balkans (StAMM); (e) an OSCE project on “Strengthening the structure and capacity of law enforcement agencies to deal with transnational threats, paying particular attention to combating organized crime, including support for integrated border management”; (f) the OSCE project, Reduction of the Risk for Proliferation of Weapons and Ammunition; and (g) the MARRI project, Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans (PaCT).

³⁶ More information on illegal migration, various forms of smuggling and fees charged by smugglers in the Western Balkans are available in: Walter Kemp, Kristina Amerhauser and Ruggero Scaturro, *Spot Prices: Analyzing Flows of People, Drugs and Money in the Western Balkans* (Geneva, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2021). Available at <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/western-balkans-crime-hotspots-3>.

³⁷ National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, “Annual report 2020” (Skopje, 2020) (in Macedonian). Available at www.nacionalnakomisija.gov.mk/mk/годишни-извештаи-на-националната-ком.

being prevented from entering the country. It is important to note that the number of migrants discovered making illegal border crossing attempts increased significantly during the winter period (specifically in the months of January and February 2020), when Türkiye opened its border with Greece to migrants. With the decision to close the borders for the next three months due to the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of prevented attempts started to drop, especially in April, when the lowest number was registered, at 516. However, as countries in the region and beyond started relaxing infection containment measures at the borders, the number of attempts increased again, with sustained intensity in the succeeding months and was especially high during July 2020, when more than 4,600 migrants were prevented from entering the country.

A.4.1.3. Composition of illegal migrants

The top five countries of origin of illegal migrants in 2020 were led by Afghanistan (12,244), which showed an almost 100 per cent increase from 2019. The next highest-represented countries of origin were Pakistan, with 7,349; Bangladesh, 3,746; and the Syrian Arab Republic, 2,683 (Table 29). In addition, there were 1,409 stateless persons. What is noteworthy about 2020 is the more-than-threefold increase, from 2019, in the number of migrants who came from Libya, Somalia, Türkiye and the Palestinian Territories, as well as Egypt, Morocco and Eritrea – countries that did not typically register large numbers in previous years.

Table 29. Illegal migrants in North Macedonia, by country of origin (selected countries)

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Afghanistan	16	57	65	134	291	95 782	35 079	963	2 625	6 249	12 244
Albania	892	216	328	400	624	347	374	252	241	215	166
Iraq	1	4	1	4	3	54 808	19 508	250	959	501	541
Pakistan	0	23	88	73	21	5 751	4 143	1 033	4 970	7 820	7 349
Syrian Arab Republic	0	0	0	116	570	216 393	49 633	476	582	1 156	2 683
Total	1 103	469	682	1 132	1 750	1 949	127 358*	4 129	16 895	24 601	32 100

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Note: *The 2016 data includes the number of issued permits during the migrant and refugee crisis.

A.4.2. Preventing illegal entry and stay of foreign citizens in North Macedonia

The great migrant and refugee crisis of 2015 initiated a number of activities, with many lessons learned in reducing the vulnerability of migrants and ensuring greater border security. The Law on Foreigners (2018) contains provisions for rejecting the entry of a foreigner into North Macedonia:

Article 17: Refusal of Entry

- (1) A foreigner who does not fulfil the entry requirements in accordance with this Law shall be refused entry into the Republic of [North] Macedonia.
- (2) Refusal of entry shall not be in prejudice of the application of special provisions on the right to international protection.
- (3) The Ministry of Interior shall take a decision for refusal of entry to a foreigner within 30 days.
- (4) A foreigner shall have the right to appeal against the refusal of entry in accordance with Article 18 of this Law.
- (5) The refusal of entry shall be noted in the foreigner's travel document, as well as in the system for control of passengers and vehicles.
- (6) The police officers competent for border control shall ensure that any foreigner who has been refused entry will not enter the territory of the Republic of [North] Macedonia.

The refusal of entry is recorded in the foreigner's travel document. The grounds listed above may also serve as bases for terminating the stay of a foreigner already in North Macedonia.

A.4.2.1. Unauthorized entry

The most common reasons for the unauthorized entry of a foreigner in North Macedonia are:³⁸

- (a) Posing a threat to public health;
- (b) Failing to present documents for the purpose of his or her stay;
- (c) Not having a valid visa to enter North Macedonia;
- (d) Not having a valid travel document;
- (e) Having been banned from entering North Macedonia.

³⁸ Ministry of Interior, *Annual Report 2020* (see footnote 34), p. 81.

Ministry of Interior data for the 2009–2019 period shows a fluctuation in the number of foreigners who crossed the border illegally into North Macedonia, ranging from a low of 2,346 in 2019 to a high of 5,436 in 2014 (Table 30). This measure is often imposed on the citizens of neighbouring countries, who, in fact, made up a large proportion of entrants to the country.

Table 30. Unauthorized entry and unauthorized exit of foreigners in and from North Macedonia, 2009–2019

Year	Unauthorized entry (counts)	Unauthorized exit (counts)
2009	3 349	351
2010	3 513	613
2011	2 548	496
2012	3 115	478
2013	2 905	416
2014	5 436	813
2015	4 542	584
2016	3 219	537
2017	2 530	486
2018	2 710	416
2019	2 346	408

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

The unauthorized entry of foreign citizens in 2020 dropped by more than 36 per cent from 2019. Border crossing authorities have, on various grounds, denied entry into North Macedonia to 1,499 foreign citizens, mainly from Albania (376 people), Kosovo⁷ (282) and Türkiye (234), but also from Cuba (79), Germany (75) and Serbia (72), with smaller numbers of foreign citizens from other countries.

In 2020, foreign citizens were denied entry to the country, mainly at the border crossings at Skopje International Airport (398); Dolno Blace, on the border with Kosovo⁷ (281); Kafasan, on the border with Albania (204); and Tabanovce, on the border with Serbia (202).

A.4.2.2. Unauthorized exit

According to data from the Ministry of Interior, the most common reasons for unauthorized exit include overstaying, not having a third-country visa, carrying a counterfeit passport and being the perpetrator of a crime. The number of foreigners who were not allowed to exit is significantly lower than the number of foreign citizens who were not allowed to enter North Macedonia, with the number ranging from 351 in 2009 to 813 in 2014 (Ministry of Interior, 2021).

In 2020, 225 foreign citizens (45% smaller compared to the number in 2019) were denied exit from the country at border crossings. By place of origin, the most numerous were from Albania (70), Türkiye (35), Kosovo⁷ (34), Serbia (15), Bulgaria and Israel (9 each). By border crossing, most (112 people) were denied exit at the country's two airports and at the Blato and Kafasanborder crossings, along the border with Albania (49).

A.4.2.3. Illegal stay

Data on misdemeanour proceedings shows that during the period 2009–2019, the number of foreigners who committed acts of misdemeanour and were expelled from the territory of North Macedonia as a public protection measure ranged from 80 (2009) to 313 (2014) (Table 31).

Table 31. Foreigners expelled from North Macedonia due to misdemeanour, by country of citizenship or place of origin, 2009–2019

Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Albania	39	63	46	52	141	245	145	96	101	128	92
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	0	1	0
Bulgaria	0	6	13	19	17	17	9	21	0	2	1
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	1
Greece	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	0
Romania	1	0	0	2	2	3	0	0	3	0	0
Serbia	24	3	13	2	11	19	39	21	23	12	5
Türkiye	4	2	5	2	1	0	3	1	4	2	6
Kosovo ⁷	3	8	20	16	16	15	15	6	6	19	16
Others	7	1	8	1	2	10	10	14	3	10	17
Total	80	85	106	94	192	313	227	160	142	205	138

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

A total of 1,742 foreigners were expelled from North Macedonia during this period, almost two thirds of whom (1,148, or 65.9% of the total) were citizens of Albania. By citizenship or place of origin, Serbia (172 persons or 9.9% of the total), Kosovo⁷ (140, or 8%) and Bulgaria (105, or 6%) represented the next biggest groups.

A.4.3. Migrant smuggling

Migration flows, especially after the migrant and refugee crisis of 2015, have been changing, and it is important to note that they are rapidly adapting to conditions along the so-called “Balkan Route”. The Border Police of North Macedonia face irregular movements of migrants from war-torn countries and those with unstable democracies and high levels of corruption, towards Europe, where there are better living conditions. When crossing the border becomes more difficult, illegal crossing attempts increase³⁹ and the activities of migrant-smuggling criminal groups intensify.

The National Unit (Task Force) for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings was established in March 2018 for the purpose of better coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecutor’s Office. Since its establishment, four organized criminal groups have been discovered and neutralized. The suppression of criminal groups has prevented the smuggling of 1,529 migrants – an increase of 71.6 per cent from the previous year (2018).⁴⁰

After the establishment of the National Unit (Task Force), IOM organized a coordination workshop in June 2018 between representatives of the National Unit, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, social work centres and the NGO sector, in order to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation and coordination in combating migrant smuggling (the workshop also covered trafficking in human beings).

In 2019, with the support of IOM, 38 two-day joint training events on trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling were conducted, attended by a total of 889 social workers, members of the National Unit (Task Force) and the mobile teams for the identification, referral and protection of victims of trafficking, representatives of the Ministry of Interior, judges and public prosecutors. Around 48 per cent of the participants were women. The purpose of the training was to strengthen mutual cooperation in the area of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

The **National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration** is supported by a secretariat, which is an executive and operational body composed of representatives of governmental institutions,

³⁹ The number of illegal border-crossing attempts recorded in 2019 was 24,601 – an increase of 45.6 per cent from the previous year (National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, “Annual Report 2019” (Skopje, 2020), p. 29).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

international organizations and citizens' associations. In an initiative by the commission, SOPs for dealing with victims of trafficking (revised in 2018), SOPs for dealing with unaccompanied foreign minors (from 2015) and SOPs for dealing with vulnerable categories of foreigners (from 2016) were adopted.

There has been progress in providing interpreters for the languages spoken by migrants, in order to establish communication with them and understand their specific needs. This information is necessary for further referral and action. Due to the large number of undocumented migrants, cooperation with countries of origin is needed to establish their identities and their reasons for migrating.

A.4.4. Trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings is recognized as a form of organized crime by authorities in North Macedonia, who are taking comprehensive measures to prevent, prosecute and convict perpetrators. Significant overall progress has been achieved with the establishment of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration in 2001. The National Commission develops measures and initiatives undertaken by the State in the area of criminal law, but also in strengthening social and protective measures for victims and vulnerable categories of migrants, especially children. The National Commission pays significant attention to preventing and combating of trafficking in human beings; identifying reasons for trafficking in human beings; strengthening capacities to implement relevant activities; awareness-raising and education; reducing vulnerability; providing support and protection for victims and migrants; victim identification and referral; helping victims and migrants; and pushing for amendments to criminal legislation for more effective prosecution of criminals.

The annual reports of the National Commission show that measures and activities are continuously undertaken to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. On the other hand, statistical data from the Ministry of Interior during the reference period shows that between 0–3 cases of the crime were detected annually in North Macedonia from 2009 to 2016; however, no incidents of the crime were documented in the last three years of the analysed period (Table 32). These data do not reflect the real situation, however, because trafficking in human beings is a crime that is not easy to detect and properly document. As for the types of exploitation experienced by victims of trafficking in the detected crimes, it can be concluded that labour and sexual exploitation were predominant.

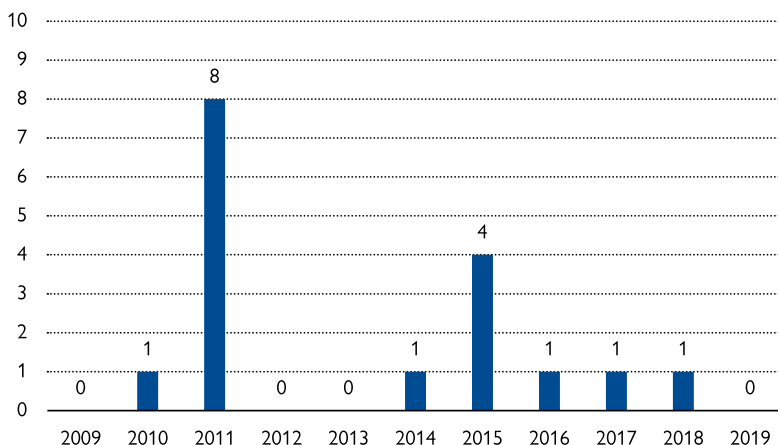
Table 32. Reported acts and perpetrators of the crime of trafficking in human beings (as defined in article 418a of the Criminal Code) in North Macedonia, 2009–2019

Year	No. of reported criminal acts	No. of perpetrators	No. of victims	Type(s) of exploitation (number of victims)
2009	1	1	1	Labour (1)
2010	0	0	0	n.a.
2011	2	6	2	Forced marriage (1) Sexual (1)
2012	3	6	3	Sexual (2) Labour (1)
2013	0	0	0	n.a.
2014	1	1	1	Sexual (1)
2015	0	0	0	n.a.
2016	1	6	2	Sexual (1) Labour (1)
2017	0	0	0	n.a.
2018	0	0	0	n.a.
2019	0	0	0	n.a.

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

There were 17 convictions (Figure 5) related to the crime of trafficking in human beings (as defined and classified in article 418(a) of the Criminal Code of North Macedonia) in the period 2009–2019.

Figure 5. Convicted perpetrators of the crime of trafficking in human beings in North Macedonia, 2009–2019



Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

The statistics on the number of victims of trafficking are from the Ministry of Interior, the National Unit (Task Force) for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, and the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration. The data is derived from criminal charges filed. When collecting data, the Ministry of Interior classifies victims according to sex, age, type of exploitation and country of origin. Available data for the 2009–2019 period shows that criminal charges for trafficking in human beings were filed on behalf of nine victims (Table 33). All victims were adults (2 men and 7 women) and citizens of North Macedonia (2), Albania (4), Bulgaria (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1) and Romania (1).

Table 33. Identified victims of trafficking in human beings in North Macedonia, by sex, age and citizenship, 2009–2019

Profiles of victims of the crime of trafficking in human beings (as per article 418a of the Criminal Code)						
Year	Age		Citizenship		Sex	
	Minors	Adults	North Macedonia	Foreigners	Male	Female
2009	0	1	1	0	1	0
2010	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011	0	2	1	Bulgaria (1)	0	2
2012	0	3	0	Albania (2) Bosnia and Herzegovina (1)	1	2
2013	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014	0	1	0	Romania (1)	0	1
2015	0	0	0	0	0	0
2016	0	2	0	Albania (2)	0	2
2017	0	0	0	0	0	0
2018	0	0	0	0	0	0
2019	0	0	0	0	0	0

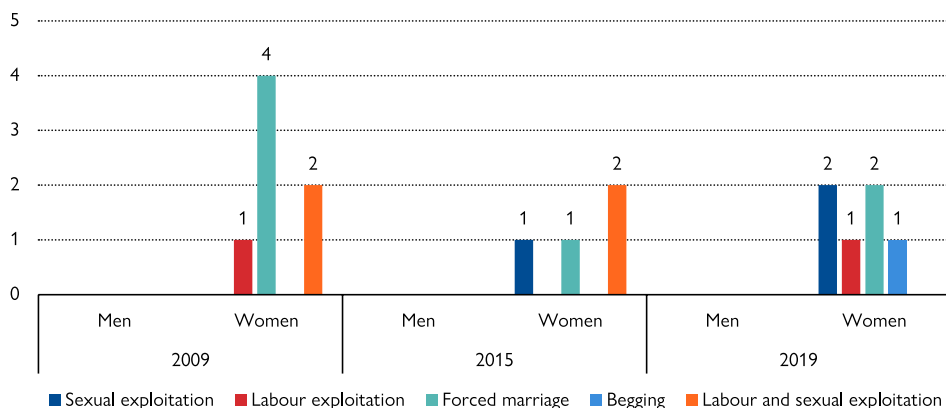
Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Globally, victims of trafficking are usually girls, who also make up the most vulnerable category.⁴¹ The reasons for the trafficking of girls are most often related to forced marriage, or to both labour and sexual exploitation, but also commonly only for sexual exploitation. There is a small number of documented cases of labour exploitation of children forced to engage in begging, which is a criminal

⁴¹ IOM, "Global trafficking trends in focus: IOM victim of trafficking data 2006–2016", fact sheet, August (Geneva, 2017). Available at www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our_work/DMM/MAD/A4-Trafficking-External-Brief.pdf.

offence, but there are indications that they occur much more frequently than they are detected. The Roma community is especially vulnerable, and preschool and school-age Roma children can be seen begging in bigger towns, especially Skopje.⁴²

Figure 6. Victims of trafficking in North Macedonia, by type of exploitation and sex, 2009, 2015 and 2019



Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

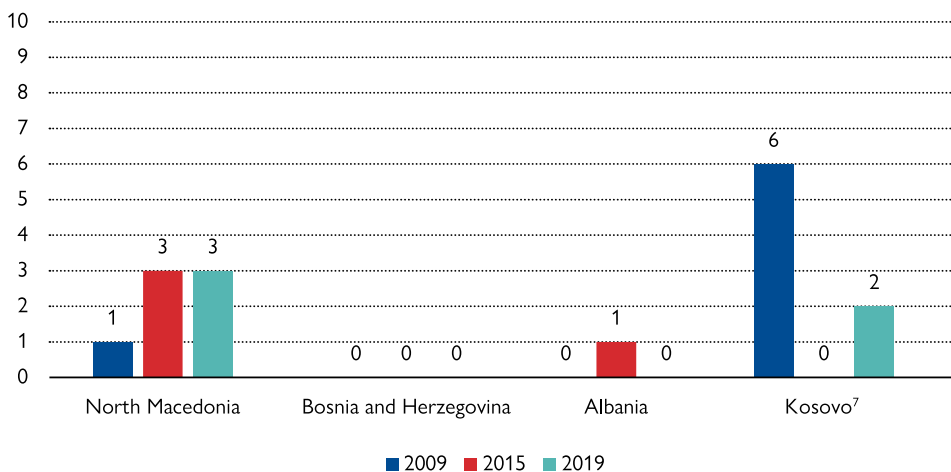
Victims of trafficking detected in North Macedonia come from the country itself, as well as Albania and Kosovo⁷ (Figure 7). Children from North Macedonia have been identified as victims of all forms of exploitation related to the crime of trafficking in human beings. Child victims from Kosovo⁷ have mainly been from the migration and refugee wave from Kosovo⁷ in the late 1990s and are currently staying with their families in North Macedonia. Their involvement in begging and other criminal offences is often by means of coercion, and this makes them susceptible to exploitation and further involvement in a downward spiral of deviant and antisocial behaviour. There are no registered cases or surveys (regional or national) that point to a link between migration waves and cases of trafficking in human beings.

Recommendations for North Macedonia from the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the European Commission (in its annual progress Reports for 2017 and 2018), as well as the 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report (“TIP Report”) of the United States Department of State, are appropriately incorporated in the corresponding action plans of the national

⁴² Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Strategy for Increasing Social Inclusion of the Roma in the Social Protection Systems in the Republic of North Macedonia for the Period 2012–2014 (Skopje, 2011). Available at www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_socijalno_vklucvanje.doc.

strategies for combating human trafficking and illegal migration for 2017–2020 and 2021–2025. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy initiated and implemented measures and activities for better prevention – and protection of victims – of trafficking. There have been some activities for capacity-building for the staff of social work centres and labour inspectors. The ministry coordinates activities related to the identification, resocialization and reintegration of victims of trafficking through social workers at social work centres in 30 towns around the country.

Figure 7. Identified victims of trafficking in North Macedonia, by country or place of origin, 2009, 2015 and 2019



Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

Between 2017 and 2019, IOM, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Justice, implemented a project for strengthening national capacities in the area of asylum, migration and trafficking in human beings, establishing five mobile teams for the identification of vulnerable categories, including victims of trafficking, in Skopje, Bitola, Kumanovo, Gevgelija and Tetovo. The mobile teams are composed of a social worker, a police officer and a representative of an NGO. They follow a specific methodology and indicators and contribute towards better cooperation between their respective institutions in identifying vulnerable categories of persons, especially children, in regard to asylum, migration and trafficking.

With the support of the mobile teams, 14 victims of trafficking (all women), 190 potential victims of trafficking and 593 persons in vulnerable categories were identified in 2018 and 2019. The number of identified victims of trafficking for those years was almost double that in 2016 and 2017 (8 in total). For 89 of the

victims and potential victims, direct assistance was provided through the Direct Assistance Fund in the form of medical assistance, legal aid, food and hygiene products, clothes, and support for professional skills development.

In 2018 and 2019, 42 two-day training events on trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling were organized for 992 police officers, social workers, judges and prosecutors (52% of whom were women). The drafting of three by-laws in accordance with the new Law on Foreigners⁴³ was supported, in addition to an analysis of the protection of unaccompanied minors and national legislation pertaining to the employment of foreigners. Informative videos on the risks of trafficking in human beings for sexual and labour exploitation and underage marriages were produced, reaching 70,000 people in the country and abroad through digital channels and social networks.

UNHCR provides continuous support to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the implementation of SOPs for dealing with unaccompanied foreign minors and SOPs for dealing with vulnerable categories of foreigners, specifically:

- (a) Support for the professional staff at the shelter for victims of trafficking by a partner organization, Open Gate – La Strada;
- (b) Psychosocial support for 973 refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, potential victims and victims of trafficking at the Vizbegovo Reception Centre for asylum seekers and the Vinojug Reception and Transit Centre, through the partner organization, Open Gate – La Strada;
- (c) Provision of an interpreter for Farsi at the Vizbegovo Reception Centre for asylum seekers by the partner organization, Open Gate – La Strada.

In addition, UNHCR provides emergency medical intervention in life-threatening situations and some humanitarian assistance to refugees and persons in need of humanitarian assistance transiting in various locations.

A.4.5. Returned persons under readmission agreements

Readmission is a tool for preventing irregular migration. The institution in charge of readmission in North Macedonia is the Ministry of Interior – more specifically, the Border Police Department through its Sector for Foreigners. Over the last decade, in order to efficiently and effectively carry out the readmission of foreigners and its citizens, North Macedonia has concluded the implementation

⁴³ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Foreigners (see footnote 18).

of protocols with several European Union member States, in accordance with an agreement with the European Union on the readmission of persons residing without authorization,⁴⁴ as well as bilateral agreements with non-European Union countries.

The rise in the number of returned citizens of North Macedonia under readmission agreements started immediately after the introduction of the visa-free regime at the end of 2009, when citizens of North Macedonia began to travel much more to European Union countries. In 2011 and the next few years, the number of returned persons doubled (Table 34). For instance, in the 2009–2014 period, 6,163 citizens of North Macedonia were returned under readmission agreements.

Table 34. Citizens of North Macedonia returned under readmission agreements and countries from which they were returned, 2009–2020

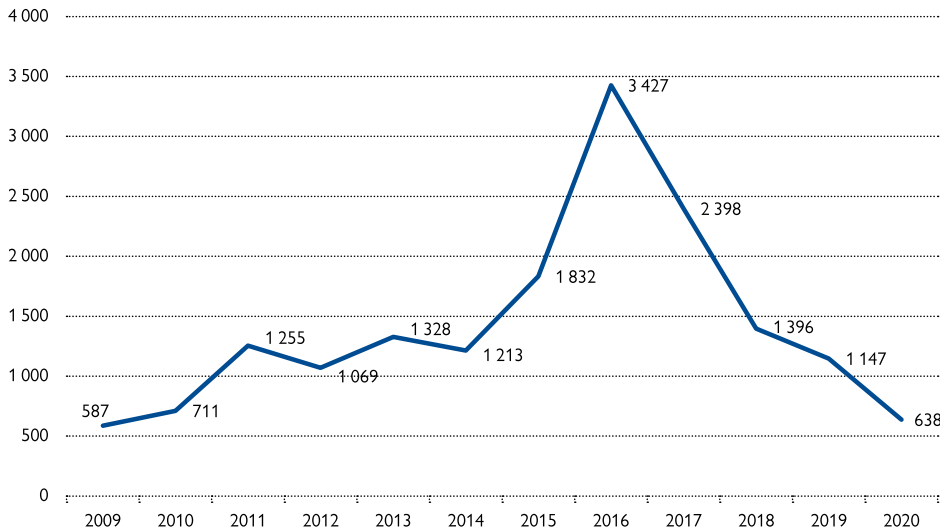
Country returned from	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Austria	28	30	44	35	16	17	43	59	66	80	74	41
Belgium	19	24	74	53	83	57	36	50	49	27	32	13
Denmark	11	21	23	18	53	28	17	31	44	26	39	10
France	13	0	201	26	50	16	16	27	24	25	109	12
Germany	169	210	496	426	657	745	1 346	2 870	1 890	1 020	674	446
Greece	106	44	48	73	43	50	88	13	16	3	10	2
Italy	30	26	23	26	24	10	8	26	8	17	19	3
Netherlands	14	19	9	30	7	5	0	12	35	22	18	16
Norway	0	100	30	23	22	20	41	68	33	24	26	4
Sweden	11	27	70	130	122	120	80	80	67	37	50	35
Switzerland	113	156	173	183	165	119	125	168	129	102	78	43
Total	587	711	1 255	1 069	1 328	1 213	1 832	3 427	2 398	1 396	1 147	638

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

The number of citizens returned to North Macedonia under readmission agreements was significantly higher during the 2015–2020 period, at 10,838. There was a particularly big wave of returnees in 2016, when a peak of 3,427 citizens was reached, with the number of returnees dropping continuously thereafter (Table 34 and Figure 8). In 2020, a mere 638 citizens of North Macedonia were returned under readmission agreements – the lowest in 12 years, that is, since 2009, when 587 people were returned.

⁴⁴ Agreement between the European Community and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the readmission of persons residing without authorization (Document 22007A1219(01)) (Official Gazette No. 141/2007).

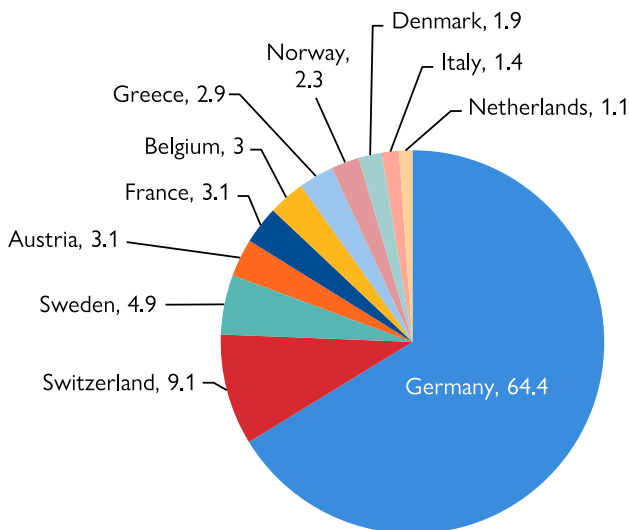
Figure 8. Citizens of North Macedonia returned under readmission agreements, 2009–2020



Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

The biggest numbers of citizens of North Macedonia returned between 2009 and 2020 were returned from Germany, at almost two thirds (64.4%) of the total (Figure 9). Annually, the biggest numbers of citizens of North Macedonia with irregular residence were returned from Germany (Table 34). The second strongest position in terms of the number of returned citizens under readmission agreements was held by Switzerland, with 9.1 per cent. Germany and Switzerland were followed by Sweden (4.9%), France (3.1%), Austria (3.1%), Belgium (3.0%), Greece (2.9%), Norway (2.3%), Denmark (1.9%), Italy (1.4%) and the Netherlands (1.1%). The shares of other countries were significantly lower. The annual numbers of persons returned to North Macedonia under readmission agreements from certain countries (presented in Table 34) were proportional to their share for the entire analysed period of 2009–2020.

Figure 9. Percentage distribution of citizens of North Macedonia returned under readmission agreements, by country from which they were returned, 2009–2020



Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

The readmission process begins with an exchange of information between the competent authorities of the two countries involved: the country returning and the country receiving the citizen in question. Official data presented in this document pertains to requests for readmission that had been responded to. Such requests were either approved or denied, and additional information could be requested from a country making a request.

Requests denied in 2020, as well as all previous years, mostly referred to persons who were not found in official records kept in North Macedonia. For that year, the Sector for Foreigners approved the readmission of 361 persons, while denying it for 105 others. Additional clarification was requested for 11 persons. The returnees usually had a valid travel document and, as such, no readmission application was needed, as provisioned in article 6, paragraph 2 of the agreement between North Macedonia and the European Commission on the readmission of persons residing without authorization.

Most of the approved requests were for citizens of North Macedonia and their children. A much smaller number of persons were returned in accordance with the agreement with the European Commission in its article 2, second indent of paragraph 2 (those married to a citizen of North Macedonia); article 3, paragraph 1 (those with residence in North Macedonia); and article 3, paragraph

3 (nationals of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia whose place of birth and place of permanent residence until 8 September 1991 was within the current territory of North Macedonia).

Most of the persons were returned via Skopje International Airport, while the number of persons returned through other border crossings were insignificant. Most of the persons returned under readmission agreements were male, and accurate data on these persons, by sex, age, education, employment status and vulnerable category, will be possible after full harmonization of the national legislation with Regulation 862/2007 of the European Parliament and its amendments from 2020.

Assisted voluntary return

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) is an activity implemented with support from IOM. It is considered a necessary tool that is part of a comprehensive approach to migration management, with the purpose of ensuring the dignified return and reintegration of persons who do not qualify for asylum or do not seek international protection (Table 35).

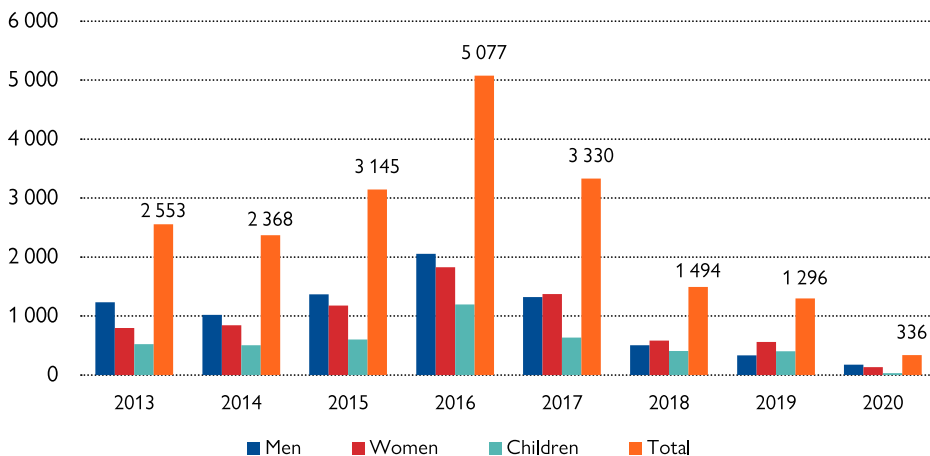
Table 35. Voluntarily returned citizens of North Macedonia, 2013–2020

Country returning from	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Germany	2 202	2 104	2 904	4 666	3 100	1 287	1 012	220
Austria	138	88	142	154	115	84	91	24
Belgium	102	80	56	0	42	61	0	0
Netherlands	0	0	0	142	0	0	124	61
Others	111	96	43	115	73	62	66	31
Total	2 553	2 368	3 145	5 077	3 330	1 494	1 296	336

Source: Data from the IOM Mission in North Macedonia.

Substantial numbers of citizens of North Macedonia had been residing in countries of the European Union, including Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands, from where the biggest numbers were returned under readmission agreements between 2013 and 2020. Data disaggregated by sex shows that of the citizens of North Macedonia who returned voluntarily during the analysed period, 53 per cent were male and 47 per cent were female. Of the total number of returnees, about one third (32.6%) were children.

Figure 10. Voluntarily returned citizens of North Macedonia, by sex and age, 2013–2020



Source: Data from the IOM Mission in North Macedonia.

In 2020, local social work centres and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy were involved in the readmission procedure for 34 citizens of North Macedonia, 11 of whom were children, some unaccompanied. The activities of the ministry in relation to these persons usually consist of notifying the Inter-Municipal Centre for Social Work and giving feedback to the Ministry of Interior, as the competent ministry for readmission procedures. This applies especially to unaccompanied children or adults with serious health issues. However, the manner (type) of return and transport is unknown to the ministry. In addition, the ministry also does not have comprehensive data on persons who have opted for voluntary return from countries where they resided without authorization. At any rate, these returnees have the same access to social protection rights as other citizens.

A.4.5.1. Identifying and defining indicators for assessing the reintegration of returnees under readmission agreements

North Macedonia develops mechanisms at the central (national) and local levels for the implementation of programmes for the support and reintegration of returnees. These programmes are formulated based on data on returnees collected through a questionnaire used by the Ministry of Interior. Returnees voluntarily complete the questionnaire at the Readmission Office.

The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy developed a set of indicators to assess the effectiveness of measures undertaken for the purpose of reintegrating citizens returned to the country under readmission

agreements (Table 36). The development of these indicators was also necessary to collect data on what was specifically done to maintain the visa-free regime and prevent returnees from going back to European Union countries, thus preventing secondary migration. The report on these indicators was included for the first time in the preparation of this Migration Profile.

The lack of comprehensive records of persons who were returned under readmission agreements appears to be a serious limiting circumstance for the systematic monitoring of voluntary returns. Some of the returnees are not included in the statistics. Surveys conducted by certain organizations and competent State institutions reveal only part of the problem.

Table 36. List of indicators for monitoring the reintegration of returnees to North Macedonia under readmission agreements, 2019 and 2020

Indicator	Relevant ministry
Number of children returned under readmission agreements in a given period	Ministry of Interior
Number of children enrolled in regular primary and secondary schools	Ministry of Education and Science
Number of children who have completed their primary and secondary education	
Number of children enrolled in pre-school institutions (e.g. kindergartens)	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Number of children enrolled in extracurricular activities	Ministry of Education and Science
Number of children taking additional classes in their mother tongue	Ministry of Education and Science
Number of persons enrolled in higher education	Ministry of Education and Science
Number of students who have graduated from university	Ministry of Education and Science
Number of persons registered with ESARNM	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Number of persons who got a job via ESARNM	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Number of persons registered for training via ESARNM	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Number of persons who have opened their own businesses (self-employed persons)	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Number of persons on social welfare	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Number of persons with health insurance from social welfare or their employment	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
	Ministry of Health
Number of persons who have returned to the country and then left again	Ministry of Interior
Number of persons who own homes	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Number of persons who rent flats	
Number of persons who are beneficiaries of State housing assistance	
Number of persons who live in substandard conditions	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Number of persons who are beneficiaries of social services related to domestic violence and similar indicators that point to factors linked to living and the environment within an extended family unit	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

Source: Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, North Macedonia.

Note: Data pertaining to each indicator is disaggregated by age and sex.

A.5. Asylum seekers and decisions on asylum applications

Asylum under international law means protection against persecution.⁴⁵ The right to asylum is guaranteed in article 18 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union – that is, it is incorporated into the non-refoulement principle.⁴⁶

A.5.1. Asylum applications

The number of asylum applications submitted in North Macedonia has significantly increased since 2011, when 719 applications were registered. Significantly increases from this number were observed in 2013 (1,364), 2014 (1,249) and especially in 2015, when 1,888 applications were recorded (Table 37). This was the year of the beginning of the big migrant and refugee crisis, which brought more than 800,000 migrants and refugees to the borders of North Macedonia. In the following years, the number of registered asylum seekers stabilized to several hundred a year.

Over the period 2009–2019, the biggest numbers of asylum seekers came from the Syrian Arab Republic (2,361), Afghanistan (2,090), Pakistan (946), Iraq (385), Somalia (341), Morocco (206), the Islamic Republic of Iran (188), the Palestinian Territories (167), Bangladesh (135) and Nigeria (62). Most asylum applicants from the Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan and Iraq were from during the onset of the big migrant and refugee crisis, while there frequently have been asylum seekers from Pakistan, Somalia and the Palestinian Territories even prior.

Table 37. Number of submitted asylum applications in North Macedonia, by country of citizenship or place of origin, 2009–2019

Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Afghanistan	78	67	393	183	283	374	357	167	14	46	128
Bangladesh	0	1	0	5	49	18	19	7	1	14	31
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0	2	7	5	1	3	30	96	11	19	14
Iraq	1	4	15	0	6	0	172	66	15	72	34
Morocco	0	2	18	28	55	1	37	39	1	3	22

⁴⁵ United Nations General Assembly resolution 3/217A on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 10 December 1948 (A/RES/3/217A). Available at www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

⁴⁶ According to article 33(1) of the Refugee Convention, “No Contracting State shall expel or return (refouler) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”

Country of citizenship/ Place of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Nigeria	1	0	0	3	44	8	5	1	0	0	0
Pakistan	0	20	181	154	100	22	70	122	66	89	122
Somalia	0	13	52	80	96	34	55	10	1	0	0
Syrian Arab Republic	0	1	2	4	340	735	990	192	26	12	59
Palestinian Territories	0	0	26	36	33	6	55	9	0	1	1
Total	88	156	719	527	1 364	1 249	1 888	760	162	299	490

Source: Data from the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia.

A.5.2. Decisions adopted in the first instance

According to the Law on International and Temporary Protection (2018), applications for recognition of the right to asylum can be submitted at a border crossing, at the Gazi Baba Reception Centre for Foreigners or at a police station. Free legal aid for persons seeking recognition of their right to asylum is possible by providing access to lawyers who are available on the spot (at Vinojug and Tabanovce), at the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers in Vizbegovo, where asylum seekers are accommodated, and elsewhere within the territory of North Macedonia. The Sector for Asylum at the Ministry of Interior acts upon applications for asylum submitted in the first instance.

The following were notable developments during the reference period 2009–2019:

- (a) 2011: One decision for a recognized refugee was adopted.
- (b) 2014: Eleven persons were recognized as refugees, and one person received subsidiary protection.
- (c) 2015: The Sector for Asylum decided on 1,888 applications, with the procedure stopped for 1,881 of them. “Recognized refugee” status was granted to two persons, and five asylum applications were rejected.
- (d) 2016: The procedure was stopped for 737 persons. “Recognized refugee” status was granted to one person and subsidiary protection, to nine persons. Thirteen asylum applications were rejected.
- (e) 2017: The procedure was stopped for 152 persons. Subsidiary protection was granted to persons, and eight asylum applications were rejected.

- (f) 2018: The procedure was stopped for 285 persons. Subsidiary protection was granted to three persons, and 10 asylum applications were rejected. For one person, the procedures were joint (Administrative Court and the Ministry of Interior – Asylum Unit), in compliance with the Law on General Administrative Procedure (LGAP).
- (g) 2019: The procedure was stopped for 450 persons. Subsidiary protection was granted to two persons, and 38 asylum applications were rejected.

The situation with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in the Sector for Asylum introducing an option for online interviews with asylum seekers with submitted applications for recognition of their right to asylum. This has helped speed up the process of passing decisions for the applications submitted. In 2020, 199 applications, for a total of 211 persons, for the recognition of the right to asylum were received by the Sector for Asylum. Of the total number of applicants, 180 were adults and 31 were minors (19 of whom were unaccompanied children and 12 were children accompanied by family members). Among them, 182 were male and 29 were female.

In 2020, North Macedonia provided shelter for 12 persons based on their recognized right to asylum. At the same time, it also provides shelter to 163 people with subsidiary protection status, of whom 153 have been in the country since the Kosovo⁷ crisis of 1999; 4 are from the Syrian Arab Republic, 1 from Pakistan, 3 from the Congo and 2 from Afghanistan.⁴⁷

A.5.3. Procedure before the administrative courts⁴⁸

After a decision is made by the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Interior – as a competent body in an administrative procedure that is final – the applicant has the right to file a lawsuit before the Administrative Court of North Macedonia. In 2018 and 2019, an NGO, the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) filed 66 lawsuits in behalf of asylum seekers and persons under subsidiary protection.⁴⁹ The Administrative Court decided on 38 cases in 2018 and 51 cases in 2019. However, one should bear in mind that these numbers include decisions issued by this court on lawsuits filed prior to these years.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Interior, *Annual Report 2020* (see footnote 34), p. 22.

⁴⁸ For the purpose of reporting in this document, the IOM Country Office in Skopje sent a request to the President of the Higher Administrative Court of North Macedonia for statistical data on decisions of the Administrative Court and the Higher Administrative Court. No response to the request was received.

⁴⁹ MYLA, "The state of asylum in the Republic of North Macedonia 2018–2019", report (Skopje, 2020) <https://myla.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/pdf/State-of-Asylum-2018-2019.pdf>.

A.6. Return migration

The return migration of foreigners who immigrated to, as well as citizens who emigrated from, North Macedonia in the last decade coincides with the increased dynamics of these movements. Regarding the return migration of former immigrants in North Macedonia, data available from the SSO refers to persons with temporary residence. The records show that in the period 2009–2019, the number of foreigners with temporary residence in North Macedonia who left ranged from 23 (2009) to 249 (2015) (Table 38). Their origin, by continent and country, coincides with the dynamics of foreigners who immigrated to North Macedonia.

Table 38. Immigrants with temporary stay in North Macedonia, by continent of origin, 2009–2019

Origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Europe	21	64	119	66	77	86	218	158	229	211	167
Americas	0	6	6	8	8	2	10	8	16	12	5
Asia	6	12	18	10	9	7	9	14	22	5	14
Africa	0	2	3	0	0	0	8	7	4	2	0
Oceania	0	0	1	1	2	1	4	3	11	3	0
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total	23	84	147	85	96	99	249	190	283	233	186

Source: SSO, 2021b.

Regarding the demographic characteristics of foreigners with temporary residence in North Macedonia who have left, it can be concluded that more than 70 per cent are men, with about two thirds in the young (15–29 years) and the younger middle-age population (30–39 years).

The intensive emigration from North Macedonia is not accompanied by significant return flows. The number of citizens returning in the last decade has been and remains very small, ranging from 259 (2009) to 490 (2013) (Table 39). Most of them came back from European countries, with the number of returnees from America and Oceania about 10 times lower. About a third or so of the returnees from European countries come from Albania and Serbia, which are not traditional host countries for citizens of North Macedonia.

Table 39. Citizens who immigrated back to North Macedonia, by continent of origin, 2009–2019

Origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Europe	225	287	323	360	451	232	218	234	268	323	274
Americas	10	7	12	23	19	18	29	38	16	27	27
Asia	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	4	8
Africa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Oceania	24	9	14	13	19	13	11	11	19	15	26
Total	259	303	349	396	490	265	259	283	304	369	336

Source: SSO, 2021b.

Data on the demographic characteristics of citizens of North Macedonia citizens who have returned from abroad show a relatively uniform structure, but with pronounced fluctuations in terms of sex distribution. In terms of age, we see an increase in the number of young people (15–29 years) and the younger middle-age population (30–39 years) and a decrease in the middle-age population (40–49 years). Regarding level of education, those with secondary or lower levels of education dominate; the share of those with higher education is very small. According to marital status, the share of returnees who are married dominates. In terms of why they returned to the country, more than two thirds cited marriage and family reasons.

A.7. Internal migration

Studies of internal migration show that migration movements within the country, in their different forms, as well as the characteristics of migrants themselves, are conditioned by the level of its socioeconomic development and changes in its territorial organization. This is confirmed by the results of surveys so far on internal migration in North Macedonia over a longer period of time – that is, from the 1960s until today. In order to get a better idea of the peculiarities of these migration movements during the course of the last decade (2009–2019), it is important to have a brief overview of the stages of the migration transition.

A.7.1. Changes in the various forms of internal migration

The transition in the migration landscape in recent history implies a certain regularity of migration movements as an important part of the modernization process. The hypothesis of mobility transition was developed in 1971 by the American geographer, Wilbur Zelinsky.⁵⁰ Such transition is characterized by a shift

⁵⁰ Wilbur Zelinsky, "The hypothesis of the mobility transition", *Geographical Review*, 61(2):219–249. Available at www.jstor.org/stable/213996.

from smaller and limited forms of spatial and social mobility among the population in a pre-modern society, to broader and more diversified forms of migration in a contemporary society, with regular changes in the intensity of migration in its different forms.⁵¹

In the process of this transition in the migration landscape, five characteristic phases are distinguished, starting with pre-modern, traditional societies (phase I), which progress to become early and late transitional societies (phases II and III), and then maturing into developed and highly developed societies (phases IV and V).

A study of the different forms of internal migration in North Macedonia from the middle of the last century until today, despite massive changes in the country's administrative–territorial organization, basically confirms the specific regularity of the development of these migration movements – that is, the migration transition.

The peculiarities of internal migration until the early 1960s correspond to the first phase of the migration transition, which is characterized by low population mobility, in terms of permanent resettlement within the country, and the relatively limited circulation of the population and workforce. The autochthonous population – that is, those who did not change their place of permanent residence at all – dominated in the total population.

The second phase of the migration transition in internal migration refers to the “early transitional society”, which coincides with the period of 1961–1971, when intensive migration from villages to cities started and various types of “circular migration” increased. Such migration is largely related to the processes of de-agrarianization, industrialization and urbanization, shaped by major changes in socioeconomic development.

In terms of the changes in the volume and forms of migration within the country, the period of 1971–1981 coincides with the third phase of the migration transition. Although the intensity of migration from villages to cities decreased, their absolute and relative volumes remained significant. At the same time, the various types of “circular migration” increased further.

Given the change in the administrative–territorial organization of the country during the period between the two censuses, 1981–1994, one cannot see changes in the volume and types of internal migration. Based on several indications, it can be concluded that there was a significant increase in intermunicipal migration – that is, movement from one town to another and within the vicinity of the City

⁵¹ Alicia Wertheimer-Baletić, “Population and development”, *Economic Review*, 54(3–4):404–410.

of Skopje, which is typical of phase IV of the migration transition. At the same time, migration from villages to cities continued, but with the absolute and relative values dropping significantly.

Studies of internal migration after 1991, that is, during the period of transition, confirmed that North Macedonia remained in phase IV of the migration transition. The reduced volume of internal migration was not conditioned by the degree of development in the country – as a whole and regionally – but by the intensification of emigration. Namely, apart from reduced permanent migration, none of the other characteristics of phase V of the migration transition can be recognized, which is typical of developed countries. In North Macedonia, this phase is characterized by: (a) a reduction in permanent migration and a slowing-down of some forms of population and workforce circulation due to new forms of communication established through contemporary media; (b) almost the whole of permanent migration being either inter-urban or intra-urban; (c) emergence of new forms of “circular migration”; and, as can be expected, (d) strict political control of internal migration.⁵²

A.7.2. Characteristics of internal migration during the 2009–2019 period

Regular statistical monitoring of internal migration by the SSO covers both those who move out and move in within the country and enables understanding of current movements (flows), in total and by region or municipality, according to the valid administrative and territorial organization.⁵³ Data on the migration of the population within the country is based on the registration records of those who have moved out and moved in to a different region or municipality, received from the regional offices of the Ministry of Interior.⁵⁴

⁵² Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, “Study on internal migrations in the Republic of Macedonia”, report (Skopje, 2009), pp. 75–76.

⁵³ In accordance with the Law on Territorial Organization of Local Self-Government in the Republic of Macedonia (Official Gazette Nos. 55/2004, 12/2005 and 10/2014) and by statistical region, according to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics of the Republic of Macedonia (NTES) (Official Gazette No. 158/2007), the last amendments were made in January 2014 (Official Gazette No. 10 of 20 January 2014). (See footnote 2.)

⁵⁴ The survey of the population migration in the Republic of Macedonia, according to the content and organization given in these methodological explanations, is conducted in accordance with the Statistical Research Programme (Official Gazette Nos. 11/08, 141/2010, 24/2014 and 50/2017) and based on the Law on State Statistics (Official Gazette Nos. 54/97, 21/07, 51/2011, 42/2014, 192/2015 and 27/16), the Law on Registration of Residence and Stay of Citizens (Official Gazette Nos. 36/92, 12/93, 43/2000 and 66/2007) and the Law on Foreigners (Official Gazette Nos. 35/2006, 66/2007, 117/2008, 92/2009 and 156/2010).

Data from the SSO on internal migration in 2009–2019 shows that the number of internal migrants in the country remained relatively small, albeit with fluctuations, ranging from a low of 2,976 (2010) to a high of 3,462 (2016) (Table 40). The **total number of internal migrants** during this time period was 35,464, and the average annual number of migrants (3,546) was slightly higher than in the 2000–2008 period (3,346).

Table 40. Internal migration in North Macedonia, by region, 2009–2019

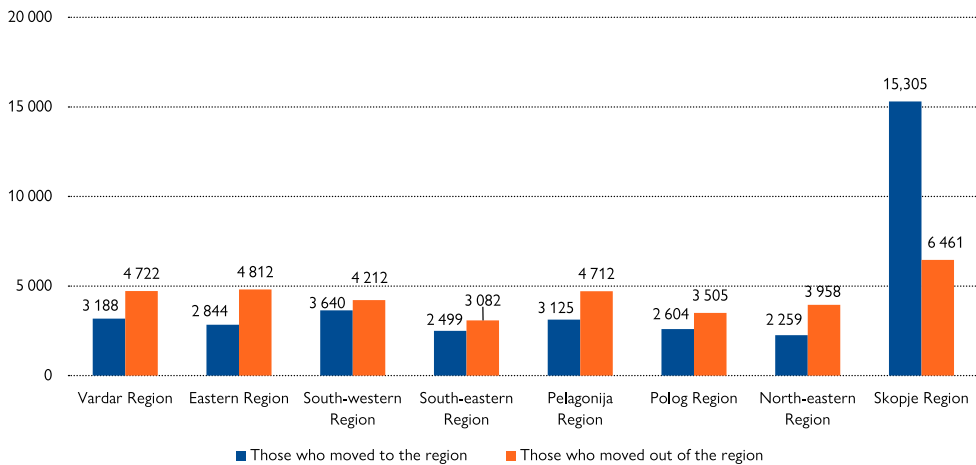
Region	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total number of those who moved to the region											
Vardar Region	303	314	325	304	363	303	259	255	221	289	252
Eastern Region	257	295	266	292	212	256	252	260	269	258	227
South-western Region	379	362	382	416	343	269	275	298	299	279	338
South-eastern Region	210	250	271	254	195	238	219	205	224	215	218
Pelagonija Region	324	318	359	333	261	263	272	279	233	217	266
Polog Region	277	286	271	304	259	182	193	210	215	196	211
North-eastern Region	224	187	207	223	217	212	216	188	206	173	206
Skopje Region	1 207	964	1 245	1 515	1 341	1 336	1 545	1 767	1 456	1 406	1 523
Total (all regions)	3 181	2 976	3 326	3 641	3 191	3 059	3 231	3 462	3 123	3 033	3 241
Total number of those who moved out of the region											
Vardar Region	420	395	394	503	423	398	440	466	455	408	420
Eastern Region	415	339	457	489	421	456	484	466	411	446	428
South-western Region	376	324	388	370	380	384	417	378	391	362	442
South-eastern Region	261	240	274	292	259	289	324	306	268	297	272
Pelagonija Region	398	397	490	500	388	422	410	448	432	424	403
Polog Region	365	236	329	367	293	268	328	367	330	280	342
North-eastern Region	335	332	345	393	368	357	332	460	337	335	364
Skopje Region	611	713	649	727	659	485	496	571	499	481	570
Total (all regions)	3 181	2 976	3 326	3 641	3 191	3 059	3 231	3 462	3 123	3 033	3 241

Region	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Migration balance											
Vardar Region	-117	-81	-69	-199	-60	-95	-181	-211	-234	-119	-168
Eastern Region	-158	-44	-191	-197	-209	-200	-232	-206	-142	-188	-201
South-western Region	3	38	-6	46	-37	-115	-142	-80	-92	-83	-104
South-eastern Region	-51	10	-3	-38	-64	-51	-105	-101	-44	-82	-54
Pelagonija Region	-74	-79	-131	-167	-127	-159	-138	-169	-199	-207	-137
Polog Region	-88	50	-58	-63	-34	-86	-135	-157	-115	-84	-131
North-eastern Region	-111	-145	-138	-170	-151	-145	-116	-272	-131	-162	-158
Skopje Region	596	251	596	788	682	851	1 049	1 196	957	925	953
Total (all regions)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: SSO, 2021b.

During the decade 2009–2019, **internal migration at the regional level** was characterized by relatively smaller or larger oscillations in certain years, both in terms of internal migrants who moved to or moved out from a certain area. In addition, all regions – except for Skopje Region during this entire period, South-western Region in 2009 and 2010, and South-eastern Region and Polog Region in 2010 – had fewer internal migrants that moved in than those who moved out; that is, they had a negative migration balance. In terms of the total number and the share of migrants who moved to certain regions out of the total number of internal migrants in the country, the largest number and share was for Skopje Region, with 15,305 people (43.2%), and the lowest for North-eastern Region (6.4%) (Figure 11). The shares of the other regions ranged from 7.3 per cent (Polog) to 10.3 per cent (South-western). However, certain deviations are noted when comparing the total number of migrants who moved out, as opposed to those who move to, each individual region. Thus, the share of Skopje Region out of the total number of those who moved out of any region was two times lower (18.2%), with Eastern Region having a relatively high share as well (13.6%), followed by Vardar Region (13.3%), Pelagonija Region (13.3%), South-western (11.9%) Region, Polog Region (9.9%) and South-eastern (8.7%) Region.

Figure 11. Number of internal (intraregional) migrants in North Macedonia, 2009–2019

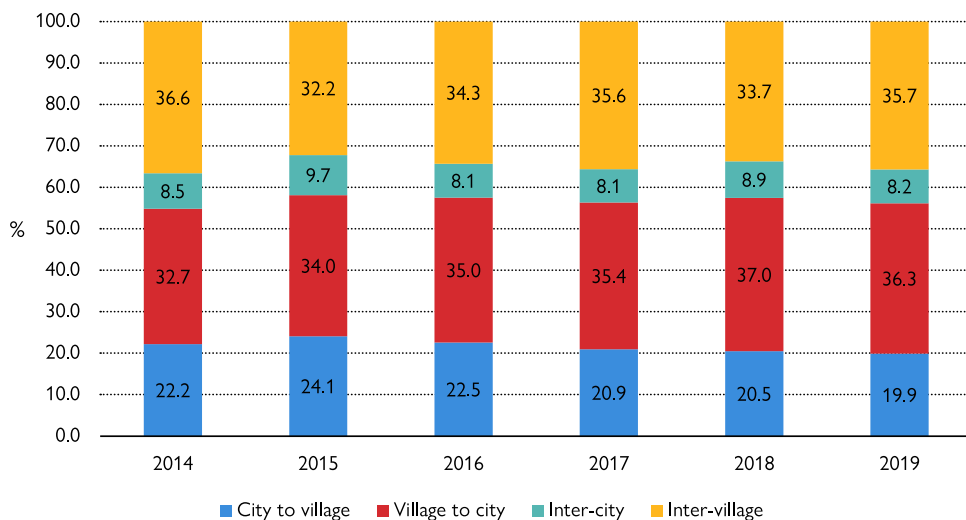


Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

These data unequivocally confirm that Skopje Region absorbs most of the migration within the country, and that internal migration in the last decade has had a significant impact on overall population growth.

Regarding local and intermunicipal migration, based on SSO data for 2014–2019 (for which there are comparable data according to the latest amendments to the Law on Territorial Organization of the Local Self-Government in the Republic of North Macedonia), the following conclusions may be reached: The total number of migrants who resettled locally during this period was 24,761 people, of whom 5,849 moved from a city to a village, 9,508 from a village to a city, and 9,404 from a village to another village. There were 2,316 people who took part in either inter-city or intermunicipal migration. The shares of these types of internal migration show that rural–urban migration remained dominant throughout the period, and despite oscillations, the share of inter-village migration remained high (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Percentage distribution of internal (intraregional) migration types in North Macedonia, by region, 2014–2019



Source: Data from the SSO, North Macedonia.

The shares of these types of internal migration vary across the different regions. They are essentially conditioned by the relative shares of urban and rural populations in the different regions and their demographic and socioeconomic structures, as well as the levels of development of the regions. The share of migrants who moved from urban to rural areas was largely the same from 2014 to 2019, ranging from 579 people (Eastern Region) to 888 people (Polog Region) (Table 41).

Table 41. Internal (intraregional) migration in North Macedonia, by type and region, 2014–2019

Region	From a city to a village	From a village to a city	Inter-city	Inter-village
Vardar Region	634	952	309	485
Eastern Region	579	1 560	620	604
South-western Region	751	1 318	553	1 405
South-eastern Region	685	1 105	252	1 548
Pelagonija Region	730	1 319	408	843
Polog Region	888	1 136	116	3 107
North-eastern Region	745	1 218	58	971
Skopje Region	837	900	-	441
Total (all regions)	5 849	9 508	2 316	9 404

Source: SSO, 2021c.

Rural–urban migration was lowest in Skopje Region (900) and Vardar Region (952). Inter-city migration ranged from 58 people (North-eastern Region) to 620 people (Eastern region), with none in Skopje Region. One third (33%) of inter-village migration occurred within Polog Region, and a combined 31.4 per cent in South-western Region and South-eastern Region.

Immigration continuously prevails in internal migration in North Macedonia, and so there is a positive migration balance in urban areas. Over the period 2014–2019, it was relatively small and ranged from 110 (2017) to 174 people (2019) (Table 42). At the same time, rural areas lost many inhabitants, with their negative migration balance being 10 times higher.

Table 42. Migration from and to urban and rural areas in North Macedonia, 2014–2019

Movement category/type	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Urban areas						
Those who moved to	2 201	2 394	2 551	2 250	2 234	2 365
Those who moved out of	2 043	2 257	2 409	2 140	2 060	2 210
Migration balance	158	137	142	110	174	155
Rural areas						
Those who moved to	858	837	911	873	799	876
Those who moved out of	1 016	974	1 053	983	973	1 031
Migration balance	–1 874	–1 811	–1 964	–1 856	–1 772	–1 907
Total (all movements)	3 059	3 231	3 462	3 123	3 033	3 241

Source: SSO, 2021c.

The data in Table 42 reveals that a relatively large proportion of those who left the rural areas of North Macedonia did not move to the cities, but probably left the country. This is a realistic assumption and a logical explanation of these data, especially given the fact that most citizens of North Macedonia who go abroad do not report it.

Given the volumes and shares of local and intermunicipal migration in the country and the intensity of emigration in the last two decades, as well as their cause-and-effect conditionality, one may conclude that external migration has largely compensated for internal migration. Under circumstances of relatively low levels of development in all regions – with the exception of Skopje Region – and thus fewer opportunities for employment and good living conditions, the potential internal migration transformed into emigration, which has intensified across all regions, especially in rural areas with greater demographic potential.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, “Study on internal migrations in the Republic of Macedonia” (see footnote 52), p. 77.

SECTION B: IMPACTS OF MIGRATION

The impacts of legal migration on demographic, economic and social development are directly correlated with the volume, structural characteristics and cause-and-effect relationship between the emigration of citizens of North Macedonia and the immigration of foreigners. During the period 2009–2019, the volume of immigration (i.e. the number of foreigners residing and working in North Macedonia), despite having an uptrend, remained relatively small and had a predominantly temporary character. Hence, it could not have had a more significant impact on the aforementioned aspects of development. Therefore, the impact of legal migration should primarily be viewed in terms of the large volume of emigration.

Illegal migration was not significant over the course of the last decade, except for a large wave in 2015–2016, to have had a more serious impact on development. North Macedonia was a country of transit for most of these migrants. At the same time, almost all asylum seekers have not met the legal basis to be granted asylum, according to the authorities.

Given such circumstances, the Migration Profile focuses on the consequences and implications of emigration, which has reached great proportions. They are numerous, very complex and manifested in the development of the population and human capital, the available workforce and the labour market, educational and scientific activity, socioeconomic development, and health and the environment. The impacts of migration are usually observed at the macro, meso and micro levels.

B.1. Impact of migration on the population and human capital development

B.1.1. Changes in the total population

The number of citizens of North Macedonia who have left the country and the number of those staying or residing in their host countries around the world increased significantly over the period 2009–2019. Structural changes in the migrant contingent from North Macedonia resulted from the new emigration wave, which, based on its features, appears to be permanent emigration. Among features that should be mentioned are the changes in the number of children born to citizens abroad, as well as the continuous conversion of temporary resident to

permanent resident status, especially among young people who were studying or specializing abroad.

Available data from foreign sources⁵⁶ confirm that the number of citizens of North Macedonia leaving for European receiving countries (flow data) increased by about 30 per cent in the last decade (i.e. the reference period 2009–2019) (Table 25). On the other hand, the total number of those who went to European and other countries around the world after 2015 doubled to about 26,000.⁵⁷ It is realistic to assume that some of them are permanent migrants and some represent a circular migration pattern, which means that the country's total population is dropping annually due to permanent emigration.

This is confirmed by data from the same sources on the total number of citizens of North Macedonia residing abroad (migrant stock). Eurostat data, for example, records an increase of about 70,000 during the 2009–2020 period. This, however, is assessed to be an incomplete estimate of the number of citizens of North Macedonia who have permanently emigrated to European receiving countries, as no data is available for some of them.

In addition, a large number of citizens of North Macedonia reside in European countries with Bulgarian passports and are thus not included in Eurostat statistics as immigrants from North Macedonia. Data from *Atlas of Migration 2020*, on the other hand, shows that the total number of citizens of North Macedonia worldwide increased by more than 160,000 people during the 2010–2020 period. Taking into account the fact that some of them were born abroad, then it could be estimated that the total population of the country dropped by about 100,000 in the last decade due to emigration.

In 2009, the impact of emigration on **population growth** in North Macedonia was even more evident due to the trend of a growing number of children of citizens being born abroad. This corresponded to an increase in family migration and, thus, to the number of women overall, accompanied by an increase in the number and share of women in their reproductive years (15–49 years) and in their optimal reproductive years (20–34 years). Over the period 2009–2019, the number of births abroad increased from 3,510 to 5,187, or by 47.8 per cent (Table 43).

⁵⁶ Eurostat, "Emigration", data set, available at https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_emi1ctz&lang=en (accessed on 15 May 2021); JRC, *Atlas of Migration 2020* (see footnote 8).

⁵⁷ JRC, *Atlas of Migration 2020*; DESA, "International migrant stock 2019" (see footnote 30).

Table 43. Live births to citizens of North Macedonia, domestic and abroad, 2009–2019

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Live births in the country	23 684	24 296	22 770	23 568	23 138	23 596	23 075	23 002	21 754	21 333	19 845
Live births abroad	3 510	3 642	4 012	4 221	4 373	4 400	4 632	4 833	4 829	5 019	5 187
Share (in%) of live births abroad in the total live births in the country	14.8	15.0	17.6	17.9	18.9	18.6	20.1	21.0	22.2	23.5	26.1

Source: SSO, 2010b, 2011a, 2012b, 2013b, 2014b, 2015b, 2016a, 2017c, 2018b, 2019b and 2020c.

At the same time, the number of those born abroad rose from 14.8 per cent (2009) to reach more than a quarter, 26.1 per cent (2019), of the total births in the country. During this time interval, 48,658 children were born to citizens of North Macedonia abroad, which is roughly the two-year birth rate of the country and 19.5 per cent of the total number (250,061) born abroad during the period. In terms of host countries, more than two thirds (66–70%) were in three European host countries (Switzerland, Italy and Germany). However, one should bear in mind that these data do not take into account all children born abroad – that is, the number is probably significantly higher.

The characteristics of the migrant contingent confirm that through emigration, North Macedonia loses a significant portion of its existing population both directly (through outflows) and indirectly (through reduced natural growth). All data show that there are around (and probably more than) 700,000 citizens of North Macedonia living abroad (see Table 24), which corresponds to more than a third of the country's total population. Bearing in mind the total population in North Macedonia, emigration is turning into an exodus with a very unfavourable impact on the country's demographic development.

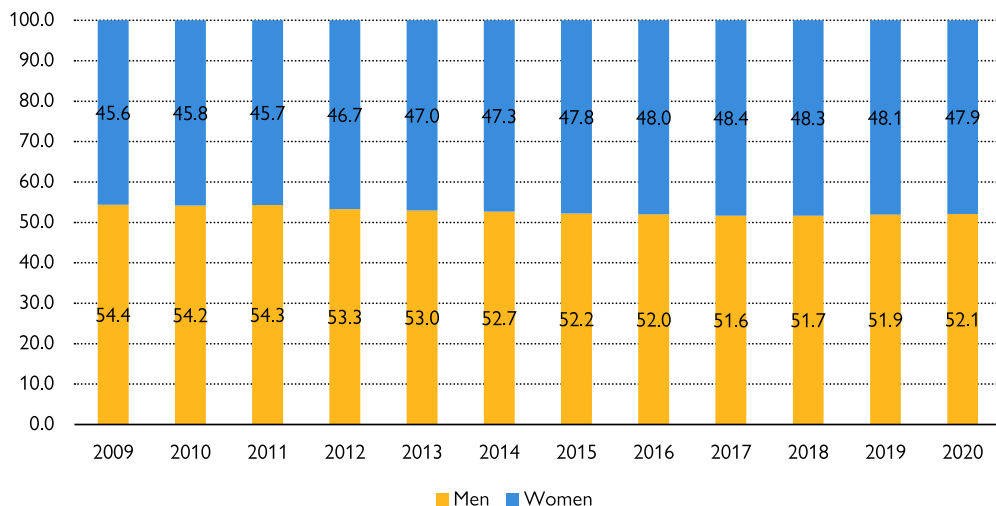
B.1.2. Impact on the demographic structure and population ageing

Along with the intensification of emigration from the country, the last decade saw major changes in the demographic structure of citizens of North Macedonia abroad.

In terms of its structure by sex, there has been an increase in the number and share of women in the migrant contingent. This is confirmed by Eurostat data on changes in the number of men and women in 2009–2019. Namely, the number

of men in the European receiving countries increased by 25.1 per cent and of women, by 37.1 per cent. This resulted in an increase in the share of women from 45.6 per cent (2009) to 47.9 per cent (2019) (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Sex distribution of citizens of North Macedonia in European receiving countries, 2009–2019



Source: Eurostat, 2021b.

Major changes have also occurred in the structure of citizens of North Macedonia abroad by age group. This is confirmed by data on the basic functional contingent (demographic group) of migrants from North Macedonia in European receiving countries (Table 44).

Table 44. Basic functional migrant contingents from North Macedonia to European receiving countries, 2009, 2015 and 2020

Migrant contingent/ demographic group	2009 (229 366 migrants)		2015 (273 370 migrants)		2020 (299 506 migrants)	
	Number of migrants in the basic functional contingent	Share (%) of the contingent among the total number of migrants	Number of migrants in the basic functional contingent	Share (%) of the contingent among the total number of migrants	Number of migrants in the basic functional contingent	Share (%) of the contingent among the total number of migrants
Children (0–4)	16 879	7.4	20 456	7.5	19 333	6.5
Children (5–14)	33 388	14.6	34 226	12.5	35 760	11.9
Young people (15–29)	62 267	27.1	68 546	25.1	70 063	23.4
Working-age population (15–64)	172 126	75.0	200 158	73.2	219 438	73.3

Migrant contingent/ demographic group	2009 (229 366 migrants)		2015 (273 370 migrants)		2020 (299 506 migrants)	
	Number of migrants in the basic functional contingent	Share (%) of the contingent among the total number of migrants	Number of migrants in the basic functional contingent	Share (%) of the contingent among the total number of migrants	Number of migrants in the basic functional contingent	Share (%) of the contingent among the total number of migrants
Women in their reproductive years (15–49)	64 376	28.1	78 681	28.8	85 158	28.4
Women in their optimal reproductive years (20–34)	33 934	14.8	39 043	14.3	40 967	13.7
Migrants 65+	6 973	3.0	12 059	4.4	17 784	5.9
Old migrants 85+	167	0.1	245	0.1	484	0.2

Source: SSO, 2021b.

The data shows that the number of children ages 0–4 years increased from 16,879 (2009) to 20,456 (2015), and then to 19,333 (2020). The increase in the number of school-age children (5–14 years) was relatively lower, from 33,388 to 34,226 and 35,760, respectively. Continuous growth was also noted among young people (15–29 years), whose number reached about 70,000 in 2020. The share of all children (0–14 years) in the migrant contingent of citizens of North Macedonia in European receiving countries in 2020 was 18.4 per cent, and of that of young people (15–29 years) was 23.4 per cent.

Data on the working-age population in European receiving countries show that its share among the total number of migrants increased by 27.5 per cent during the period 2009–2020; in 2020, they numbered around 220,000. The growth in the shares of individual age groups of working age were as follows: 12.5 per cent, for those ages 15–29 years; 22.0 per cent, younger middle-age population (30–39 years); 49.9 per cent, older middle-age population (40–49 years); 45.3 per cent, 50–59 years; and 39.5 per cent, for the 60+ group. These figures confirm the increasing emigration of the older middle-age population, corresponding to changes in the migration policies of host countries in the last decade.

The increase in the share of women is accompanied by an increase in the number of women in their reproductive years (15–49 years), from 64,376 (2009) to 85,158 (2020), or by 32.3 per cent, and of women in their optimal reproductive years (20–34 years), from 33,934 (2009) to 40,967 (2020), respectively, that is, by 20.7 per cent. Given these increases, further growth in the number of births abroad can be expected.

The long-term nature of migration movements abroad has caused a relatively large increase in the population of elder persons. Thus, the number of citizens of North Macedonia abroad age 65+ has increased 2.5 times, with their share of the total increasing from 3.0 per cent (2009) to 5.9 per cent (2020). At the same time, the contingent of the elderly (85+) has tripled.

These data confirm that there is a large number of young people abroad, and that a significant part of them were born there. This undoubtedly has direct and indirect impacts on the changes in the country's population in terms of age, specifically, on the intensification of demographic ageing.

Based on several indicators, it can be concluded that in the period 2015–2019, the population in North Macedonia entered a stage of deep, old demographic age, with the average age of the population increasing from 38.5 to 39.5 years in just five years. Intensive ageing of the population implies growing problems in the medium and long terms in various domains.

B.1.3. Implications on the available human capital and on educational and scientific engagement

The available data and the results of previous surveys confirm that in the last two decades, the emigration of highly educated professionals from North Macedonia has been rising constantly. The results of surveys by international organizations show that in 2005, the share of tertiary educated of total emigration was about 29 per cent, about twice as high as in 1995 (about 15%).⁵⁸ The high intensity of intellectual emigration was also identified in a 2012 European Commission study that covered 25 countries.⁵⁹

The increase in the emigration of highly educated professionals, by all their attributes, can be treated as brain drain.⁶⁰ This is confirmed by the “brain drain” indicator of the World Economic Forum, according to which North Macedonia was among the group of 10 countries with the highest levels of brain drain during

⁵⁸ *TradingEconomics.com*, “Emigration rate of tertiary educated (% of total tertiary educated population) by country”, data set. Available at www.tradingeconomics.com/macedonia/emigration-rate-of-tertiary-educated-percent-of-total-tertiary-educated-population-wb-data.html (accessed on 12 January 2018).

⁵⁹ European Commission and Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -gestaltung e.V. (GVG), “Social impact of emigration and rural–urban migration in Central and Eastern Europe” (VT/2010/001), synthesis report, (Brussels and Berlin, GVG, 2012), p. 58.

⁶⁰ Long-term or permanent emigration from North Macedonia is reaching large numbers and is not being offset by more significant return effects from technology transfers, investments, foreign remittances or trade.

the period 2009–2011.⁶¹ Since 2012, this indicator has been divided into two: capacity to retain talent and capacity to attract talent. During the 2012–2015 period, with respect to both indicators, North Macedonia ranked among the 15 countries in the world with the lowest capacity to retain and attract talent.

The latest WEF Global Competitiveness Report ranks Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia and Serbia among countries with the largest brain drain in the world. On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = All talented people leave the country"; 7 = All talented people stay in the country), Bosnia and Herzegovina scored 1.76, followed by Croatia (1.88), North Macedonia (2.13) and Serbia (2.31).⁶² On another ranking, based on the value of the Brain Drain Index (which ranges from a low of 0 to a high of 10), North Macedonia remained among the top five countries (among 41 European countries) with the largest brain drain from 2015 to 2020, scoring 4.90 to 5.50 index points.⁶³

The constant growth of intellectual emigration in the last decade has been largely conditioned by the massification of higher education, thus the overproduction of university graduates, and the large increase in unemployment among young people with higher education (including those with master's and doctorate degrees of various profiles). No less important determinants for the intensification of intellectual emigration are higher wages and better living standards in host countries; disregard of labour, underestimation of expertise and limited opportunities for job promotion in North Macedonia; traditional emigration patterns; and the emergence of various communities in the diaspora and their established migration ties, which remained significant mitigating factors for an increase in emigration.

Intellectual emigration in recent years has led to further changes in the size and profile of the available workforce with higher education and a decrease in the level of human capital. These are very unfavourable trends with regard to national development when it is taken into account that greater engagement of engineering professionals has a multiplying positive impact on the development of the real sector and job creation, that is, **increasing competitiveness and**

⁶¹ World Economic Forum (WEF), *The Global Competitiveness Report 2008–2009* (Geneva, 2008); WEF, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2009–2010* (Geneva, 2009); WEF, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2010–2011* (Geneva, 2010); WEF, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2011–2012* (Geneva, 2011); WEF, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2012–2013* (Geneva, 2012); WEF, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2013–2014* (Geneva, 2013); WEF, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2014–2015* (Geneva, 2014); WEF, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2015–2016* (Geneva, 2015).

⁶² *EuropeanWesternBalkans.com*, "WEF: Four Balkan countries top global ranking with biggest brain drain", 3 February 2020. Available at <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/02/03/wef-four-balkan-countries-top-global-ranking-with-biggest-brain-drain> (accessed on 12 May 2021).

⁶³ *TheGlobalEconomy.com*, "Human flight and brain drain in Europe – 2021" (see footnote 11).

employment growth – the two most pressing problems the economy of North Macedonia has been facing during the last decade. In this regard, there is a need to monitor the most significant consequences of brain drain on the country's economy and development, which are closely correlated with efficient use of talent and innovation.

The consequences of the emigration of highly educated persons on the **development of educational and scientific research activity** are manifested directly and indirectly. North Macedonia today has a respectable scientific diaspora, which emerged mainly as a result of intellectual emigration and the increase in the emigration of young people for education and academic specialization abroad, especially those with the potential and affinity for scientific research work.⁶⁴ The size of the scientific diaspora cannot be accurately determined. In the absence of official data in the country, some information is provided by foreign data sources. For example, a 2011–2015 survey of municipalities in the United States identified 39,263 people over the age of 25 who declared themselves as citizens of North Macedonia.⁶⁵ Among them were 23,223 with higher education,⁶⁶ including 3,080 master's degrees and 728 doctorate degrees.

Given the rank of North Macedonia in terms of brain drain indicators in the period after 2015, the increased intensity of intellectual emigration in recent years is indisputable, marked by a further increase in the number of scientists from the country at prestigious higher education and scientific institutions worldwide. Under circumstances of limited employment opportunities in higher education institutions and in research units of companies, as well as the limited funding allocated in the scientific field in North Macedonia, the development of young scientists has almost stopped. This and the ageing of scientists will adversely affect the development of scientific research in the country, with long-term consequences and implications in various domains.

Intellectual emigration is causing an increasing shortage of highly educated persons, leading to a lack in one of the most important factors of development. Under such circumstances, in addition to reducing the intensity of this emigration, the shortage of professionals can be offset through activities of State institutions that stimulate the transfer of knowledge and technology by hiring people from

⁶⁴ For more information, see, for example: Verica Janeska, *Научната дијаспора од Република Македонија* [Scientific diaspora from the Republic of Macedonia], report (Skopje, Saints Cyril and Methodius University Institute of Economics, 2014) (in Macedonian), pp. 104–129.

⁶⁵ United States Census Bureau, "Foreign-born population (education) – North Macedonia", data set. Available at https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_SPT_B15002&prodType=table (accessed on 15 December 2018).

⁶⁶ College and university education, including master's and doctorate degrees.

the diaspora. This is currently happening at a very low level due to, among other things, a lack of information on available human capital abroad. In regard to this, the National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for Cooperation with the Diaspora 2019–2023, identifies the challenges to, as well as measures and activities for, establishing cooperation between institutions in the country and experts in the diaspora, with the support of international organizations and other actors.⁶⁷

The grave demographic consequences and implications of emigration at the macro level are evident. At the meso level, that is, the level of regions and municipalities, these are somewhat more pronounced in areas that decades ago faced large emigration. Pelagonija Region is a striking example where emigration has been ongoing for more than half a century now. Today, this region faces ongoing depopulation and has the oldest population. Based on population estimates by the SSO, Pelagonija Region stands out with the largest share of the 65+ population, which stood at 24.8 per cent in 2020.⁶⁸ No less unfavourable are consequences at the micro level, that is, the level of households, specifically those with family members living abroad. Due to the permanent nature of emigration, there is an increasing number of households of elderly people who find it difficult to cope with their daily tasks and responsibilities.

B.2. Implications of the migration on the workforce and the labour market

Given the impact of emigration on the labour market, which is marked by growing shortages in various labour profiles, it is important to point out both the implications of emigration and the need to manage the migration of foreign labour to provide the necessary workforce.

According to Eurostat data, the number of working-age citizens (15–64 years) of North Macedonia in European receiving countries increased from 200,158 (2015) to 219,438 (2020). In this context, emigration should be taken into account as a factor in the rise in the age dependency coefficient of the elderly, which reflects the balance between the elderly population and the active population. The active population abroad is younger than the population in the country, which implies a greater burden on the pension system based on paid contributions and increased pressure on public finances.

⁶⁷ Government of North Macedonia, National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for Cooperation with the Diaspora, 2019–2023 (Skopje, 2019), pp. 57–59.

⁶⁸ Calculated based on data from: SSO, "Population age distribution – by region", data set. Available at http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/mk/MakStat/MakStat__Naselenie__ProcenkiNaselenie/225_Popis_reg_3112_PolVoz_mk.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=491bc638-032a-483e-a82c-d23e07f088f7.

The large outflow of the economically active population has increased labour shortage in the country, especially of certain profiles. Analysis by ESARNM of skills that are in demand shows that the labour market continuously lacks workforce with higher education in certain areas (software programmers, mechanical and civil engineers, medical doctors, IT specialists and technologists, among others), as well as workers with vocational secondary education (mechanical, construction and electrical technicians, nurses, welders, tinsmiths and construction equipment operators, among others). The shortage of labour of certain profiles shows a growing trend and is equally manifested at the macro level and at the level of regions and municipalities.

The labour market is experiencing a continuous shortage of engineers in various fields and of various profiles, despite the growing interest of young people in technical and technological studies at universities and, consequently, the increase in the number of engineering graduates. The number of graduates of the faculties of technical and technological sciences in universities increased from 659 (2005) to 1,380 (2019), with a total of 18,771 for the entire period.⁶⁹

There is an evident labour shortage in the labour market in North Macedonia in a situation where there is also a high unemployment rate. This implies a growing mismatch between available supply of and demand for labour with a high level of education and even more so of workers with vocational secondary education. Unlike intellectual emigration, which, for the most part, is permanent, those with secondary vocational education are increasingly part of temporary emigration – that is, circular migration. These changes in the labour market confirm the increase in the rate of vacancies, from 1.23 per cent in 2012 to 1.77 per cent in 2019, as well as the almost doubling of the number of vacancies from 4,729 to 9,053, respectively.

The current labour market situation in North Macedonia implies a different approach to the immigration and employment of foreigners, in order to meet the demand for labour as an important precondition for the development of certain sectors and the country's overall development. Considering the specific needs and labour shortages identified, there is a need to develop appropriate policies and procedures for the admission of foreign labour, including seasonal employment of foreigners in certain sectors based on bilateral and multilateral agreements, as well as for different types of temporary flexible hiring (contract workers on short-term stay, internal company transfers and trainers, among others). A key challenge in terms of foreign labour immigration is the need to effectively manage economic

⁶⁹ SSO, "Graduated students", data set. Available at <http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/en/MakStat/?rxid=46ee0f64-2992-4b45-a2d9-cb4e5f7ec5ef> (accessed on 9 June 2021).

and non-economic legal immigration to be in line with the country's demographic and socioeconomic development.

B.3. Migration and socioeconomic development

The economic relationship between the diaspora and their country of origin is manifested primarily through the inflows of remittances from citizens abroad. When analysing remittances from emigrants and citizens temporarily working abroad, the different definitions and methodologies for data collection and processing should be taken into account, and a clear distinction should be made between foreign remittances and foreign exchange inflows from transfers made by citizens of North Macedonia living abroad.⁷⁰ This issue is addressed by the **Law on Foreign Exchange Operations and the Law on Providing Fast Money Transfer Services**.⁷¹ Data on remittances from expatriates and workers living abroad are available in the balance of payments of the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia, in the section on secondary income.⁷² They are included in the section on “transfers to other institutional units – senders and recipients of money from abroad”, which consist of:

- (a) **Personal transfers:** remittances to and from abroad by natural persons who are citizens of North Macedonia through formal or official channels (e.g. bank transfers and fast money transfers);⁷³
- (b) **Other current transfers:** including (a) pensions and disability benefits, among others and (b) the net purchased cash after currency exchange operations. For net purchased cash that flows into the banking sector, it is estimated that a significant part represents received transfers in foreign currencies (cash), that is, remittances received through informal channels. However, one must keep in mind that some of these funds also come from the collection of residents from non-residents, as well as sold goods and services (unregistered exports, i.e. in the informal economy).

⁷⁰ These are two different notions (i.e. foreign remittances include only foreign exchange assets that are remitted through the Macedonian banking system; it does not include physical cash brought into the country personally or through informal channels, nor money deposited in foreign currency saving accounts in the banks).

⁷¹ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Foreign Exchange Operations of 1 October 2001 (as amended by Official Gazette Nos. 34/01, 49/01, 103/01, 51/03, 81/08, 24/11, 135/11, 188/13, 97/15, 153/15 and 23/16); Government of North Macedonia, Law on Providing Fast Money Transfer Services of 6 April 2021 (as amended by Official Gazette Nos. 54/07, 48/10, 67/10, 17/11, 135/11, 187/13, 154/15, 23/16 and 77/21).

⁷² This refers to transfers of (a) the State and (b) other institutional units as senders or recipients of funds from abroad (these senders or recipients may include financial and non-financial enterprises, households and non-profit institutions serving households).

⁷³ All remittances from emigrants and workers residing abroad to the benefit of residents (natural persons in North Macedonia) are recorded as inflows; remittances from resident natural persons to the benefit of non-resident natural persons are recorded as outflows, regardless of whether they are transferred through banks or by fast money transfer.

Data on private current transfers for 2015–2020 show that, with the exception of 2020, the same trend is maintained. The transfers (i.e. remittances), in whole or in part, originate from emigrants and persons temporarily working abroad (Table 45).

Table 45. Private current transfers, North Macedonia (in EUR millions), 2009–2020

Type	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Personal net transfers (remittances from workers)	170.13	181.78	179.68	182.79	177.37	189.84
Net exchange operations	756.03	979.29	1 053.56	1 189.50	1 106.87	1 092.58
Other current transfers	166.02	164.17	177.61	189.68	188.78	196.35
Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Personal net transfers (remittances from workers)	194.12	176.60	175.23	184.28	1 78.69	262.04
Net exchange operations	1 095.28	1 061.78	1 181.83	1 270.28	1 296.68	772.08
Other current transfers	239.31	251.42	234.99	245.27	248.54	278.50

Source: Data from the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Based on these data, it can be concluded that:

- (a) The amount of **personal net transfers** (remittances from workers) fluctuates and shows an overall downward trend – that is, it does not correspond to the increase in emigration in recent years. In 2020, there was a significant increase in the volume of such transfers. The increase in remittances through formal channels in 2020 was a result of limited circular migration (due to the COVID-19 crisis).
- (b) The inflow of foreign currency that emigrants bring into the country as cash or through unofficial channels is continuously growing. It is estimated that 40–50 per cent of foreign currency in the currency exchange market (net purchased cash) originates from citizens of North Macedonia abroad.⁷⁴ In 2020, the volume of **net currency exchange operations** was halved due to limited circular migration and the smaller number of citizens of North Macedonia in the diaspora who came to the country.

⁷⁴ Government of North Macedonia, Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia, 2015–2020 Official Gazette No. 8 of 16 January 2015) (see footnote 2); Government of North Macedonia, National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for Cooperation with the Diaspora, 2019–2023 (Skopje, 2019), p. 28.

- (c) **Other current transfers**, defined according to international methodology, are not included in the record of remittances from emigrants and persons temporarily working abroad. However, some of these transfers are for pension payments and disability benefits of citizens of North Macedonia who used to work abroad – that is, they are related to emigration.
- (d) The total volume of **foreign-currency remittances** from emigrants and nationals temporarily working abroad cannot be determined accurately due to the large share of remittances in cash. According to estimates by the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia, made using an IMF-harmonized methodology, the amount of these remittances, from 2009 onwards, exceeds EUR 1 billion euros per year – that is, around 16 per cent of national GDP on average.⁷⁵

The Resolution on the Migration Policy of North Macedonia 2015–2020 envisaged a number of activities in the area of foreign remittances. So far, only activities under the competence of the National Bank have been realized. Thus, in 2016 there was an adaptation and upgrade of the Macedonian Inter-bank Payment System (MIPS) for the possibility of making cross-border payments in euros, accompanied by appropriated amendments to the relevant legislation and by-laws concerning foreign payment operations. Promotional activities were conducted in 2017, with the National Bank presenting the system to banks, companies and the general public. In addition, MIPS implies indirect connection to the Eurosystem's TARGET2 payment system through a foreign central bank – namely, the Bank of Italy. However, due to the high service fees charged by the Bank of Italy, this channel was unable to lower remittance costs compared to other channels (e.g. correspondent banks and fast money transfers), which is why it has not been used. An analysis of the possibilities for further liberalization of the foreign exchange regime has been made. The survey of private transfers is a continuous activity of the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia.

⁷⁵ Interview with Anita Angelovska-Bezowska, PhD, Governor of the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia: "Foreign currency remittances from emigrants and persons temporarily working abroad are important for the Macedonian economy", Australia SBS Radio, Skopje, 5 August 2020. Available at www.nbrm.mk/ns-newsarticle-soopstenie-05082020.nspix.

B.3.1. Use of foreign remittances

The developmental effects of remittances are largely determined by the way they are used. All surveys on the use of remittances and foreign exchange inflows from the diaspora show that most of these funds are used for personal consumption.⁷⁶ Hence, while they have a positive impact on the consumption and living standards of migrants' households, they do not have long-term development effects at the macro level by increasing consumption, especially of imported goods. Regardless, remittances from expatriates and nationals temporarily working abroad have broader macroeconomic significance, increasing the foreign exchange potential of the economy. Remittances represent an important source of funds in the current account of the balance of payments and contribute towards maintaining a low current account deficit.⁷⁷

USAID surveys show that 15 per cent of remittances can be directed towards productive investment activities.⁷⁸ North Macedonia has a solid regulatory framework and infrastructure for foreign remittance transfers. In addition, the country is characterized by stable macroeconomic conditions, favourable foreign exchange rates and low inflation. In the National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for Cooperation with the Diaspora 2019–2023, several measures and activities are envisaged for directing foreign remittances towards productive investment activities in various sectors, in order to promote the country's socioeconomic development.

The results of the surveys show that the impact of modern emigration on the development of North Macedonia is mainly evident in short-term and insufficient development effects, and that the numerous negative consequences and implications have a long-term impact on the development of the population and of the labour market. The expectation that emigration will alleviate the long-term unemployment problem have not materialized. After five decades of continuous and large outflows of labour, unemployment remains one of the biggest problems of the country – overall and regionally – but in an even more unfavourable context of a serious shortage of labour needed to drive economic development.

⁷⁶ Global Development Network (GDN), "Development on the move: Measuring and optimizing the economic and social impacts of migration in the Republic of Macedonia", report (Skopje, 2009). Marjan Petreski and Branimir Jovanovic (eds.), *Remittances and Development in the Western Balkans: The Cases of Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Chisinau, Scholars' Press, 2013).

⁷⁷ Interview with Anita Angelovska-Bezowska, 5 August 2020 (see footnote 75).

⁷⁸ USAID, Enabling the diaspora to invest back home. Available at www.usaid.gov.

Given the complexity and the very unfavourable impact of external migration on demographic development and the insufficient positive impacts on the socioeconomic development of North Macedonia at both macro and meso levels, the need to conceptualize and adopt a comprehensive Strategy for Economic Migration is indisputable.

B.4. Migration, health and the environment

Apart from previously observed consequences and implications, migration also affects many other segments, of which those in the areas of health and the environment can be singled out as more significant.

B.4.1. Health care

The international migration of doctors and other health-care professionals in recent years has attracted increasing attention due to its continuous and very large increase. According to estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO), the number of migrant doctors and nurses working in countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has increased by 60 per cent in the last decade.⁷⁹ There is growing concern that such circumstances could cause a severe shortage of medical staff in developing countries already facing serious shortages of qualified health-care professionals.⁸⁰ Therefore, WHO and its partners are developing solutions so that countries of origin can meet the challenges of managing migration and retaining health workers by establishing a supportive working and living environment and opportunities for professional development. At the same time, the need for proper implementation of the 2010 WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel is highlighted.⁸¹

This trend of a continuous rise in the emigration of medical professionals is characteristic of North Macedonia and has reached alarming dimensions in the last few years. According to the results of a 2015 survey, around 450 doctors left the country within the space of just a few years.⁸² There are no precise data from domestic sources regarding this emigration. According to data provided

⁷⁹ Genevieve Gencianos, "Migrant health workers at the frontlines", Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung website article, 4 July 2021. Available at www.fes.de/en/displacement-migration-integration/article-page-flight-migration-integration/migrant-health-workers-at-the-frontlines.

⁸⁰ OECD, *Health at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators* (Paris, 2015). Available at www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-2015_health_glance-2015-en.

⁸¹ WHO, World Health Assembly resolution WHA63.16 on the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel of 21 May 2010 (WHA/RES/63.16).

⁸² Vladimir Lazarevik et al., "Migration of health care workers from the Western Balkans – analyzing causes, consequences and policies (country report: Macedonia) (Skopje, Healthgroup, 2015), p. 17.

by the Doctors' Chamber of the Republic of North Macedonia, around 170 doctors have been leaving annually in recent years. Data from foreign sources – that is, international organizations such as WHO, the OECD, the ILO, IOM and the World Bank – confirm that the number of doctors in OECD countries who originate from North Macedonia has been growing steadily since 2010 (assuming that their number in the United States remained the same as in 2016) (Table 46). The data for 2020 may be considered incomplete, because there have been no medical professionals (doctors and nurses) returning to the country even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 46. Total number of doctors from North Macedonia (migrant stock) residing in selected OECD receiving countries

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Austria	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	2	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Belgium	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	2	2	2	2
Canada	14	13	12	12	12	13	13	13	13	12	12	n.d.
Chile	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Czechia	n.d.	n.d.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	n.d.	n.d.
Denmark	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Finland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
France	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	22	25	27	29	31	32	34	35	n.d.
Germany	46	71	115	145	198	269	301	337	385	421	471	n.d.
Hungary	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	n.d.
Ireland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	2	1	1	1	1	1	n.d.	n.d.
Italy	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	3	3
Netherlands	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	10	10	11	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
New Zealand	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	n.d.	n.d.
Norway	4	3	3	4	4	5	4	5	7	7	8	7
Poland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	1	1
Slovenia	n.d.	23	33	47	52	59	60	65	73	75	72	69
Spain	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Switzerland	12	12	13	14	16	17	17	17	18	19	23	24
United Kingdom	14	15	13	11	12	12	12	13	14	13	15	14
United States	n.d.	969	1 024	1 064	1 074	1 054	1 061	1 070	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Total	95	1.112	1.244	1.337	1.411	1.474	1.517	1.561	552	591	643	120

Source: OECD, 2021.

Based on these data, it can be concluded that: (a) the number of our doctors working abroad in 2010–2019 increased by about 60 per cent; (b) their number in OECD countries is relatively higher compared to other countries in the region; (c) the targets of medical emigration from North Macedonia remain the same in regard to host countries (United States, Germany, Slovenia, France and Switzerland).

The consequences and implications of medical emigration turning into an exodus are manifested in a growing shortage of nurses and physicians of various profiles. Although the number of medical graduates is constantly growing (from around 558 in 2009 to 1,058 in 2019), the country today faces a serious shortage of doctors and medical specialists in various fields, both at the national level and especially in some regions and municipalities. This was especially felt with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was reflected in the overburdening of medical staff and difficulty in access to health care.

The permanent loss of health personnel to emigration will be difficult to compensate for, even with the production and employment of young doctors, especially given the age structure of the current health workforce and the fact that many of them will retire in the coming years. The shortage of medical staff is felt at the individual level, manifested in reduced opportunities for providing timely and good-quality health care. Such shortage is gradually transformed into an important determinant of intensifying emigration.

B.4.2. Environment

There are no explicit data and indicators on the impact of migration on the environment. In a situation where there have been high rates of emigration from the country for more than five decades – and given that today it is turning into an exodus that causes permanent depopulation of large parts of the territory of North Macedonia – emigration undoubtedly impacts the environment. There is a constantly growing number of uninhabited settlements throughout the country in which no infrastructure is maintained and there is no control on the ground, including in terms of environmental treatment.

This leaves room for the devastation of forests and uncontrolled logging, the emergence of illegal dumping sites that no one reports to the authorities, the depletion of water resources, and so on. Much of the arable land remains uncultivated or is converted into construction land. These are well-known consequences and implications for the environment in areas that are affected by complete depopulation or in which there is an ageing population that cannot take any action. Such areas are numerous, and this has an adverse impact on the environment of the country as a whole.

SECTION C: MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

C.1. Political framework

C.1.1. Coherence and coordination policy

The coordination of the activities of ministries, agencies and other State institutions in the area of migration, as well as their cooperation with international organizations, may be assessed as relatively good. In the last decade, international organizations that have offices in North Macedonia have, through their numerous activities, provided great professional support and financial assistance in the implementation of projects and programmes related to various aspects of legal and illegal external migration. They took place in coordination with the Government, including relevant ministries, and other competent institutions in the country.

This coordination policy is recognized in the work of interministerial coordination bodies that have been formed with the development of migration policies and strategic documents pertaining various aspects of legal and illegal external migration. They have a either long-term or a one-off mandate (e.g. the sole purpose of developing a document). Some of them have included representatives of the diaspora, and their indirect involvement is recognized through the Emigration Agency, which cooperates with about 700 organizations of expatriates around the world. The Government of North Macedonia, at its 9 March 2021 session, adopted Decision No. 40-1989/1 appointing the Head, Deputy Head, members and deputy members of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Developing the Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2021–2025.⁸³ The group consists of representatives of 11 institutions and 4 international organizations.

North Macedonia remains committed to managing all relevant aspects of external and internal migration, respecting changes in the features of legal and illegal migration and the need to improve institutional capacities and harmonize legislation with international standards, in order to improve the country's development. This activity of the State is regulated by the Law on Foreigners (article 8),⁸⁴ according to which the "Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, upon a proposal by the Government of North Macedonia, adopts a Resolution on the Migration Policy with an action plan, which determines the conditions, problems and measures to

⁸³ Based on article 36, paragraph 6 of the Law on the Government of the Republic of Macedonia (Official Gazette Nos. 59/00, 12/03, 55/05, 37/06, 115/07, 19/08, 82/08,10/10, 51/11, 15/13, 139/14, 196/15, 142/16, 140/18 and 98/19). (See footnote 2.)

⁸⁴ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Foreigners (see footnote 18).

be taken in the area of migration". So far, two Resolutions on the Migration Policy have been adopted and implemented: (a) the **Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia 2009–2014** (Official Gazette No. 6 of 15 January 2009) and (b) the **Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia 2015–2020**, (Official Gazette No. 8 of 16 January 2015).² The adoption of the new **Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021–2025** is in progress.

In the period after 2015–2020, several policies and strategic documents in the area of migration were drafted and adopted, some of which were for the first time, and others as continuation of previous activities.

National Integrated Border Management Strategy (2015–2019).

The strategy is in line with the European Union concept of integrated border management from 2006.⁸⁵ A risk management concept and a methodology for border police have been established to regulate risk assessment management and implementation by the border police.⁸⁶ This strategic document identifies the need to upgrade the Schengen Action Plan (adopted in 2008) and adapt it to the current developments in the European acquis. In addition, the need to strengthen the National Coordination Centre for Border Management has been recognized. A new National Strategy for Development of Integrated Border Management is being prepared.

In the area of illegal migration, five strategic documents and action plans have been adopted so far: (a) National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration in the Republic of Macedonia 2006–2009; (b) National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration in the Republic of Macedonia 2009–2012; (c) National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration in the Republic of Macedonia 2013–2016; (d) National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration in the Republic of Macedonia 2017–2020; (e) National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration in the Republic of North Macedonia 2021–2025 (adopted in April 2021).⁸⁷ The strategic goals and priorities in the new National Strategy and Action Plan are organized

⁸⁵ Government of North Macedonia, National Integrated Border Management Strategy, 2015–2019 (Skopje, 2015).

⁸⁶ The Border Affairs and Migration Department (under the Ministry of Interior – Bureau for Public Security) is a specialized strategic unit within the Ministry of Interior. The Border Police is structured in four regional centres, covering the police stations for border surveillance and the police stations for border control. The legal framework for external border management is largely in line with European Union standards.

⁸⁷ Government of North Macedonia, National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration in the Republic of North Macedonia, 2021–2025 (Skopje, 2021). (See footnote 2.)

in five strategic areas: (a) supporting framework, (b) prevention, (c) identification and referral, (d) direct assistance, protection, integration and voluntary return of victims of trafficking and migrants, and (e) efficient detection and prosecution of perpetrators of the crimes of trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling.

C.1.2. Integration of migration in development plans

From the aspect of the cause-and-effect conditionality between migration and development, the coordination and interaction of policies and strategic documents in the area of migration, as well as other strategic documents and sectoral policies, are very important at all stages of the migration cycle. The development of sectoral policies, to a greater or lesser extent, can affect both this conditionality and the reduction of the negative effects of legal and illegal external migration, as well as internal migration. At the same time, a comprehensive and consistent migration policy, whose measures and activities are harmonized with development and sectoral policies, can contribute to the advancement of all segments of economic and social development at the national and local levels. The importance of the connectedness and interaction of sectoral and migration policies is indisputable, as a precondition for mitigating the consequences and the implications of intensive permanent emigration and growing illegal migration, on the one hand, and intensifying cooperation with the diaspora, as a precondition for stimulating development in North Macedonia, on the other.

In the period after 2015, strategic documents and sectoral policies were adopted in North Macedonia in almost all areas which are linked directly or indirectly to migration processes. Due to their importance, these documents should be pointed out:

- (a) Demographic Policy Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia 2015–2024;
- (b) National Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Republic of Macedonia 2009–2030;
- (c) Strategy for Regional Development of the Republic of Macedonia 2009–2019;
- (d) National Strategy for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises 2018–2023;
- (e) Industrial Policy of the Republic of Macedonia 2009–2020;
- (f) National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia 2016–2020;
- (g) Strategy for Formalization of the Informal Economy in the Republic of Macedonia 2018–2022;
- (h) Gender Equality Strategy 2013–2020.

The need for interaction and coordination between migration policies and strategic documents with other strategic and sectoral policies is equally important when it comes to pre-emigration and post-emigration measures and activities pertaining to legal migration. This need for interaction and coordination as regards pre-emigration measures and activities, which could affect the reduction of emigration, especially of young and highly educated persons, includes the linking of migration policies with relevant sectoral policies in the areas of education, research, and development; employment and the labour market; development of industry, agriculture and other sectors; regional development; and social policy, among others.

In this context, the connection and coordination of these very sectoral policies is equally important. For example, from the point of view of reducing permanent emigration, the link between education policy and labour market policy is essential. The current situation in North Macedonia implies the need for the greater harmonization of education policy at all levels with the demands of the labour market. The massive enrolment of young people in higher education has resulted in the overproduction of a highly educated workforce of certain profiles who cannot be absorbed into the labour market. This has led to a large rise in the unemployment of people with a higher education and the intensification of intellectual emigration.

Given the unfavourable demographic situation in the country, a smaller influx of new generations of young populations capable of working can be expected. Under such circumstances, a cross-sectoral education policy and other sectoral policies are necessary, aimed at identifying shortages of certain profiles, improvement of the curricula (in secondary and higher education) and guiding young people in the educational process. These activities and the encouragement of cooperation with the business sector is an extremely important part of the preventive measures to reduce emigration. In addition, “talent management” is no less important, that is, the development of programmes for recognizing and fostering talents. They should be accompanied by mechanisms to retain talented people in the country.

The coordination of migration policies with the strategic documents and sectoral policies can contribute to their effective implementation, as well as mitigating the existing demographic and development problems of North Macedonia at the national and regional levels.

C.1.3. Diaspora and development

The first **National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for cooperation with the Diaspora** (for the period 2019–2023), which determines the challenges and directions of action regarding the most important aspects of interest of the diaspora and the country, was adopted in 2019.⁸⁸ The **general goal of the strategy** is to create legal, institutional and other preconditions for the development of a sustainable and comprehensive framework for cooperation between State institutions and the diaspora based on trust, joint initiatives and mutual benefit, which refers to the promotion of its position in countries of residence and facilitation of productive return options for the diaspora. The strategy is implemented towards four strategic goals:

- (a) **Strategic goal 1:** Improving the regulatory framework and institutional capacities, for the purpose of ensuring greater political involvement of the diaspora and to exercise their civil and social rights, in order to build trust and establish effective cooperation with the State.
- (b) **Strategic goal 2:** Establishment of economic cooperation between the country and the diaspora in different areas, based on partnership, equal opportunities and mutual benefit.
- (c) **Strategic goal 3:** Expansion of the cooperation with the diaspora in the area of education, science and the youth.
- (d) **Strategic goal 4:** Establishment and expansion of cultural ties with the diaspora in various areas for the preservation of cultural identity and cultural heritage.

The need for coordination and interaction between migration policies with other sectoral policies and strategic documents is very important in relation to post-emigration measures, especially as regards tapping the development potential of the diaspora. The **National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for Cooperation with the Diaspora** confirms that cooperation should be established in a number of areas. This led to the horizontal approach in drafting the strategy and the need for its coordination and interaction with policies and strategic documents that are directly or indirectly related to the diaspora. It suggests incorporating diaspora-related activities into the strategic documents being prepared. In order to establish effective cooperation with the diaspora, it will be necessary to create various networks (of scientists, medical staff and engineers, among others) through which contact among stakeholders would be ensured. These networks could also serve as fora for discussing various issues.

⁸⁸ Government of North Macedonia, *National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for Cooperation with the Diaspora, 2019–2023* (Skopje, 2019), pp. 14–15.

C.2. Laws and regulations (national legislation, regional and international instruments)

C.2.1. National legislation on migration and laws that deal with migration-related issues

North Macedonia has a relatively solid legal framework to deal with legal and illegal migration movements, among other instruments relevant to migration policy. Since its independence, the country has been continuously working on harmonizing national legislation with international instruments and the European acquis, whereby significant harmonization in the areas of migration, border management and asylum has been achieved. Without claiming completeness, it is important to point some of them out.

Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia guarantees that foreigners in the country enjoy the freedoms and the rights guaranteed by the Constitution under conditions established by national law and international agreements. The fundamental rights and freedoms of legal migrants, including the right to enter and stay in North Macedonia, as well as their duties, are outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia and elaborated in several regulations.

Law on Foreigners.⁸⁹ In 2018, a new Law on Foreigners was adopted, which regulates the conditions for entry, exit, departure, stay and return of foreigners with illegal residence, as well as outlining the rights and duties of foreigners in North Macedonia. The provisions of the law apply to all foreigners, except for those seeking international protection from North Macedonia in accordance with the Law on International and Temporary Protection, or those enjoying privileges and immunities under international law. The new Law on Foreigners specifies the conditions for the entry of foreigners into the territory of North Macedonia in terms of the visa regime, as well as residence conditions. This is in line with 10 European Union directives on **returning illegally-staying, third-country nationals**; long-term residence; family reunification; implementing a single application procedure for a single permit to reside and work; conditions for the entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment; conditions for the entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers; conditions for the entry and residence of third-country nationals within the framework of an intra-corporate transfer; conditions for the entry and residence of third-country nationals for

⁸⁹ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Foreigners (see footnote 18).

purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing; and a uniform format for visa applications, as well as two regulations: the European Union Visa Code and the Schengen Border Code. Significant contribution and expert support in drafting the law was provided by the IOM Country Office in Skopje.

For procedures implemented in accordance with the Law on Foreigners, the provisions of the **Law on General Administrative Procedure** are appropriately applied. The following by-laws have been adopted for the purpose of implementing the **Law on Foreigners**: (a) Rule Book on Foreigners; (b) Rule Book on Travel and Other Documents for Foreigners; (c) Rule Book/House Rules of the Reception Centre for Foreigners; and the (d) Rule Book on the Visa Regime, that is, on the manner of issuing visas to foreigners, extension and shortening of visa validity, and the revocation and cancellation of visas, as well as the visa form itself and record-keeping.

Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners. The law regulates issues concerning the employment of foreigners. It has been amended many times since its adoption in September 2007.⁹⁰ The law aims to facilitate the procedure for obtaining a work permit, as well as increasing the mobility of foreigners employed in companies in North Macedonia. However, this law, in addition to the care for foreigners – that is, in provisions that prohibit any kind of discrimination against them – also considers the protection of the domestic labour market. The last round of amendments to the Law on Employment of Foreigners were made in 2016.⁹¹ These further specify the conditions under and procedures through which foreigners may work or be employed in North Macedonia, unless otherwise determined by a ratified international agreement.

Law on Citizenship. The first Law on Citizenship of North Macedonia was adopted in 1992 and has been amended several times to date.⁹² In order to fully harmonize the Law on Citizenship with the European Convention on Nationality and international legal standards in this area, the Law was amended in 2004, 2008 and 2011.⁹³ In 2016, the Law amending the Law on Citizenship of North

⁹⁰ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners (as amended by Official Gazette Nos. 70/2007, 5/2009, 35/10, 148/11, 84/12, 148/13 and 38/14).

⁹¹ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners of 2015 (Official Gazette No. 217/2015).

⁹² Government of North Macedonia, Law on Citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia (as amended by Official Gazette Nos. 67/92, 8/04, 98/08, 158/11 and 55/16).

⁹³ The amendments to the Law on Citizenship mainly pertained to the definition of certain terms, reduction in the number of years of residence in the Republic of Macedonia required for naturalization (i.e. from 15 to 8 years), clarification of certain other conditions of the law, strengthening the principle of prevention without citizenship, inclusion of a special provision related to the succession of the State, and its harmonization with the Law on General Administrative Procedure regarding legal remedies.

Macedonia⁹⁴ was adopted, which is harmonized with prescribed standards and the Law on General Administrative Procedure. It regulates the manner and conditions for acquiring and renouncing citizenship in North Macedonia, determining an individual's citizenship, proving one's citizenship, defining the competent State authority for deciding in such cases, and keeping records of nationals of North Macedonia.

Law on Border Control.⁹⁵ This legislation regulates border control, the competencies of the police within the country's borders, cooperation between State authorities with competencies in border management, and international police cooperation.

Law on Passports.⁹⁶ The law determines the types of passports and visas issued, as well as the procedure for their issuance to nationals and non-nationals of North Macedonia.

Law on International and Temporary Protection.⁹⁷ In partnership with UNHCR, the law has been harmonized with the European acquis in the area of asylum and especially with European directives, concerning reasons for persecution.⁹⁸ (The law itself provides for harmonization with European directives in the field of asylum, i.e. international protection.) Thereby, the conditions and procedures for asylum seekers, persons with refugee status, persons under subsidiary protection and persons under temporary protection to obtain the right to international protection are regulated. Victims of trafficking are also considered vulnerable persons, whose special needs are established through individual assessments of their situations by a competent public institution for

⁹⁴ Government of North Macedonia, Law amending the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia (Official Gazette No. 55/16).

⁹⁵ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Border Control (as amended by Official Gazette Nos. 171/10, 41/14, 148/15, 55/16 and 64/18).

⁹⁶ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Travel Documents (as amended by Official Gazette Nos. 67/92, 20/03, 46/04, 73/04, 19/07, 84/08, 51/11, 135/11, 154/15, 55/16 and 302/20).

⁹⁷ Government of North Macedonia, Law on International and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette No. 64/18).

⁹⁸ These directives include: (a) Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (CELEX No. 32011L0095); (b) Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on a common procedure for granting and withdrawing international protection (CELEX No. 32013L0032); (c) Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (CELEX No. 32013L0033); and (d) Directive 2001/55 of the European Parliament and of the Council 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.

social protection. The law also regulates the conditions under which North Macedonia can provide temporary protection, as well as the rights and duties of persons under such protection.

Law on Foreign Exchange Operations and the **Law on Providing Fast Money Transfer Services**.⁹⁹ These laws regulate the definitions and methodologies for collecting and processing data on foreign remittances and foreign exchange inflows as transfers from nationals of North Macedonia abroad.

Law on Health Care. The law guarantees primary health care to foreign nationals working within the territory of North Macedonia; foreigners attending school or vocational training in North Macedonia; foreigners within the territory of North Macedonia working for international organizations; foreign consulates and other missions or in personal service of foreign nationals with diplomatic immunity.

Law on Health Insurance. This law regulates the health insurance of citizens and foreigners, including their health insurance-related rights and obligations, as well as the manner by which insurance is administered. This law also regulates the rights and the conditions of health insurance of the same categories of foreign nationals stated in the Law on Health Care.

Law on Primary Education. This legislation proclaims the fundamental principle that children who are foreign nationals staying in North Macedonia have a right to primary education under equal conditions as children who are nationals of North Macedonia.

Law on Secondary Education. This law has provisions that allow foreign nationals to acquire secondary education and grant them the right to request validation or equivalency for an education certificate acquired abroad.

Law on Higher Education. The law has a provision that foreign nationals shall enrol under the same conditions as nationals of North Macedonia. Foreign nationals may be restricted or prohibited from receiving military or police-related education or from enrolling in studies in fields that are of interest to national security.

⁹⁹ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Foreign Exchange Operations (see footnote 71); Government of North Macedonia, Law on Providing Fast Money Transfer Services (see footnote 71).

Law on Social Protection.¹⁰⁰ The legislation has provisions on the right to health care of victims of trafficking (article 66), as well as the setting up of the Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking and the possibility of accommodating foreign victims under approved temporary stay. In March 2018, the Law on Social Protection was amended to expand the mandate of the Centre for Victims of Trafficking to also accommodate victims of sexual violence.

Child Protection Law.¹⁰¹ This law regulates the rights of children, especially in regard to any kind of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (harassment, child pornography and child prostitution), soliciting by coercion, and the sale or trafficking of children (article 12, para. 2).

Criminal Code. The code incriminates acts of trafficking in human beings (article 418a), migrant smuggling (article 418b), organizing a group and encouraging commission of acts of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants (article 418c) and trafficking of children (article 418d). The amendments to the Criminal Code¹⁰² of North Macedonia meant implementing one of the key benefits of the long-time efforts of the Commission and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission – that is, introducing the principle of not punishing victims of trafficking in criminal legislation in North Macedonia. The amendments to the Criminal Code that went into effect on 1 January 2019 envisaged an explicit provision not to punish victims of the crime of trafficking (article 418a, para. 7) and the crime of trafficking of children (article 418d, para. 8). The essence of this principle and provision is the non-punishment, non-prosecution and non-detention of victims. The new provisions will enable more efficient identification, assistance and support for victims, who, in most cases, considering the situation in which they find themselves, are forced by traffickers to also commit crimes. The application of the principle of non-punishment will encourage victims to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in detecting and punishing the perpetrators.

Law on Free Legal Aid.¹⁰³ The new law, which went into force on 1 October 2019, provides for primary and secondary legal aid to all citizens of North Macedonia, including victims of gender-based violence and domestic

¹⁰⁰ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Social Protection of 21 May 2019 (in Macedonian). Available at www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/zakoni/2019/28.5_zakon_SZ.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Child Protection of 1 September 2019 (in Macedonian). Available at <http://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/dete.pdf>.

¹⁰² Government of Macedonia, Law Amending the Criminal Code of 28 December 2018 (in Macedonian). Available at www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Zakon-za-izmenuvane-i-dopolnuvane-31-12-2018.pdf.

¹⁰³ Government of North Macedonia, Law on Free Legal Aid of 16 May 2019 (in Macedonian). Available at <http://pravda.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/Zakon%20za%20besplatna%20pravna%20pomos.pdf>.

violence. Article 8, which includes victims of trafficking as a category entitled to free legal aid was already part of the previous Law on Free Legal Aid, is still in force.

In cooperation with IOM, **standard operating procedures (SOPs)** for dealing with victims of trafficking were passed, revised and then adopted in November 2018. The revised SOPs serve as an appropriate framework for providing support, integration and voluntary return to migrants and victims of trafficking. In addition, in collaboration with UNHCR, SOPs for unaccompanied foreign minors¹⁰⁴ and SOPs for processing vulnerable categories of foreign nationals¹⁰⁵ were adopted in 2016.

The current regulations regarding legal and illegal migration represent good legal basis for resolving individual requests for legal and illegal residence in North Macedonia from persons of different categories. Nevertheless, the country will continue to follow trends and guidelines from European legislation in order to ensure timely harmonization.

C.2.2. Key international documents, multilateral and bilateral agreements on migration

There is a systemic approach to drafting strategic documents on migration (including all its aspects) in North Macedonia, and the recommendations and good practices from international documents are taken into account: the recommendations by the European Commission and the Council of Europe; reports by relevant regional and international organizations and bodies; European Union and OSCE strategies; and relevant reports on and recommendations for North Macedonia contained in the annual reports of the US Department of State. The aforementioned documents recognize the comprehensive and organized response in migration management in North Macedonia.

During this last decade, in addition to the dedicated implementation of international standards, North Macedonia has become more actively involved in the activities of the international community in the field of migration. These

¹⁰⁴ National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, Standard Operating Procedures for Dealing with Unaccompanied and Separated Foreign Children (Skopje, 2015) (in Macedonian). Available at <http://nacionalnakomisija.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/SOP-za-postapuvanje-so-nepridruzuvani-deca-stranci.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ UNHCR and the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, Standard Operating Procedures for Processing Vulnerable Categories of Foreign Nationals (Skopje, UNHCR, 2016) (in Macedonian). Available at <http://nacionalnakomisija.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/SOP-za-postapuvanje-so-ranlivi-kategorii-lica-stranci.pdf>.

include the Global Compact on Refugees¹⁰⁶ and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,¹⁰⁷ drafted in line with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2016¹⁰⁸ and by North Macedonia in 2018. In conceptualizing certain areas of the new Resolution on the Migration Policy, the 23 goals of Global Compact for Migration were taken into account.

The agreements and arrangements between the States for (bilateral and multilateral) cooperation represent an important instrument of the national migration policy. For this purpose, a number of agreements have been signed and decisions were adopted in order to enhance cooperation in the area of legal and illegal migration, the visa regime, and citizenship issues.

Legal emigration

In the area of bilateral agreements on **seasonal employment in the labour force** until 2014, North Macedonia had signed and ratified bilateral agreements on sending workers based on project agreements only with Slovenia, Germany¹⁰⁹ and Qatar. Unlike the agreement with Germany, the bilateral agreements with Slovenia and Qatar were not implemented. In 2013, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy had initiatives for concluding agreements with the governments of several countries on the seasonal employment of workers from North Macedonia. These and other initiatives of the State after 2015 for signing bilateral agreements on seasonal labour were not accepted by any country due to obligations arising from such agreements for the host country. In recent years, regional labour market liberalization (the Mini Schengen Initiative, as well as certain activities within the Central European Free Trade Agreement) has been increasingly applied to simplify access to the labour markets of signatory countries to these agreements.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations General Assembly resolution 73/151 on the Global Compact for Refugees, adopted on 17 December 2018 (A/RES/73/151). Available at www.unhcr.org/5c658aed4.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations General Assembly resolution 73/195 on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted on 19 December 2018 (A/RES/73/195). Available at www.iom.int/resources/global-compact-safe-orderly-and-regular-migration/res/73/195.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/1 on the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted on 19 September 2016 (A/RES/71/1). Available at www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_1.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ For each detachment year, which begins on October 1 of the current year and ends on September 30 of the following year, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany established a quota of workers who could be detached from North Macedonia (see footnote 2) to Germany. For the 2014 detachment year, a quota of 570 workers in construction, installation and insulation was set.

Legal residence of foreigners

Regarding the social security of foreigners in North Macedonia, 19 bilateral agreements,¹¹⁰ 11 of which were with European Union member States,¹¹¹ were in force until 2014 for the coordination of social protection systems. During this period, activities were undertaken for signing bilateral agreements on the use of the European Health Insurance Card. The benefit of their implementation is the use of health services abroad in case of travel for professional development, schooling, business or private purposes. This type of bilateral agreement was signed with 16 countries, plus Kosovo.^{7,112} After 2015, three social insurance agreements were conclude, namely with Hungary, Slovakia and Albania.

Illegal migration and readmission

International cooperation in the area of these migration movements and on readmission is a subject to which migration policies pay special attention. For this purpose, North Macedonia has undertaken activities during the last decade for establishing broad international cooperation and exchange of data in relation to illegal migration. During the period 2009–2014, a number of agreements on illegal migration, both bilateral and multilateral, were signed with neighbouring countries and beyond. The implementation of the Agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Community for the admission of persons with unauthorized residence was being carried out smoothly, and the number of returned persons continuously rose. Most of the returned nationals of North Macedonia came back from Germany, and the number of those returning from other European countries (Sweden, Norway and Belgium, as well as Switzerland) was also relatively high. During this period, four readmission agreements were signed (with the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro), in addition to protocols for the implementation of the readmission agreement with seven European Union member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands). In 2017, an agreement and a protocol for its implementation (coming into force in 2018) was signed between the Government of North Macedonia² and authorities in Kosovo⁷ for the admission of persons with illegal residence. Regarding protocols for the implementation of

¹¹⁰ For more, see: Government of North Macedonia, Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia, 2015–2020 (Official Gazette No. 64/18), p. 38.

¹¹¹ Until the conclusion of new social security agreements, the Republic of Macedonia applied the agreements inherited from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with the former Czechoslovakia, England, Northern Ireland, France; Italy; Norway and Sweden.

¹¹² The agreements with the following are in force today and applied: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Germany, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland, Türkiye and Kosovo.⁷ The list of bilateral social insurance agreements (in Macedonian) is available at www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/dokumenti/2020/24.7-листа2020.pdf.

the European Commission Agreement: after 2015, protocols with Slovakia, Italy and Czechia entered into force. After 2015, proposals for concluding readmission agreements were sent to Egypt and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and a proposal was received for concluding a readmission agreement with Azerbaijan.

Visa regime

A number of decisions have been made in recent years for the unilateral cancellation of entry and residence visas for up to 90 days and for the interim abolishment of visas for the short-term stay of foreign nationals, as well as agreements regarding travel conditions and inter-State agreements to abolish the visa regime for holders of diplomatic and service passports.

Until 2015, the Government of North Macedonia² had adopted decisions for the unilateral cancellation of entry and residence visas of up to 90 days for citizens of countries and territories included in Annex 2 of European Council Regulation No. 539/2001.¹¹³ In order to strengthen business ties and increase the number of foreign tourists, a number of decisions were adopted between 2010 and 2014 for the unilateral temporary abolishment of short-stay visas for citizens of certain countries for periods of one year (for the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan) or longer (e.g. a unilateral decision to abolish visas for citizens of Ukraine for a five-year period, from 2013–2018). Also, agreements were signed between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia² and the Government of Brazil on visa exemption (2011), as well as with the Government of Türkiye on travel conditions for citizens of both countries (2012). Agreements on travel conditions were signed in 2011 and 2012 with the governments of three countries in the region (Serbia, Albania and Montenegro), including on the recognition of a valid biometric national identity card as a travel document, alongside a valid passport.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Those are: Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mauritius, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Uruguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles, Hong Kong, SAR, China, and Macao, SAR, China.

¹¹⁴ In addition to the previously mentioned activities in 2009–2014, inter-State agreements were signed or there were initiatives to abolish the visa regime for holders of diplomatic and service passports between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia (see footnote 2) and the governments of India, Indonesia, Argentina, Viet Nam and Qatar.

Between 2015 and 2020, decisions were adopted for the unilateral abolishment of visas for entry and stays of up to 90 days for nationals of 24 countries (which are on the so-called European Union White List), as well as decisions for the unilateral temporary abolishment of visas for the short-term stay for nationals of five countries. Agreements to recognize a valid biometric national identity card as a travel document alongside a valid passport, as part of travel conditions for citizens, were also signed between the Government of North Macedonia² and authorities in Kosovo⁷ and between the Government of North Macedonia and the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, inter-State agreements were signed with certain countries to terminate the visa regime for holders of diplomatic and service passports.

Citizenship

The Law on the Ratification of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (Official Gazette No. 208/2019) was adopted on 17 October 2019. Pursuant to this law, the Ministry of Interior was appointed as the competent authority of the State administration that will take care of the implementation of the convention referred to in article 1 of this law.

Considering the experience with agreements concluded so far, as well as their implementation, North Macedonia remains committed to these activities, especially those that imply the expansion of economic cooperation, greater protection of its nationals abroad, and the facilitated entry and stay of foreigners, especially those in the workforce, of which there is a shortage.

C.3. Institutional framework

The Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia encompasses all relevant aspects of legal emigration of its nationals and immigration of foreigners, as well as illegal migration and migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, asylum and refugee protection. The complexities in all these areas impose a need to involve more institutions. This is also recognized in the composition of the Intersectoral Group for Migration Policy Development.¹¹⁵ Each of the institutions and organizations has competencies in its area, but also share competencies in some other areas that are subject to observation in the Migration Policy. Therefore, their responsibilities and competencies should be clearly defined, and activities should be fully harmonized and coordinated.

¹¹⁵ The group consists of representatives from the Cabinet of the Government of North Macedonia, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Health, the Secretariat for European Affairs, the SSO and international organizations (e.g. IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, ICMPD and MARRI).

Findings from the implementation of previous migration policies (2009–2014 and 2015–2020), as well as the course of activities for drafting the new Resolution on the Migration Policy 2021–2025, confirm that the institutional premise for the implementation of the Migration Policy depends on, among other things, the number of competent institutions for each of the aforementioned areas of migration. Namely, in North Macedonia, the development and implementation of the Migration Policy is relatively simple in areas where two to three institutions are competent. This conclusion refers to illegal migration, migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, asylum, the visa regime and citizenship in North Macedonia. In such cases, communication between the institutions is more efficient, and the results of their activities are more harmonized and more efficient.

The experiences with the implementation and development of the Migration Policy with regard to the emigration of nationals versus the immigration of foreigners are different. Unlike the policy concerning foreigners (with either temporary or permanent residence) and their integration, the development and implementation of emigration policy represents a much more complex activity. This is due to the complexity of the issue of the emigration of citizens of North Macedonia, its long-term nature, the lack of relevant data and information, as well as the large number of institutions directly and indirectly involved in this area. The evaluation of previous iterations of the Migration Policy shows that a significant part of envisaged measures and activities in this area remained unimplemented. The drafting of the policy, on the other hand, confirmed that if emphasis is placed on the causes, consequences and implications of emigration, then other institutions (which are currently not part of the Intersectoral Group for Migration Policy Development) should be involved, and that coordination in regard to measures and activities for certain specific goals should take place among a smaller number of directly involved institutions.¹¹⁶

Established migration networks play an important role in the implementation of measures and activities related to the reasons and the impacts of emigration. These networks should be tapped to establish and deepen cooperation of migrants and returnees with institutions at the local level. The experience in many countries confirms that the use of migration networks to stimulate socioeconomic development of the regions of origin is very instructive. In this sense, it would be necessary to have greater involvement of centres for the development of planning regions and municipalities in North Macedonia, as well as the non-governmental sector, and for them to be connected with migrants' organizations abroad.

¹¹⁶ Thus, for example, measures and activities for strengthening infrastructure for the inflow of remittances through formal channels and creating opportunities for their more productive use were developed in cooperation with the National Bank of North Macedonia, and the measures and activities for finding and attracting investors from among citizens of North Macedonia living abroad, in consultation with the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the Foreign Investment Agency.

In the last decade, international organizations that have offices in North Macedonia – IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, ICMPD and the Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) – have been very active in providing great professional support and financial assistance in the implementation of projects and activities related to various aspects of legal and illegal migration. Their expertise and commitment in conceptualizing the previous and the new iterations of the Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia, which takes place in coordination with competent institutions, is of great importance. Support from representatives of international organizations will be very important in the implementation of the new Resolution on the Migration Policy 2021–2025.

The discussion regarding institutional premises, that is, the institutions that are responsible and involved in drafting and implementing the Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia, raises the issue of the need to draft and adopt a Law on Migration Management that would determine all the relevant aspects of the institutional premises for the efficient management of processes relating to external migration.

C.4. International cooperation

The long-term priority of the Government of North Macedonia and its competent ministries is efficient migration management, including in dealing with illegal migration. International cooperation in the area of migration and border security is based on Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security of the European acquis. It is most often achieved with neighbouring countries through bilateral cooperation.

International cooperation with regional and international organizations that have competence in border security is achieved through membership in international organizations. Cooperation with FRONTEX,¹¹⁷ UNHCR,¹¹⁸ EASO,¹¹⁹ Europol,¹²⁰ Interpol,¹²¹ IOM,¹²² ICMPD,¹²³ the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC),¹²⁴ MARRI,¹²⁵ UNFPA¹²⁶ and other organizations

¹¹⁷ The FRONTEX website is available at <https://frontex.europa.eu>.

¹¹⁸ The UNHCR website is available at www.unhcr.org.

¹¹⁹ The EASO website is available at www.easo.europa.eu.

¹²⁰ The Europol website is available at www.europol.europa.eu.

¹²¹ The Interpol website is available at www.interpol.int.

¹²² The IOM website is available at www.iom.int.

¹²³ The ICMPD is available at www.icmpd.org.

¹²⁴ The SELEC website is available at www.selec.org.

¹²⁵ The MARRI website is available at <http://marri-rc.org.mk>.

¹²⁶ The UNFPA website is available at <https://mk.unfpa.org>.

and bodies is intensive and is carried out daily. The aim is to develop standards for effective law enforcement through information exchange and harmonized operations.

In order to improve the security of the borders with Greece, the Government of North Macedonia signed bilateral agreements in 2016 with eight countries (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia), which provided the presence of foreign border police officers. Their presence ensures a higher degree of security and better migration management.

Cooperation with the European Union. The European Union is the most important partner of North Macedonia, which aims to adopt the European legal heritage. In the Annual Progress Report on North Macedonia, special attention is paid to border management, to which migration is of central importance. European Union support is at two levels: political, by setting up goals to be achieved, and financial, by funding a number of programmes and projects that support European integration processes in the country.

Cooperation with FRONTEX¹²⁷ The agency, FRONTEX, was established through European Council Regulation No. 2007/2004, which in its article 2 defines its tasks:¹²⁸

1. Coordinate operational cooperation between Member States in the field of management of external borders;
2. Assist Member States on training of national border guards, including the establishment of common training standards;
3. Carry out risk analyses;
4. Follow up on the development of research relevant for the control and surveillance of external borders;
5. Assist Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at external borders, as well as provide Member States with the necessary support in organizing joint return operations.

¹²⁷ FRONTEX (European Border and Coast Guard Agency), is the European agency for the management of and operational cooperation at the external borders of European Union member States. The FRONTEX website is available at <https://frontex.europa.eu>.

¹²⁸ The vision and mission of FRONTEX is available at <https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/our-mission>.

In recent years, FRONTEX has been actively working on institutionalizing cooperation with third countries, as well as with international organizations with competences in the area of migration. This cooperation is based on mutual respect, support from FRONTEX, which usually consists of expertise and research analysis, affirmation of human rights, and good governance. North Macedonia has had a working arrangement with FRONTEX since 2009,¹²⁹ under which are provisions for information exchange and risk analysis, training and research activities, as well as project development and operational activities. The Border Police of North Macedonia has been participating in numerous FRONTEX projects, which have an impact on strengthening the capacities of the Border Police and improving regional cooperation.

Cooperation with IOM. The contributions of IOM are evident and significant in providing expert support and funding for many projects, as well as for the development of many strategic documents and policies. IOM actively participates in and provides financial support for the voluntary return of migrants to North Macedonia. IOM currently plays a major role in the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (2020) and in the development of the new Resolution on the Migration Policy, the Migration Profile and the National Road Map for Migration Statistics in North Macedonia.

Cooperation with UNHCR. UNHCR has continuously supported the efforts of institutions in North Macedonia in creating modern regulations concerning refugees. The support also includes providing technical and IT assistance in advancing the methodology for more efficient management of statistics related to asylum seekers and the right of access to asylum.

Cooperation with UNFPA. UNFPA¹³⁰ supports the efforts of institutions in North Macedonia to develop strategies for responding to demographic changes and their impacts on the economy, social systems and infrastructure.

Cooperation with EASO. Continued engagement should provide more effective practical cooperation consisting of joint training, expertise, statistics and data on the countries of origin of asylum seekers.

¹²⁹ FRONTEX, “EU external borders in May: Detections in Western Balkan region more than double”, news release, 13 June 2022. Available at <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news-release/working-arrangement-with-the-fyr-of-macedonia-concluded-10iaEG>.

¹³⁰ UNFPA, “UNFPA population event ends with calls for strengthening human capital in response to demographic change”, news article, 23 October 2019. Available at <https://northmacedonia.unfpa.org/en/news/unfpa-population-event-ends-calls-strengthening-human-capital-response-demographic-change-0>.

Cooperation with MARRI¹³¹ The MARRI initiative was established in 2003 to provide regional exchange of information in the field of migration. Improvement in regional cooperation is aimed at developing a platform for more effective cooperation between countries in the region.

Cross-border police cooperation. Such cooperation is carried out with neighbouring countries and is especially important for the prevention of illegal migration. Cross-border cooperation takes place in accordance with the frameworks given in the Schengen Catalogue with European Union recommendations and best practices (Schengen Catalogue, Part IV: Police Cooperation), development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the area of border operations, and participation in international programmes, projects and initiatives. North Macedonia has established joint border centres with Albania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Kosovo⁷ for efficient cross-border cooperation.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has had a major impact on the number of prevented attempts of illegal migration. Intensified measures and activities were undertaken to prevent this phenomenon, and include closing borders and airports to international traffic, engaging the army to secure borders, declaring a state of emergency in the country, limiting the time of day when movement is allowed and enforcing lockdowns, among others. Under these newly created circumstances, international cooperation helped greatly in properly addressing challenges.

¹³¹ The MARRI website is available at <http://marri-rc.org.mk>.

SECTION D: KEY FINDINGS, THE MIGRATION POLICY IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

D.1. Main findings on current trends, the impacts of migration and migration policies

The changes in external and internal migration North Macedonia described in this Migration Profile were observed over a longer period (2009–2019/2020) and in a wider context of their cause-and-effect conditionality, implemented policies, and changes in legislation and international cooperation.

Migration flows from North Macedonia to other countries and vice versa were happening at a time of changes in the visa regime, conditioned by visa liberalization and harmonization of visa processes with European Union requirements, as well as bilateral visa facilitation activities undertaken with numerous countries. During the reference period of the analysis, 34,648 visa applications from nationals of about 180 countries were rejected. After 2015, there was a significant decrease observed in the annual numbers, corresponding to the changes in the visa regime. Applicants from Türkiye, China and India represented the largest combined share (about 25%) of the total number of issued visas between 2009 and 2019.

Big changes are also typical for cross-border mobility – that is, the flow of passengers across State borders. During this period, there was increased entry of citizens of North Macedonia and other countries by about 60 per cent; the number of citizens of North Macedonia leaving the country doubled; and the number of foreign citizens leaving North Macedonia increased by a quarter (25%). More than 90 per cent of the foreigners who entered the country came from European countries.

In 2009–2019, 12,660 individuals acquired citizenship in North Macedonia. Data from the Ministry of Interior shows that over the same period, on the other hand, a total of 13,591 persons relinquished their citizenship in North Macedonia. About two thirds of them requested it for the purpose of acquiring citizenship in Germany, Austria and Slovenia.

Analysis shows that after 2009, there have been changes in the features of legal and illegal external migration, including their scopes and dynamics, as well as the structure and origins of the migrant contingent.

- (a) According to the data from the SSO, the number of immigrants with temporary residence has almost tripled and in 2019 it was around 4,500 people. Data from the Ministry of Interior show that in the same year, the number of foreigners with temporary residence doubled (to about 10,000), with the number of those with permanent residence at around 800 people.
- (b) The emigration of a large number of citizens of North Macedonia, which has additionally intensified in the last decade, in recent years has been the biggest challenge for the country, due to major changes in their characteristics and the dominant phenomenon of permanent migration. In 2018 and 2019, the number of citizens of North Macedonia who left the country was around 25,000, and the total number of citizens of North Macedonia residing outside North Macedonia reached about 700,000, which was more than one third of the total population in the country. There has also been an increase in circular migration, for which there is almost no relevant data available.
- (c) Illegal migration decreased after the large wave in 2015, and North Macedonia remains on the Western Balkans corridor as a transit country between countries of origin and destination in a context of mixed-migration movements (composed of vulnerable categories of people including unaccompanied children, victims of trafficking and persons in need of international protection).
- (d) The annual reports of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration show that measures and activities are continuously undertaken to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. Statistical data from the Ministry of Interior for the last 10 years confirm that in North Macedonia, 0–3 criminal acts are detected annually. These data certainly do not reflect the real situation, because it is a crime that is not easy to detect and document properly.
- (e) The number of asylum seekers was highest in 2013–2015 and has been continuously dropping in the last five years; for most of them, the asylum procedure was stopped due to the absence of the applicant. At the same time, the number of returned citizens of North Macedonia and foreigners in a readmission procedure has significantly increased, in light of the concluded bilateral agreements with several European Union member States and other countries.

The impact of legal migration on demographic, economic and social development is directly correlated with the scope, structural characteristics and the cause-and-effect relationship of the emigration of citizens of North Macedonia and immigration of foreigners. Given the relatively small number of foreigners in the country and the predominantly temporary nature of their stay, immigration has no significant impact on these aspects of development. Hence, the impact of legal migration, that is, large emigration, remains dominant. Regarding the impact of illegal migration, except for the big flows in 2015–2016, there has not been any significant influx in the last decade that would have more serious implications on development. North Macedonia is a country of transit for most of them.

The consequences and implications of emigration are numerous and very complex, and they are manifested in the development of the population and of human capital, the available workforce and the labour market, educational and scientific activity, socioeconomic development, health and the environment. **Their influence at the macro, meso and micro levels is evident.**

Decades of growing emigration, which reached its culmination in the last decade, have had significant demographic consequences and implications at the macro (national) and meso levels, that is, at the level of regions and municipalities. They are manifested in the decline in the total population size due to permanent emigration, increased births abroad, ageing of the population and of the labour force, and permanent loss of human capital and talent, including especially of scientists. The consequences are also unfavourable at the micro level, that is, at the level of households with members who live abroad, as there is an increase in the number of care homes for the elderly and of single-person households.

Emigration causes a growing shortage in the labour market in a situation where there is still a high unemployment rate, with very unfavourable consequences for the development of certain sectors. The effects of remittances on development are largely determined by the way they are used. During the last decade, there were large foreign remittances and foreign exchange inflows from the diaspora to North Macedonia. All surveys on their use show that most of these funds are used for personal consumption. Hence, they have a positive impact on the consumption and living standards of migrants' households; however, the increase in such consumption does not have long-term development effects at the macro and meso levels. Due to their negligible use in investment in the country, their positive impact on the country's economic development is lacking.

National migration policy in the future should be based on the identified impacts of legal and illegal migration on demographic and socioeconomic development at the macro, meso and micro levels, which are very complex and far-reaching. The main directions of the migration policy of North Macedonia should be:

- (a) Creating preconditions for reducing permanent emigration, with a special focus on people with higher education, by continuously addressing the reasons for emigration. At the same time, support for temporary circular migration is needed, as well as encouragement of return and facilitating mutual recognition of skills and qualifications.
- (b) The need for the efficient management of economic and non-economic legal immigration, in accordance with the growing labour shortage of certain profiles and the creation of an appropriate visa policy, is indisputable.
- (c) Further development of the established asylum system and increasing its efficiency and effectiveness.
- (d) Strengthening the national capacities for the timely, efficient and effective prevention, detection and management of illegal migration.
- (e) Under conditions of increased involvement of North Macedonia in international activities in the area of migration and as a signatory to the Global Compact for Migration, a policy for building partnerships is needed to promote international cooperation in the area of migration.

D.2. Recommendations related to the Government's migration management framework

In the last decade, the Government of North Macedonia has undertaken numerous activities in order to create premises for migration management and improve the situation in this area. In regard to the support framework, there were evident positive changes in the last decade for the purpose of applying international standards in all relevant aspects of migration management and migration policy development. Specifically:

- (a) There is evident progress in the areas of migration policy instruments (specifically, in the the visa regime, support/protection of citizens of North Macedonia abroad, residence and employment of foreigners, and citizenship in North Macedonia), as well as institutional premises for the creation of migration policies.

- (b) Numerous changes have been made to existing legislation, and new laws have been adopted that directly or indirectly address the issue of migration. Today, North Macedonia has a relatively solid legal framework for regulating both legal and illegal migration movements that is largely synchronized with international standards and European Union regulations.
- (c) The country is constantly expanding its international cooperation, and the number of signed bilateral agreements and protocols for regulating and facilitating migration is growing.
- (d) North Macedonia actively participates in international initiatives and consistently respects its obligations in the area of migration. In 2018, the country was among the signatories to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugee, drafted in accordance with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2016.

Regardless of the identified progress and improvement of the support framework for migration management in North Macedonia, there remains a need for its further improvement and harmonization with international standards. In this regard, the recommendations would refer to the following aspects.

Future activities in relation to the **visa regime** should aim at further harmonization of national visa policy with European Union visa policy, then at commencing visa liberalization negotiations with certain countries (which are on the so-called European Union/Schengen White List), including further unilateral interim decisions for the abolishment of the visa regime for short-term stay in certain countries, as well as the signing of new bilateral agreements on the abolishment of the visa regime for holders of diplomatic and service passports.

Improving the quality of **consular services** provided to its citizens working and residing abroad remains one of the constant priorities of the foreign policy of North Macedonia. In a situation of increasing circular migration, the continuous provision of information on legal migration procedures and the protection of migrants through intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in the area of labour migration (especially the vulnerable categories of migrants, low-skilled migrants and women migrants), as well as regulating the operation of private employment agencies abroad, are not less important.

As regards the issue of **citizenship**, there is still a need for consistency in the treatment and care of stateless persons, in accordance with the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Regarding this challenge,

although there generally are no problems peculiar to stateless persons, as a result of the succession it is not completely ruled out that a number of persons living in North Macedonia still do not have regulated citizenship status.

The institutional premises, that is, the responsible and involved institutions, are especially important from the aspect of the development and implementation of the Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia. In order to improve the efficiency of their activities, there is a need to conceptualize and adopt a **Law on Migration Management**. The experience shows that this law: defines the different forms of migration, as well as the competencies and procedures for their regulation; establishes a coordinated migration management system with established principles, competent State bodies responsible for migration management and a single system for collecting and exchanging data in this area; proposes and undertakes measures for the implementation of the Migration Policy, better harmonization of policies in certain areas of migration, as well as for achieving the goals set up in the strategic documents.

The current **regulations** in regard to legal and illegal migration represent good legal basis for resolving the individual requests for legal and illegal residence in North Macedonia from persons of different categories. Nevertheless, the country will continue to follow trends and guidelines from European legislation in order to ensure their timely harmonization.

North Macedonia should remain committed to **concluding agreements and their implementation**, especially those that imply the expansion of economic cooperation, greater protection of nationals abroad, and facilitation of the entry and stay of foreigners, especially of labour, which is in shortage.

In addition to improving the support framework, it is necessary to provide staffing, organizational and financial bases for the implementation of the Migration Policy for the 2021–2025 period and other adopted strategic documents in the area of migration, continuous updating of this Migration Profile, and the implementation of the National Road Map for Migration Statistics and other documents.

Migration management should contribute to balanced and planned economic development in North Macedonia, by respecting economic development strategy and policy and economic relations abroad, measures in active employment policies, population policy, and policies in the area of education and science, and by strengthening relations with the diaspora through the return and reintegration of migrants, the integration of persons with a recognized right to protection, and the consistent implementation of readmission agreements, among others.

D.3. Recommendations for incorporating migration issues in sectoral policies

The harmonization of the Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia with strategic development-related documents and sectoral policies can contribute to its efficient realization and to the alleviation of the existing demographic and socioeconomic problems at the national and regional levels, conditioned by the large number of emigrants.

Regarding remittances, North Macedonia should strive towards implementing measures and activities for increased transfer of these funds through official channels, as well as creating opportunities for their more productive use in order to maximize personal benefit and support for the development of the country. Today, the country has a respectable business diaspora, whose greater involvement in the country's investment activities can contribute to stimulating economic development. This cooperation should be based on mutual economic interest, security and equal treatment with other investors.

The strategy for cooperation with the diaspora has shown that there are great opportunities for the inclusion of migration-related issues in sectoral policies.¹³² They are especially important for the productive use of foreign remittances and foreign exchange inflows for **stimulating investments**. For this purpose, the activities should focus on:

- (a) Promoting opportunities and creating favourable conditions for more direct investments by the diaspora;
- (b) Mapping of businesspersons in the diaspora and their continuous familiarization with investment opportunities in the country;
- (c) Further expansion of organized forms of activities of the business diaspora;
- (d) Identifying opportunities for involving the diaspora in the implementation of projects under public–private partnerships;
- (e) Creating conditions for issuing “bonds for the diaspora”;
- (f) Better organized engagement of the business diaspora in attracting foreign investors.

¹³² Government of North Macedonia, National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for Cooperation with the Diaspora, 2019–2023, pp. 26–45.

No less important would be activities in the **foreign trade sector**. Establishing cooperation with the diaspora in order to increase the export of products from North Macedonia, and their greater availability in countries and areas where a large number of citizens of North Macedonia reside, as well as the intensification of trade between companies in North Macedonia and companies abroad that are owned by the diaspora, is a complex process. For its efficient realization, it is necessary to undertake activities aimed at:

- (a) Understanding the current situation, including the need for product exports from North Macedonia, as well as current export conditions, to countries and areas with large diaspora communities;
- (b) Mapping and creating a database of diaspora-owned business entities and of exporters in North Macedonia, as a starting point for connecting companies in North Macedonia and businesspersons from the diaspora who are interested in establishing trade relations;
- (c) Meetings and networking initiatives (including through online tools and trade fairs) for businesspeople from North Macedonia and diaspora in the area of trade;
- (d) Organizing training for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in North Macedonia to enter foreign markets and networking with the diaspora in order to open new markets.

Tourism is a sector that also offers many opportunities for development through cooperation with the diaspora. This could be achieved by:

- (a) Developing premises for the greater use of tourist offers in the country when citizens from the diaspora come to visit;
- (b) Identifying and developing special tourist offers for young people from the diaspora;
- (c) Promotion of cultural tourism;
- (d) Continuous improvement of the tourist offers, including by subsidizing low-budget flights and tourist facilities, and intensifying the promotion of tourism in North Macedonia;
- (e) Recognizing opportunities for the inclusion of the diaspora in the tourism industry as investors;
- (f) Involvement of diaspora organizations in the promotion of tourism in North Macedonia in their countries of residence.

The philanthropic contributions of the diaspora in past decades have been very significant, but there is not enough information about them. Some of them were abused and therefore activities for their expansion and promotion should be set up differently. This implies activities aimed at:

- (a) Establishing a fund for social innovation, with the support of the diaspora;
- (b) Identifying the need to revise current regulations concerning donations;
- (c) Recognizing the possibilities for tax and administrative facilitation of philanthropic contributions from the diaspora;
- (d) Promoting the country's cooperation with the diaspora in the area of philanthropic contributions;
- (e) Creating a mechanism to minimize abuses related to the diaspora's philanthropic contributions;
- (f) Establishing various forms of recognition of big philanthropists in the diaspora.

Today, North Macedonia has a large scientific diaspora, and developing cooperation with it can help in advancing higher education and scientific activities in the country. This cooperation implies several activities, among which the following may be underlined:

- (a) Establishing a Diaspora Centre;
- (b) Continuous mapping of the scientific diaspora, in order for scientists in the country to establish cooperation with them;
- (c) Developing a platform (functional database) for networking in different areas between the scientific diaspora and the scientists in the country;
- (d) Including the scientific diaspora in the educational process of higher education institutions in North Macedonia;
- (e) Cooperation between the scientific diaspora and higher education institutions in the implementation of scientific research projects in various fields.

A special challenge is the continuous care for the diaspora and the promotion of its relations with North Macedonia, as well as cooperation with the diaspora, especially the involvement of the diaspora in the revitalization and strengthening of economic, public and cultural diplomacy.

D.4. Recommendations for improving migration statistics and the overall evidence base

The analysis in this Migration Profile shows that comprehensive and relevant data on many aspects of migration are missing. Some of them are imminent for this issue, which is difficult to monitor and document, and some of them arise from the lack of data from domestic sources. Without data, a comprehensive analysis and design of appropriate policies and measures cannot be made.

The lack of complete data on permanent and temporary emigration from North Macedonia from domestic sources remains the biggest problem in understanding the peculiarities of these migration movements. Although statistics from foreign sources provide more realistic information about manifested changes, they cannot be accepted as a permanent alternative to statistics from domestic sources due to their inconsistency and different methodological bases.

Under such circumstances, one of the strategic goals of the new Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021–2025 is to provide relevant statistics and information on legal and illegal migration movements to, from and through North Macedonia. The specific objectives refer to: (a) collection and use of accurate and disaggregated data on external migration, as the basis for building evidence-based policies, and (b) providing evidence on the legal identity and appropriate documentation for migrants.

For the purpose of improving the situation in the area of migration statistics, the National Road Map for Migration Statistics is in the process of being adopted and it has been drafted in accordance with Regulation 862/2007 and Regulation 2020/851. It aims to present the current situation in State institutions that have competence in the area of migration and especially the situation with statistics related to the Regulation 862/2007 and the Regulation 2020/851, to identify challenges in the process of harmonization of the national legislation and the European Union, as well as the challenges associated with collecting relevant data concerning the monitoring and the management of international migration processes.

The National Road Map for Migration Statistics is a strategic document that guides the activities of competent institutions, with a set time framework for full compliance with Regulation 862/2007. The National Road Map identifies the activities related to statistical data collection and the challenges faced by these competent institutions. Also, the National Road Map aims to help find a national solution in accordance with Regulation 862/2007 and Regulation 2020/851, if such a solution is missing in the domestic legislation.

The National Road Map is a dynamic document, implemented, monitored and updated by decision makers at the highest level, in order to provide a sustainable concept for the exchange of comprehensive and compatible data on migrants, harmonized with those of countries in the region and the European Union. The data provided in this way will be the basis for estimating the number of both citizens of North Macedonia and foreigners, on an annual basis, which is important in terms of calculating and monitoring complex demographic and socioeconomic indicators.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. Top 10 countries and places of origin, per continent, of foreign nationals entering North Macedonia at authorized border crossing points, 2009, 2015 and 2019

2009			2015			2019		
EUROPE	4 338 511	%	EUROPE	6 097 216	%	EUROPE	7 247 460	%
Serbia	1 140 345	26.3	Serbia	1 526 526	25.0	Kosovo ⁷	1 641 197	22.6
Greece	864 626	19.9	Kosovo ⁷	1 107 538	18.2	Serbia	1 490 823	20.6
Kosovo ⁷	647 004	14.9	Greece	1 010 275	16.6	Albania	1 140 487	15.7
Albania	362 611	8.4	Albania	729 847	12.0	Greece	766 518	10.6
Bulgaria	313 377	7.2	Bulgaria	444 623	7.3	Bulgaria	609 249	8.4
Hungary	139 106	3.2	Germany	158 247	2.6	Germany	209 658	2.9
Germany	126 813	2.9	Poland	132 595	2.2	Romania	140 232	1.9
Poland	126 145	2.9	Hungary	115 913	1.9	Poland	137 666	1.9
Romania	66 247	1.5	Romania	95 374	1.6	Sweden	132 915	1.8
Croatia	59 859	1.4	Sweden	92 378	1.5	Hungary	99 985	1.4
ASIA	135 238	%	ASIA	261 614	%	ASIA	315 795	%
Türkiye	119 818	88.6	Türkiye	209 075	79.9	Türkiye	246 511	78.1
Israel	8 423	6.2	Uzbekistan	18 874	7.2	China	20 193	6.4
Japan	1 565	1.2	China	8 036	3.1	Israel	14 580	4.6
China	1 109	0.8	Republic of Korea	5 818	2.2	Malaysia	8 963	2.8
Republic of Korea	1 011	0.7	Israel	5 406	2.1	Republic of Korea	4 139	1.3
India	744	0.6	Japan	3 170	1.2	Japan	4 109	1.3
Georgia	438	0.3	Malaysia	2 418	0.9	Georgia	2 475	0.8
Armenia	193	0.1	Georgia	1 479	0.6	India	2 293	0.7
Azerbaijan	174	0.1	India	1 098	0.4	Singapore	2 023	0.6
Iraq	168	0.1	Kazakhstan	675	0.3	Philippines	1 072	0.3
AFRICA	946	%	AFRICA	2 058	%	AFRICA	2 995	%
South Africa	168	17.76	Egypt	437	21.23	Egypt	716	23.91
Egypt	144	15.22	South Africa	257	12.49	South Africa	526	17.56
Comoros	114	12.05	Uganda	213	10.35	Morocco	363	12.12
Tunisia	92	9.73	Morocco	199	9.67	Tunisia	268	8.95
Nigeria	71	7.51	Tunisia	163	7.92	Nigeria	180	6.01
Morocco	47	4.97	Nigeria	124	6.03	Libya	111	3.71
Algeria	29	3.07	Namibia	82	3.98	Algeria	109	3.64
Congo	27	2.85	Ghana	77	3.74	Ghana	88	2.94
Sierra Leone	26	2.75	Kenya	50	2.43	Kenya	53	1.77
Ethiopia	25	2.64	Cameroon	48	2.33	Eswatini	51	1.70

2009			2015			2019		
AMERICAS	51 906	%	AMERICAS	65 299	%	AMERICAS	91 138	%
United States	41 295	79.6	United States	50 020	76.60	United States	67 211	73.75
Canada	8 838	17.0	Canada	10 559	16.17	Canada	14 726	16.16
Brazil	580	1.1	Brazil	1 908	2.92	Brazil	2 921	3.21
Mexico	256	0.5	Mexico	653	1.00	Mexico	1 208	1.33
Argentina	179	0.3	Argentina	502	0.77	Argentina	1 119	1.23
Cuba	150	0.3	Chile	196	0.30	Colombia	944	1.04
Chile	117	0.2	Colombia	165	0.25	Cuba	565	0.62
Peru	85	0.2	Cuba	146	0.22	Chile	454	0.50
Jamaica	55	0.1	Grenada	137	0.21	Costa Rica	289	0.32
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	44	0.1	Jamaica	132	0.20	Peru	260	0.29
OCEANIA	18 772	%	OCEANIA	25 751	%	OCEANIA	31 144	%
Australia	17 332	92.3	Australia	24 054	93.41	Australia	28 030	90.00
New Zealand	1 429	7.6	New Zealand	1 652	6.42	New Zealand	3 093	9.93
Disputed States and United Nations protectorates	244		Disputed States and United Nations protectorates	3 094		Disputed States and United Nations protectorates	3 371	
Entered with passports issued by international organizations	7 825		Entered with passports issued by international organizations	2 120		Entered with passports issued by international organizations	1 629	

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Note: Continent totals include numbers for countries outside of the top ten.

ANNEX 2. Top 10 countries and places of origin, per continent, of foreign nationals exiting North Macedonia at authorized border crossing points, 2009, 2015 and 2019

2009			2015			2019		
EUROPE	3 551 054	%	EUROPE	3 903 440	%	EUROPE	4 588 773	%
Serbia	937 476	26.4	Serbia	889 415	22.8	Serbia	906 688	19.8
Greece	770 314	21.7	Greece	711 531	18.2	Albania	851 736	18.6
Kosovo ⁷	391 599	11.0	Albania	647 564	16.6	Bulgaria	583 639	12.7
Albania	312 404	8.8	Bulgaria	420 346	10.8	Kosovo ⁷	547 805	11.9
Bulgaria	306 032	8.6	Kosovo ⁷	346 335	8.9	Greece	535 949	11.7
Hungary	113 607	3.2	Germany	107 543	2.8	Germany	147 202	3.2
Poland	107 152	3.0	Poland	85 495	2.2	Poland	107 527	2.3
Germany	96 158	2.7	Hungary	83 271	2.1	Romania	106 697	2.3
Romania	54 461	1.5	Romania	62 975	1.6	Sweden	88 339	1.9
Croatia	51 990	1.5	Sweden	57 344	1.5	Hungary	72 489	1.6
ASIA	115 972	%	ASIA	215 866	%	ASIA	260 857	%
Türkiye	101 758	87.7	Türkiye	183 849	85.2	Türkiye	205 167	78.7
Israel	8 050	6.9	China	7 147	3.3	China	15 430	5.9
Japan	1 408	1.2	Republic of Korea	5 304	2.5	Israel	13 121	5.0
China	1 031	0.9	Israel	4 992	2.3	Malaysia	6 603	2.5
Republic of Korea	792	0.7	Japan	2 870	1.3	Japan	3 351	1.3
India	625	0.5	Uzbekistan	2 309	1.1	Republic of Korea	2 792	1.1
Georgia	375	0.3	Malaysia	2 172	1.0	India	1 933	0.7
Armenia	190	0.2	Georgia	974	0.5	Georgia	1 801	0.7
Iraq	173	0.1	India	891	0.4	Singapore	1 643	0.6
Uzbekistan	165	0.1	Kazakhstan	653	0.3	Philippines	922	0.4
AFRICA	825	%	AFRICA	1 649	%	AFRICA	2 509	%
Egypt	144	17.45	Egypt	418	25.35	Egypt	692	27.58
South Africa	139	16.85	South Africa	224	13.58	South Africa	403	16.06
Comoros	100	12.12	Morocco	168	-	Morocco	310	-
Tunisia	84	10.20	Tunisia	149	-	Tunisia	227	-
Nigeria	63	7.64	Nigeria	96	5.82	Nigeria	140	5.58
Morocco	39	4.73	Namibia	66	4.00	Algeria	89	3.55
Algeria	30	3.64	Uganda	66	4.00	Ghana	53	2.11
Congo	28	3.39	Ghana	51	3.09	Senegal	52	2.07
Gabon	20	2.42	Cameroon	51	3.09	Libya	51	2.03
Mauritius	19	2.30	Kenya	44	2.67	Kenya	46	1.83

2009			2015			2019		
AMERICAS	47 264	%	AMERICAS	48 764	%	AMERICAS	71 649	%
United States	37 793	80.0	United States	37 100	76.08	United States	53 407	74.54
Canada	7 854	16.6	Canada	7 948	16.30	Canada	10 989	15.34
Brazil	510	1.1	Brazil	1 512	3.10	Brazil	2 249	3.14
Mexico	242	0.5	Mexico	582	1.19	Mexico	1 063	1.48
Argentina	158	0.3	Argentina	424	0.87	Argentina	898	1.25
Cuba	144	0.3	Chile	174	0.36	Colombia	787	1.10
Chile	105	0.2	Cuba	133	0.27	Chile	361	0.50
Peru	83	0.2	Colombia	121	0.25	Cuba	254	0.35
Jamaica	80	0.2	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	100	0.21	Costa Rica	239	0.33
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	43	0.1	Grenada	85	0.17	Peru	216	0.30
OCEANIA	19 866	%	OCEANIA	22 823	%	OCEANIA	27 092	%
Australia	17 332	87.2	Australia	21 506	94.23	Australia	25 265	93.26
New Zealand	1 429	3.0	New Zealand	1 281	5.61	New Zealand	1 817	6.71
Disputed States and United Nations protectorates	227		Disputed States and United Nations protectorates	2 849		Disputed States and United Nations protectorates	2 877	
Entered with passports issued by international organizations	7 012		Entered with passports issued by international organizations	1 227		Entered with passports issued by international organizations	1 104	

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Note: Continent totals include numbers for countries outside of the top ten.

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