

# ASYLUM AND MIGRATION OVERVIEW 2025 IN AUSTRIA

## Contribution to the Asylum and Migration Overview of the European Commission

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Publisher: National Contact Point Austria in the  
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This publication was issued without formal editing by IOM.

This publication was issued without IOM Publications Unit (PUB) approval for adherence to IOM's brand and style standards.

This publication was issued without IOM Research Unit (RES) endorsement.

This publication was issued without official translation by IOM Translations Unit (TRS). It is an unofficial translation of the original version in German, entitled *Österreich – Asyl- und Migrationsüberblick 2025 in Österreich: Beitrag zum Jahresbericht der Europäischen Kommission*.

Translation: Cruz Communications GmbH

Required citation: EMN Austria, 2026. *Asylum and Migration Overview 2025 in Austria: Contribution to the Asylum and Migration Overview of the European Commission*. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Vienna.

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## **Explanatory Note**

This report has been produced within the framework of the annual reporting of the National Contact Points (NCPs) in the European Migration Network (EMN). The report outlines the most significant legislative and political developments in the field of migration and asylum in Austria in 2025.

The report provides input to the EMN's Asylum and Migration Overview 2025. The format of this report is based on a common template designed by the EMN to collect comparable information on a set of specific topics.

This report draws upon official sources such as press releases, responses to parliamentary inquiries, legal texts and written inputs from relevant ministries and authorities. It was produced by the NCP Austria in the EMN in cooperation with the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy, and Tourism, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection.

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# 1 MAJOR OVERARCHING AND CROSS-CUTTING CHANGES TO NATIONAL MIGRATION AND ASYLUM SYSTEMS

*Note: Major overarching and crosscutting developments are likely to result from a change of government or an overarching policy change that affects the overall approach to policymaking which in turn accounts for changes reported in the specific policy areas. This could include for example a new Programme for Government, institutional restructuring or a new migration law covering both asylum and migration etc. All other overarching and cross-cutting developments should be reported in the thematic chapters where they apply, with potential cross-referencing where there is overlap (e.g. resource management across more than one area of processing; customer service strategies; developments to improve preparedness).*

Q1. Were there any overarching and/or crosscutting legal or policy developments in the national migration and asylum system in 2025?

**Development:** On 3 March 2025, the new Austrian Federal Government, a coalition of the Austrian People's Party, the Social Democratic Party of Austria and NEOS – The New Austria and Liberal Forum, was sworn in (Office of the Federal President, 2025). The Government programme "Jetzt das Richtige tun. Für Österreich." (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025) sets out the following objectives in the areas of migration, asylum and integration, some of which were already implemented in 2025 (see the thematic chapters for details):

- **Regular migration**

- Through amendments to immigration law, labour migration is to be strategically developed and aligned with labour market needs in order to promote the immigration of skilled workers in shortage occupations to Austria and to enable additional seasonal labour demand to be met (see Q5b, Q5d).<sup>1</sup>

- **Asylum**

- Among other things, the implementation and further development of the Common European Asylum System is planned, with the aim of reducing applications for international protection in Austria to zero. In addition, in the event of an increase in applications for international protection, the possibility of invoking the European Union emergency clause (Art. 72 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – TFEU)<sup>2</sup> is reserved (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:74).

- **Integration**

- Among other things, the introduction of a mandatory integration programme from day one is planned (see Q46).
- In order to improve integration into the labour market, the recognition of previously acquired skills and the processing of nostrifications are to be simplified, accelerated and made more cost-effective (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:99).

<sup>1</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. OJ. C 202.

- **Statelessness**

- The Government programme provides for improving the protection of stateless persons (see Q60; Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:100).

- **Irregular migration**

- In order to prevent irregular migration to Europe, the Government programme provides, inter alia, for the conclusion and implementation of comprehensive cooperation agreements with third countries (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:75).

- **Return**

- In order to make voluntary return and removals more efficient, further bilateral readmission agreements are to be concluded (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:129). In addition, removals to countries of origin are to be carried out on the basis of third-country agreements if the person concerned does not voluntarily comply with their obligation to leave the country. Incentives are also to be created for the third countries concerned; for example, funding for third-country cooperation, visa policy, development assistance and trade are to be used as leverage (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:78).

- **Migration and development**

- In order to address the root causes of displacement and provide assistance locally, Austria intends to strengthen its support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in crisis regions. Local prospects are to be promoted through migration-related measures in development cooperation so that people are not compelled to leave their homes (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:74f,131).

**Objective:** The objective was to form a new Federal Government after the National Council elections in September 2024 with a sufficient majority in the National Council.

**Driver:** The new coalition was formed as a result of the National Council elections held on 29 September 2024. For details on the election results and the issue of "immigration" as an election motif, see Streit, 2025:4.

**Development:** Due to the high level of national debt, the Federal Government initiated the reorganization of public finances in 2025 through the 2025/2026 budgets and the federal financial framework until 2029 (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2025a:3). In 2025, EUR 6.4 billion and in 2026, EUR 8.7 billion are to contribute to budget consolidation (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2025c). The budget was adopted on 30 June 2025.<sup>3</sup> The cost-cutting measures also affect the budgets of the individual ministries and, consequently, the policy areas listed below:

- **Development cooperation:** In the area of development cooperation and foreign disaster relief, a scaling back of the funding that had increased in previous years was provided for. Financial resources have been reduced by EUR 10 million for 2025 and by EUR 40 million for 2026, with savings made in particular in operational funding for development

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<sup>3</sup> Federal Finance Act 2025, FLG. I No. 22/2025; Federal Finance Act 2026, FLG. I No. 23/2025.

cooperation and in allocations to the Austrian Disaster Relief Fund (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2025a:31; Parliament Austria, 2025p). Nevertheless, the budget is still above the 2019 level (Parliament Austria, 2025p).

- Immigration: In the area of migration and asylum, the decline in applications for international protection (Parliament Austria - Parliamentary Administration, 2026b) is expected to enable cost savings including through the optimization of basic care accommodation capacity and the needs-based closure of federal reception centres (Parliament Austria - Parliamentary Administration, 2025:8). In addition, budgetary developments in the area of migration and asylum largely depend on the number of applications for international protection and, in particular, on the number of asylum seekers receiving basic care.<sup>4</sup> In this context, an asylum reform is intended to address these issues, notably through the suspension of family reunification, strengthened return measures with European Union support, implementation of the Pact on Asylum and Migration by June 2026 and the promotion of self-sufficiency among displaced persons from Ukraine. According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, these measures are expected to lead to a comparatively low number of asylum seekers in the future, so that the decline in persons receiving basic care will enable total savings of EUR 650 million by 2029 (Parliament Austria - Parliamentary Administration, 2025:7; Parliament Austria, 2025r).
- Integration: In the area of integration, budget adjustments were envisaged, inter alia, in the areas of language support programmes, national integration funding, infrastructure expenditure for the Austrian Integration Fund and funding for the protection of religious minorities (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2025a:123).

**Objective:** According to the Government programme, the objective of the budget consolidation measures is to prevent an excessive deficit procedure under European Union rules (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:17). In addition, the Federal Minister of Finance stated that he intended to restore order to public finances, avoid high interest payments and dependence on capital markets and create fiscal space for forward-looking investment (Parliament Austria - Parliamentary Administration, 2026a:179).

**Driver:** According to an analysis by the Austrian Court of Audit, public debt and the need for budget consolidation were primarily attributable to the fact that the Austrian economy recorded negative growth for the second consecutive year in 2024 and had experienced a challenging economic environment for the fifth consecutive year. In addition, financing needs increased due to measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation and to support the economy, higher interest expenditure on public debt since 2023, and significantly higher expenditure on pensions and salaries (Austrian Court of Audit, 2025).

Q2. Were there any overarching strategic legal or policy developments regarding digitalisation, and/or the use of new technologies such as

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<sup>4</sup> Payments in this regard account for more than two-thirds of total payments (2025: EUR 494 million) under subdivision 18-Alien Affairs (Parliament Austria - Parliamentary Administration, 2025:7).

Artificial Intelligence, in the national migration and asylum system in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 2 LEGAL MIGRATION

### 2.1 Overarching and cross-cutting developments

*Note: cross-cutting developments in relation to legal migration are developments that impact on more than one policy area in the field of legal migration as outlined in Questions 5, 8, 9 and 11 (see also the explanation in Q1 for general context)*

Q3. Were there any overarching and/or crosscutting legal or policy developments in relation to legal migration in 2025?

**Development:** The Settlement Regulation 2025 was promulgated on 18 December 2025.<sup>5</sup> The Regulation determines, for 2025, the number of residence titles subject to quotas in Austria (5,616) and their distribution by permit type and federal province. From the beginning of 2025 until the entry into force of the Settlement Regulation 2025, the “one-twelfth rule” (Art. 13 para. 7 of the Settlement and Residence Act) applied.<sup>6</sup> Under this rule, the Settlement Regulation 2024 continued to apply, with the proviso that no more than one twelfth of the total number of residence titles could be issued in any month. This arrangement made it possible to issue quota-based residence titles even in the absence of a Settlement Regulation for 2025<sup>7</sup> (“provisional quota management”). As a result, a large proportion of the quota places provided for under the Settlement Regulation 2025 had already been allocated by the time the Regulation entered into force, despite its very late promulgation in the year (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025f). According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the reduction of 230 residence titles compared with the Settlement Regulation 2024<sup>8</sup> is attributable to a lower overall demand for quota-based residence permits for the purpose of family reunification of family members of third-country nationals<sup>9</sup> in Lower Austria and Styria, as well as for quota-based settlement permits for third-country nationals and their family members who are permitted to settle permanently in Austria without engaging in gainful employment, particularly in Styria (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025f).

**Objective:** The objective of the Settlement Regulation 2025 was to ensure the orderly development of the labour market and to distribute residence titles among the federal provinces in accordance with capacity and needs (Art. 13 para. 2 of the Settlement and Residence Act). According to the submission to the Council of Ministers, the Regulation was also adopted in order to ensure the possible application of the “one-twelfth rule” in 2026 (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025f).

**Driver:** The Settlement Regulation is based on Art. 13 of the Settlement and Residence Act, under which the Federal Government determines by

<sup>5</sup> Settlement Regulation 2025, FLG. II No. 309/2025.

<sup>6</sup> Settlement and Residence Act, FLG. I No. 100/2005 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 87/2025.

<sup>7</sup> According to Art. 12 para. 1 of the Settlement and Residence Act, the initial granting of a residence permit and, where applicable, the change of purpose of a valid residence permit requires, among other things, a free quota place.

<sup>8</sup> Settlement Regulation 2024, FLG. II No. 170/2024.

<sup>9</sup> For details, see in particular Ammann and Stiller, 2025:10.

regulation, for each calendar year, the number of residence titles subject to quotas.

Q4. Were there any legal or policy developments on digitalisation and/or the use of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence in relation to legal migration in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 2.2 Work-related migration

Q5. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to migrant workers (both employees and self-employed), including developments to satisfy labour market shortages and skills needs or other changes to admission rules including to combat misuse, regarding the following categories of workers in 2025?

*Note: Please note that question 75 deals with monitoring of and specific sanctions against misuse of legal migration pathways (work, study, family reunification). For question 5, please only report any changes to admission rules implemented where misuse was a driver.*

a. Crosscutting developments affecting all migrant workers

**Development:** An amendment to the Settlement and Residence Act was promulgated on 3 November 2025, introducing the new “cross-border commuter” residence title (Art. 68 of the Settlement and Residence Act).<sup>10</sup> Under this amendment, third-country nationals residing in a neighbouring country of the Republic of Austria who hold a permanent residence title there with unrestricted access to the labour market have, since 1 December 2025, been entitled to enter Austria regularly and reside temporarily for the duration of their working hours in order to engage in dependent employment in a company located in a border district,<sup>11</sup> provided that the other requirements<sup>12</sup> are met. The Act Governing the Employment of

<sup>10</sup> Amendment to the Settlement and Residence Act and the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, FLG. I No. 70/2025.

<sup>11</sup> According to Art. 2 para. 7 of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, these are the political districts that directly border the neighbouring country in which the third-country national resides, as well as the free cities of Eisenstadt and Rust. Innsbruck, Salzburg, Klagenfurt and Villach are also included because they are statutory cities that are surrounded by a border district or directly border a foreign country (Austrian Business Agency GmbH, 2025); Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026.

<sup>12</sup> These include, among other things, the general requirements for the granting of a residence permit, such as that the residence of the person concerned does not conflict with public interests or that they have comprehensive health insurance cover and that this insurance is also liable to pay benefits in Austria (Art. 68 para. 1 in conjunction with Art. 11 of the Settlement and Residence Act). A written notification from the regional office of the Public Employment Service is also required, confirming that the requirements for admission as a ‘cross-border commuter’ are met (Art. 20d para. 1 subpara. 7 in conjunction with Art. 12e of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals).

Foreign Nationals<sup>13</sup> was amended accordingly (Parliament Austria, n.d.d:1).

**Objective:** The objective of the legislative amendment is to close a gap in the admission of foreign nationals to the Austrian labour market and to enable cross-border commuters without residence in Austria to take up employment. According to the explanatory notes to the legislation, this is intended to contribute to addressing the shortage of skilled labour and thereby strengthen the Austrian economy (Parliament Austria, n.d.d:1).

**Driver:** As the shortage occupation list (see Q5b) shows, the shortage of skilled labour in Austria continued in 2025. In order to allow companies with a registered office in border districts to employ skilled third-country nationals residing in a neighbouring country of Austria, it was necessary, according to the explanatory memorandum to the amendment, to close the previously existing legal gap (Parliament Austria, n.d.d:1).<sup>14</sup>

b. Highly qualified workers and intra-corporate transferees

**Development:** The Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025<sup>15</sup> entered into force on 1 January 2025. This includes a list of occupations designated as shortage occupations.<sup>16,17</sup> In 2025, foreign nationals who met the relevant criteria (Art. 12a of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals) were eligible for admission to employment in these occupations throughout the federal territory or in specific federal provinces. For 2025, 81 occupations were designated as shortage occupations nationwide and 66 as province-specific shortage occupations (Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025a), with the number of shortage occupations in the federal provinces ranging from one (Burgenland) to 41 (Upper Austria). The shortage occupations included, for example, electricians, restaurant cooks and both qualified and non-qualified

<sup>13</sup> Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, FLG. No. 218/1975 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 87/2025.

<sup>14</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026.

<sup>15</sup> Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025, FLG. II No. 421/2024.

<sup>16</sup> According to Art. 13 para. 1 of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, shortage occupations are those occupations for which there are no more than 1.5 job seekers registered per vacancy. Occupations with a job vacancy rate of up to 1.8 may be considered if other objectively verifiable shortage indicators are identified, in particular an increased training activity on the part of companies, or if the relevant sector of employment is experiencing above-average wage growth. In the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025, occupations with a job vacancy rate of up to 1.5 have been included (Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026).

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that the list of shortage occupations is not only aimed at highly qualified workers, but also includes occupations requiring medium-level qualifications and apprenticeships. In any case, proof of completed vocational education and training comparable to several years of apprenticeship training in Austria must be provided. In some shortage occupations, higher education or a degree may be required (Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026).

healthcare and nursing staff. In addition, the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025 also covers “green jobs”, such as tram drivers and bus drivers (Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025a).<sup>18</sup> Nationwide, 29 fewer occupations were listed than in the previous year.<sup>19</sup>

**Objective:** According to the former Federal Minister for Labour and Economy, the objective was to create rapid access to the labour market for highly qualified international skilled workers in occupations experiencing high demand (Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025a).

**Driver:** The Regulation is based on Art. 13 of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, under which the Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection may designate shortage occupations for the following calendar year by regulation where a long-term labour shortage cannot be met by the domestic labour force. This possibility had already been used in previous years; however, both the number of shortage occupations and the specific occupations listed varied.

**Development:** In 2025, the Austrian Business Agency was restructured, including by shifting its focus to countries identified as priority countries within a comprehensive skilled worker recruitment strategy. In addition, digital solutions were to be further developed in order to lay the foundation for a fully digital recruitment process (Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025b). Further digitization of the entire application and processing procedure for the Red-White-Red Card, with a view to simplifying and increasing transparency, was reiterated in the submission to the Council of Ministers on 10 December 2025 (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025:2).

**Objective:** The restructuring aimed to enable the implementation of the Austrian Federal Government’s International Skilled Workers Initiative. For this initiative, the Austrian Business Agency, which is part of the Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, served as an essential cooperation partner (Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, n.d.). Through the digitization of the recruitment process, barriers to the recruitment of international talent are to be further reduced (Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025b).

**Driver:** As the shortage occupation list shows, the shortage of skilled labour in Austria continued in 2025, not least due to demographic

<sup>18</sup> In doing so, use was made of the option to consider occupations in the field of passenger and freight transport by rail, regardless of the job vacancy rate, which are necessary for the provision and expansion of public transport services in support of the mobility transition (Art. 13 para. 1b of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals; Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026).

<sup>19</sup> Regulation for Skilled Workers 2024, FLG. II No. 439/2023.

change in Austria. In line with the Government programme,<sup>20</sup> the Federal Minister for Economy, Energy and Tourism stated that it was crucial for Austria's economic future to remain at the forefront of global competition for talent and investment and that the measures described were intended to achieve this objective. The Austrian Business Agency plays a key role in this regard, as it actively recruits international skilled workers (Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025b).

**Development:** The Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026<sup>21</sup> was promulgated on 23 December 2025. For 2026, 64 occupations were designated as shortage occupations nationwide.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026 also includes province-specific shortage occupations, with the number of shortage occupations in the federal provinces ranging from one (Burgenland) to 41 (Upper Austria). The shortage occupations include, for example, medical doctors, qualified nurses and roofers. By contrast, and unlike under the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025 (see above), occupations such as midwives, train drivers and tram drivers are no longer included in the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026.

**Objective:** The objective of the Federal Government is the strategic further development of labour migration (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:104,125). The Regulation for Skilled Workers aims to address the shortage of skilled workers in the coming calendar year by admitting skilled workers from third countries. Qualified third-country nationals who meet personal and points-based criteria may be granted access to qualified employment in designated shortage occupations (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2025b:2). In addition, the Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and the Federal Minister for Economy, Energy and Tourism stated that measures would be taken in 2026 to evaluate and further develop the indicators used for the Red-White-Red Card. In particular, the indicators for the shortage occupation list are to be evaluated and refined in order to reflect skilled labour needs as the basis for the Regulation for Skilled Workers and to enable flexible responses to labour market developments (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025:1).

**Driver:** The Regulation is based on Art. 13 of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, under which the Federal Minister

<sup>20</sup> For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:125.

<sup>21</sup> Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026, FLG. II No. 316/2025.

<sup>22</sup> According to Art. 13 para. 1 of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, shortage occupations are those occupations for which there are no more than 1.5 job seekers registered per vacancy. Occupations with a job vacancy rate of up to 1.8 may be considered if other objectively verifiable shortage indicators are identified, in particular an increased training activity on the part of companies, or if the relevant sector of employment is experiencing above-average wage growth. In the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026, occupations with a job vacancy rate of up to 1.5 have been included (Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026).

for Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection may designate shortage occupations for the following calendar year by regulation where a long-term labour shortage cannot be met by the domestic labour force. This possibility had already been used in previous years; however, both the number of shortage occupations and the specific occupations listed varied.

c. Low and medium skilled workers (other than seasonal workers)

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

d. Seasonal workers

**Development:** The Regulation on the Temporary Employment of Foreign Nationals in Tourism and Agriculture and Forestry for 2026 (Seasonal Quota Regulation 2026) was promulgated on 17 October 2025.<sup>23</sup> As provided for in the Government programme,<sup>24</sup> the increase in annual seasonal quotas in the tourism sector by 515 places to 5,500 was already presented to the Council of Ministers on 30 April 2025. In addition, a separate quota of 2,500 places was established in the tourism sector for seasonal workers from selected Southeast European countries, namely the European Union-candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, as well as Kosovo<sup>25</sup> (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection et al., 2025; Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025c). In the agriculture and forestry sector, quotas were largely maintained at the previous level. However, separate quotas for harvest workers were discontinued, and these 119 places were incorporated into the regular agricultural quotas, resulting in a total of 3,496 quota places.<sup>26</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of the Regulation is, in accordance with Art. 5 para. 1 of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals (see below), to meet the additional demand for seasonal workers in the calendar year. In addition, promulgating the Regulation in autumn 2025 was intended to provide greater planning certainty for companies and seasonal workers ahead of the winter season (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection et al., 2025).

**Driver:** Under Art. 5 para. 1 subpara. 1 of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, the Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection may, by regulation, establish numerical quotas for the temporary admission of foreign seasonal workers in a specific economic sector, occupational group or region. A precondition is a temporary

<sup>23</sup> Seasonal Quota Regulation 2026, FLG. II No. 218/2025.

<sup>24</sup> For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:50.

<sup>25</sup> The reference to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

<sup>26</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026.

additional demand for labour that cannot be met either by the labour force available in Austria, by nationals of the European Economic Area or Switzerland, or by returning seasonal workers. When determining the quotas, the general situation and development of the labour market, in particular in the relevant sub-labour market, must be taken into account (Art. 5 para. 1 of the Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals), for example the number of unfilled vacancies or the number of jobseekers registered in Austria.

e. Self-employed and start-ups-related  
No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

f. Other remunerated workers  
No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q6. Were there any legal or policy developments aimed at tackling labour exploitation of migrant workers and/or safeguarding equal treatment of migrant workers with nationals of your Member/Observer Country in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note: Developments regarding trafficking in human beings, including trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, are covered in section 10. Developments on tackling illegal employment are covered in section 9.*

Q7. Were there any developments regarding bilateral labour migration agreements<sup>27</sup> (including Skills Mobility Partnerships/Talent Partnerships<sup>28</sup>) between your Member/Observer Country and third countries in 2025? Please note circular migration schemes are to be reported under Q99 in section 12.

**Development:** In September 2025, preparations began for the launch of the EAGLE project, a mobility project with Egypt in the field of vocational training. The formal launch is planned for 2026.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), bilateral labour migration agreements are "formal mechanisms concluded between States, which agreements are essentially legally binding commitments concerned with inter-state cooperation on labour migration. The term is also used to describe less formal arrangements regulating the movement of workers between countries entered into by States as well as a range of other actors, including individual ministries, employer organizations, etc." (Source: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml25\\_1.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml25_1.pdf)), last accessed on 20 November 2024.

<sup>28</sup> The EMN Glossary (Version 10.0) defines talent partnership as a "Comprehensive EU policy framework as well as funding support for cooperation with third countries to better match labour and skills needs in the EU aimed at enhancing legal migration and mobility with key partners."

<sup>29</sup> Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026.

**Objective:** The objective of the mobility project is to provide continuing training in the field of metalworking in Egypt, together with language and cultural orientation modules (Streit, 2025:12f).<sup>30</sup>

**Driver:** The background to the project is the ongoing shortage of skilled workers in certain sectors in Austria.<sup>31</sup>

**Development:** At the end of November 2025, the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding between Austria and Brazil on the recruitment of skilled workers was signed.<sup>32</sup>

**Objective:** The objective is to promote the recruitment of qualified skilled workers in shortage occupations, in line with the current shortage occupation list, through targeted cooperation and information exchange agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding, thereby contributing to addressing the shortage of skilled workers.<sup>33</sup>

**Driver:** The background is the continuing shortage of skilled workers in certain sectors in Austria, even though the number of shortage occupations has declined in recent years. Within the framework of the International Skilled Workers Initiative to address Austria's labour shortages, Brazil is one of five focus countries.<sup>34</sup>

*Note to Observer Countries for question 7: please also report from the perspective of a sending country, with regard to agreements between your country and EU Member States, if applicable.*

## 2.3 Students and researchers

Q8. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to students, including changes to admission rules to combat misuse, in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note: Please note that question 75 deals with monitoring of and specific sanctions against misuse of legal migration pathways (work, study, family reunification). For question 8, please only report any changes to admission rules implemented where misuse was a driver.*

Q9. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to researchers in 2025?

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<sup>30</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026.

<sup>31</sup> Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026.

<sup>32</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

**Development:** On 1 July 2025, an amendment to University Act 2002 was promulgated,<sup>35</sup> introducing temporary facilitations for the recruitment of researchers from the United States of America. For the period from 1 July 2025 to 30 September 2026, exceptions to the obligation to publicly advertise positions apply when concluding employment contracts with members of the scientific and artistic staff whose primary place of research and teaching activity during the 24 months prior to concluding the employment contract was in the United States of America (Parliament Austria, 2025o, 2025h:3). According to media reports, by early October 2025, a total of 26 researchers from the United States of America had been recruited by Austrian universities (ORF.at, 2025c).

**Objective:** The objective of the amendment is to provide Austrian universities with a framework to recruit researchers from the United States and to expand "opportunity hiring" (Parliament Austria, 2025q, 2025h:3).

**Driver:** In spring 2025, research ministers from 13 European Union Member States called, in a letter to the European Commission, for a coordinated approach to recruiting researchers from the United States. Austria supported this initiative and subsequently adopted the amendment described above (Parliament Austria, 2025h:3).

Q10. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to trainees, au pairs and volunteers in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 2.4 Family reunification

Q11. Were there any legal or policy developments in 2025 regarding family reunification, including changes to eligibility criteria/rules to combat misuse but excluding family reunification of beneficiaries of international protection, and UAMs (*as these are covered in sections 3 (international protection) and 5 (UAMs and other vulnerable groups) of the template*)?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note: Please note that question 75 deals with monitoring of and specific sanctions against misuse of legal migration pathways (work, study, family reunification). For question 11, please only report any changes to admission rules implemented where misuse was a driver.*

## 2.5 Information provision

Q12. Were there any legal or policy developments to improve the provision of information on the pathways to and conditions of legal migration for third-country nationals, in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

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<sup>35</sup> Amendment to the University Act 2002 and the Education Documentation Act 2020, FLG. I No. 28/2025.

*Note: examples of this are legal/policy decisions to improve provision of information through information campaigns aimed at legal migration (e.g. campaigns targeting students, highly-skilled workers, family reunification), websites, specific centres etc.*

*The aim here is not to obtain a detailed list of campaigns or changes to existing websites.*

## **2.6 Other developments**

Q13. Were there any other legal or policy developments regarding legal migration (e.g. other legal migration pathways not covered by the questions above such as investors, etc.) in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 3. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

*Note: In the global context, the actions by the international community on the basis of international law, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of a specific category of persons outside their countries of origin, who lack the national protection of their own countries. In the EU context, protection encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status (EMN Glossary v10.0). The definition in the EU context is the basis for reporting.*

*Note: Integration of beneficiaries of international protection is covered in section 6.*

#### 3.1 Overarching and cross-cutting developments

Q14. Were there any overarching and/or crosscutting legal or policy developments in relation to international protection in 2025?

**Development:** In 2025, the current products of the State Documentation Unit (Country of Origin Information – COI) were largely made publicly available and have since been accessible online (data.gv.at, n.d.).<sup>36</sup>

**Objective:** The objective was to comply with the proactive information obligation pursuant to Art. 4 of the Freedom of Information Act.<sup>37,38</sup>

**Driver:** The background was the Freedom of Information Act, which entered into force on 1 September 2025 and provides, inter alia, that information of general interest must be published and made available online as soon as possible in a manner accessible to everyone, insofar and for as long as it is not subject to secrecy and as long as a general interest in such information can be assumed.<sup>39</sup>

Q15. Were there any legal or policy developments on digitalisation and/or the use of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence in relation to international protection in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

#### 3.2 International protection procedure

Q16. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to access to the procedure for international protection in 2025?

*Note: this concerns making, registering and lodging an application. As per the Asylum Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU: Making an application: during this phase the person expresses the intention to apply for international protection; registering an application: the applicant's intention to seek protection is registered, which may be done by an authority not competent for the asylum procedure itself, such as the*

<sup>36</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

<sup>37</sup> Freedom of Information Act, FLG. I No. 5/2024 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 52/2025.

<sup>38</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

*border police; lodging an application: the asylum application is formally lodged at the competent authority for the asylum procedure.*

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q17. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding admissibility of applications<sup>40</sup> in 2025?

**Development:** On 27 February 2025, the Constitutional Court held that the deportation of an Afghan national<sup>41</sup> to Greece pursuant to Art. 4a of the Asylum Act 2005 was permissible.<sup>42,43</sup> In the Court's view, the applicant's allegation that his constitutionally guaranteed rights had been violated, namely the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment (torture; Art. 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights – ECHR;<sup>44</sup> Art. 4 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union – CFR)<sup>45</sup> and the right to respect for private and family life (Art. 8 ECHR; Art. 7 CFR), was unfounded. The Constitutional Court further stated, inter alia, that the Federal Administrative Court had reasonably concluded that, in the event of his transfer to Greece, the man would not face a real risk of a violation of his rights protected under Art. 3 ECHR. The Federal Administrative Court based its decision on the country information on Greece issued by the State Documentation Unit on 13 June 2024 (Constitutional Court, 2025a). Although the Constitutional Court noted that, according to the country information on Greece, the reception conditions for persons seeking protection had improved and that the current situation in Greece no longer constituted an obstacle to removals (Constitutional Court, 2025a, 2025e) it nevertheless emphasized that its decision did not relieve the enforcement authority of its obligation to comply with Art. 3 ECHR when carrying out the

<sup>40</sup> An application for international protection which an EU Member State authority may decide not to examine in the following cases:

- (a) another EU Member State has granted international protection;
- (b) a country which is not an EU Member State is considered as a first country of asylum for the applicant;
- (c) a country which is not an EU Member State is considered as a safe third country for the applicant;
- (d) the application is a subsequent application, where no new elements or findings relating to the examination of whether the applicant qualifies as a beneficiary of international protection by virtue of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive) have arisen or have been presented by the applicant; or
- (e) a dependant of the applicant lodges an application after they have, in accordance with Art. 7(2), consented to have their case be part of an application lodged on their behalf, and there are no facts relating to the dependant's situation which justify a separate application. (Source: Art. 33 of Directive 2013/32/EU (Recast Asylum Procedures Directive)).

<sup>41</sup> The man who applied for international protection in Austria on 12 June 2024, had already been granted recognized refugee status and a residence permit in Greece in April 2024. The Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum therefore rejected the application per administrative decision and ordered his removal from the country (Constitutional Court, 2025a, 2025e).

<sup>42</sup> Asylum Act 2005, FLG. I No. 100/2005 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 63/2025.

<sup>43</sup> Art. 4a of the Asylum Act 2005 stipulates that an application for international protection must be rejected as inadmissible if the applicant has been granted asylum or subsidiary protection status in another EEA country or Switzerland and has found protection from persecution there. The administrative rejection decision must also specify the State to which the applicant must return.

<sup>44</sup> European Convention on Human Rights, FLG. No. 210/1958 in the version of the promulgation FLG. III No. 116/2025.

<sup>45</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. OJ. C 202.

removal, in particular with regard to the security and reception situation prevailing at the time of removal (Constitutional Court, 2025a).

**Objective:** The objective was to review the lawfulness of the proceedings within the scope of the complainant’s statutory remedies and to remedy any procedural errors.

**Driver:** The trigger was the complaints lodged by the Afghan national, initially against the decision of the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and subsequently against the judgement of the Federal Administrative Court.

**Development:** In connection with the proposal to revise the concept of a safe third country in the Asylum Procedure Regulation,<sup>46</sup> the Federal Chancellor stated on 20 March 2025 that the connection criterion<sup>47</sup> should be removed (Federal Chancellery, 2025f).<sup>48</sup> On 24 June 2025, the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family also called for the complete removal of the connection criterion (Federal Chancellery, 2025m). On 8 December 2025, the Council of Ministers for Home Affairs reached an agreement that the Asylum Procedures Regulation will no longer require, in certain scenarios, a direct connection between rejected applicants for international protection and the relevant safe third country (European Council - Council of the European Union, 2025; ORF.at, 2025d).<sup>49</sup>

**Objective:** The objective was to present the position of Austrian policymakers in the context of the revision of the Asylum Procedure Regulation and to remove the currently required individual connection between applicants for international protection and third countries (European Commission, 2025d).

**Driver:** According to the Federal Chancellor, the background to Austria’s demand is the ongoing discussion on the amendment of the Asylum Procedure Regulation (Federal Chancellery, 2025f). In addition, the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family stated that “several important steps have already been taken” in the areas of migration and security and that it is necessary to maintain this pace (Federal Chancellery, 2025m).

*Note: An admissibility examination determines whether the application is inadmissible to the international protection procedure. The reasons for determining an application as inadmissible are covered in Article 33 of the Procedures Directive.*

<sup>46</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU. OJ. L series.

<sup>47</sup> The connection criterion refers to the requirement for a connection between the applicant and the third country (European Commission, 2025c). The Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family explained: “It is not sufficient to have lived in a country for a short period of time or to have travelled through a safe country. People can only be removed to places where safe conditions exist” (Federal Chancellery, 2025m).

<sup>48</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/A/5/a (EU Migration Affairs), 23 January 2026.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Q18. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding Dublin procedures in 2025?

**Development:** In 2025, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum resumed consultation procedures with Greece on the basis of the Dublin III Regulation,<sup>50</sup> with the exception of vulnerable persons.<sup>51</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of this ongoing development is to ensure the efficiency of the Dublin system and effective cooperation with all European Union Member States in the Dublin procedures.<sup>52</sup>

**Driver:** In recent years, the Greek authorities, with the support of the European Commission, the European Union Agency for Asylum, Member States as well as international organizations and non-governmental organizations, have sought to improve the functioning of the asylum system, also in light of the relevance of the Dublin procedure within the overall European Union asylum and migration management framework, and considerable progress has been achieved. For this reason, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum now takes the view that the legal situation differs fundamentally from the circumstances assessed by the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights in 2011.<sup>53</sup> A 2020 study by the European Parliament on the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation has documented these developments since 2011. On 7 April 2025, the European Commission published a Communication on the state of migration management on the Greek mainland. The European Commission concluded that the Greek asylum and reception system on the mainland does not display systemic deficiencies that would pose a risk of inhuman or degrading treatment. Consequently, Dublin transfers to Greece should take place in the same way as for the other Member States (European Commission, 2025a).<sup>54</sup> The resumption of removal orders to Greece by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum was subsequently confirmed in several cases by the Federal Administrative Court. In one case, an appeal was lodged with the Constitutional Court, which rejected the appeal.<sup>55,56</sup>

Q19. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding types of procedures to examine a claim in 2025?

a. Regular procedure

<sup>50</sup> Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast). OJ. L 180, pp. 31–59.

<sup>51</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> European Court of Human Rights, 21 January 2011, Case of M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece, 30696/09. Strasbourg.

<sup>54</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

<sup>55</sup> See Constitutional Court, 2025b.

<sup>56</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

b. Border procedure

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

c. Accelerated procedures (including application of the safe country of origin concept or safe country of origin lists)

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q20. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding first instance appeals in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q21. Were there any legal or policy developments in 2025 regarding operational aspects of the international protection procedure (including appeals) covering the following aspects:

a. Procedural safeguards (e.g. access to information and legal counselling/representation; provision of interpretation)

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

b. Timeframes and case management including backlog management, caseload management tools e.g. prioritisation procedures. omitting of the personal interview in specific circumstances

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

c. Other Aspects (e.g. country of origin information)

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### **3.3 Reception of applicants for international protection**

Q22. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to reception of applicants for international protection, including access to basic services, in 2025?

a. Accommodation

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

b. Other material reception conditions including allowances

**Development:** On 19 May 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior declared that the granting of basic care in kind or the earmarking of cash benefits paid out was being sought and was being implemented. Based on the experience gained from the 2024 pilot project on the benefits-in-kind card (see Streit, 2025:25), a Europe-wide procurement procedure was conducted for its nationwide deployment in Austria, and the best bidder was selected and subsequently commissioned (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025a:21f).

**Objective:** According to the Federal Minister of the Interior, the aim of implementing the benefits-in-kind card is to grant benefits in kind (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025a:21).

**Driver:** Expanding the model of a benefits-in-kind card was a Federal Government objective that was already included in the Government programme (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:79). Through the benefits-in-kind card with payment function, persons receiving basic care can cover their daily needs via a broad network of acceptance points; however, the payment function is excluded for certain categories of merchants and sectors, such as gambling or remittance transfers (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2024b).<sup>57</sup>

**Development:** In 2025, applicants for international protection in basic care were obliged to perform community service in two federal provinces. The Burgenland Provincial Care Act<sup>58</sup> had been amended in December 2024<sup>59</sup> and has been implemented since 1 July 2025 (ORF.at, 2025b). Under this Act, applicants for international protection in Burgenland lose their entitlement to basic care if they refuse two offers made by the province or municipalities to perform community service activities, for example in landscape maintenance and design, the maintenance of parks and sports facilities, or administrative support (Art. 5a para. 6 and Art. 6 of the Burgenland Provincial Care Act). In September 2025, an amendment to the Vorarlberg Social Benefits Act<sup>60</sup> and the Vorarlberg Social Benefits Regulation<sup>61</sup> was promulgated. Since 1 October 2025, applicants for international protection aged 18 and over in Vorarlberg receive full basic care only if they demonstrate willingness to participate in integration-promoting measures. These include, inter alia, the use of their own labour. In the absence of such willingness, the financial component of basic care may be reduced by up to one half following prior written warning (Art. 13a para. 1, 3 and 5 of the Vorarlberg Social Benefits Regulation).

**Objective:** The measures described aimed to make basic care conditional upon a willingness to contribute to society through the

<sup>57</sup> In the EU context, this refers to a financial transfer from migrants to a beneficiary in their country of origin (European Commission, 2025b).

<sup>58</sup> Burgenland Provincial Care Act, PLG. No. 42/2006 in the version of the provincial law PLG. No. 58/2025.

<sup>59</sup> Act of 12 December 2024, amending the Burgenland Provincial Care Act, PLG. No. 110/2025.

<sup>60</sup> Act Amending the Social Benefits Act, PLG. No. 45/2025.

<sup>61</sup> Provincial Government Regulation on an amendment to the Social Benefits Regulation, PLG. No. 50/2025.

performance of community service activities or to participate in integration-promoting measures (Burgenland Provincial Parliament, 2025; Vorarlberg Provincial Parliament, 2025a).

**Driver:** The rationale provided was that the performance of community service activities can be regarded as “a form of consideration and partial compensation” for the basic care granted by the Province of Burgenland (Burgenland Provincial Parliament, 2025). In the Vorarlberg provincial parliament, it was stated that integration is a reciprocal process based on participation and responsibility, and that the full entitlement to basic care should therefore be linked to the willingness to participate in integration-promoting measures (Vorarlberg Provincial Parliament, 2025b).

c. Access to the labour market.

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note: This question only covers the criteria for the legal right to work for asylum applicants, not support measures or the possibility to change status. Support measures should be reported under question 23 on early integration. Possibilities to change status should be reported under question 29 on other developments and/or in the legal migration chapter.*

d. Access to healthcare, including mental health

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

e. Access to education

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

f. Maintaining family unity

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

g. Measures in relation to child protection/safeguarding

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q23. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to early integration measures (e.g. labour market orientation, language training) for applicants for international protection in 2025?

*Note: Early integration is defined as measures and activities to facilitate and accelerate the integration of applicants for international protection (i.e. while in the asylum procedure), to achieve independence and reduce social exclusion following a positive decision to grant them international protection*

**Development:** In spring 2025, a mandatory integration programme from day one was introduced in the Council of Ministers. For details see Q46.

Q24. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to the assessment of and response to special reception needs in relation to vulnerabilities in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 3.4 Detention

Q25. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding (alternatives to) detention of applicants for international protection in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 3.5 Family reunification

Q26. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to maintaining family unity<sup>62</sup> (including granting family reunification) for beneficiaries of international protection in 2025?

**Development:** On 5 March 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior informed the European Commission that Austria would suspend family reunification (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025k).

**Objective:** According to the Federal Minister of the Interior, the objective is to prevent (further) overburdening of Austrian systems, for example in the areas of education, health and social services, and to avoid a resulting threat to social cohesion in Austria (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025k). In addition, the Federal Minister of the Interior aims to ensure the sustained continuation of the decrease in the number of persons arriving through family reunification that followed the legal amendments (see Streit, 2025:21) adopted in spring 2024 (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025j).

**Driver:** According to the Federal Minister of the Interior, the high number of persons who migrated through family reunification has placed considerable strain on various areas of society, including educational institutions and the integration system (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025j). For this reason, the Federal Government announced in its Government programme<sup>63</sup> that it intends to suspend family reunification.

**Development:** On 12 March 2025, the Council of Ministers decided to temporarily suspend family reunification and, building on the existing integration monitoring system, to develop an Integration Barometer as a basis for the future introduction of quotas for family reunification. The Integration Barometer is intended to reflect the impact and burden on individual systems and the related effects on the State budget, with a view to safeguarding social cohesion and public order in Austria (Federal

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<sup>62</sup> The EMN Glossary (Version 10.0) defines the right to family unity, in the *context of a refugee*, as a right provisioned in Art. 23 of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive) and in Art. 12 of Directive 2013/33/EU (Recast Reception Conditions Directive) obliging EU Member States to ensure that family unity can be maintained. (Source EMN Glossary v.10.0).

<sup>63</sup> For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:74,77.

Chancellery, 2025d, n.d.c; Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025:2,3).

**Objective:** The objective of the Council of Ministers' decision was to temporarily suspend family reunification and to initiate the development of the Integration Barometer.

**Driver:** This development is linked to the suspension and planned future quota system for family reunification announced in the Government programme.<sup>64</sup>

**Development:** On 24 May 2025, the amended Asylum Act 2005, which was supplemented inter alia by Art. 36a, entered into force<sup>65</sup> and is based – as also provided for in the Government programme<sup>66</sup> – on the European Union emergency clause pursuant to Art. 72 TFEU (Parliament Austria, 2025c).<sup>67</sup> The newly introduced Art. 36a of the Asylum Act 2005 provides that the six-month time limit for decisions and the obligation to decide (Art. 73 para. 1 of the General Administrative Procedure Act 1991)<sup>68</sup> on applications for family reunification are suspended for the duration of a corresponding regulation issued by the Federal Government.<sup>69,70</sup> However, a decision on an application for family reunification must still be taken within the general six-month time limit where this is urgently required to safeguard the right to respect for private and family life (Art. 8 ECHR). The relevant grounds must already be set out in detail in the application for entry.<sup>71</sup> Whether a decision within six months is urgently required is determined on the basis of an assessment of the circumstances of the individual case, in accordance with the established case law of the supreme courts and the European Court of Human Rights (Parliament Austria, 2025c:4),<sup>72</sup> with primary consideration generally given to the best interests of the child (Parliament

<sup>64</sup> For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:74.

<sup>65</sup> Amendment to the Asylum Act 2005, FLG. I No. 17/2025.

<sup>66</sup> For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:74.

<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, Title V TFEU ("Area of freedom, security and justice") does not affect "the exercise of the responsibilities incumbent upon Member States with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security," but the possibility of deviation for reasons of public order and public safety provided for in Art. 72 TFEU must be interpreted narrowly (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2022).

<sup>68</sup> General Administrative Procedures Act 1991, FLG. No. 51/1991 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 50/2025.

<sup>69</sup> Art. 36a of the Asylum Act 2005 refers to Art. 36 ("Federal Government Regulation") already contained in the Asylum Act 2005, which remained unchanged and authorizes the Federal Government, in agreement with the Main Committee of the National Council, to determine by regulation that the maintenance of public order and the protection of internal security are at risk.

<sup>70</sup> This regulation only applies to family reunification in accordance with Art. 35 of the Asylum Act 2005 and thus to family members of beneficiaries of international protection status. Family reunification under the Settlement and Residence Act remains unaffected. For details, see Ammann and Stiller, 2025.

<sup>71</sup> For family reunification under the Asylum Act 2005, see Ammann and Stiller, 2025:15.

<sup>72</sup> One criterion could be that "no (additional) disruption to the functioning of those State subsystems for which the regulation pursuant to Art. 36 para. 1 was issued is to be expected because the applicant – or their sponsor entitled to protection in Austria – already has sufficient knowledge of the German language, for example, and it can therefore be expected with sufficient probability that he or she will be able to integrate into Austrian living conditions without or with only minor recourse to integration measures, or will be able to participate in school life without or with only minor support measures" (Parliament Austria, 2025c:5).

Austria, 2025c:5). This statutory provision is limited in time until 30 September 2026 (Art. 73 para. 27 of the Asylum Act 2005).

**Objective:** The objective of the legislative amendment is to provide the Federal Government with the legal option to temporarily suspend, by regulation, the processing of applications for family reunification (Parliament Austria, 2025l). This is intended to protect Austrian systems, for example in the areas of education, health and social services, from being overburdened (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025k) and to prevent a threat to social cohesion (Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025). It is also intended to enable the integration of those persons who have arrived in Austria in recent years (Federal Chancellery, 2025d).

**Driver:** The background to this legislative amendment was the decision by the newly sworn-in Federal Government in the Council of Ministers on 12 March 2025 to “take all necessary steps at European Union and national level, including adapting national legal provisions in compliance with the case law of the CJEU, in order to temporarily suspend family reunification with immediate effect and thereby ensure public order”. In implementation of this decision, the governing parties submitted a motion to amend the Asylum Act 2005 to the National Council on 26 March 2025 (Parliament Austria, 2025c). According to the assessment of the Federal Minister of the Interior, and in particular the governing parties, migration through family reunification in recent years has exhausted Austria’s reception capacities, including within the education system, and has led in particular to overburdening of the education system in Vienna (Parliament Austria, 2025m, 2025n). In its Government programme, the Federal Government therefore announced its intention to suspend family reunification. The measure described constitutes a step towards implementing this objective and preventing system overburdening (Federal Chancellery, 2025d).

**Development:** In connection with the suspension of family reunification (see above), on 2 July 2025 a regulation of the Federal Government was promulgated,<sup>73</sup> determining that the maintenance of public order and the protection of internal security pursuant to Art. 36 para. 1 of the Asylum Act 2005 are endangered. For the duration of the regulation, Art. 36a of the Asylum Act 2005 (see above) applies. On 18 December 2025, the regulation was amended and its period of validity was extended to 12 months,<sup>74</sup> with the result that family reunification is suspended until 2 July 2026. With reference to the number of entries under family reunification in November 2023 (1,146 arrivals), November 2024 (241 entries) and November 2025 (one entry), the Federal Ministry of the Interior assessed the temporary suspension as effective.<sup>75</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of the regulation was to temporarily suspend, by regulation, the processing of applications for family reunification.

<sup>73</sup> Federal Government Regulation on Determining Threats to the Maintenance of Public Order and the Protection of Internal Security, FLG. II No. 127/2025.

<sup>74</sup> Amendment to the Federal Government Regulation on Determining Threats to the Maintenance of Public Order and the Protection of Internal Security, FLG. II No. 310/2025.

<sup>75</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

**Driver:** In its Government programme, the Federal Government announced its intention to suspend family reunification.<sup>76</sup> The measure described constitutes a step towards implementing this objective. The regulation was preceded by a decision of the Council of Ministers on 25 June 2025 and the transmission of the draft regulation to the Main Committee of the National Council in order to obtain its legally required approval (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b; Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025g:2). In the written statement of reasons required by law (Art. 36 para. 2 of the Asylum Act 2005), the Federal Government set out in detail the grounds on which it based its finding that the maintenance of public order and the protection of internal security are at risk (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025c, 2025b). The extension of the temporary suspension of family reunification in December 2025 was justified by the Federal Government on the grounds that Austria requires a further consolidation phase in order to protect systems, in particular in the areas of education, integration and social services, from being overburdened.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.6 Withdrawal of international protection

Q27. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to withdrawal (both revocation and cessation) of international protection status in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 3.7 Resettlement, humanitarian admission and other pathways to protection

Q28. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to resettlement<sup>78</sup> and humanitarian admission<sup>79</sup> programmes in 2025, including for unaccompanied minors?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note: please distinguish clearly between UNHCR resettlement programmes and other types of humanitarian admission programmes/pathways to protection in your answer.*

*Please report on pledges made in 2025; new national programmes introduced; new policy approaches to resettlement, developments regarding community*

<sup>76</sup> For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:74.

<sup>77</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

<sup>78</sup> In the EU context, admission following a referral from the from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of third-country nationals or stateless persons from a third country to which they have been displaced, to the territory of the EU Member States, and who are granted international protection and have access to durable solutions in accordance with Union and national law (Source: EMN Glossary v10.0).

<sup>79</sup> In the EU context, the admission following, where requested by an EU Member State, a referral from the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), or another relevant international body, of third-country nationals or stateless persons from a third country to which they have been forcibly displaced to the territory of EU Member States, and who are granted international protection or humanitarian protection under national law that provides for rights and obligations equivalent to those of Art. 20 to 34 of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive) for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (Source: EMN Glossary v10.0).

*sponsorship; developments in relation to pre-departure programmes, reception, supports for and legal status of persons accepted under such schemes, development of innovative pathways linked to education or work.*

### 3.8 Other developments

Q29. Were there any other legal and policy developments in the field of international protection in 2025 which were not covered above?

**Development:** On 25 August 2025, the Supreme Administrative Court ruled that the country of origin information on the Syrian Arab Republic does not automatically support the conclusion that every Syrian national who refuses military service is attributed an opposition stance by the Syrian regime and therefore faces political persecution (Supreme Administrative Court, 2025a).<sup>80</sup>

**Objective:** The objective was to review the lawfulness of the previous administrative and court proceedings and their decisions, and, where necessary, to set them aside.

**Driver:** The proceedings were triggered by an application for international protection lodged by a Syrian national. The applicant had left the Syrian Arab Republic due to the war and his imminent conscription into the Syrian army and applied for international protection in Austria in September 2022. The Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum granted the applicant subsidiary protection, but not refugee status. The applicant lodged an appeal against this decision with the Federal Administrative Court. By judgement of 14 March 2024, the Federal Administrative Court granted him refugee status, reasoning that refusal to perform military service was not only considered a criminal offense by the Syrian government, but also an expression of political dissent. By leaving the country, the applicant had evaded the obligation to perform military service, which would be perceived by the Syrian regime as disloyal and as an expression of an oppositional attitude. In the event of return, the applicant would face the risk of being conscripted against his will into the Syrian army and, due to his refusal to perform military service, would be punished with imprisonment associated with the use of torture. The Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum lodged a revision appeal against this decision with the Supreme Administrative Court. The Supreme Administrative Court, which was required to review the Federal Administrative Court's judgement on the basis of the factual and legal situation at the time and was not permitted to take into account subsequent changes in circumstances in the Syrian Arab Republic, concluded that the relevant country of origin reports present a differentiated picture of the Syrian regime's position towards draft evaders and that these reports do not support the conclusion that, with a sufficient degree of probability, every Syrian national who refuses military service is attributed an opposition stance. The Supreme Administrative Court therefore set aside the judgement of the Federal Administrative Court (Supreme Administrative Court, 2025a).

<sup>80</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

**Development:** On 9 September 2025, the Supreme Administrative Court ruled that any form of genital mutilation qualifies as persecution (Supreme Administrative Court, 2025b).

**Objective:** The objective was to review the lawfulness of the previous administrative and court proceedings and their decisions, and, where necessary, to set them aside.

**Driver:** The proceedings were triggered by an application for international protection lodged by a Somali national in July 2023. She stated that she had been subjected to genital mutilation in childhood. In the event of a return to Somalia, she feared being subjected to genital mutilation again. The Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum granted the asylum seeker subsidiary protection but not refugee status. The Federal Administrative Court confirmed this decision, assuming that the applicant would no longer face genital mutilation upon return to Somalia because the prevalence rate of such practices had declined nationwide and the trend was towards less invasive forms. The Supreme Administrative Court stated that even less invasive forms of genital mutilation constitute a serious interference with woman's fundamental human rights and therefore amount to persecution relevant for asylum purposes, as injury to the external female genital organs for non-medical reasons occurs without (effective) consent of, or against the will of, the person concerned. As the Federal Administrative Court had not sufficiently examined whether the applicant would face a risk of renewed genital mutilation upon return to Somalia, the Supreme Administrative Court set aside its decision (Supreme Administrative Court, 2025b, 2025c).

**Development:** Following an amendment to the Vienna Minimum Benefit Act<sup>81</sup> promulgated on 5 December 2025, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Vienna will no longer be entitled to minimum benefits as of 1 January 2026 (Art. 5 para. 3 of the Vienna Minimum Benefit Act),<sup>82</sup> and will instead receive support within the framework of basic care (City of Vienna, n.d.a:3). Tyrol, where a similar provision had existed, had already announced a corresponding amendment in September 2025 (Office of the Provincial Government of Tyrol, 2025). The amendment to the Tyrol Minimum Benefit Act<sup>83</sup> was promulgated on 29 December 2025,<sup>84</sup> with the result that beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Tyrol will likewise no longer be entitled to minimum benefits from 1 January 2026. In Tyrol, too, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection will in future receive benefits under the basic care system, and the Tyrol Basic Care Act<sup>85</sup> was amended accordingly (Tyrolean Provincial Parliament, n.d.:1).

<sup>81</sup> Vienna Minimum Benefit Act, Vienna Housing Assistance Act; amendments, PLG. No. 65/2025.

<sup>82</sup> Vienna Minimum Benefit Act, PLG. No. 38/2010 in the version of the provincial law PLG. No. 65/2025.

<sup>83</sup> Tyrolean Minimum Benefit Act, PLG. No. 99/2010 in the version of the provincial law PLG. No. 97/2025.

<sup>84</sup> Amendment to the Tyrolean Minimum Benefit Act, the Tyrolean Basic Care Act, and the Tyrolean Children and Youth Service Act, PLG. No. 97/2025.

<sup>85</sup> Law of 15 December 2005, enacting the Tyrolean Basic Care Act, PLG. No. 21/2006 in the version of the provincial law PLG. No. 97/2025.

**Objective:** The objective of the amendment to the Vienna Minimum Benefit Act was to further develop minimum benefits , adapt it to changed framework conditions and support efforts at federal level to standardize social assistance and introduce adjustments required under European Union law (City of Vienna, n.d.b:1). The amendment to the Tyrol Minimum Benefit Act likewise aimed to comply with the requirements of the General Social Assistance Act<sup>86</sup> and to provide beneficiaries of subsidiary protection exclusively with benefits under the Basic Care Act of Tyrol (Tyrolean Provincial Parliament, n.d.:1).

**Driver:** In Vienna, the background to the legislative amendment was that the Vienna Provincial Government, in its Government programme, set out inter alia the objective of analysing the benefits provided under the Vienna Minimum Benefit scheme and implementing reforms on that basis, as well as supporting federal efforts to standardize social assistance or minimum benefits (City of Vienna, n.d.a:1). In Tyrol, the reform was based on an evaluation of the previously existing provisions and on the Provincial Government’s objective of establishing “a new, fairer Tyrol Minimum Benefit Act” (Office of the Provincial Government of Tyrol, 2025).

**Development:** With the new European Union Asylum and Migration Pact, the first solidarity cycle for 2026 was launched in 2025, and Austria was exempted from providing solidarity contributions for 2026.<sup>87,88</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of the solidarity mechanism is to establish a balance between solidarity and responsibility among European Union Member States by ensuring that Member States disproportionately affected by migration are supported through solidarity measures undertaken by other Member States.<sup>89</sup>

**Driver:** The new solidarity mechanism was introduced in response to the distribution of burdens and responsibilities relating to migration among European Union Member States. According to the relevant implementing decision, Austria is experiencing a “pronounced migration situation”.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> General Social Assistance Act, FLG. I No. 41/2019 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 25/2025.

<sup>87</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2642 of 19 December 2025 on the Establishment of the Annual Solidarity Pool for 2026. OJ. L series.

<sup>88</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/A/5/a (EU Migration Affairs), 23 January 2026.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2642 of 19 December 2025 on the Establishment of the Annual Solidarity Pool for 2026. OJ. L series.

## 4. TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND OTHER MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S WAR OF AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

*Observer Countries operating outside of the EU legal framework of the Temporary Protection Directive are invited to report on similar measures that have been applied in their respective countries in response to the war in Ukraine.*

### 4.1 Overarching and cross-cutting developments

Q30. Were there any overarching and/or crosscutting legal and policy developments in 2025 regarding temporary protection of persons fleeing Ukraine?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 4.2 Legal status

Q31. Were there any changes made in 2025 regarding the legal status of persons to whom temporary protection applies in accordance with Council Implementing Decision 2022/382 (e.g. extension of scope of temporary protection, registration, type of documentation, renewal of residence permits following the extension, access and transition to other statuses)?

**Development:** On 29 October 2025, the Supreme Administrative Court held that the lawfulness of the residence of displaced persons from Ukraine, based on the temporary right of residence in the federal territory effective ex lege (Art. 62 para. 1 and 2 of the Asylum Act 2005 in conjunction with the Regulation on Displaced Persons)<sup>91</sup> does not depend on the issuance of an "ID card for displaced persons" (Supreme Administrative Court, 2025d).<sup>92</sup>

**Objective:** The objective was to review the lawfulness of the previous administrative and court proceedings and their decisions, and, where necessary, to set them aside.

**Driver:** The proceedings were triggered by an application for the residence title "Red-White-Red Card plus", lodged in Vienna in January 2025 by a Ukrainian national and her minor son. The applicants had been registered with their main residence in Vienna continuously since April 2022, and the applicant had been in salaried employment since that time. However, the "ID card for displaced persons" was not issued until January 2024. As less than two years had elapsed between the issue of this ID card and the application for the "Red-White-Red Card Plus" in January 2025, the Governor of Vienna took the view that the legally required lawful residence in the federal territory during the preceding two years had not been fulfilled. The residence title was therefore granted with a validity of one year instead of three years. The applicants lodged an appeal against this decision with the Vienna Administrative Court, which dismissed the appeal on

<sup>91</sup> Regulation on Displaced Persons, FLG. II No. 92/2022 in the version of the regulation FLG. II No. 27/2023.

<sup>92</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

29 April 2025. A revision appeal lodged by the Federal Minister of the Interior led to the Supreme Administrative Court setting aside the judgement of the Vienna Administrative Court. The Supreme Administrative Court held that displaced persons from Ukraine have a temporary right of residence in the federal territory ex lege and that the lawfulness of their residence does not depend on the issue of an "ID card for displaced persons" (Supreme Administrative Court, 2025d).

### 4.3 Rights

Q32. Were there any legal or policy developments in 2025 in relation to access to rights and basic services for beneficiaries of temporary protection?

a. Access to suitable accommodation and/or means to obtain housing?

**Development:** In 2025, the initial reception centres closed due to a decline in the number of displaced persons arriving from Ukraine. Admission to basic care is carried out via the standard process, with contact points located in all federal provinces (non-governmental organizations acting on behalf of the province, or direct admission to basic care by the provincial basic care authorities).<sup>93</sup>

**Objective:** The aim was to integrate the initial reception of displaced persons from Ukraine into the standard process and minimize costs.<sup>94</sup>

**Driver:** The change in circumstances was acknowledged, and the admissions process was adapted accordingly, in accordance with administrative principles.<sup>95</sup>

b. Access to medical care including in relation to mental health?

**Development:** The regulation by the Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection on the Implementation of Health Insurance for Persons Included in Health Insurance Pursuant to Art. 9 General Social Insurance Act<sup>96</sup> expired on 31 May 2025. From June 2025 onwards, persons with displaced person status will continue to be eligible for health insurance as part of basic care if they are in need of assistance.<sup>97</sup>

**Objective:** The aim was to integrate the initial reception of displaced persons from Ukraine into the standard process and minimize costs.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/B/9 (Basic Care), 18 February 2026.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Regulation of the Federal Minister for Social Administration of 28 November 1969 on the Implementation of Health Insurance for Persons Included in Health Insurance Pursuant to Art. 9 General Social Insurance Act, FLG. No. 420/1969 in the version of the federal law FLG. II No. 319/2025.

<sup>97</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/B/9 (Basic Care), 18 February 2026.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

**Driver:** The change in circumstances was acknowledged, and the admissions process was adapted accordingly, in accordance with administrative principles.<sup>99</sup>

- c. Access to assistance in terms of social welfare and means of subsistence?

**Development:** On 18 March 2025, amendments<sup>100</sup> to the Act on the Compensation of Family Expenses 1967<sup>101</sup> and the Childcare Allowance Act<sup>102</sup> were promulgated. These amendments provided that entitlement to family allowance and childcare allowance continued retroactively from 4 March 2025, the expiry date of the previous statutory provision, until 31 October 2025 (Parliament Austria, 2025k). On 31 October 2025, a further legislative amendment was promulgated.<sup>103</sup> This amendment extended entitlement to the above-mentioned benefits but stipulated that, from 1 November 2025, displaced persons from Ukraine are entitled to family allowance and childcare allowance for their children only if they are either engaged in employed or self-employed activity or registered as jobseekers with the Public Employment Service (Art. 3 para. 6 of the Act on the Compensation of Family Expenses 1967; Art. 2 para. 1 subpara. 5 sub-subpara. d of the Childcare Allowance Act), unless exemption criteria apply (Parliament Austria, 2025j). This provision applies until 30 June 2026.

**Objective:** According to the Member of the National Council who introduced the amendment, the newly introduced additional requirement aims to promote the commencement and continuation of employment or the use of counselling and placement services offered by the Public Employment Service among displaced persons from Ukraine (Parliament Austria, 2025a).

**Driver:** The amendment to the law was triggered by the view of the governing parties that displaced persons from Ukraine should participate more in the Austrian labour market (Parliament Austria, 2025s).

**Development:** As part of the Tax Amendment Act 2025,<sup>104</sup> the Fees Act 1957<sup>105</sup> was amended, inter alia. Since 24 December 2025, the submission of foreign identity documents for official use in the context of registering, changing or deregistering a residence in the Central Register of Residents is no longer subject to a fee (Art. 14 tariff item 4 para. 6 of the Fees Act 1957).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Amendment to the Act on the Compensation of Family Expenses 1967 and the Childcare Allowance Act, FLG. I No. 11/2025.

<sup>101</sup> Act on the Compensation of Family Expenses 1967, FLG. No. 376/1967 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 64/2025.

<sup>102</sup> Childcare Allowance Act, FLG. I No. 103/2001 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 64/2025.

<sup>103</sup> Amendment to the Act on the Compensation of Family Expenses 1967 and the Childcare Allowance Act, FLG. I No. 64/2025.

<sup>104</sup> Tax Amendment Act 2025, FLG. I No. 97/2025.

<sup>105</sup> Fees Act 1957, FLG. No. 267/1957 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 97/2025.

**Objective:** The objective was, inter alia, in the interest of administrative simplification, to abolish the fees for the official use of foreign documents in connection with the residence registration and to reduce the financial burden following initial arrival in Austria (Parliament Austria, 2025e:3).<sup>106</sup>

**Driver:** This was brought about by optimized structures and digitized processes in administrative simplification.<sup>107</sup>

d. Access to education for minors (including educational support)?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

e. Access to the labour market, including vocational training, practical workplace experience and access to educational opportunities for adults?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

f. Access to the general education system for adults?

Note: Member States are not obliged to grant adults access to the general education system

*Note: Please focus answers on new developments or substantive changes, not continuation of measures that already exist.*

**Development:** The tuition fee exemption for Ukrainian students at universities and university colleges of teacher education in Austria, originally introduced in 2022, was extended to cover the winter semester 2024/2025, the summer semester 2025 and the winter semester 2025/2026. The required amendment to the Tuition Fee Regulation<sup>108</sup> was promulgated on 21 February 2025.

**Objective:** The objective is to provide financial relief to Ukrainian students. They were therefore exempted from tuition fees until the end of February 2026 (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2024).

**Driver:** The amendment was prompted by the intention to continue supporting Ukrainian students in light of the ongoing Russian attack on Ukraine (Parliament Austria, n.d.c).

Q33. Were there any legal or policy developments in 2025 on digitalisation and/or the use of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence in relation to provision of services for beneficiaries of temporary protection?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

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<sup>106</sup> Written input: Ukraine Refugee Coordination Unit of the Federal Government, 21 January 2026.

<sup>107</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/B/9 (Basic Care), 18 February 2026.

<sup>108</sup> Amendment to the Tuition Fee Regulation, FLG. II No. 23/2025.

#### **4.4 Other developments**

Q34. Were there any legal or policy developments in 2025 in relation to support for persons enjoying temporary protection who voluntarily want to go back home to Ukraine?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q35. Were there any other major legal or policy developments in 2025 in relation to other aspects related to the protection of persons fleeing the war in Ukraine not covered above (e.g. family reunification, guardianship/custody)?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 5. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

### 5.1 Unaccompanied minors

*Note: this section covers unaccompanied minors in the asylum procedure and unaccompanied minors outside of the asylum procedure. If legal or policy developments only apply to one of the categories or both, please explicitly mention this in your description of the development.*

#### 5.1.1 Identification and registration of unaccompanied minors

Q36. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to identification of unaccompanied minors in 2025 (including developments related to age assessment)?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note: this includes the collection of biometric data, identification of special needs.*

Q37. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to registration of unaccompanied minors in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q38. Were there any legal or policy developments in 2025 on digitalisation in relation to the identification and registration of unaccompanied minors?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q39. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to unaccompanied minors going missing in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

#### 5.1.2 Reception and care of unaccompanied minors

Q40. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to the reception and care of unaccompanied minors in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

#### 5.1.3 Guardianship

Q41. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to guardianship of unaccompanied minors in 2025?

*Note: this includes changes to the policies regarding training/qualification of guardians, policy changes regarding the number of minors in their care.*

**Development:** The Government programme envisages the statutory anchoring of the consideration of the best interests of the child in all asylum and residence procedures, as well as in basic care, through the

establishment of guardianship from day one. The Federal Government has also committed itself to the recommendations of the Child Welfare Commission (Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:79f). In this context, the Austrian Ombudsman Board advocated in November and December 2025 for a nationwide standardized guardianship procedure for minor refugees and stated that it would be appropriate for the Child and Youth Welfare authorities to assume guardianship of unaccompanied refugee children as soon as they arrive in Austria (Austrian Ombudsman Board, 2025a, 2025b).

**Objective:** The envisaged measure aims to ensure the protection of children in asylum and immigration procedures.

**Driver:** The measure is driven by the intention to place particular emphasis on the best interests of the child in asylum and immigration procedures.

#### 5.1.4 Family reunification

Q42. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to family reunification of unaccompanied minors in 2025?

**Development:** See the comments on suspending family reunification under Q26.

#### 5.1.5 Safeguards for unaccompanied minors

Q43. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to improving the procedural safeguards for unaccompanied minors in the asylum procedure in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

#### 5.1.6 Transition to adulthood

Q44. Were there any legal or policy developments at national level in the type of support (e.g. housing, education, employment, psychological support) available to unaccompanied minors for the transition to adulthood in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 5.2 Other vulnerable groups

Q45. Were there any legal or policy developments at national level regarding vulnerable groups (excluding victims of trafficking in human beings) in 2025?

*Note: Other vulnerable groups include disabled people, elderly people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) people, pregnant women, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental health issues and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation, following the specific headings outlined below.*

*Please note that this subsection covers other vulnerable groups excluding victims of human trafficking; this group is covered in Section 10. Assessment of vulnerabilities in the international protection procedure is covered in section 3.*

**Development:** For the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court regarding genital mutilation, see Q29.

## 6. INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS

*Note: some of the questions in this section refer to national and regional policies. Please only report on regional policies where integration is a regional competence; where integration is a competence shared between national and regional levels, please report only on any significant regional variations. Where integration is a competence shared by national/regional level with the local level, please report only on legal and policy developments in relation to the legislative and policy framework (including funding) provided by national/regional authorities for integration policies carried out by local authorities.*

*Integration policies can be targeted or mainstreamed. Mainstreamed means that a migrant integration perspective is integrated at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects. **In your answers, please reflect your national context and please make clear if the intervention is mainstreamed or targeted to a particular group, e.g. beneficiaries of international protection, and their family members.***

### 6.1 National integration strategy

Q46. Were there any developments in or changes to the national/regional integration strategy (in general or targeting specific groups) in 2025?

*Where relevant, please make reference to any developments in the national strategy that support the following principles of the EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027: inclusion for all, targeted support where needed; mainstreaming of gender and anti-discrimination priorities; providing support at all stages of the integration process.*

**Development:** On 28 May 2025, the mandatory integration programme from day one envisaged in the Government programme<sup>109</sup> was presented to the Council of Ministers (Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2025). Based on the understanding that integration is not an offer but an obligation (Federal Chancellery, 2025j), the integration programme is to be structured around three pillars:

- Acquisition of the German language;
- Employment and ability to secure one's livelihood;
- Values and rules (for measures to combat antisemitism in this context, see Q56).

Displaced persons, beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers with a high probability of being recognized are to be supported for three years through individual case management and are to complete tailored modules in these core areas (Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2025; Federal Chancellery, 2025j). Regular mandatory integration counselling and the establishment of a real-time data exchange between the relevant authorities and organizations are intended to enable coordinated and needs-based integration measures, as well as timely

<sup>109</sup> For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:97f.

consequences in cases of non-compliance with integration obligations.<sup>110</sup> If integration measures are refused or courses are discontinued, social benefits are to be reduced or administrative penalties imposed (Federal Chancellery, 2025h, 2025j). The package is due to enter into force in 2026 (ORF.at, 2025a) and represents the biggest reform and further development in the area of integration since the entry into force of the Integration Act<sup>111</sup> in 2017.<sup>112</sup>

**Objective:** These mandatory integration measures aim to initiate the integration process in a more targeted and therefore more efficient manner (Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2025). Initial measures are to take effect from day one after persons arrive in Austria (Federal Chancellery, 2025j).

**Driver:** In the presentation to the Council of Ministers introducing the integration programme, it was stated that significant integration policy challenges had emerged over the past ten years (Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2025). In addition, according to the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family, the unused course places in 2024 demonstrate the need for mandatory integration measures and sanctions (Federal Chancellery, 2025q).

**Development:** On 26 November 2025, the National Action Plan against Violence against Women was presented in the Council of Ministers and acknowledged by the Federal Government (Federal Chancellery, n.d.e; Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research et al., 2025). With regard to integration, it was noted that migrants are to be informed at an early stage and in a binding manner about the values of equality, self-determination and respectful coexistence applicable in Austria, and are to be involved accordingly. It was also mentioned that language support, awareness programmes and cultural orientation courses can contribute to preventing violence and strengthening awareness of the inviolability of the physical and psychological integrity of women. The eight thematically grouped chapters of the Action Plan also provide, inter alia, for measures with a specific focus on women with a migration background, including:

- Addressing the headscarf ban in schools, in values and orientation courses, seminars and workshops in Austrian Integration Fund women's centres in order to inform parents, in particular mothers;
- Reviewing and developing educational materials to address honour-related violence more prominently in educational institutions;
- Mandatory workshops for parents in the integration programme on Austrian family law, parenting styles and honour-related violence;
- Preparation of target-group-specific studies on violence against women and girls with a migrant background, including research into causes, risk factors and barriers to accessing support services;

<sup>110</sup> Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026.

<sup>111</sup> Integration Act, FLG. I No. 68/2017 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 76/2022.

<sup>112</sup> Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026.

- National integration funding for projects in the area of protection against violence for women with a migration background (Republic of Austria, n.d.:9, 23,24).

**Objective:** According to the presentation to the Council of Ministers, the objective was to submit a catalogue of measures to be implemented consistently by the Federal Government until the end of the legislative period. The Action Plan serves as the central basis for action for a comprehensive and long-term strategy that strengthens both prevention and support for those affected and promotes effective measures to protect against further violence (Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research et al., 2025:1).

**Driver:** The presentation to the Council of Ministers pointed out that violence against women is a deeply rooted societal problem that manifests in different forms. Each year, numerous women in Austria become victims of physical, psychological and sexual violence, and the number of femicides makes the scale of the problem clearly visible, while representing only the tip of the iceberg of violence against women and girls (Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research et al., 2025).

**Development:** On 30 December 2025, an amendment to School Education Act was promulgated,<sup>113</sup> by which Art. 43a was inserted. This provision stipulates that, from 1 September 2026, female pupils up to the age of 14 are prohibited from wearing “a headscarf that covers the head in accordance with Islamic traditions”. This prohibition applies in school, but not in off-site instruction or at school events and school-related events outside school premises. In the event of non-compliance, discussions are initially to be held with the pupils concerned and their legal guardians to clarify the background to the violations. In the event of repeated violations, the school authority is to be informed and the pupils and their legal guardians are required to participate in further mandatory discussions at the school authority. If the prohibition continues to be violated following these discussions, the competent child and youth welfare authority (Art. 37 of the Federal Child and Youth Service Act 2013) is to be informed.<sup>114</sup> As a measure of last resort to enforce the ban, administrative penalties (fines of EUR 150 to EUR 800) are provided for (Art. 80b para. 1 in conjunction with para. 2 subpara. 3 and 4 of the School Education Act).<sup>115</sup>

**Objective:** Through the introduction of a headscarf ban in schools, the aim is, according to the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family, to strengthen the self-determination of minor girls (Parliament Austria, 2025g:1). The Federal Minister further emphasized that the headscarf worn by young girls constitutes a sign of oppression. The Federal Government intends to protect girls and enable them to grow up freely, visibly and in a self-determined manner (Federal Chancellery, 2025u).

<sup>113</sup> Amendment to the School Education Act, the Basic Act on Compulsory Schooling Maintenance, the Compulsory Education Act 1985, and the Private Schools Act, FLG. I No. 117/2025.

<sup>114</sup> Federal Children and Youth Service Act 2013, FLG. I No. 69/2013 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 105/2019.

<sup>115</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Education, Department III/1 (EU Education Cooperation and Multilateral Affairs), 20 January 2026.

**Driver:** In autumn 2025, in line with the Government programme,<sup>116</sup> the Federal Minister for Education<sup>117</sup> presented a draft of the “Federal Act to Strengthen the Self-Determination of Minor Girls at Schools by Introducing a Headscarf Ban” (Parliament Austria, 2025d). Following the end of the multi-week consultation period and more than 600 submissions received, (Parliament Austria, n.d.a, n.d.b) an adapted Government bill was submitted to the National Council on 18 November 2025, (Parliament Austria, n.d.e, 2025i) and the legislative amendment was promulgated on 30 December 2025. The trigger was that the Federal Government regarded the protection of children in their development as a key concern. According to the Federal Government, the headscarf ban for children under the age of 14 is necessary because children at this age do not yet possess the cognitive maturity and emotional capacity for abstraction required to independently assess the religious, cultural and social significance of symbolic clothing. The school is described as a place of freedom and equal encounters, where female pupils in particular can try out alternative life models and free themselves from any existing social and/or familial pressure to wear a headscarf (Parliament Austria, 2025g:1,2).<sup>118</sup>

Q47. Were there any changes in the distribution of responsibilities for integration policy between national, regional and local authorities in 2025?

**Development:** For information on the mandatory integration programme and the planned expansion of data exchange to be implemented with various authorities and bodies, see Q46.

Q48. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding digitalisation and/or the use of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, in relation to facilitation of access to or delivery of integration process or services in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q49. Were there any developments in relation to the monitoring and/or evaluation(s) of your national/regional integration programmes and/or strategy during 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

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<sup>116</sup> For details, see Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:99.

<sup>117</sup> With the Federal Ministries Act Amendment 2025, FLG. I No. 10/2025, announced on 18 March 2025, the education agenda was transferred from the then existing Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research to the Federal Ministry of Education. This report therefore uses both designations, depending on whether it refers to the period before or after the amendment.

<sup>118</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Education, Department III/1 (EU Education Cooperation and Multilateral Affairs), 20 January 2026.

## 6.2 Involvement of stakeholders

Q50. Were there any legal or policy developments at the national/regional level targeting the involvement of stakeholders in promoting the integration of third-country nationals in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note: please only include overarching programmes/developments and not individual projects.*

*Stakeholders may include civil society organisations, educational and other public institutions, employers and socio-economic partners, social economy organisations, churches, religious and other philosophical communities, youth and students' organisations, diaspora organisations as well as migrants themselves.*

## 6.3 Pre-departure integration programmes

Q51. Were there any legal or policy developments targeting the integration of third-country nationals (including resettled refugees) through pre-departure integration programmes (e.g. language, civic integration, skills recognition) in 2025?

**Development:** For preparations regarding the launch of the EAGLE project, see Q7.

## 6.4 Education and training

Q52. Were there any legal or policy developments targeting the integration of third-country nationals through education and training in 2025, including applying new technologies and digital tools (in general or targeting specific groups)?

a. Basic skills and language

**Development:** In 2025, the Austrian Integration Fund expanded its range of German language courses:

- On 23 July 2025, the Austrian Integration Fund announced new occupation-specific online courses entitled "German for Work" to support refugees, displaced persons and migrants with limited German language skills in entering the labour market quickly. The courses take place five days per week, are freely accessible and free of charge for all participants. They provide practical and easily understandable instruction in German language skills relevant to entering employment. In addition to introducing new occupational profiles, teaching phrases and technical terminology, and practising occupation-specific communication situations, for example in the hospitality or care sectors, courses are also offered to support participants in identifying suitable job advertisements, drafting a curriculum vitae and preparing for job interviews (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025c).
- On 9 November 2025, the Austrian Integration Fund announced that, together with the Chamber of Physicians in Vienna, it would

offer new online courses entitled “German for Physicians”. The weekly course units take place live and focus on language skills required in daily medical practice (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025j).

- In addition, the Austrian Integration Fund has established the Alphaportal as a digital learning programme to teach basic language and digital skills at literacy level (Austrian Integration Fund, n.d.).<sup>119</sup>

**Objective:** The objective is to support refugees, displaced persons and migrants in entering employment quickly, particularly in view of labour shortages in many sectors in Austria (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025c). The German language course offered for physicians also aims to support preparation for specialist language examination, which is a prerequisite for practising medicine in Austria (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025j).

**Driver:** Pursuant to Art. 2 para. 2 of the Integration Act, integration measures are to enable participation in social, economic and cultural life in Austria, with participation through employment being central. Accordingly, “integration through performance” is deemed to exist, inter alia, where sufficient German language skills for working life are demonstrated (Parliament Austria, 2017:1). In addition, at a press conference on 15 May 2025, the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family presented the reorientation of integration funding and stated that learning German and preparing for the labour market are necessary, inter alia, to become part of Austrian society (Federal Chancellery, 2025h).

#### b. Civic orientation programmes

**Development:** On 13 November 2025, the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family announced a fundamental expansion of values and orientation courses for beneficiaries of asylum and subsidiary protection, extending the duration of these courses from three days to five days as of 2026 (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025k).

**Objective:** The extension of the values courses makes it possible to address the five modules of the new values and orientation course on separate course days and thereby provide a comprehensive overview of central aspects of life in Austria (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025k).

**Driver:** The duration of the values and orientation courses had already been extended from three to five days in autumn 2024 as part of a pilot project (Streit, 2025:31). According to the Austrian Integration Fund, the results of this pilot phase demonstrate that a longer, more intensive course format has a lasting effect and enables Austria’s core values to be conveyed clearly and effectively (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025k).

#### c. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

<sup>119</sup> Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026.

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

d. Primary and secondary education

**Development:** On 11 April 2025, the Federal Minister for Education announced that the creation of additional established posts would create the basic prerequisite for medium-term qualitative further development in the area of German language support.<sup>120</sup> Based on the number of extraordinary pupils<sup>121</sup> in the 2024/2025 school year,<sup>122</sup> the 577 established posts dedicated to German language support in compulsory education are to be increased to more than 1,300 established posts in the 2025/2026 school year (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025d, 2025b).<sup>123</sup>

**Objective:** According to the Federal Minister for Education, the objective of the additional established posts is to create the basic prerequisite for medium-term qualitative further development in the area of German language support and to further improve the German language skills of pupils (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025d).

**Driver:** According to the Federal Minister for Education, the trigger for the increase in established posts was the shared objective of the Federal Government to intensify the acquisition of German as the language of instruction, since, according to the Minister, integration cannot function without corresponding language skills. Proficiency in the German language is described as the foundation for a successful educational pathway (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025d).

**Development:** On 24 July 2025, an amendment to the School Education Act<sup>124</sup> was promulgated,<sup>125</sup> introducing orientation classes as of 1 September 2025. Since then, an orientation interview has been conducted with all children who do not have sufficient prior schooling experience, during which, inter alia, previous schooling and literacy levels are assessed (Art. 4 para. 2b of the School Education Act; Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 2025:2). Subsequently, the school management or the school authority decides on the necessity of allocation to an orientation class (Federal Ministry of Education,

<sup>120</sup> The aim of the German language support model for extraordinary students is to enable them to learn German, the language of instruction, early on and intensively so that they can be taught in class as quickly as possible according to the curriculum of the relevant school type and grade level (Federal Ministry of Education, n.d.a).

<sup>121</sup> These are students who do not have sufficient knowledge of German, the language of instruction (Art. 4 para. 2 subpara a of the School Education Act).

<sup>122</sup> In the 2024/2025 school year, around 49,650 extraordinary students in all types of Austrian schools were unable to follow regular lessons due to a lack of German language skills (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025b; Written input: Federal Ministry of Education, Department III/1 (EU Education Cooperation and Multilateral Affairs), 20 January 2026). Statistics Austria data shows a total of 1,185,525 students in Austria for the 2024/2025 school year (Statistics Austria, 2025).

<sup>123</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Education, Department III/1 (EU Education Cooperation and Multilateral Affairs), 20 January 2026.

<sup>124</sup> School Education Act, FLG. No. 472/1986 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 44/2025.

<sup>125</sup> Amendment to the School Education Act, the Basic Act on Employment Requirements, and the Higher Education Act 2005, FLG. I No. 44/2025.

n.d.b). Attendance in an orientation class is limited to a maximum of six months (Art. 4 para. 4a of the School Education Act), as a transition to German language support classes or regular classes should be pursued as quickly as possible once the necessary competences have been acquired (Federal Ministry of Education, n.d.b).

**Objective:** The introduction of orientation classes aims in particular to support pupils who, due to their refugee background, have little or no prior school experience in the Austrian education system. Orientation classes provide greater flexibility in this respect than is possible within the regular school law framework. The preparatory phase within orientation classes is also intended to support schools in integrating newly admitted pupils (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 2025:2,3).

**Driver:** According to the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research, the trigger for the creation of orientation classes was family reunification from 2023 onwards, which led to a significant influx of family members of beneficiaries of asylum and subsidiary protection to Austria (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 2025:1). This was accompanied by the migration of many school-age children and adolescents, some of whom had no prior schooling experience and may lack, in addition to knowledge of the German language, basic social competences or may be illiterate (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025c; Parliament Austria, 2025m).<sup>126</sup> In addition, on 25 April 2025, the Federal Government, in particular the Federal Minister for Education, was requested by resolution of the National Council, inter alia, to introduce orientation classes (Parliament Austria, 2025b), which were also provided for in the Government programme.<sup>127</sup>

**Development:** On 10 December 2025, the Federal Minister for Education submitted to the Council of Ministers a draft law in connection with the further development of German language support. Inter alia, the draft provides schools with the option to choose the specific manner of implementing German language support (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025a). The Council of Ministers decided to submit the draft law, together with the accompanying documents, to the National Council for further consideration (Federal Chancellery, n.d.f).

**Objective:** The objective of the further development of German language support, to be undertaken on the basis of the Government programme, is to strengthen its effectiveness and quality, so that pupils are enabled to follow regular instruction as quickly as possible and, at the latest upon completion of extraordinary status, possess the required language skills (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025b:2).

**Driver:** The further development of German language support is based, on the one hand, on the Government programme<sup>128</sup> and, on the other hand, on the resolution of the National Council of 25 April 2025, which,

<sup>126</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Education, Department III/1 (EU Education Cooperation and Multilateral Affairs), 20 January 2026.

<sup>127</sup> For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:206.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

inter alia, requested the Federal Government, in particular the Federal Minister for Education, to further develop German language support classes (Parliament Austria, 2025b). According to the Federal Minister for Education, an increase in the number of pupils requiring language support or having a first language other than German has been observed in recent years (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025b:1). In the political discourse, it was stated, for example, that in Vienna 44 per cent of first-year pupils are classified as extraordinary pupils (Parliament Austria, 2025n) and that 60 per cent of pupils speak a language other than German as their everyday language (Parliament Austria, 2025m).

- e. Tertiary and Adult education  
No relevant developments occurred in 2025.
- f. Other forms of education/training  
No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 6.5 Labour market and skills

Q53. Were there any legal or policy developments at the national/regional level targeting the labour market integration of third-country nationals in 2025?

*Note: please include developments related to new technologies and digital tools (in general or targeting specific groups)*

- a. Access to vocational training/other types of training as a measure aimed at labour market integration

**Development:** For preparations regarding the launch of the EAGLE project, see Q7.

**Development:** In 2024 and 2025, an additional EUR 75 million was made available as part of active labour market policy to facilitate the labour market integration of recognized refugees and to expand existing measures. A particular focus was placed on the significant expansion (to 4,000 places) of Youth Colleges in Vienna, a school-like educational programme for young people aged 15–25. Participants receive instruction for approximately nine months in areas such as literacy, basic education, German language skills and digital competences. Workshops, skills assessments, job application training and internships prepare them for working life and the Austrian labour market.<sup>129</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of this measure is to open up prospects for young recognized refugees and to support their labour market integration.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

**Driver:** In recent years, demand for basic qualifications, fundamental knowledge at compulsory school level and German language courses has increased significantly. These factors are of great importance for labour market integration.<sup>131</sup>

- b. Measures to facilitate the recognition of skills and of formal qualifications

**Development:** In 2025, to support persons from Ukraine in the recognition of their skills and qualifications, the Public Employment Service Vienna, in cooperation with counselling centres for people with qualifications acquired abroad, organized seven Ukrainian-language information events on the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad. Several hundred persons who had recently registered with the Public Employment Service were invited to each of these events.<sup>132</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of these information events was to support persons from Ukraine in obtaining recognition of their qualifications in order to promote sustainable employment commensurate with their training.<sup>133</sup>

**Driver:** The background to these events was that many Ukrainians who arrived in Austria as a result of the Russian war of aggression possessed formal qualifications that are in demand on the Austrian labour market. Such information events therefore supported both displaced persons and the Austrian labour market.<sup>134</sup>

- c. Other measures to facilitate labour market integration of third-country nationals (including entrepreneurs)

**Development:** In 2025, the Austrian Integration Fund and the Public Employment Service offered opportunities to bring together companies and displaced persons from Ukraine, as well as beneficiaries of asylum and subsidiary protection. Inter alia, the following events took place:

- To specifically support Syrian refugees with limited German language skills in their integration into the labour market, the Public Employment Service Vienna organized six two-week training courses in specialized cleaning in 2025, each concluding with a job fair. Around 100 people were invited to preliminary information events, of whom 20 particularly interested participants were admitted to the training courses.<sup>135</sup>
- On 13 August 2025, within the framework of the Austrian Integration Fund career platform, five companies presented vacancies as well as entry-level and training opportunities, including for persons with limited German language skills, to more than 200 jobseekers from the target group (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025d).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

- On 24 April 2025, 4 September 2025, 24 September 2025 and 8 October 2025, the Austrian Integration Fund focused on the health and nursing professions: In April, more than 150 persons from the target group had the opportunity at the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria to obtain information on vacant positions as well as training and employment opportunities in the health and care sector. Similar events followed in September and October, during which numerous persons from the target group obtained information on vacant positions and training and employment opportunities in the health and care sector (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025b, 2025e, 2025g, 2025h).
- On 22 October 2025, the Federal Ministry of Defense, the Austrian Integration Fund, the City of Vienna and the Vienna Directorate of Education brought together young people with and without a migration background and representatives of more than 75 apprenticeships and 60 exhibitors (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025i).
- On 11 November 2025, the Public Employment Service informed about the Opportunities Fair in Styria. This platform, designed specifically for beneficiaries of asylum, brought together more than 500 beneficiaries of asylum seeking employment with companies in Styria (Public Employment Service, 2025).
- On 27 November 2025, a further Austrian Integration Fund career fair on health and care professions took place. More than 60 displaced persons from Ukraine seeking employment were given the opportunity to obtain direct information on vacant positions, training pathways and employment opportunities with a major health and care provider (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025l).

**Objective:** The objective of these measures was to connect companies with prospective employees (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025d).

**Driver:** Through these and further measures, the Austrian Integration Fund and the Public Employment Service aim to support persons with a refugee background in labour market integration.<sup>136</sup>

## 6.6 Basic services

Q54. Were there any legal or policy developments at the national/regional level targeting the integration of third-country nationals through access to basic services in 2025?

a. Access to housing

*Note: this refers to policies to promote integration of third-country nationals through access to housing as a basic service, such as access to social housing and financial assistance.*

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

b. Access to healthcare including mental healthcare

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

c. Access to social security

**Development:** On 11 March 2025, the Constitutional Court annulled provisions of the Vienna Minimum Benefit Act<sup>137</sup> and the Lower Austrian Social Assistance Implementing Act<sup>138</sup> as unconstitutional because they contravened the General Social Assistance Act.<sup>139</sup> The annulment enters into force at the end of 31 March 2026 (Constitutional Court, 2025c, 2025d).

**Objective:** The objective was to examine the constitutionality of the statutory provisions and, where necessary, to annul them.

**Driver:** The trigger was the ex officio proceedings to review the constitutionality of Art. 5 para. 2 of the Vienna Minimum Benefit Act and the application by the Supreme Administrative Court to annul Art. 5 para. 4 subpara. 6 of the Lower Austrian Social Assistance Implementing Act as unconstitutional (Constitutional Court, 2025d, 2025c). The background was that third-country nationals without asylum status are entitled to social assistance pursuant to Art. 4 para. 1 of the General Social Assistance Act if they have resided lawfully and on a durable basis in Austria for at least five years. The Constitutional Court stated that the General Social Assistance Act does not provide for the requirement of a specific residence title. The two annulled provisions had provided that persons holding only a temporary residence title (for example a "Red-White-Red Card Plus" pursuant to Art. 41a of the Settlement and Residence Act) were excluded from receiving social assistance, without taking into account whether a durable settlement within the meaning of the General Social Assistance Act existed which, upon fulfilment of the waiting period, entitled them to social assistance benefits. It follows that the annulled provisions required the existence of specific residence titles for access to social assistance, which contravenes the General Social Assistance Act. Accordingly, Art. 5 para. 2 of the Vienna Minimum Benefit Act and Art. 5 para. 4 subpara. 6 of the Lower Austrian Social Assistance Implementing Act were annulled with effect from 31 March 2026 (Constitutional Court, 2025d, 2025c, 2025f).

**Development:** On 15 September 2025, inter alia, the Federal Ministers for Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and for Europe, Integration and Family presented the key elements of the newly regulated social assistance system. The new social assistance system is to be linked to the mandatory integration programme (see Q46). Full

<sup>137</sup> Vienna Minimum Benefit Act, PLG. No. 38/2010 in the version of the provincial law PLG. No. 65/2025.

<sup>138</sup> Lower Austrian Social Assistance Implementing Act, PLG. No. 70/2019 in the version of the provincial law PLG. No. 57/2024.

<sup>139</sup> General Social Assistance Act, FLG. I No. 41/2019 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 25/2025.

social benefits are only available after a maximum integration phase of three years and are to be linked to clear integration obligations. In the event of non-compliance with these integration obligations, sanctions are to be provided for (Federal Chancellery, 2025s).<sup>140</sup>

**Objective:** One objective of the new social assistance system is to promote integration (Federal Chancellery, 2025s).

**Driver:** One of the triggers was that differing social assistance regulations existed in the individual federal provinces and the system is to be harmonized. In addition, higher benefits in Vienna led to significant internal mobility to the federal capital following the granting of protection status, which was considered to run counter to the objective of a more even distribution and of facilitating employment in western Austria, where more vacancies are available (Federal Chancellery, 2025s).<sup>141</sup>

**Development:** On 18 September 2025, the Constitutional Court annulled part of Art. 8 para. 4 of the Asylum Act 2005 as unconstitutional due to a violation of the right to equal treatment of foreigners among themselves. The annulment enters into force upon expiry of 28 February 2027 (Constitutional Court, 2025g).

**Objective:** The objective was to review the constitutionality of a legislative provision and, if necessary, to annul it.

**Driver:** The decision was triggered by a complaint lodged by a beneficiary of subsidiary protection against the refusal to grant him a "Permanent Residence – EU" residence title. The man, who had lawfully resided in Austria for almost 16 years, was informed by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, in the context of the extension of his residence authorization by two years in March 2022, that he could apply for a "Permanent Residence – EU" residence title with the locally competent settlement authority if the relevant requirements were met. In August 2023, he applied for the "Permanent Residence – EU" residence title and in July 2024 received notification that he was invited to collect the residence title and should bring the "extended asylum decision in original and copy" with him when collecting the residence title. When he attended the collection appointment on 6 August 2024 and was only able to present the extension decision of 1 March 2022, as he had not applied for an extension of his residence right as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection due to the pending application for the "Permanent Residence – EU" residence title, he was informed that the "Permanent Residence – EU" residence title would not be granted after all because he had not submitted an extension application regarding his residence right as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection. The man lodged a complaint against this decision. The Administrative Court of Vienna subsequently requested the Constitutional Court to

<sup>140</sup> Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026; Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreigners), 21 January 2026.

<sup>141</sup> Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026.

annul, inter alia, Art. 8 para. 4 of the Asylum Act 2005. In summary, the Constitutional Court held that beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are treated disadvantageously within the groups of persons entitled to apply for a "Permanent Residence – EU" residence title. The granting of a "Permanent Residence – EU" depends, inter alia, on continuous actual residence for a period of five years, which therefore requires extension applications to be submitted in due time. As, in essence, only beneficiaries of subsidiary protection lack a possibility of remedy in the event of a late application for extension of their residence title, they are disadvantaged without objective justification, with the result that the relevant legislative provision had to be annulled (Constitutional Court, 2025g).

d. Other

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 6.7 Fostering participation and encounters with the host society

Q55. Were there any legal or policy developments at the national/regional level fostering participation and encounters of third-country nationals with the host society in 2025?

*Note: please only include overarching programmes/developments and not individual projects.*

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 6.8 Fighting racism and discrimination

Q56. Were there any legal or policy developments at the national or regional aimed at fighting discrimination of third-country nationals, racism etc. in 2025?

*Please distinguish 1) migrants as a target group within the mainstream anti-discrimination legal framework or mainstream policies and 2) any policies specifically targeting migrants. Please clarify if your legislation or policies target all migrants or third country nationals specifically. Please also specify whether actions were taken under national anti-racism strategies where relevant.*

*Note: please only include overarching programmes/developments and not individual projects.*

**Development:** On 11 April 2025 and 10 September 2025, the new Austrian Integration Fund seminar programmes were presented. The spring programme focused on the integration of women, protection against violence and the prevention of antisemitism, radicalization and extremism. The 40 free training courses offered in the summer semester of 2025 were aimed at people who deal with integration in their everyday or professional lives – such as educators, teachers in German courses, healthcare personnel or representatives of authorities, municipalities and companies (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025a). The autumn programme was also

aimed at the same target group, focusing on the advancement of women, the prevention of radicalization and integration in schools, and offering 50 free training courses (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025f).

**Objective:** The objective was to raise awareness, strengthen prevention and enhance skills in addressing antisemitism, extremism and radicalization, with particular attention to challenges emerging in the digital space, such as hate speech, disinformation and radicalizing content (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025a).

**Driver:** The training courses were offered in particular in the context of antisemitic and extremist incidents (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025a).

**Development:** On 10 November 2025, the Federal Government presented the "National Strategy against Antisemitism 2.0", which was taken note of by the Council of Ministers and transmitted to the National Council (Federal Chancellery et al., 2025a; Federal Chancellery, n.d.g).

**Objective:** In continuation of the National Strategy against Antisemitism 2021–2024, the objective of the National Strategy against Antisemitism 2.0 is to protect and secure the continued existence of Jewish life in Austria in the long term, to curb antisemitism in all its forms and to uphold the remembrance of the victims of the Shoah. To this end, a total of 49 measures were identified (Parliament Austria, 2025u; Federal Chancellery, 2025b:32). These include, inter alia, the expansion of the integration declaration for beneficiaries of asylum and subsidiary protection through a declaration against antisemitism, intended to provide a clear and comprehensible stance against any form of hostility towards Jews and to underline that antisemitism is incompatible with the values of democratic coexistence in Austria. In addition, antisemitism is to be incorporated as a mandatory cross-cutting issue in the new integration programme (see Q46), and the fight against antisemitism is also to be addressed in the values and orientation courses extended to five days (see Q52b; Federal Chancellery, 2025b:140f).

**Driver:** In the foreword to the Strategy, the Federal Chancellor stated that following 7 October 2023 there had also been a new wave of antisemitism in Europe, which had demonstrated the importance of further developing the strategy (Parliament Austria, 2025u).

## 7. CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

### 7.1 Acquisition of citizenship

Q57. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to the **acquisition of citizenship** for legally residing third-country nationals in 2025? (this also includes e.g. policy decisions on operational aspects such as moving applications online)

**Development:** The Government programme of the Austrian Federal Government provides for an “enhancement of citizenship incorporating the integration programme” (see Q46). In addition to removing minor administrative offences as an obstacle to naturalization, the Government programme also provides for more stringent measures. For example, German language skills at B2 level are to be required, and the successful completion of a mandatory citizenship course at the Austrian Integration Fund focusing on understanding democracy, European fundamental values and equality between men and women is envisaged. In future, integration rather than bureaucracy is to be placed at the forefront of naturalization procedures. For example, proof of duration of residence or income is to be simplified, including by using collective agreements as the benchmark for assessing self-sufficiency for persons in urgently needed occupations. To reduce bureaucracy, greater use is also to be made of digitization (Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:99f).

**Objective:** The objective is to enhance citizenship by incorporating the integration programme (Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:99).

**Driver:** This measure was justified on the grounds that Austrian citizenship should continue to remain “a valuable asset” that is awarded at the end of a successful integration process (Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:99).

Q58. Were there any legal or policy developments on digitalisation and/or the use of Artificial Intelligence in relation to processing of citizenship applications, in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 7.2 Statelessness

Q59. Were there any developments related to the legal regulation of statelessness (e.g. ratification of international conventions; overarching changes in the legal framework, reduction of statelessness among children etc.) in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q60. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to a dedicated statelessness determination procedure (SDP) or any other procedures or mechanisms by which statelessness can be identified or the status can be determined in 2025?

**Development:** The Government programme of the Austrian Federal Government provides, for the first time, for the improvement of protection

for stateless persons (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:100). Similar initiatives were not included in the Government programmes since 2008.<sup>142</sup>

**Objective:** The objective is to examine the introduction of an accessible, fair and efficient procedure for determining statelessness in Austria that complies with international standards, in order to verify the actual statelessness of the persons concerned and to safeguard their rights (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:100).

**Driver:** Austria is a State Party to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness<sup>143</sup> and is therefore obliged to introduce a procedure to determine who is stateless in Austria (UNHCR, n.d.:20). In addition, the Screening Regulation<sup>144</sup> (Art. 12 para. 3) and the Asylum Procedures Directive (Art. 27 para. 2) contain provisions that explicitly refer to stateless persons.

Q61. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to the issuance of a residence permit or in relation to the rights (access to the labour market, education, health care and social aid, access to citizenship, etc.) granted to recognized stateless persons in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. also Social Democratic Party of Austria, Austrian People's Party, n.d.a, n.d.b; New Austrian People's Party, Austrian Freedom Party, n.d.; The new Austrian People's Party, Austrian Green Party, n.d.

<sup>143</sup> Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, FLG. No. 538/1974 in the version of the promulgation FLG. III No. 50/2025.

<sup>144</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 introducing the screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817. OJ. L series.

## 8. SCHENGEN GOVERNANCE AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN BORDER MANAGEMENT AND VISA POLICY

*Note: This chapter covers developments which are applicable to countries which are part of the Schengen area and/or are bound by the Schengen acquis and developments which fall outside of the Schengen acquis. The questions are divided between 1) questions solely applicable to the Schengen acquis and 2) other developments in border management and visa policy which fall outside the Schengen acquis and may be applicable to all EMN Member and Observer countries. This chapter focuses on developments regarding border management (improving border checks, border governance for example), not on border control as a means to prevent irregular migration.*

### 8.1 Schengen area

*Note: This section collects information on national developments solely relevant to the Schengen area or relevant aspects of the Schengen acquis.*

#### 8.1.1 Schengen Governance

Q62. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to Schengen evaluations during 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

#### 8.1.2 External Dimension of Schengen

Q63. Were there any national legal or policy developments in relation to the implementation of Schengen visas in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note: developments in EU visa policy will be reported in the EU developments section of the report. Here please only report national level developments.*

#### 8.1.3 External Schengen border management

Q64. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to the European harmonisation of external border controls of the Schengen area in 2025?

a. Entry/Exit System (EES)

**Development:** On 12 October 2025, the "Entry-Exit-System"<sup>145</sup> entered a pilot phase at Vienna Airport. Following a six-month transitional phase, the system is to become fully operational at all border crossings at the Schengen external borders from April 2026 (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025v). Since 12 November 2025, the "Entry-Exit-System" has also been operational at Salzburg Airport (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025ah). Subsequently, the "Entry-Exit System" was put into operation at Innsbruck Airport on

<sup>145</sup> This is an automated, forgery-proof EU-wide IT system that records the entry and exit of travellers from third countries who are allowed to stay in the Schengen area for up to 90 days within a 180-day period (European Union, n.d.b). Upon entry, fingerprints and facial images are recorded, among other things (European Union, n.d.a).

21 November 2025, at Graz Airport on 26 November 2025, at Linz Airport on 6 December 2025 and at Klagenfurt Airport on 13 December 2025, thereby completing the roll-out of the system at Austria's external borders.<sup>146</sup>

**Objective:** The objective is to implement a central component of the European Union asylum and migration reform, to modernize border controls and, inter alia, to increase security at the European Union external borders (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025v, 2025ah).

**Driver:** With the pilot phase, a central component of the European Union asylum and migration reform is being implemented. According to the Federal Minister of the Interior, it is important for the Austrian police to know who enters Austria, whether the person enters lawfully and how long they remain. Finally, the system contributes to facilitating the detection of irregular stays, automatically identifying visa overstays and preventing identity fraud. The previous manual passport stamping is partially no longer required following the introduction of this digital recording (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025v).<sup>147</sup>

b. European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)

**Development:** On 12 December 2025, the Second European Union Information Systems Adaptation Act<sup>148</sup> was promulgated, amending numerous existing laws, including the Settlement and Residence Act and the Aliens Police Act 2005.

**Objective:** The legislative amendment aimed to enable the interoperability of European Union information systems (some already existing and some yet to be established) and the establishment of the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS);<sup>149</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025e; Parliament Austria, 2025f:1).

**Driver:** The trigger was that the European Union information systems already in operation – the Schengen Information System, the Visa Information System and the Europe-wide fingerprint identification system Eurodac – had, according to the Council of Ministers submission, been operated separately and were only partially accessible to Member States for cross-checking. By establishing interoperability, the existing and newly established European Union information systems – such as ETIAS – were to be interconnected (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025e).

<sup>146</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/B/6 (Integrated Border Management), 21 January 2026.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Second European Union Information Systems Adaptation Act, FLG. I No. 87/2025.

<sup>149</sup> The ETIAS travel authorization is an entry requirement for visa-exempt nationals who, with a valid ETIAS travel authorization, can enter the territory of certain European countries as often as they wish for short stays (usually for up to 90 days within a 180-day period; European Union, n.d.c).

c. Schengen Information System (SIS)

**Development:** In 2025, administrative processes in the “Schengen Information System” (SIS)<sup>150</sup> were further optimized. Newly created web forms were, at the end of 2025, in the final phase prior to roll-out.<sup>151</sup>

**Objective:** The objective was, inter alia, to provide a secure web form for SIS deletion requests and to transform complex and error-prone processes into a guided, user-centred digital workflow.<sup>152</sup>

**Driver:** The background was the intention to create a web form that dynamically adapts to the legal situation of the applicant and ensures completeness and formal correctness before submission, hereby reducing processing times and follow-up queries. Multilingualism and accessibility are intended to improve inclusion and the quality of applications, while the standardized processing of the transmitted data is to enable faster review, better traceability and greater efficiency in the further handling of cases.<sup>153</sup>

d. Visa Information System (VIS)

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

e. Interoperability between EU large scale Information Systems Regulations 2019/817 and 2019/818

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

f. European Integrated Border Management

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

g. Other

**Development:** In the course of 2025, there were several discussions between members of the Austrian Federal Government and members of the governments of other European States concerning the protection of external borders. For example, during a working meeting with the German Federal Minister of the Interior on 16 May 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior emphasized “strong and robust external border protection” as a shared objective (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025m). Similarly, following a working meeting with his French counterpart on 19 May 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior stated that the protection of the European Union external borders and

<sup>150</sup> This is a joint information system that gives the competent authorities in each EU Member State access, by means of an automated search procedure, to alerts on persons and objects for the purpose of border controls and other police and customs checks within the country in accordance with national legislation (see European Commission, 2025b).

<sup>151</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior (Department V/B/8 - Asylum) and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 21 January 2026.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

consistent returns are essential components of the common European asylum system and that Austria is therefore pressing for a rapid implementation of the European Union asylum and migration pact that is “further strengthened in certain areas” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025n). In connection with external border protection, on 13 June 2025, during a joint press appearance with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Federal Chancellor expressed his appreciation that Bulgaria had strengthened the protection of the European Union external borders together with Austria and other partner countries (Federal Chancellery, 2025g). Ahead of the European Union summit of Heads of State or Government, the Federal Chancellor took part in a meeting of like-minded counterparts on migration issues on 26 June 2025. Topics discussed reportedly included cooperation with third countries and the protection of external borders (Federal Chancellery, 2025n). The necessity of secure external borders was reiterated by the Federal Chancellor the following day during a joint press conference with the German Federal Chancellor, stating that such protection is a fundamental precondition for open internal borders (Federal Chancellery, 2025k, 2025o). Following his talks with the Bavarian Minister-President on 10 July 2025, the Federal Chancellor again emphasized that the solution for open internal borders lies in robust external border protection and procedures at the external borders (Federal Chancellery, 2025p). The Federal Chancellor also reiterated the importance of procedures at the external borders during his meeting with the President of the French Republic on 18 July 2025 (Federal Chancellery, 2025r).

**Objective:** The objective was to present the position of Austrian policymakers.

**Driver:** The background to these talks included the Austrian position on external border protection, which was to be communicated in the context of these meetings.

Q65. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to Local Border Traffic Regimes<sup>154</sup> in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

#### 8.1.4 Situation at the internal borders

Q66. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to the situation at the internal borders in the Schengen area during 2025?

**Development:** The regulations of the Federal Minister of the Interior concerning the temporary reintroduction of border controls at the internal borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, as well as with the Republic of Slovenia and Hungary, were initially amended on 15 April 2025

<sup>154</sup> Local Border Traffic: The regular crossing of an external land border by border residents in order to stay in a border area, for example for social, cultural or substantiated economic reasons, or for family reasons, for a period not exceeding three months (Source: EMN Glossary v.10.0).

and 9 May 2025 respectively, extending their validity until 15 October 2025<sup>155</sup> and 11 November 2025.<sup>156</sup> On 15 October 2025, both regulations were extended until 15 December 2025.<sup>157</sup> Finally, on 12 December 2025, the “Temporary Regulation of Border Traffic at the Internal Borders with the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Slovenia and Hungary” was promulgated.<sup>158</sup> Accordingly, in the period from 16 December 2025 to 15 June 2026, the internal borders with the Slovak Republic in land and water traffic and with the Czech Republic, the Republic of Slovenia and Hungary in land traffic may only be crossed at border crossing points.

**Objective:** According to Art. 1 of the Regulation on Border Traffic, public peace, order and security are to be guaranteed. Border controls at border crossing points are to be carried out in accordance with the situation and analysis, taking into account the requirements of expediency, simplicity, speed and cost-efficiency, so that they may also be conducted within the framework of patrol duties.

**Driver:** The renewed extensions were justified vis-à-vis the European Commission by citing the ongoing threat linked to rising irregular migration, for example via the Western Balkan route, as well as the strain on the asylum reception system and the basic care system provision, in addition to the continuing war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East due to terrorist groups (European Commission, n.d.).

## 8.2 Other developments in border management and visa policy

*Note: This section collects information on developments which fall outside or go beyond the Schengen acquis. For border management this relates to developments which fall within national competence but not bilateral agreements with third countries which are covered in section 9. Regarding visa policy this includes developments within national competence which impact both short stay or long stay visas (e.g. institutional developments) and developments in national policies regarding long stay visas.*

*Observer or non-Schengen countries should report their border management or visa policies in this section.*

Q67. Were there any developments in relation to border management (other than Schengen borders) in 2025?

<sup>155</sup> Amendment to the Regulation on the Temporary Reintroduction of Border Controls at the Internal Borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, FLG. II No. 70/2025.

<sup>156</sup> Amendment to the Regulation on the Temporary Reintroduction of Border Controls at the Internal Borders with the Republic of Slovenia and Hungary, FLG. II No. 85/2025.

<sup>157</sup> Amendment to the Regulation on the Temporary Reintroduction of Border Controls at the Internal Borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, FLG. II No. 216/2025; Amendment to the Regulation on the Temporary Reintroduction of Border Controls at the Internal Borders with the Republic of Slovenia and Hungary, FLG. II No. 217/2025.

<sup>158</sup> Temporary Regulation of Border Traffic at the Internal Borders with the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Slovenia and Hungary, FLG. II No. 292/2025.

**Development:** In 2025, Austria contributed to external border protection, for example by deploying an Austrian police contingent on 29 January 2025, equipped with off-road vehicles, a thermal imaging bus and advanced technology, for an operation at the Bulgarian–Turkish external border (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025h).

**Objective:** The objective was to take further measures together with Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary to combat irregular migration and migrant smuggling and to assume responsibility for the protection of the European Union external border (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025h).

**Driver:** In November 2024, a border protection package was agreed with Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, providing, inter alia, for stricter controls and close cooperation in combating migrant smuggling (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025h). In addition, external border protection is a priority for the Federal Government. (Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:83).

Q68. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to visa policy falling under national competence in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 9. IRREGULAR MIGRATION

*Note: There is no universally accepted definition of irregular migration. From the perspective of destination countries, it is entry, stay or work in a country without the necessary authorisation or documents required under immigration regulations (Source: Note 1 to definition of Irregular Migration EMN Glossary, v10.0).*

### 9.1 Overarching and cross-cutting developments

Q69. Were there any overarching and/ or crosscutting legal and policy developments in 2025 regarding irregular migration?

**Development:** In connection with the reduction of irregular migration, several discussions and working meetings took place between members of the Austrian Federal Government and European policymakers, as well as between officials at administrative level. For example, on 10 February 2025, the Federal Chancellor met with the Prime Minister of Italy and stated that the two countries were working side by side for a strong Europe, including with regard to the challenges in the area of migration (Federal Chancellery, 2025c). On 17 March 2025, the European Union Commissioner for Home Affairs and Migration visited the Federal Chancellor to discuss, inter alia, measures against irregular migration. Following the meeting, the Federal Chancellor stated that the right course must also be set at European level and that Europe needs a functioning asylum system that counters irregular entry attempts (Federal Chancellery, 2025e). On 26 March 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior took part in a working meeting in Jordan. Jordan's assessment and expertise regarding the migration situation in the Middle East were considered particularly relevant for Austria, as any change in the situation would have immediate effects on Europe and would allow for joint early countermeasures (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025l). On 12 September 2025, a senior official from the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, together with his French counterpart, visited Bulgaria to exchange views on current challenges in the area of irregular migration (Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 2025b). During the official visit of the Prime Minister of Romania to Vienna on 4 December 2025, the Federal Chancellor expressed his appreciation for "Romania's achievements in external border protection and in combating migrant smuggling" and for the "excellent" cooperation (Federal Chancellery, 2025v).

**Objective:** The objective was to present the position of Austrian policymakers.

**Driver:** The background to these talks included the Austrian position on the need for a "trend reversal in the European asylum and migration system" (Federal Chancellery, 2025e) which was to be communicated in the context of these meetings.

**Development:** In August 2025, infrastructure that was no longer required at the border control posts in Spielfeld and Nickelsdorf was dismantled. While a container facility and a detention tent for the preparation and implementation of border police operations were to remain in place, according to the Federal Minister of the Interior, four tents were dismantled at each of the two border control posts, thereby also reducing costs (Federal

Ministry of the Interior, 2025q). In addition, on 20 November 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior announced that the asylum registration centre in Schattendorf would be closed at the end of December 2025 (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025ae).

**Objective:** The objective was, inter alia, to reduce avoidable costs and relieve the population in the region (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025q, 2025ae).

**Driver:** According to the Federal Minister of the Interior, the measures taken in recent years have succeeded in reducing irregular migration (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025q, 2025ae, 2025x). The decline in newly arriving applicants for international protection in Austria and the stable situation at the aforementioned border control points enabled the reduction of infrastructure and the closure of the asylum registration centre (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025q, 2025ae).

Q70. Were there any legal or policy developments on digitalisation, and/or use of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, regarding combatting irregular migration, in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 9.2 Preventing the arrival of irregular migrants

### 9.2.1 Combating facilitation of unauthorized entry (migrant smuggling)

Q71. Were there any legal or policy developments aimed at combatting facilitation of unauthorised entry (migrant smuggling) in 2025? Please include any developments aimed at combatting migrant smuggling networks.

**Development:** On 14 August 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior presented the 2024 situation report on migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025b). The report shows that in 2024 most apprehensions took place in the Austro-Hungarian border area. The number of smuggled persons apprehended decreased significantly from 35,483 in 2023 to 5,736 in 2024 (-84%). The number of apprehended smugglers also declined sharply. While 751 people smugglers were arrested in 2023, only 225 were arrested in 2024 (-70%). The majority of smuggled persons originated from the Syrian Arab Republic, and most arrested smugglers originated from Ukraine. According to the report, the decline in apprehensions is attributable, inter alia, to police measures along the main migration routes, an adjustment of routes by smugglers and the dismantling of smuggling networks (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025d:9,12,14,16).

**Objective:** The annual report served within the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the provincial police directorates as a supporting instrument for operational and strategic decision-making and coordination measures (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025d:7).

**Driver:** The report was prompted by reflection on strategic thinking, international cooperation and operational efficiency as guiding principles in combating organized crime (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025d:4).

Q72. Were there any legal, policy, or practice developments in 2025 to prevent, identify and/or investigate fraudulent acquisition and use of false travel documents for travelling to your country?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 9.2.2 Preventing irregular migration through information provision

Q73. Were there any legal, policy or practice developments aimed at providing information to prevent irregular migration from countries of origin and transit through information provision in 2025?

*Please focus on the legal and policy decisions as well as major practical developments rather than providing a detailed list of projects.*

*Note: examples of this are policy decisions to undertake new information campaigns launched, websites, new projects with grass-roots NGOs or involving the diaspora, etc.*

**Development:** The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) information campaigns<sup>159</sup> "PARIM II" in Pakistan, "MIRAMI" in Iraq and the "Pathways EMR-WBR" project, implemented with the participation and co-financing of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, ended in April/May 2025. The Federal Ministry of the Interior, together with other partners, participated in new submissions under an "AMIF Union Action Call" for information campaigns. In November 2025, three of these submissions were selected by the European Commission, namely the follow-up projects "PARIM III", "MIRAMI II" and "New Pathways to Resilience", which build on the content and methodology of the predecessor projects. Implementation is scheduled to begin in the first half of 2026.<sup>160</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of the projects is to provide persons in countries of origin and transit with fact-based information on the risks of irregular migration, such as migrant smuggling or dangers along migration routes. In addition, the framework conditions in European destination countries, as well as regular migration alternatives and prospects in countries and regions of origin and transit, are to be communicated.<sup>161</sup>

**Driver:** The background is the intention to counter migration-related misinformation and disseminate fact-based counter-narratives. In this context, information campaigns are regarded as a central component of international migration policy.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>159</sup> The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is an EU financial instrument for measures taken by EU Member States in the areas of asylum, migration, and integration (Federal Chancellery, n.d.a).

<sup>160</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/A/5/c (International Migration Communication and Research), 21 January 2026.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

### 9.2.3 Cooperation with third countries to prevent irregular migration

Q74. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to establishing cooperation with new or existing partner third countries in 2025 to prevent irregular migration? Please indicate which aspect of migration management is referred to, e.g. border management, anti-smuggling, etc.

*Note to observer countries: please also report from the perspective of a sending country, with regard to agreements between your country and EU Member States, if applicable.*

**Development:** In 2025, the Federal Ministry of the Interior took further steps to establish comprehensive cooperation with third countries to prevent irregular migration and to implement innovative solutions in the external dimension of migration. The Federal Ministry of the Interior considers asylum procedures in safe third countries and return centres to be particularly important elements of a sustainable migration and asylum system. Accordingly, the Federal Minister of the Interior engaged in close exchanges with European Union Member States, the European Commission and international organizations, and advocated for corresponding amendments to Union law (see also Q18 and Q89) in order to create a legal basis for the implementation of innovative solutions. In this context, the Federal Minister for European and International Affairs and the Federal Minister of the Interior signed a joint letter by ministers of the interior and foreign affairs from a total of 19 European Union Member States to the European Commission. In this letter of 16 December 2025, a stronger focus was called for on innovative solutions, as defined in the letter, in close partnership with third countries in order to sustainably prevent irregular migration to Europe. The priorities of the ministerial letter concerned financing issues, the role of European Union agencies in implementation and coherent migration diplomacy.<sup>163</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of the initiative was to advocate for sustainable measures against irregular migration and for stronger cooperation with third countries.<sup>164</sup>

**Driver:** The background was the intention, through a joint initiative of ministers of the interior and foreign affairs, to initiate further common steps at European level and to provide important impetus for discussion.<sup>165</sup>

**Development:** In 2025, migration policy cooperation with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was intensified, including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on 15 October 2025 between the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the British Embassy in Austria. In the Memorandum of Understanding, both sides agreed on the secondment of a British liaison officer to the Joint Coordination Platform<sup>166</sup> in order to strengthen political dialogue and operational cooperation in addressing

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> For details on the Joint Coordination Platform, see Ebner, 2022:37,39f.

common migration policy challenges, particularly in the context of the Western Balkans.<sup>167</sup>

**Objective:** The objective was to support bilateral cooperation on migration-related matters and to strengthen international cooperation and the information exchange for the prevention of irregular migration, particularly in the areas of asylum, border management, return and combating migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans.<sup>168</sup>

**Driver:** The background to this Memorandum of Understanding was the increasing strategic interest of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in migration policy cooperation following its withdrawal from the European Union and in the stabilization of migration-related developments along the Western Balkan route.<sup>169</sup>

### 9.3 Preventing irregular stays

Q75. Were there any legal or policy developments introduced in 2025 regarding monitoring of or sanctions against misuse of legal migration pathways for work, study or family reunification (including monitoring the effects of visa-free regimes in your country)?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q76. Were there any other legal or policy developments aimed at preventing irregular stay and combatting facilitation of irregular stay, including disincentives and sanctions in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q77. Were there any legal or policy developments in 2025 aimed at preventing employment of irregularly staying migrants, including developments related to sanctions against employers and other relevant aspects (inspections, complaints, back-payments, temporary residence permits) under the Employers Sanctions Directive (2009/52/EC)?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 9.4 Access to services and legal solutions for irregularly staying migrants

Q78. Were there any legal or policy developments for irregularly staying migrants in relation to 1) legal solutions (tolerated stays, regularisations) 2) access to rights (e.g. education, healthcare) in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

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<sup>167</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Joint Coordination Platform, 22 January 2026.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

## **9.5 Other developments**

Q79. Were there any other legal or policy developments regarding irregular migration (i.e. developments not specifically tied to one of the categories or topics already covered above) in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 10. TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

*Note: the section covers mainstream measures that also impact third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings as well as measures specifically aimed at third-country national victims.*

### 10.1 National strategic policy developments

Q80. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding the prevention and/or the fight against trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals (e.g. new legal or institutional framework, national action plans or national strategies introduced) during 2025?

**Development:** The current National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (2024–2027) provides for the development of a national referral mechanism based on existing instruments (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2024:37). According to the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, a newly established perspective working group within the Task Force to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings made decisive progress in 2025 and developed a concept for a national referral mechanism, which is currently being finalized.<sup>170</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of the National Referral Mechanism is to contribute to the early identification of trafficked persons and to provide them with the necessary protection without delay.<sup>171</sup>

**Driver:** The drafting of the concept was prompted by European Union legal requirements,<sup>172</sup> providing for the implementation of a National Referral Mechanism in the European Union Member States by 15 July 2026.<sup>173</sup>

### 10.2 Prevention of trafficking in human beings

Q81. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to the prevention of trafficking in human beings in 2025? Please indicate whether the development concerns detection and/or identification of victims?

*Note: any other developments (not legal or policy) are to be reported in subsection 10.3.*

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### 10.3 Detection and identification of victims

Q82. Were there any developments in relation to the detection and identification of third-country national victims (including applicants for international protection but excluding beneficiaries of temporary protection) in 2025?

<sup>170</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Department IV.2 (Visa, Border, Residence, and Asylum Matters, Migration, Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings), 21 January 2026.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. OJ. L series.

<sup>173</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Department IV.2 (Visa, Border, Residence, and Asylum Matters, Migration, Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings), 21 January 2026.

## a. Training and awareness raising

**Development:** On 14 August 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior presented the 2024 situation report on migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025b). The report shows that in 2024 there was an increase both in the number of perpetrators and victims. A total of 36 persons were recorded on suspicion of trafficking in human beings and 31 persons on suspicion of cross-border prostitution trafficking. In total, 45 persons were identified as victims of trafficking and 19 persons as victims of cross-border prostitution trafficking. Six minors who were victims of trafficking in human beings were identified. According to statistics, in 2024 there were 19 victims of cross-border prostitution trafficking (Art. 217 of the Criminal Code)<sup>174</sup> and 10 victims who were sexually exploited in the context of trafficking in human beings (Art. 104a of the Criminal Code).<sup>175</sup> Sexual exploitation and labour exploitation were therefore the two almost equally predominant forms of exploitation in 2024. According to the report, most victims originated from lower-income European Union or third countries (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025d:26, n.d.b).

**Objective:** The annual report served within the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the provincial police directorates as a supporting instrument for operational and strategic decision-making and coordination measures (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025d:7).

**Driver:** The report was prompted by reflection on strategic thinking, international cooperation and operational efficiency as guiding principles in combating organized crime (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025d:4).

**Development:** On 16 October 2025, the Vienna Conference against Trafficking in Human Beings took place on the occasion of the European Union Anti-Trafficking Day. Under the motto "Resilient together: Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings in Times of Crisis", the event addressed how the resilience of vulnerable groups to the risks of trafficking in human beings can be strengthened (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2024:19, 2025e).

**Objective:** The objective of the conference was to raise public awareness of trafficking in human beings (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2024:19).

**Driver:** As provided for in the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, the Vienna Conference against Trafficking in Human Beings is held annually on the occasion of the European Union Anti-Trafficking Day (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2024:19).

<sup>174</sup> Criminal Code, FLG. No. 60/1974 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 50/2025.

<sup>175</sup> In Austria, both persons affected by Art. 104a of the Criminal Code and persons falling under Art. 217 of the Criminal Code are considered victims of human trafficking. For details, see Stiller, 2021:8.

b. Measures on cooperation between national authorities

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

c. Measures on cooperation between (Member) States

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

d. Other

**Development:** From 1 to 6 June 2025, the international operation "Global Chain" against trafficking in human beings was carried out under the leadership of Austria and Romania. According to the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 209 potential victims – mostly women aged 18 and over who were sexually exploited or forced into social benefit fraud – were identified and supported in Austria. In addition, 10 persons were arrested in Austria who were allegedly involved in trafficking in human beings (Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 2025a).

**Objective:** According to a press release by the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, the objective of the operation was to dismantle criminal structures, protect victims and initiate follow-up investigations (Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 2025a).

**Driver:** As a global phenomenon, trafficking in human beings can only be combated at a global level and in an international context (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, n.d.; Stiller, 2021:1). The operation, which was coordinated by Europol, Frontex and INTERPOL, and led to a total of 520 arrests, involved 43 countries (Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 2025a).

**Development:** In the period from 22 to 28 September 2025, Austria participated in the "EMPACT Action Days Labour/Agri 2025" against labour exploitation (Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 2025c). In the course of the investigations, 20 potential victims of trafficking in human beings were identified and a total of five suspects, including third-country nationals and European Union citizens, were identified (Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 2025c).

**Objective:** The objective of the campaign was to identify and specifically combat the most prevalent forms of labour exploitation in the participating States (Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 2025c).

**Driver:** Austria's participation took place as part of the EMPACT Joint Action Days. In the course of the operation, law enforcement, border control, labour and financial authorities across Europe joined forces to detect and combat labour exploitation and trafficking in human beings. A particular focus was placed on trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation, with special emphasis on the agricultural sector and the exploitation of non-European Union citizens and refugees (Criminal Intelligence Service Austria, 2025c).

**Development:** On 7 October 2025, it was announced that an internationally operating trafficking in human beings organization had been dismantled as part of operation “Bogotá” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025u).

**Objective:** The objective was to combat trafficking in human beings and to signal that perpetrators will be held accountable, including through cross-border cooperation between authorities (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025u).

**Driver:** The trigger was that a Colombian-Turkish-Romanian-Uruguayan-Austrian criminal group had, in previous years, transported 45 Colombian women to Austria via Istanbul and forced them into prostitution. Various Austrian authorities had been investigating the group of perpetrators since September 2022. After the public prosecutor’s office issued international arrest warrants in April 2023, the suspected Turkish main perpetrator and two accomplices from Romania and Austria fled to Türkiye to continue operating from there. In the summer of 2024, meetings took place in Istanbul and Ankara between Austrian liaison officers and Turkish authorities, which in February 2025 led to the arrest of two female suspects. In parallel, Austrian investigators travelled to Bogotá in March 2025, where five perpetrators were arrested on 5 September 2025 as part of a coordinated action day. Two further perpetrators had already been arrested in Spain (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025u).

Q83. Were there any developments in 2025 in relation to national referral mechanisms (or equivalent systems) for victims of trafficking in human beings?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

#### 10.4 Protection of victims

Q84. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding the provision of a reflection period and/or legal residence for (presumed) third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings during 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

Q85. Were there any developments regarding the provision of information to, assistance to and support of (presumed) third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings during 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

#### 10.5 Cooperation with third countries

Q86. Were there any developments involving cooperation with third countries on the prevention and fight against trafficking in human beings in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### **10.6 Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection**

Q87. Were there any legal policy developments in relation to the fight against trafficking in human beings of beneficiaries of temporary protection in 2025? developments involving cooperation with third countries on the prevention and fight against trafficking in human beings in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

### **10.6 Other developments**

Q88. Were there are any other legal or policy developments in relation to trafficking in human beings in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 11. Return and Readmission

### 11.1 Overarching and cross-cutting developments

Q89. Were there any overarching and/ or crosscutting legal and policy developments regarding return and readmission in 2025?

**Development:** In 2025, members of the Government participated in talks and conferences with European policymakers in which Austria clearly advocated for removals. For example, on 17 March 2025, the Federal Chancellor welcomed the Return Regulation proposed by the European Union Commissioner for Home Affairs and Migration,<sup>176</sup> describing it as an important part of the trend reversal in the European asylum and migration system. The European Union Commissioner stated in this regard that what is needed is not more return decisions but more actual returns (Federal Chancellery, 2025e). In a meeting on 14 July 2025 with the Belgian Minister for Asylum and Migration, Social Integration and Urban Policy, the Federal Minister of the Interior also placed particular emphasis on removals. In addition, in connection with Austria's removal to the Syrian Arab Republic on 3 July 2025 – as the first European Union Member State to do so (see Q91) – the Federal Minister of the Interior emphasized its exemplary role for other European States (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025p). The Austrian removals to the Syrian Arab Republic were also highlighted by the Federal Chancellor at the meeting of the European Political Community on 2 October 2025, where Austria's pioneering role in this regard was mentioned (Federal Chancellery, 2025t). At the Council of Ministers of the Interior on 14 October 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior stated that he was pursuing the objective of enabling removals to the Syrian Arab Republic from across Europe, which would require close cooperation and strong alliances within Europe (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025w).

**Objective:** The objective was to present the position of Austrian policymakers.

**Driver:** The trigger was the Federal Minister of the Interior's desire to continue "a consistent, tough and fair asylum policy" with removals and expulsions from the country (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025r).

**Development:** In connection with returns and return centres, a number of statements were made in 2025 by Austrian policymakers, as well as discussions with members of the governments of other European Union Member States in 2025. Following a working meeting with the German Federal Minister of the Interior, the Federal Minister of the Interior stated on 16 May 2025 that removals were necessary and that Austria and Germany would further intensify their cooperation on removals to Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025m). Similarly, on 19 May 2025, following a meeting with his French counterpart, the Federal Minister of the Interior stated that consistent

<sup>176</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC.

returns are essential components of the common European asylum system and that he clearly supports the establishment of return centres (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025n). The establishment of external centres was also raised by the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family following a working meeting with the Italian Minister for European Affairs on 23 June 2025 (Federal Chancellery, 2025l). The Federal Chancellor also expressed support on 27 June 2025, during a joint press conference with the German Federal Chancellor, for stronger cooperation with countries of origin and transit, as well as for the establishment of return centres and the implementation of a “safe third country concept” (Federal Chancellery, 2025o). The concept of safe third countries is also shared with France, as is the position on returns, procedures at the external borders and the common asylum and migration pact, as the Federal Chancellor stated on 18 July 2025 following a working lunch with the President of the French Republic (Federal Chancellery, 2025r). Ahead of the Council of Ministers of the Interior on 14 October 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior stated that discussions should also address return centres outside Europe and asylum procedures in third countries (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025w). With regard to asylum procedures outside Europe, there is also alignment with Sweden, as the Federal Minister of the Interior stated on 20 October 2025 after a working meeting with the Swedish Minister for Migration. Both countries also support enabling removals to Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025y). Finally, ahead of the Council of the European Union (Justice and Home Affairs) on 8 December 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior stated that the European Union asylum and migration pact must bring about a shift in migration policy at European level. To that end, it is necessary to jointly develop the legal framework for return centres and asylum procedures outside Europe (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025af).

**Objective:** The objective was to present the position of Austrian policymakers.

**Driver:** The background to Austria’s position on asylum procedures and return centres outside Europe was the expectation that these measures would “make the systems stricter, more flexible and fairer” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025i).

**Development:** On 22 May 2025, the Federal Chancellor signed, together with the Heads of State or Government of eight other European Union Member States, an open letter<sup>177</sup> advocating a discussion on the interpretation of the ECHR (Federal Chancellery, 2025k). The Federal Chancellor’s initiative was welcomed in particular by members of his political party. The Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family welcomed the initiative as a means of enabling more effective removal of asylum applicants who have committed criminal offences (Federal Chancellery, 2025i). Further working meetings on this topic followed, including on 23 June 2025 with the Italian Minister for European Affairs (Federal Chancellery, 2025l). The Federal Minister of the Interior also considered the Europe-wide debate on a reinterpretation of the ECHR to be

<sup>177</sup> See also Prime Minister of Denmark et al., 2025.

appropriate, noting that it had been interpreted very broadly, which had led to decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, particularly in the field of asylum policy, that were difficult to comprehend (Parliament Austria, 2025t). He therefore held talks on 19 November 2025 with the Italian Minister of the Interior, during which the “contemporary interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights” was also discussed (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025ad).

**Objective:** According to the Federal Chancellor and the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Family, the objective of the initiative was to address migration-related challenges on the basis of the rule of law. “Innovative solutions” were to be considered and a practicable balance between protection needs and public security was to be found in order to remove foreigners who have been convicted of crimes by final judgement from the country (Federal Chancellery, 2025i, 2025a).

**Driver:** The background to the initiative was the aim of finding a “contemporary interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025ad) to strengthen the courts (Federal Chancellery, 2025k) as well as enable more effective removals (Federal Chancellery, 2025i).

Q90. Were there any legal or policy developments on the digitalisation of the return procedure and/or the use of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence in 2025?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 11.2 Forced return

Q91. Were there any legal or policy developments in relation to forced return of irregular migrants and unsuccessful international protection applicants in 2025?

**Development:** On 3 July 2025, Austria removed, for the first time since 2011, a Syrian national convicted of a criminal offence in Austria to the Syrian Arab Republic (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025a). A few days later, on 7 July 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior met with his Jordanian counterpart to discuss, during a working meeting, the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the framework conditions for the return of Syrian refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025o). Two further removals of persons convicted of criminal offences in Austria to the Syrian Arab Republic followed on 18 September 2025 and 2 October 2025 (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025s, 2025t). The latter took place after the European Court of Human Rights lifted, on 23 September, its interim measure prohibiting the removal of the man, which it had imposed in August 2025 and extended in September 2025. The European Court of Human Rights found that it had not been established that the man would suffer a real and immediate risk of irreparable harm to his rights under Art. 2 and Art. 3 ECHR (right to life and prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment) in the event of removal (European Court of Human Rights, 2025).

**Objective:** The objective was, inter alia, to enforce issued return decisions (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025a).

**Driver:** The Austrian action was prompted by the intention of the Federal Minister of the Interior to remove convicted offenders to the Syrian Arab Republic “as announced, in a continued consistent manner” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025t).

**Development:** On 2 September 2025, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Somali authorities, removed two men convicted of criminal offences in Austria to Somalia for the first time in approximately 20 years. According to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Austria is one of the first States in Europe to have carried out removals to Somalia. On the same day, the Federal Minister of the Interior and the German Federal Minister of the Interior discussed how future removals from Austria and Germany to various States could be carried out more efficiently (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025r).

**Objective:** The objective was to continue what the Federal Minister of the Interior described as a “firm and fair asylum policy” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025r).

**Driver:** In connection with the removal, the Federal Minister of the Interior emphasized that removals were part of “a firm and fair asylum policy” that will continue to be implemented consistently in the future (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025r).

**Development:** In autumn 2025, three Afghan nationals were removed from Austria to Afghanistan. At the beginning of the year, representatives of the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum had held working discussions at operational and technical level with the Afghan administration. A further meeting with the Afghan administration took place in Vienna in September 2025, during which representatives of the Afghan de facto authorities participated in the identification of a total of 30 persons in order to enable removals to Afghanistan (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025z; Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025c).<sup>178</sup> At this identification meeting, men convicted of criminal offences were presented to the authorities’ representatives, identified and issued with assurances of substitutive travel documents. The first removal since the Taliban assumed power in summer 2021 took place on 21 October 2025 (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025z). Further removals to Afghanistan followed on 9 November 2025 and 18 December 2025 (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025d; Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025ac, 2025ag).<sup>179</sup>

**Objective:** The objective was to implement what the Federal Minister of the Interior had announced as the “removal of convicted offenders to Afghanistan” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025z).

<sup>178</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/B/10 (Return, Reintegration, and Quality Development), 22 January 2026.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

**Driver:** Regarding the background to the removals to Afghanistan, the Federal Chancellor stated that there is “zero tolerance towards persons who have forfeited their right of residence through criminal offences” and that these persons must leave Austria (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025z).

Q92. Were there any developments at national level regarding participation in Joint Return Operations in 2025?

**Development:** In 2025, several charter removals were again carried out, either organized by Austria or with Austria’s participation. For example, on 22 October 2025, five Nigerian nationals were flown out of Austria as part of a charter operation carried out by Frontex (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025aa). On 28 October 2025, a total of 11 persons were removed in a charter operation organized by Austria; six of them were forcibly removed (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025ab).<sup>180</sup>

**Objective:** The objective was to remove persons concerned from the territory.

**Driver:** Regarding the removals, the Federal Minister of the Interior stated that they were part of a “strict, firm and fair asylum policy”, which was necessary “to make Europe more robust” (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025aa). In addition, removals “to countries of origin or back to other European countries” are necessary where Austria is not responsible (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025ab).

### 11.3 (Assisted) voluntary return and reintegration

Q93. Were there any legal or policy developments with regard to (assisted) voluntary return, including return and reintegration counselling, in 2025?

**Development:** Since 2 June 2025, general reintegration assistance for returnees to the Syrian Arab Republic has been provided under the European Union Reintegration Programme (EURP) implemented by Frontex (Federal Ministry of the Interior, n.d.c).<sup>181</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of this offer is to enable voluntary return to the country of origin (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025b).

**Driver:** Voluntary return is a top priority for the Federal Ministry of the Interior and, in line with an effective and human return policy and the European Return Directive, constitutes the cornerstone of Austria’s return strategy (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2024a).

**Development:** Since 9 December 2025, general reintegration assistance for returnees to Afghanistan has been provided under the European Union Reintegration Programme (EURP) implemented by Frontex (Federal Ministry of the Interior, n.d.a).

**Objective:** The objective of this offer is to enable voluntary return to the country of origin (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025b).

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

**Driver:** Voluntary return is a top priority for the Federal Ministry of the Interior and, in line with an effective and human return policy and the European Return Directive, constitutes the cornerstone of Austria's return strategy (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2024a).

Q94. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding reintegration measures in 2025?

*Note: please also include developments in relation to your participation in Frontex EU Reintegration Programme.*

**Development:** From July to September 2025, families and vulnerable returnees were supported in their reintegration in the Syrian Arab Republic through a bilaterally established reintegration project of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The planned quota (places for 34 principal applicants) had already been fully utilized by the end of September 2025.<sup>182</sup>

**Objective:** The objective of this offer was to enable voluntary return to the country of origin (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025b).

**Driver:** Voluntary return is a top priority for the Federal Ministry of the Interior and, in line with an effective and human return policy and the European Return Directive, constitutes the cornerstone of Austria's return strategy (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2024a).

## 11.4 Detention

Q95. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding, detention, alternatives to detention of irregular migrants and unsuccessful international protection applicants in 2025, including minors and families with children?

a. Detention

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

b. Alternatives to detention

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

## 11.5 Cooperation with countries of origin and transit

Q96. Were there any legal or policy developments regarding cooperation with third countries in 2025 on return and reintegration management?

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

**Development:** A bilateral readmission agreement was concluded with Kazakhstan on 28 February 2025 and with Mongolia on 26 May 2025. In addition, non-binding agreements on returns were further pursued.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/A/5/a (EU Migration Affairs), 21 January 2026.

**Objective:** The objective of the agreements is to make return preparation and the implementation of returns of nationals of the respective contracting State who are obliged to leave Austria more efficient.<sup>184</sup>

**Driver:** The background was the plan set out in the Federal Government's programme to conclude additional bilateral readmission agreements (see Q1).<sup>185</sup>

*Examples: identification of a TCN and consular cooperation, bilateral readmission agreements, bilateral implementing protocols under EU readmission agreements, etc.*

*Note to observer countries: please also report from the perspective of a sending country, with regard to agreements between your country and EU Member States, if applicable.*

## 11.6 Other developments

Q97. Were there any other legal or policy developments in relation to return and readmission in 2025?

**Development:** In 2025, the project "Strengthening Return Management Systems in the Western Balkans" was launched, establishing a new, structured form of cooperation between participating European Union Member States, international organizations, European Union agencies and the Western Balkan partners in the field of return. It combines measures to improve the European Union law-compliant implementation of forced returns with measures to promote voluntary return. By involving European Union agencies and international organizations and establishing a joint coordination body, regional and operational cooperation in the field of return is systematically strengthened.<sup>186</sup>

**Objective:** The objective is to improve the effectiveness, coordination and European Union law compliance of returns from the region to countries of origin by expanding institutional and operational capacities by July 2029.<sup>187</sup>

**Driver:** The background was persistent deficiencies in the actual implementation of returns and the need for more strongly coordinated European Union support in return management in the region.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Joint Coordination Platform, 22 January 2026.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

## 12. Migration and development

Q98. Were there any developments aimed at facilitating synergies between migration and development in third countries in 2025?

*Note: please report on developments relating to the explicit linkage of the international development cooperation policies of your Member State to migration related issues. An example could be a fellowship scheme allowing students to undertake qualifications in EU countries and apply the learning in their home country. Another example would be development policies explicitly aimed at addressing root causes for forced and/or irregular migration. Developments related to the activities of diaspora communities related to their country of origin and supported by development policy could also be relevant.*

**Development:** On 17 March 2025, the Federal Minister for European and International Affairs announced that humanitarian aid amounting to EUR 19.3 million would be made available to the Syrian Arab Republic (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025c).

**Objective:** According to the Federal Minister for European and International Affairs, the objective was to provide prospects for the Syrian civilian population on the ground and to enable the sustainable return of refugees (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025c).

**Driver:** According to the Federal Minister for European and International Affairs, the trigger was the intention to help the Syrian Arab Republic “get back on its feet” and to provide an economic perspective, which is why Austria, as in previous years, participated in the Brussels Syria Conference in 2025 (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025c).

**Development:** On 25 June 2025, the Federal Minister for European and International Affairs submitted to the Council of Ministers the new Three-Year Programme (2025 to 2027) of Austrian development policy, which was taken note of (Federal Chancellery, n.d.b; Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025b).

**Objective:** The objective of the Three-Year Programme is to contribute to addressing current development policy challenges (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025b). In addition, Art. 23 of the Development Cooperation Act was complied with through the preparation of the Three-Year Programme.<sup>189</sup>

**Driver:** The Federal Government assumes that both internal and cross-border migration will increase worldwide in the coming decades. An increase in root causes of displacement in the coming decades is also foreseeable (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025a:13,14). The Three-Year Programme sets out the strategic cornerstones for a national Austrian development policy reflecting the priorities of the Government programme and addressing current challenges,

<sup>189</sup> Development Cooperation Act, FLG. I No. 49/2002 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 37/2018.

including irregular migration and displacement (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025b).

**Development:** On 1 October 2025, the Council of Ministers took note of the report of the Federal Chancellor, the Federal Minister for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport and the Federal Minister for European and International Affairs on the development of a whole-of-government Africa strategy (Federal Chancellery et al., 2025b; Federal Chancellery, n.d.d). The submission of the whole-of-government Africa strategy to the National Council is planned for 2026 (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025d).

**Objective:** The objective of the whole-of-government Africa strategy is, inter alia, to create peace, reduce terrorism and irregular migration and provide partnership-based support in building stable structures (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025d).

**Driver:** In the submission to the Council of Ministers it was stated that, from an Austrian perspective, a prosperous Africa in which peace prevails and which develops dynamically and sustainably is in the interests of Austria, the European Union and the international community. Conversely, crises and conflicts in Africa also affect Austria (Federal Chancellery et al., 2025b:2). In addition to economic aspects, which are particularly relevant for an export-oriented country like Austria, the continent is also relevant from a security perspective, as without stability on the continent migration to Europe will not decrease (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025d). One of the core elements of the Strategy therefore concerns the area of "Migration & Mobility", according to which irregular migration is to be reduced, migrant smuggling combated and returns made more efficient (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, 2025d). At the same time, protection capacities on the ground are to be expanded and lawful migration and skills-oriented mobility are to be enabled. It is envisaged, in particular, to conclude new migration- and readmission-related agreements and to implement existing agreements of this kind as effectively as possible (Federal Chancellery et al., 2025b:3).

Q99. Were there any developments regarding the creation of opportunities for third-country nationals to work in your country under circular migration in 2025

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

*Note to observer countries for question 101: please also report from the perspective of a sending country, with regard to agreements between your country and EU Member States, if applicable.*

Q100. Were there any developments in policies, legislation and activities related to remittances in your country in 2025? Please report only framework or significant activities showing new approaches or changing trends.

No relevant developments occurred in 2025.

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