

# AUSTRIA

## ASYLUM AND MIGRATION OVERVIEW 2025

Martin Stiller

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# OVERVIEW 2025

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## FOREWORD



Dear Readers!

This 2025 Asylum and Migration Overview – now the twenty-second report of its kind – provides a fact-based picture of developments in Austria's migration policy over the past year. These developments are not only documented but also contextualized through diverse perspectives, incorporating various voices from politics, the media, and civil society, in order to offer you a comprehensive overview.

The developments outlined in the report demonstrate just how dynamic the field of migration policy is. As the report indicates, there were a number of changes in Austria in 2025, for example regarding the right to family reunification or the implementation of removals. At the same time, there are also continuities, such as the ongoing relevance of the issue of recruiting international skilled workers and related measures to enhance Austria's attractiveness as a destination.

A large number of experts contributed to the creation of this report. I would like to extend my special thanks to the experts from the relevant departments at the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, and the Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy, and Tourism, who provided valuable input to [Austria's contribution to the European Commission's Asylum and Migration Overview](#), which forms the basis of this report. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Chief of Mission of the IOM Country Office for Austria, Marian Benbow Pfisterer, as well as to my colleagues, in particular the report's author, Martin Stiller, and Leila Hadj Abdou, under whose expert guidance this report was produced.

On behalf of the entire EMN Austria team, I wish you, dear readers, an informative read! I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to a wide range of additional analyses on migration and asylum in Austria produced by the European Migration Network, including past Asylum and Migration Overviews. You can find these on our website at [www.emn.at](http://www.emn.at). There, you can also subscribe to our newsletter to stay up to date on the latest EMN publications and events.

Best regards,

Saskia Heilemann

*(Head of the Department of Policy Research and Migration Law, IOM Austria  
& National Coordinator of EMN Austria)*

## SUMMARY

The Asylum and Migration Overview 2025 was prepared as part of the annual reporting by the National Contact Points in the European Migration Network (EMN). The report outlines the most important political and legal developments in the areas of asylum and migration in Austria in 2025. These are contextualized with information on civil society initiatives and public debates. Infobox 1 summarizes three key developments in Austria in 2025.

### Infobox 1: Key developments in 2025

1. In 2025, Austria suspended family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection. To this end, amendments were made to the Asylum Act 2005 to subsequently issue a regulation suspending the six-month decision-making period and the obligation to decide on applications for family reunification.
2. In the second half of 2025, Austria carried out removals to the Syrian Arab Republic for the first time since 2011, to Somalia for the first time in about 20 years, and to Afghanistan for the first time since the Taliban took power in the summer of 2021.
3. In 2025, the Federal Government presented a plan to introduce a mandatory integration programme, based on the pillars of the German language, employment, and values.



### Political, legal, and institutional developments

Migration was a key issue in 2025 during the formation of the new Federal Government. The change in the Federal Government and the associated new government programme led to numerous initiatives in the areas of asylum, regular migration, integration, and return. At the same time, budget cuts in several ministries had an impact on some migration-related policy areas and measures.



### Migration for employment purposes

As in previous years, the demand for skilled workers continued to shape labour market policies in Austria in 2025. For example, amendments to the University Act 2002 facilitated the recruitment of researchers from the United States of America. In addition, the Austrian Business Agency underwent a strategic realignment as part of the international skilled workers initiative. Furthermore, the newly created “cross-border commuter”

Temporary Residence Permit facilitated cross-border employment for third-country nationals from Austria's neighbouring countries. Overall, these measures were aimed at simplifying and expediting the admission procedure and making the location more attractive. Furthermore, the Settlement Regulation – which sets the number of residence permits subject to quotas for the year 2025 – and the Seasonal Quota Regulation for the temporary employment of foreign nationals in tourism and in agriculture and forestry were updated. In addition – as in previous years – the so-called list of shortage occupations was updated. This list includes occupations in which there are no more than 1.5 job seekers for every open position, and it serves as the basis for recruiting skilled workers from third countries to fill positions in shortage occupations.



### **International protection, right of residence for displaced persons, basic care**

number of applications for international protection declined again in 2025, the majority of applications not based on new arrivals in Austria. The majority so-called “non-initial” applications, such as those from children born subsequently or follow-up applications related to already concluded proceedings (multiple applications). A central political issue was the halting of family reunification, which was implemented through legislative changes and regulations.

This step sparked intense legal and social debates, particularly regarding concerns about fundamental and human rights. The number of Ukrainians with temporary protection in Austria remained high in 2025, and legislative changes have, since November 2025, linked this group's eligibility for family allowance and childcare allowance to gainful employment or registration with the Public Employment Service. In basic care – under which foreign nationals in need of aid and protection primarily receive benefits aimed at covering basic daily needs (such as food, shelter, and medical care) – there was a significant decline in the number of people receiving care. At the same time, new legal regulations in the provinces of Vienna and Tyrol suggest an expected increase in the number of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status receiving basic care. The provinces of Burgenland and Vorarlberg also introduced work requirements or integration-related conditions for applicants for international protection receiving basic care.



### **Irregular migration, border policy, and return**

To reduce irregular migration, the Federal Government continued to rely on border controls at several internal borders, which were therefore extended again in 2025. Return statistics for 2025 show a slight increase in departures (both forced and voluntary), with Austria placing particular emphasis on removals to Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Somalia. These removals to those countries – the first in years – triggered some controversial reactions, particularly due to human rights concerns. At the political level, a

European debate was initiated regarding a reinterpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights, which also sparked discussions. Additionally, Austria supported the plan to conduct international protection procedures and establish return centres outside the European Union.



## Integration

In 2025, the Federal Government presented a plan to introduce a mandatory integration programme, based on the pillars of the German language, employment, and values. The programme was assessed by stakeholders in the integration sector as partly positive and partly critical. While data from Statistics Austria from 2025 show a strong sense of belonging to Austria among immigrants, Austrian citizens perceived coexistence with immigrants as a challenge, according to a survey commissioned by the Austrian Integration

Fund. A political campaign based on these survey results triggered tensions within the coalition as well as public criticism. As part of integration measures in 2025, German language support programmes were further expanded, additional teachers were funded, and plans were made to further develop German language support classes. In addition, orientation classes were introduced for newly arrived school-age children with little prior schooling. A headscarf ban for female pupils under the age of 14 was enshrined in law following intense debates.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Asylum and Migration Overview 2025 was produced by the European Migration Network (EMN),<sup>1</sup> which was established by Council Decision 2008/381/EC in May 2008.<sup>2</sup> The EMN provides up-to-date, objective, reliable, and comparable information on migration and asylum issues to support policy-making at the European Union (EU) and Member State levels and to make this information available to the general public. This report, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2025, is the twenty-second Asylum and Migration Overview (formerly: Annual Report on Migration and Asylum)<sup>3</sup> by EMN Austria. The aim of the report is to provide an overview of the most important political and legal developments in the field of migration and asylum in Austria. It also offers a summary of the political and public debates surrounding these developments.

In compiling the Asylum and Migration Overview 2025, EMN Austria followed the common guidelines developed by the EMN to facilitate the comparability of results across all Member States. The terminology used in this report is based (unless otherwise indicated) on the EMN Glossary 10.0 (European Commission, 2025b).

To enable precise reporting and comparability, the Asylum and Migration Overview 2025 reflects key developments and debates defined on the basis of the criteria listed in the reporting guidelines. Such developments relate, for example, to amended or new legislation, strategic developments, fundamental policy changes, as well as developments of high political priority or with significant implications for migrants. It should be noted that developments regarding the implementation of the European Union's Pact on Migration and Asylum (European Commission, 2024) are not covered by this report, as these are part of the European Union's annual Asylum and Migration Report, which was launched for the first time in 2025 (European Commission, 2025a). With regard to public and political debate, the report includes differing opinions exchanged in the Austrian Parliament or among ministries, political parties, and civil society actors, which consequently received broad media coverage. The following sources of information were consulted: press releases and websites of the relevant ministries and authorities, studies, reports, policy documents, draft legislation and enacted laws, court rulings, parliamentary debates, as well as online articles from major daily newspapers (Der Standard, Die Presse, Kurier, ORF.at) in Austria.

This Austrian Asylum and Migration Overview 2025 is based on the "Asylum and Migration Overview 2025 in Austria: Contribution to the Asylum and Migration Overview of the European Commission" (EMN Austria, 2026). The aforementioned contribution provides a more detailed account of the most relevant developments in the field of asylum and migration in Austria in 2025 and should be understood as a supplement to the present Asylum and Migration Overview, which in turn addresses a limited number of developments and supplements them with political and social debates.

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1 For more information about EMN Austria, visit [www.emn.at](http://www.emn.at).

2 Council Decision of 14 May 2008, establishing a European Migration Network (2008/381/EC), OJ 131/7. Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>.

3 Previous reports from 2004 to 2024 are available at [www.emn.at](http://www.emn.at).

This report was prepared by Martin Stiller (Legal Associate, IOM Country Office for Austria) under the supervision of Leila Hadj Abdou (Deputy Head of the Department of Policy Research and Migration Law, IOM Country Office for Austria). Many thanks to Marian Benbow Pfisterer (Chief of Mission, IOM Country Office for Austria) and Saskia Heilemann (Head of the Department of Policy Research and Migration Law, IOM Country Office for Austria) for their additional comments. Special thanks also go to Ida Hamacher and Anna Dreimann (research interns, IOM Country Office for Austria) for their support in preparing the report.

This Asylum and Migration Overview 2025 was prepared in close cooperation with the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

## 2 OVERARCHING POLITICAL, LEGAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS



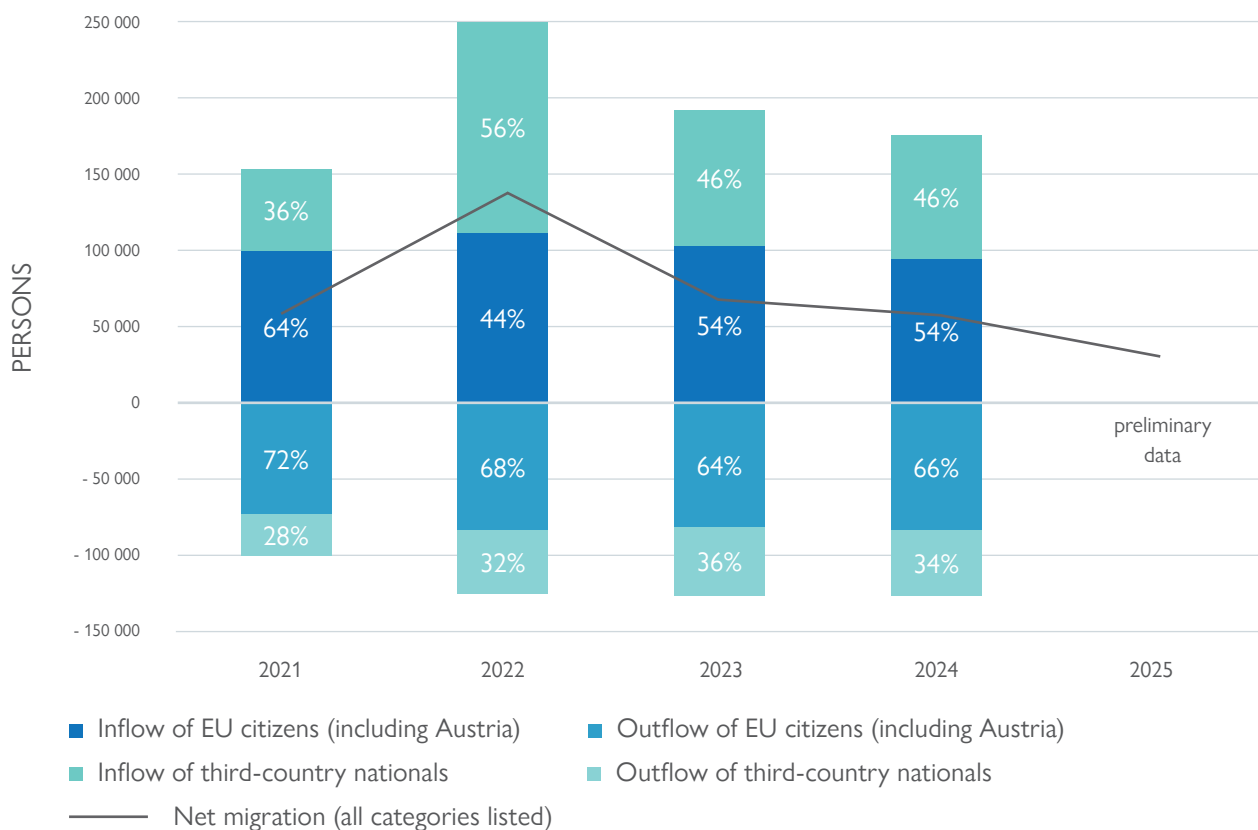
- “Immigration” is the fourth most important issue for the Austrian population
- The new Federal Government’s programme includes a wide range of measures in the area of asylum and migration
- Budget consolidation with implications for the asylum, integration, and migration sectors as well

In the Austrian context, international migration encompasses not only the immigration of third country nationals (through regular migration or refugee migration)<sup>4</sup> and European Union citizens, as well as Austrian citizens living abroad, but also emigration from Austria. Emigration from Austria has accelerated in recent years, as evidenced by the fact that new immigrants are staying in the country for increasingly shorter periods or less frequently, and half of new immigrants have already left Austria after five to six years (Münz and Yaryyeva, 2025:1). However, when examining immigration and emigration in Austria for the year 2025, a positive net migration balance is evident – in line with the trend of the previous 40 years (Statistics Austria, 2025b). Overall, more people moved to Austria than left the country. Since the historic peak in immigration in 2022, triggered by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the number of immigrants has declined steadily, yet the net migration balance remained positive (Statistics Austria, 2025b).<sup>5</sup> This positive net migration balance has been a key contributor to Austria’s population growth for decades. Without this immigration, Austria’s population would, in the long term, decline to the level of the 1950s due to negative birth rates. Above all, the associated decline in the working-age population relative to the population of retirement age would have far-reaching consequences (Borrmann, 2024; Statistics Austria, 2025c).

4 For details on migration to Austria for employment purposes, see [Chapter 3](#); for details on refugee migration, see [Chapter 4](#).

5 For the year 2025, only preliminary data is available.

**Figure 1: Migration flows and net migration (immigration to Austria minus emigration from Austria) by nationality group, 2021–2025**



Source: Statistics Austria, n.d.c, n.d.d.  
 Note: The 2025 data is preliminary.

During the observation period, data across all categories shown indicate that more men than women moved to Austria and left the country. The only exception was 2022, when more third-country nationals women moved to Austria than third-country nationals men (Statistics Austria, n.d.d). This can be explained by the influx of migrants to Austria triggered by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, which resulted in 77 percent of adult Ukrainians residing in Austria with temporary residence permits at the end of December 2022 being female (Heilemann, 2023). For the year 2025, only preliminary data is available. Based on this data, a similar result to that of the previous year can be expected. In 2024, a total of 164,916 people moved to Austria. Of these, 13,658 (about 8%) were returning Austrians and 69,711 (about 42%) were European Union (EU) citizens moving from other EU Member States, accounting for more than half of all immigration to Austria. The largest groups were German (19,438), Romanian (16,120), and Hungarian nationals (13,128). In total, 81,547 third country nationals accounted for less than half (around 49%) of all immigration to Austria (Statistics Austria, n.d.d).

In 2025, the Austrian public viewed immigration as the fourth most important issue for Austria, with 16 percent of respondents citing it as such<sup>6</sup> – as shown by a survey conducted in the fall of 2025 among 1,003 people as part of the European Commission’s “Standard Eurobarometer”.<sup>7</sup> More important to respondents were rising prices/inflation/cost of living (48%), the economic situation (24%), and government debt (17%). Although Austrian respondents viewed immigration as the most important issue at the European Union level (23%), only 15 percent of respondents supported the allocation of European Union budget funds for migration (European Commission, 2025c:2,4).

Immigration has been a central issue in political party competition in Austria for decades (Hadj Abdou, 2023) and remained a relevant topic on the political agenda in 2025. Consequently, the government programme of the new Federal Government, sworn in on 3 March 2025, includes a series of measures on asylum and migration (Office of the Federal President, 2025).<sup>8</sup> The new Federal Government – a coalition of the Austrian People’s Party, the Social Democratic Party of Austria, and NEOS – The New Austria and Liberal Forum – set out in its government programme “Jetzt das Richtige tun. Für Österreich“ (“Doing the Right Thing Now. For Austria”; Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025) in the areas of migration, asylum, and integration, among others, the following objectives, some of which were already implemented by 2025:

- **Regular migration**
  - Strategic development of labour migration and alignment with the current labour market situation through amendments to immigration law, in order to, among other things, promote the immigration of skilled workers in shortage occupations to Austria and to enable additional seasonal labour demand to be met.<sup>9</sup>
  
- **Asylum**
  - Implementation and further development of the Common European Asylum System, with the goal of reducing applications for international protection in Austria “to zero.” Furthermore, in the event of an increase in applications for international protection, the possibility of invoking the European Union emergency clause (Art. 72 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – TFEU)<sup>10</sup> is reserved (Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:74).

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6 This figure is only slightly higher than the European Union average (EU27: 15%; European Commission, 2025c:2).

7 The Standard Eurobarometer is the European Commission’s most important opinion poll. It is conducted twice a year and focuses on monitoring key trends relevant to the European Union as a whole, the European Commission’s priorities, and current socio-political events. Standard Eurobarometer surveys are generally conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews in all EU Member States and several other countries and territories (European Union, n.d.).

8 For details on the results of the National Council election on 29 September 2024, and the topic of “immigration” as an election issue, see Streit, 2025:4.

9 Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreign Nationals), 21 January 2026.

10 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. OJ. C 202.

- **Irregular migration**
  - Comprehensive cooperation with third countries to prevent irregular migration (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:75).
  
- **Return**
  - Conclusion of further bilateral readmission agreements to make voluntary return and removals more efficient (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:129). In addition, removals to the country of origin are to be carried out on the basis of (non-binding) agreements with third countries if the person concerned does not voluntarily comply with their obligation to depart. 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).<sup>11</sup>
  
- **Integration**
  - Introduction of a mandatory integration programme (see [Chapter 6](#)).
  - Simplification, acceleration, and cost-effective structuring of the recognition of previously acquired skills as well as the processing of credential recognition to ensure better integration into the labour market (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:99).
  
- **Migration and development**
  - Strengthening support for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in crisis regions to reduce the causes of flight and migration and to provide on-site assistance. 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).

The implementation of the measures outlined in the government programme regarding asylum, integration, and migration is influenced by a variety of external factors, including the availability of financial resources. A budget deficit was already becoming apparent several months before the National Council election in September 2024, and its resolution also shaped the coalition negotiations held following the election, as the negotiating political parties held differing views on whether the budget consolidation should take place with or without an European Union deficit procedure (ORF.at, 2025a; Trend, 2025). In the government programme, the coalition parties agreed to prevent a European Union deficit procedure (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:17). In the government programme, the coalition parties agreed to prevent a European Union deficit procedure (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:17). With this in mind, the Federal Government initiated the consolidation of public finances with the 2025/2026 budgets and the federal financial framework through 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, 2025b). The cost-cutting measures also affect the budgets of the individual ministries and, consequently, the policy areas listed below:

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<sup>11</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/A/5/a (EU Migration Affairs), 26 May 2026.

- Immigration:** In the area of migration and asylum, the decline in applications for international protection (Parliament Austria - Parliamentary Administration, 2026b:241) 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>12</sup> In this context, an asylum reform is intended to address these issues, notably through the suspension of family reunification (see [Chapter 4](#)), strengthened return measures with European Union support, implementation of the European Union's Pact on Asylum and Migration by June 2026 and the promotion of self-sufficiency among displaced persons from Ukraine (see [Chapter 4](#)). 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, 2025o).
- Integration:** In the area of integration, budget cuts 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).
- 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 cooperation and in allocations to the Austrian Disaster Relief Fund (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2025a:31; Parliament Austria, 2025l). Nevertheless, the budget is still above the 2019 level (Parliament Austria, 2025l).

The Federal Finance Acts of 2025 and 2026 were passed by the National Council without the votes of the opposition parties, the Austrian Freedom Party and the Austrian Green Party (Parliament Austria, n.d.a, n.d.b) and promulgated on 30 June 2025.<sup>13</sup> The Austrian Freedom Party's rejection was based, among other things, on the view that even with a decline in the number of asylum applications, no savings would be possible in the future (Parliament Austria, 2025o). For the Austrian Green Party, one point of criticism was the budget cuts for the Austrian Integration Fund. While they supported the Federal Government's plan to promote integration from day one (see [Chapter 6](#)), they doubted the feasibility of implementation given the shrinking budget and the reduction in German language courses (Parliament Austria, 2025n).

<sup>12</sup> Payments in this category account for more than two-thirds of the total payments (2025: EUR 494 million) under breakdown analysis 18 - Immigration (Parliament Austria - Parliamentary Administration, 2025:7).

<sup>13</sup> Federal Finance Act 2025, FLG. I No. 22/2025; Federal Finance Act 2026, FLG. I No. 23/2025.

### 3 MIGRATION FOR EMPLOYMENT PURPOSES



- Reorientation of the Austrian Business Agency to implement the International Skilled Workers Initiative
- New “cross-border commuter” Temporary Residence Permit to enable labour mobility for third-country nationals residing in a neighbouring country
- Amendment of the University Act 2002 to facilitate the recruitment of researchers from the United States of America

Due to an aging population, as well as factors such as digitalization, artificial intelligence, and the green transition, the European labour market is undergoing a transformation. The consequences are a declining workforce and changing requirements in terms of professional qualifications. It is becoming increasingly clear that the labour supply in the European Union is insufficient to meet the demand for skilled workers in the European Union and in Austria (Ebner and Hadj Abdou, forthcoming; Hadj Abdou and Ebner, 2025:1,4f.). In 2025, Austria was again one of the countries with the highest annual average vacancy rates in the European Union (Eurostat, n.d.c). At the same time, 2025 saw a significant decline in the number of job openings and apprenticeship positions reported to the Public Employment Service. The annual average number of immediately available job openings and apprenticeship positions decreased compared to the previous year (78,844, a decrease of 13.1%, and 6,981, a decrease of 13.6%; Public Employment Service, 2026). Similarly, the number of shortage occupations declined again in 2025.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the number of people seeking employment and apprenticeships increased: in 2025, an annual average of 317,540 people were registered as unemployed with the Public Employment Service (a 6.6% increase compared to the previous year), as well as 9,166 apprenticeship seekers who were immediately available but had not yet received a job offer (a 16.3% increase compared to the previous year). These developments point to an easing of the skilled labour shortage in Austria and reflect the deteriorating labour market situation (unemployment rate in 2025: 7.4%; Public Employment Service, 2026), making it increasingly important to make optimal use of the domestic labour force. As part of the 2025 annual nationwide business survey (“Workforce Radar”)<sup>15</sup> conducted on behalf of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber the valid responses from 2,483 companies were analyzed, revealing that a total of 78 percent (of which 24.5% reported a “mild/minor” shortage) of the companies surveyed are affected by a shortage of labour and skilled workers (Dornmayr and Riepl:3,4,51). This survey also revealed positive trends regarding the shortage of skilled workers, as the proportion of businesses in nearly all sectors that were severely affected (“very severely” or “somewhat severely”) by labour and skilled worker shortages declined compared to 2024 (Dornmayr und Riepl, 2025:5). Austria’s main instrument for recruiting skilled workers

<sup>14</sup> For details see below and Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026, FLG. II No. 316/2025.

<sup>15</sup> For details about the survey and the questionnaire see Dornmayr and Riepl, 2025:3,162.

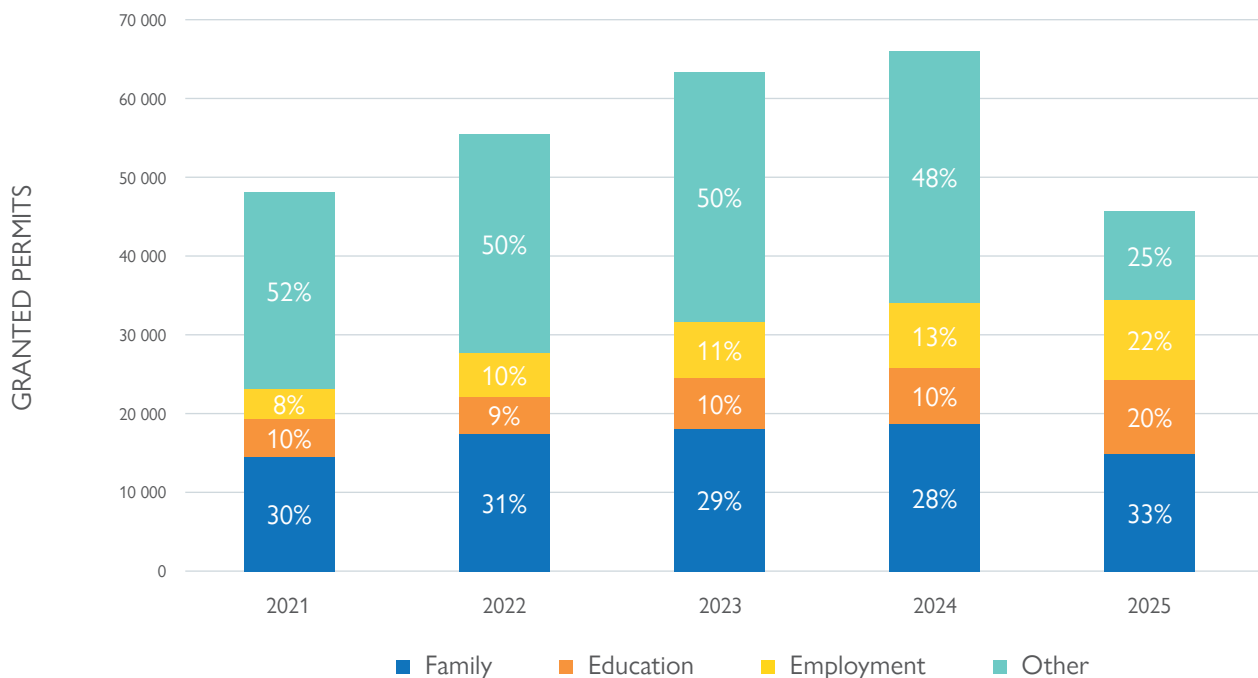
from countries outside the European Union is the Red-White-Red Card. It can be issued for various categories of workers and requires – with the exception of the self-employed category – a concrete job offer. Under the criteria-based immigration system, which is based on a points system, very highly qualified individuals, skilled workers in shortage occupations, other key workers, and startup founders must achieve a minimum number of points (e.g., for age, language skills, previous work experience, and education) to be granted a Red-White-Red Card (Art. 12, 12a, 12b, and 24 Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals). In contrast, graduates of an Austrian university, permanent employees, and self-employed key workers must meet certain requirements but do not need to achieve a minimum number of points (Art. 12b, 12d, and 24 Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals; Hadj Abdou and Ebner, 2025:11).

Unlike refugee migration (see [Chapter 4](#) and [Figure 3](#)), regular migration is viewed as “a desired and positive form of immigration” (Migration Council for Austria, 2018:71). In the context of third countries it is controllable, particularly due to the initial application that must generally be submitted to the competent Austrian representation authority abroad prior to entry into Austria (Art. 21 Settlement and Residence Act)<sup>16</sup> as well as the requirements that must be met for the issuance of residence permits or Temporary Residence Permits. Depending on the specific residence permit, the applicant must, among other things, demonstrate that they have a legal right to housing that meets local standards, have a secure source of income so that their stay does not result in a financial burden, have health insurance that covers all risks and is valid in Austria, or that their stay does not pose a threat to public peace or order (Art. 11 Settlement and Residence Act). In addition, proof of some knowledge of German is required (Art. 21a Settlement and Residence Act).

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<sup>16</sup> Settlement and Residence Act, FLG. I No. 100/2005 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 87/2025.

**Figure 2: Residence permits and Temporary Residence Permits granted under regular migration by purpose of stay, 2021–2025**



Source: Eurostat, n.d.b (data for the years 2021–2024); Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2026b (data for the year 2025).  
 Note: The classification of residence permits and temporary residence permits is carried out by Eurostat and can therefore not be confirmed by the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department VI/A/2 (Residence and Citizenship Matters), 26 May 2026). The percentages for the year 2024 have been rounded, resulting in minor discrepancies and causing the values shown not to add up exactly to 100 percent. The data for the year 2025 is based on the author's classification of initial residence permits and Temporary Residence Permits.

Within the context of regular migration to Austria, the proportion of residence permits issued for the purpose of employment or education has steadily increased in recent years (Figure 2). However, compared to residence permits issued for other reasons, this share is small, whereas across the European Union, residence permits issued for work or education purposes account for the largest share of inflows into the European Union (Eurostat, 2025). With regard to labour migration, the Austrian Federal Government set itself the goal, among other things, 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), strategically developing labour migration, and launching a skilled workers initiative (Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:104,125).

On 1 January 2025, the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025<sup>17</sup> came into effect, which – as in previous years – included a list of occupations designated as shortage occupations.<sup>18,19</sup> Based on this list, foreign nationals who met the relevant criteria (Art. 12a 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 health care and nursing staff, as well as welders and cutting torch operators. 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>20</sup> Nationwide, 29 fewer occupations were listed than in the previous year.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026<sup>22</sup> was published as early as 23 December 2025, designating 64 occupations as shortage occupations nationwide.<sup>23</sup> The shortage occupations in 2026 include, for example, medical doctors, qualified nurses and roofers. By contrast, and unlike under the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025, occupations such as midwives, train drivers and tram drivers are no longer included in the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026.

With a view to the Federal Government’s goal of securing the necessary skilled workers for Austria as part of the strategic development of labour migration in accordance with the situation and trends in the Austrian labour market (Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:36),<sup>24</sup> the EAGLE project was launched on 1 September 2025, and is being implemented by IOM Austria in cooperation with the Federal Chancellery. Among other things, the project aims to train Egyptian skilled workers in metalworking professions within the transport sector according to Austrian standards, thereby improving the labour market prospects of these skilled workers in both countries. Graduates who are to be hired by Austrian companies – particularly as skilled workers in shortage occupations, as defined by the current list of shortage occupations – through the Red-White-Red Card receive comprehensive support. This support includes, among other things, assistance with the process of obtaining a Red-White-Red Card or with travel arrangements. In addition, there are

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17 Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025, FLG. II No. 421/2024.

18 According to Art. 13 para. 1 Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals, shortage occupations are those for which there are no more than 1.5 job seekers registered per open position. Occupations with a job-to-applicant ratio of up to 1.8 may be considered if other objectively verifiable indicators of a shortage are identified, in particular increased training activity by companies, or if the relevant sector of employment exhibits above-average wage growth. Occupations with a job-to-applicant ratio of no more than 1.5 were included in the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2025 (Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreign Nationals), 21 January 2026).

19 It should be noted that the list of shortage occupations is not limited to highly skilled workers, but also includes occupations requiring intermediate-level qualifications as well as apprenticeship-based professions. In any case, applicants must demonstrate that they have completed vocational training comparable to a multi-year apprenticeship in Austria. In some shortage occupations higher education or a university degree may be required (Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreign Nationals), 21 January 2026).

20 In this context, use was made of the option to consider, in the areas of passenger and freight rail transport, occupations necessary for the provision and expansion of public transportation services in support of the mobility transition, regardless of the job-to-applicant ratio (Art. 13 para. 1b 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 Foreign Nationals), 21 January 2026).

21 Regulation for Skilled Workers 2024, FLG. II No. 439/2023.

22 Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026, FLG. II No. 316/2025.

23 For further details on the term “shortage occupations,” see the footnote 18. Occupations with a job-to-applicant ratio of no more than 1.5 were included in the Regulation for Skilled Workers 2026 (Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreign Nationals), 21 January 2026).

24 Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, IAR/International Labour Law Unit, 26 May 2026.

preparatory and orientation courses before departure and after arrival, as well as additional job-related German language courses.<sup>25</sup>

Another significant development in 2025 was the realignment of the Austrian Business Agency to implement the Austrian Federal Government's International Skilled Workers Initiative. The focus is to be placed on those countries that are considered priority countries within the framework of a comprehensive skilled workers 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). Interest groups representing the Austrian business community, such as the Federation of Austrian Industries, also viewed the acceleration and simplification of procedures for the Red-White-Red Card as essential measures not only to successfully recruit internationally qualified workers but also to retain them in the country. However, the Federation of Austrian Industries pointed out that a “genuine culture of welcome” was also needed (Federation of Austrian Industries, 2025).

To close a gap in the admission of foreign nationals to the Austrian labour market and to contribute to addressing the shortage of skilled labour and thereby strengthen the Austrian economy (Parliament Austria, n.d.h:1), an amendment to the Settlement and Residence Act was promulgated on 3 November 2025, introducing the new “cross-border commuter” residence title (Art. 68 Settlement and Residence Act).<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, “third-country nationals who are skilled workers residing in a neighbouring EEA Member State or Switzerland” (Parliament Austria, n.d.h:1) and 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>27</sup> provided that the other requirements<sup>28</sup> are met. The Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals<sup>29</sup> was amended accordingly (Parliament Austria, n.d.h:1). The amendment was passed in the National Council by the governing parties and the opposition Austrian Green Party, while the opposition Austrian Freedom Party rejected the new regulation out of concern regarding irregular immigration (Parliament Austria, 2025r, n.d.g).

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25 Written input: IOM Austria, Labour Mobility and Integration Unit, 21 April 2026.

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

27 According to Art. 2 para. 7 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 Foreign Nationals), 21 January 2026.

28 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 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 Act Governing the Employment of Foreign Nationals).

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

With the aim of meeting the additional demand for seasonal workers in 2026 the Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection issued the Regulation on the Temporary Employment of Foreign Nationals in Tourism and Agriculture and Forestry for 2026 (Seasonal Quota Regulation 2026) on 17 October 2025.<sup>30</sup> As provided for in the Government programme,<sup>31</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>32</sup> (Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2025c; Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection et al., 2025). 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>33</sup> The regulation was intended not only to meet the demand for seasonal workers for the calendar year but also, by promulgating the Regulation in autumn 2025, 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). However, the Austrian Trade Union Federation criticized this measure, arguing that there is a sufficient labour force in Austria, and called for attracting people to work in Austria through fair wages and better working conditions (Austrian Trade Union Federation, 2025).

In the academic sector, the recruitment of researchers from the United States of America was made easier in 2025. An amendment<sup>34</sup> to the University Act 2002,<sup>35</sup> published on 1 July 2025, provides exemptions from the obligation to publicly advertise positions 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 the conclusion of the contract was in the United States of America, between 1 July 2025 and 30 September 2026 (Parliament Austria, 2025k, 2025f:3). In the spring of 2025, research ministers from 13 EU Member States called for a coordinated approach to admitting scientists from the United States of America in a letter to the European Commission. Austria supported this initiative and subsequently enacted the legislative amendment described (Parliament Austria, 2025f:3), with the aim of providing Austrian universities with a framework for admitting scientists from the United States of America and expanding “opportunity hiring” (Parliament Austria, 2025m, 2025f:3). In the National Council, the governing parties and the opposition Austrian Green Party passed this legislative amendment; the opposition Austrian Freedom Party voted against it (Parliament Austria, 2025m). It wanted not only the opportunities but also the risks of the legislative amendment to be taken into account (Parliament Austria - Parliamentary Administration, 2026a:426). According to media reports, by early October 2025, a total of 26 researchers from the United States of America had been recruited for Austrian universities (ORF.at, 2025f).

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30 Seasonal Quota Regulation 2026, FLG. II No. 218/2025.

31 For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:50.

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

33 Written input: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Department IX/B/7 (Employment of Foreign Nationals), 21 January 2026.

34 Amendment to the University Act 2002 and the Education Documentation Act 2020, FLG. I No. 28/2025.

35 University Act 2002, FLG. I No. 120/2002 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 68/2025.

On 18 December 2025 the Federal Government's 2025 Settlement Regulation was promulgated.<sup>36</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 Settlement and Residence Act) applied. 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>37</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 Settlement Regulation 2025 entered into force, because the regulation did not take effect until late in the year (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025d). According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the reduction of 230 residence titles compared with the Settlement Regulation 2024<sup>38</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>39</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, 2025d). The Settlement Regulation 2025 aimed 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 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, 2025d).

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36 Settlement Regulation 2025, FLG. II No. 309/2025.

37 Pursuant to Art. 12 para. 1 Settlement and Residence Act, the initial issuance of a residence permit, as well as any change in the purpose of a valid residence permit, requires, among other things, an available quota spot.

38 Settlement Regulation 2024, FLG. II No. 170/2024.

39 For details, see in particular Ammann and Stiller, 2025:10.

## 4 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION, RIGHT OF RESIDENCE FOR DISPLACED PERSONS, AND BASIC CARE



- Decline in applications for international protection in Austria and suspension of family reunification
- Requirement for applicants for international protection to perform community service, as well as exclusion from the minimum benefit system for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status in two provinces
- Reform of access to family allowance and childcare allowance for displaced persons from Ukraine

In Austria, the Asylum Act 2005<sup>40</sup> regulates various options for granting residence, which can be divided into international protection (asylum status and subsidiary protection status) and the right of residence for displaced persons.

The procedure for obtaining international protection begins with the application for international protection (“asylum application”). Through this application, a foreign national requests permission to be placed under the protection of Austria. The application aims both to grant refugee status and, if refugee status is not granted, to grant subsidiary protection status (Art. 2 para. 1 subpara. 13 Asylum Act 2005). If a person faces persecution in their country of origin within the meaning of the Geneva Refugee Convention,<sup>41</sup> that person must be granted refugee status (Art. 3 para. 1 Asylum Act 2005). As a person granted asylum, the individual is initially granted a temporary residence permit valid for three years, which is extended indefinitely provided that the conditions for initiating a revocation procedure are not met or the revocation procedure is discontinued (Art. 3 para. 4 Asylum Act 2005). If, however, there is no risk of persecution, but there is a real danger in the event of the foreign national’s removal to their country of origin – such as a serious threat to life or physical integrity resulting from arbitrary violence in the context of an international or internal conflict – subsidiary protection status must be granted (Art. 8 para. 1 Asylum Act 2005). A beneficiary of subsidiary protection status is granted a temporary residence permit valid for one year, which is extended for two additional years at a time upon the person’s application if the requirements continue to be met (Art. 8 para. 4 Asylum Act 2005).

If, on the other hand, the application is rejected on both counts, a return decision is generally issued, which obliges the applicant to leave Austria – either through voluntary departure or as part of removal (Schrefler-König and Szymanski, 2024:Art. 2 Asylum Act, margin number 5).<sup>42</sup> Exceptions may arise, however, if the applicant meets the

40 Asylum Act 2005, FLG. I No. 100/2005 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 63/2025.

41 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, FLG. No. 55/1955 in the version of the promulgation FLG. III No. 27/2022.

42 The issuance is permissible provided that it does not interfere with the foreign national’s private or family life, or where such interference is strictly necessary to achieve the objectives set forth in Art. 8 para. 2 ECHR (Art. 9 para. 1 Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum Procedures Act, FLG. I No. 87/2012 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 50/2025).

requirements for the issuance of a residence permit for exceptional circumstances (Art. 54 to 57 Asylum Act 2005; Schrefler-König and Szymanski, 2024:Art. 2 Asylum Act, margin number 5). Such residence permits are granted, for example, when necessary to ensure the prosecution of punishable acts, particularly for witnesses or trafficked persons or persons involved in cross-border prostitution trafficking, provided the relevant requirements are met.

Finally, the Asylum Act 2005 also forms the basis for the “right of residence for displaced persons” (Art. 62), serving as the legal foundation for the Regulation on Displaced Persons enacted in March 2022. On this basis, displaced persons from Ukraine are entitled to a temporary right of residence in Austria,<sup>43</sup> which currently remains in effect at least until 4 March 2027 (oesterreich.gv.at, n.d.). Furthermore, displaced persons from Ukraine have the option of applying for a Red-White-Red Card Plus (Art. 41a para. 7b Settlement and Residence Act). One of the key requirements for this is that the applicant is already integrated into the Austrian labour market. The Red-White-Red Card Plus is a temporary, renewable residence permit that is linked to residence in Austria and gainful employment (self-employed worker or employed). An additional work permit is not required. The residence permit is valid for a limited period (generally one year) but can be extended upon application.<sup>44</sup>

## International protection

In 2025, according to statistics published by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, there were a total of 16,668 applications for international protection in Austria. According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior’s definition, these applications included both “initial” and “non-initial” applications. Accordingly, “initial” first-time applicants constitute a subgroup of applicants who have actually entered the country for the first time. In contrast, “non-initial” applicants include the groups of children born subsequently,<sup>45</sup> multiple applications<sup>46</sup> and applicants with an entry permit under family reunification. Of the total 16,668 applications for international protection filed in 2025, “initial” first time applications accounted for 42 percent – less than half of all applications. The significantly larger share of “non-initial” applications, at 58 percent, consisted of applications for children born subsequently (27%), multiple applications (25%), and applications under family reunification (6%; Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2026a:I,II,19).<sup>47</sup>

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43 For details, see EMN Austria, 2024.

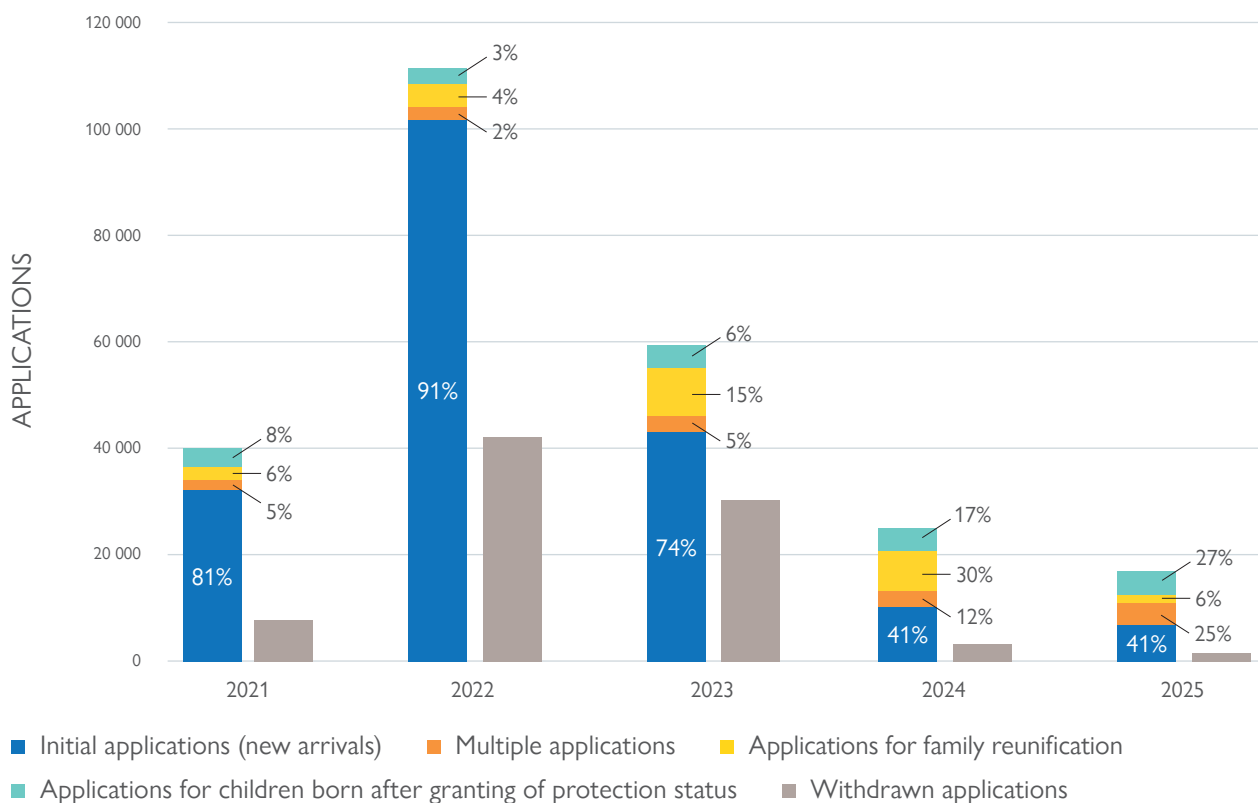
44 Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department VIA/2 (Residence and Citizenship Matters), 26 May 2026.

45 Children born after the date on which the residence permit was issued or asylum or subsidiary protection status was granted to the foreign national acting as a sponsor in the context of family reunification are considered children born subsequently (see Art. 3 para. 5 Act on the Compensation of Family Expenses 1967).

46 A new application for international protection filed by individuals following a final decision are considered multiple applications (“subsequent application”; Art. 2 para. 1 subpara. 23 Asylum Act 2005, Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2026a:54).

47 For details, see the statistics in [Annex A.1](#).

**Figure 3: Number of applications for international protection filed in Austria and number of withdrawn applications, 2021–2025**



Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2022:I,II,18, 2023:I,II,19, 2024a:I,II,20, 2025a:I,II,18, 2026c:I,II,18; Eurostat, n.d.a.

Note: For details, see Table 2 in Annex A.1. The percentages for the year 2025 have been rounded, resulting in minor discrepancies and causing the values shown not to add up exactly to 100 percent.

As shown in Figure 3 above, the number of applications for international protection in Austria has been declining for several years – a trend that continued in 2025. It should be noted that in 2024 and 2025 – unlike in previous years – “initial” first-time applications, i.e., those filed upon actual new entry, accounted for a comparatively small number of all applications for international protection. The number of withdrawals of applications for international protection – whether explicit or implicit – was also declining and stood at a low double-digit percentage relative to the total number of applications for international protection (11%; Eurostat, n.d.a).

In light of these declining figures, the Federal Minister of the Interior stated in August 2025 that 37 percent fewer applications for international protection had been filed from January to June 2025 than in the previous year. This decline also made it possible to dismantle infrastructure no longer needed at the border control points in Spielfeld and Nickelsdorf (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025I).

In connection with family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection, the Federal Minister of the Interior had already informed the European Commission on 5 March 2025, that Austria would suspend family reunification (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025h). According to the Federal Minister of the Interior, this step – which was in line with the government programme<sup>48</sup> – had become necessary because the high number of people immigrating under family reunification had posed major challenges to numerous sectors of society, such as educational institutions or the integration system (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025g). The suspension was therefore deemed necessary to prevent (further) strain on Austrian systems – such as in the education, health, or social sectors – as well as the resulting threat to social peace in Austria (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025h). In addition, the decline in the number of family reunifications, which accompanied the tightening of legal restrictions in the spring of 2024 (see Streit, 2025:21), was to be ensured sustainably (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025g). In accordance with the announcement made, the Council of Ministers decided 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 Court of Justice of the European Union, in order to temporarily suspend family reunification with immediate effect and thereby ensure public order”. In addition, building on the existing integration monitoring system, an Integration Barometer was to be developed as a basis for the future introduction of quotas for family reunification, which would reflect the impact and burden on individual systems and the related effects on the national budget, with a view to safeguarding social cohesion and public order in Austria (Federal Chancellery, 2025b, n.d.b; Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025:2,3). 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). On 24 May 2025, the amended Asylum Act 2005, which was supplemented inter alia by Art. 36a, entered into force<sup>49</sup> and is based – as also provided for in the Government programme<sup>50</sup> – on the European Union emergency clause pursuant to Art. 72 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU; Parliament Austria, 2025c).<sup>51</sup> The newly introduced Art. 36a Asylum Act 2005 provides that the six month time limit for decisions and the obligation to decide (Art. 73 para. 1 General Administrative Procedure Act 1991)<sup>52</sup> on applications for family reunification are suspended for the duration of a corresponding regulation issued by the Federal Government.<sup>53,54</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 European Convention on Human Rights – ECHR).<sup>55</sup> The relevant grounds must already be set out in detail in the application for entry.<sup>56</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

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48 For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:74.

49 Amendment to the Asylum Act 2005, FLG. I No. 17/2025.

50 For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:74.

51 Accordingly, “the exercise of Member States’ responsibilities for maintaining public order and safeguarding internal security” is not affected by Title V of the TFEU (“The Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice”); however, the possibility of derogation provided for in Art. 72 TFEU on grounds of public order or public security must be interpreted narrowly (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2022).

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

53 Art. 36a Asylum Act 2005 refers to Art. 36 (“Regulation of the Federal Government”), which was already included in the Asylum Act 2005, 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.

54 This provision applies only to family reunification under Art. 35 Asylum Act 2005 and thus to family members of persons entitled to international protection. Family reunification under the Settlement and Residence Act remains unaffected. For details, see Ammann and Stiller, 2025.

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

56 For information on family reunification under the Asylum Act 2005, see Ammann and Stiller, 2025:15.

with the established case law of the supreme courts and the European Court of Human Rights (Parliament Austria, 2025c:4),<sup>57</sup> with primary consideration generally given to the best interests of the child (Parliament Austria, 2025c:5). This statutory provision is limited in time until 30 September 2026 (Art. 73 para. 27 Asylum Act 2005). Based on the newly created regulatory authority, a draft regulation was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 25 June 2025, and this draft was forwarded to the Main Committee of the National Council to obtain its legally required approval (Federal Chancellery, n.d.a; Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025e:2). In the written statement of reasons required by law (Art. 36 para. 2 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 Federal Government's regulation determining that the maintenance of public order and the protection of internal security within the meaning of Art. 36 para. 1 Asylum Act 2005 are at risk was finally promulgated on 2 July 2025.<sup>58</sup> For the duration of the regulation, Art. 36a Asylum Act 2005 applies. On 18 December 2025, the regulation was amended and its period of validity was extended to 12 months,<sup>59</sup> with the result that family reunification is suspended until 2 July 2026. The Federal Government justified this extension by stating that Austria needed a further consolidation phase to protect the systems – particularly in the areas of education, integration, and social services – from becoming overburdened.<sup>60</sup>

The announcement of the planned temporary suspension of family reunification drew criticism from the media and various stakeholders in the migration sector, with particular focus on whether the measure was compatible with European Union law and fundamental rights. Various organizations expressed concerns regarding the justifiability of the measure (Amnesty International Austria, 2025a; Diakonie Flüchtlingsdienst, 2025; IOM Austria et al., 2025; UNHCR Austria, 2025a; UNICEF Austria, 2025; Volkshilfe, 2025), and pointed out that the separation of families could also have negative effects on the integration of family members already living in Austria (UNHCR Austria, 2025b, 2025c). Civil society organizations also questioned the legal basis and proportionality of the new regulation proposed by the Federal Government and its explanatory memorandum (Diakonie, 2025a). At the political level, the opposition rejected the amendment to the Asylum Act 2005 for opposing reasons. While the Austrian Freedom Party called for more far-reaching measures, including a complete halt to asylum, the Austrian Green Party considered the amendment questionable from a human rights perspective and doubted its effectiveness. Motions by the opposition parties to support their position did not gain a majority in the National Council (Parliament Austria, 2025j).

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57 One criterion might be, for example, that “no (further) disruption to the functioning of the very State subsystems for which the regulation pursuant to Art. 36 para. 1 was issued is to be expected, because the applicant – or his or her sponsor entitled to protection in Austria – already possesses sufficient knowledge of the German language, for example, and it is therefore reasonably likely that he or she will be able to integrate into Austrian society with little or no need for integration measures, or will be able to participate in school life with little or no need for support measures.” (Parliament Austria, 2025c:5).

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

59 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.

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

The Federal Ministry of the Interior assessed the temporary suspension of family reunification as effective, based on the number of entries under the family reunification programme (November 2023: 1,146 entries; November 2024: 241 entries; November 2025: 1 entry).<sup>61</sup> According to media reports, however, the decline in family reunifications was already apparent before the measure took effect (Der Standard, 2026). The Federal Minister of the Interior described the measure as a key factor in the sharp decline in applications for international protection. Regarding the period following the expiration of the suspension of family reunification and the planned quota system, he stated that he could imagine “starting from zero” (Der Standard, 2025b).

In connection with the debate on the number of applications for international protection as well as family reunification and the resulting political developments, reference should also be made to the first solidarity cycle launched under the new European Union’s Pact on Migration and Asylum. The solidarity mechanism is one of the core elements of the Pact, aimed at striking a balance between solidarity and responsibility among EU Member States by ensuring that those disproportionately affected by migration are supported through solidarity measures undertaken by other EU Member States (Council of the European Union, 2025).<sup>62</sup> These solidarity contributions include the resettlement of applicants for international protection or beneficiaries of international protection, financial contributions for measures within the European Union or in relation to third countries, as well as contributions in kind or in the form of personnel (“alternative solidarity measures”; European Union, 2024). It is up to each EU Member State to decide for itself what type or combination of solidarity contributions to commit to (Council of the European Union, 2025). According to the European Commission’s implementing decision, Austria is facing a “severe migration situation”. A request by Austria to be exempted from the mandatory solidarity contributions for the year 2026 was granted.<sup>63</sup>

### **Right of residence for displaced persons**

The number of Ukrainians living in Austria under temporary protection stood at 92,445 in December 2025, marking the highest figure to date (Eurostat, n.d.a). With regard to the unemployment rate among Ukrainian nationals in Austria in 2025 (annual average 18.7%; Austrian Integration Fund, 2026:13) the Federal Government concluded that displaced persons from Ukraine should participate more extensively in the Austrian labour market (Parliament Austria, 2025q). Consequently, on 31 October 2025, an amendment<sup>64</sup> to the Act on the Compensation of Family Expenses of 1967<sup>65</sup> and the Childcare Allowance Act<sup>66</sup> was promulgated. While this amendment extended the originally time-limited eligibility for these family benefits for displaced persons from Ukraine – which was set to expire on 31 October 2025<sup>67</sup> – it also stipulates 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 Act on the Compensation of Family Expenses

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

62 Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department VI/A/5/a (EU Migration Affairs), 23 January 2026.

63 Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2642 of 19 December 2025 on the Establishment of the Annual Solidarity Pool for 2026. OJ. L series; Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department VI/A/5/a (EU Migration Affairs), 23 January 2026.

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

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

66 Childcare Allowance Act, FLG. I No. 103/2001 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 64/2025.

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

1967; Art. 2 para. 1 subpara. 5 sub-subpara. d Childcare Allowance Act), unless exemption criteria apply (Parliament Austria, 2025h). This provision is valid until 30 June 2026, and, according to the members of the governing parties who introduced the amendment, is intended to promote the taking up and continuation of gainful employment or the use of the Public Employment Service's counseling and placement services by displaced persons from Ukraine (Parliament Austria, 2025a). During the parliamentary debate on this legislative amendment, it was mentioned that approximately 12,000 eligible Ukrainian parents of 18,000 children would be affected by these changes (Parliament Austria, 2025h). The opposition Austrian Freedom Party fundamentally rejected the legislative amendment (Parliament Austria, n.d.e). In their view, family benefits should be available only to domestic families, especially since it was noted that this measure, which would be paid in addition to basic care, would incur costs of approximately EUR three million per month (Parliament Austria, 2025h). The opposition Austrian Green Party supported the legislative resolution in the National Council (Parliament Austria, n.d.e).

## Basic care

In Austria, applicants for international protection and displaced persons, among others, are entitled to basic care provided they are in need of assistance. They are considered in need of assistance if they cannot, or cannot sufficiently, provide for the basic needs of themselves and their dependents living in the same household through their own efforts and resources, and also do not, or do not sufficiently, receive such support from other persons or institutions (Art. 2 Agreement between the Federal State and the Provinces on Basic Care – Art. 15a Federal Constitutional Act).<sup>68</sup> Within the framework of basic care, foreign nationals in need of help and protection primarily receive benefits aimed at covering basic daily needs, such as adequate food, shelter, medical care, clothing assistance, school supplies, as well as information and counseling (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2024b). The legally prescribed maximum rates apply, such as a monthly allowance of EUR 40 or support for individual housing in the amount of EUR 165 per month (for a single person) or EUR 330 (for families of two or more people; Art. 9 Agreement between the Federal State and the Provinces on Basic Care – Art. 15a Federal Constitutional Act).

Due to changes in the legal requirements in Tyrol and Vienna, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status – as had already been the case in the other provinces (Office of the Provincial Government of Tyrol, 2025) – have no longer been entitled to the minimum benefit system in Tyrol and Vienna since 1 January 2026, and have been provided for under basic care. The aim of the change was to contribute to the standardization of social assistance (City of Vienna, n.d.a:1; Tyrolean Provincial Parliament, n.d.a:1).<sup>69</sup> The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Austria regretted these steps and pointed out that the basic care system – was designed for short stays and intended primarily for asylum seekers awaiting the outcome of their proceedings. With the elimination of social assistance, the basic care system could come under severe strain if thousands of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status could no longer afford their housing and, like asylum seekers, had to

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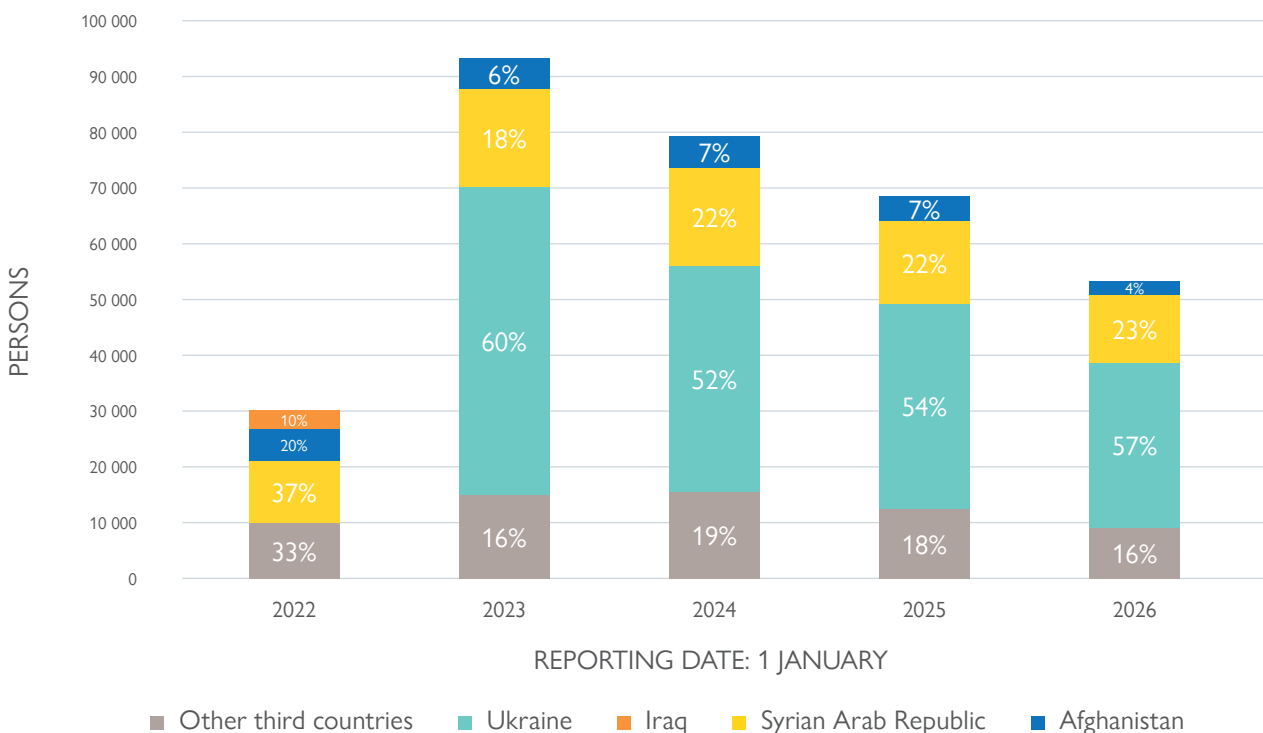
68 Agreement between the Federal State and the Provinces on Basic Care - Art. 15a Federal Constitutional Act, FLG. I No. 80/2004 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 3/2025.

69 In Vienna, the amendment was passed by the parties in the city government – the Social Democratic Party of Austria and NEOS – over the objections of the Austrian People's Party, the Austrian Freedom Party, and the Austrian Green Party (City of Vienna, n.d.b). In Tyrol, the provincial government parties – the Austrian People's Party and the Social Democratic Party of Austria – as well as NEOS voted in favor of the legislative amendment, while the Austrian Freedom Party and the Austrian Green Party voted against it (Tyrolean Provincial Parliament, n.d.b:5).

be housed in organized accommodations. UNHCR Austria therefore appealed to all decision makers in Austria to provide social benefits for both beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status and displaced persons from Ukraine that would ensure them a decent standard of living and support their integration in Austria (UNHCR Austria, 2025d). In this context, Diakonie pointed out that the withdrawal of Vienna’s minimum benefit system for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status would undermine integration efforts (Diakonie, 2025b).

Any potential increase in the use of basic care due to the legislative changes described above would only be discernible in the basic care statistics starting in January 2026. For the year 2025, however, the chart below shows that the number of people receiving basic care has been steadily declining since the historic peak on 1 January 2023, which was directly linked to the displacement caused by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine (EMN Austria, 2024:1). Accordingly, the number of people receiving basic care as of 1 January 2025, was lower than in previous years – a trend that continued as of 1 January 2026. Of the 68,161 and 52,834 people receiving basic care as of 1 January 2025, and 1 January 2026, respectively, 54 percent and 57 percent were Ukrainian nationals. Thus, as of 1 January 2026, a slightly higher proportion of Ukrainian nationals were receiving basic care than in the previous year, despite an overall decline in the number of Ukrainian nationals receiving such care.

**Figure 4: Persons receiving basic care in Austria as of 1 January and the top 3 nationalities of persons receiving basic care, 2022–2026**



Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2022:49, 2023:51, 2024a:53, 2025a:51, 2026a:53.  
 Note: The percentages for the year 2025 have been rounded, resulting in minor discrepancies and causing the values shown not to add up exactly to 100 percent.

In 2025, two provinces made their provision of basic care contingent on the willingness of the recipients to perform community services (Burgenland Provincial Parliament, 2025; Vorarlberg Provincial Parliament, 2025a). The Burgenland Provincial Care Act<sup>70</sup> had been amended in December 2024,<sup>71</sup> and has been implemented since 1 July 2025 (ORF.at, 2025d). 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 Burgenland Provincial Care Act). In September 2025, an amendment to the Vorarlberg Social Benefits Act<sup>72</sup> and the Vorarlberg Social Benefits Regulation<sup>73</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 Vorarlberg Social Benefits Regulation). 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) and 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). These legislative changes were passed in Burgenland by the ruling Social Democratic Party of Austria and the Austrian People’s Party, and in Vorarlberg by the coalition partners Austrian People’s Party and the Austrian Freedom Party. In Burgenland, however, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Austrian Green Party, and an independent provincial parliamentarian voted against the changes. In Vorarlberg, the Austrian Green Party, the Social Democratic Party of Austria, and NEOS also voted against the changes (Burgenland Provincial Parliament, n.d.; Vorarlberg Provincial Parliament, n.d.). Criticism, particularly of the Burgenland approach, also came from the academic community. For example, it was pointed out that there was an insufficient supply of community service activities that could be performed with limited German language skills, or that the additional effort required for training could overwhelm smaller communities (Eisenreich, 2025).

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

71 Act of 12 December 2024, amending the Burgenland Provincial Care Act, PLG. No. 110/2025.

72 Act Amending the Social Benefits Act, PLG. No. 45/2025.

73 Provincial Government Regulation on an amendment to the Social Benefits Regulation, PLG. No. 50/2025.

## 5 IRREGULAR MIGRATION, BORDER POLICY, AND RETURN



- Maintenance of border controls at the internal borders with Slovenia, Slovakia, Czechia, and Hungary
- Resumption of removals to Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Somalia
- Support for a reinterpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights

Irregular migration is understood as an umbrella term for the movement of people outside regulatory norms (IOM, n.d.). In the absence of a uniform definition, irregular migration includes, for example, entering, staying, or working in a country without the necessary permits or documents required under immigration regulations (European Commission, 2025b), as well as exceeding the duration of a residence permit or visa. If irregular migrants do not have valid residence permits or the required visa, their stay in Austria is unlawful, meaning they are obligated to leave Austria pursuant to a corresponding administrative decision (return decision, Art. 52 Aliens Police Act 2005)<sup>74</sup> issued by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum. If they fail to make their voluntary departure within the specified time limit, their departure may be enforced (removal, Art. 46 Aliens Police Act).

Participation in the “Schengen Area” is intended to promote freedom of movement between EU Member States without the need to undergo border controls when crossing internal borders (European Council - Council of the European Union, 2025). The temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal borders may only be considered in exceptional situations as a last resort, must be limited in time, and must comply with the principles of necessity and proportionality (European Commission, n.d.). Since the temporary Austrian border controls at internal borders with some of Austria’s neighbouring countries, which have been in place since fall 2015, were maintained in 2025 as well, the legality of entry into Austria (Art. 15 Aliens Police Act) required, among other things, that the border controls not be circumvented. The regulations of the Federal Minister of the Interior concerning the temporary reintroduction of border controls at the internal borders with Slovakia and Czechia, as well as with Slovenia and Hungary, were initially amended on 15 April 2025 and 9 May 2025 respectively, extending their validity until 15 October 2025<sup>75</sup> and 11 November 2025.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Aliens Police Act 2005, FLG. I No. 100/2005 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 87/2025.

<sup>75</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>76</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.

On 15 October 2025, both regulations were extended until 15 December 2025.<sup>77</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>78</sup> Accordingly, in the period from 16 December 2025 to 15 June 2026, the internal borders with Slovakia in land and water traffic and with Czechia, Slovenia and Hungary in land traffic may only be crossed at border crossing points. The reasons cited to the European Commission for the recent extensions included the ongoing threat associated with rising irregular migration, for example via the Balkan route, as well as the strain on the asylum reception system and basic care, alongside Russia’s ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and the security situation in the Middle East, which has been exacerbated by terrorist groups (European Commission, n.d.). Border controls have been and continue to be carried out both at fixed border crossing points and on a mobile basis in areas near the border. In addition to ensuring public peace, order and safety, the temporary border controls also aim to reduce irregular migration to zero (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025i, 2025j). The maintenance of internal border controls has been criticized in some quarters, for example by NEOS Hainburg. It was pointed out that the controls would complicate commuting, childcare, or family visits and lead to unpredictable waiting times. Among other things, this would hinder economic development and result in an annual economic loss of approximately EUR 180 million. Furthermore, only two suspected cases were reported at the nearby Berg border crossing in 2024. In this context, the NEOS federal party called for the protection of the European Union’s external borders – as also envisaged in the government programme<sup>79</sup> – to be prioritized “instead of expensive and ineffective controls” within the European Union (Weber, 2025).

In 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior focused primarily on Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic in connection with the voluntary and forced departure of foreign nationals. For example, at the Council of Interior Ministers in October 2025, the Federal Minister of the Interior called for removals to the Syrian Arab Republic from across Europe (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025p) or, in December 2025, stated his goal of making removals to the Syrian Arab Republic the norm (Der Standard, 2025d). As early as October 2025, he had stated that “removals of convicted criminals from Syria or Afghanistan [...] would be consistently” implemented by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025c). As [Table 1](#) below shows, a total of 14,324 people left Austria in 2025 as part of a “voluntary departure”,<sup>80</sup> a removal, or a Dublin transfer.<sup>81</sup> This means that, on average, 39 people left Austria per day, which was even slightly higher than the figure of 35 people per day cited by the Federal Minister of the Interior in October 2025 (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025c). It should be noted, however, that these

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77 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.

78 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.

79 For details, see Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:83.

80 Voluntary departures are not defined by law and do not refer to the deadline set in the context of a return decision pursuant to Art. 55 Aliens Police Act 2005. Rather, foreign nationals may express their desire to return voluntarily prior to a decision by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum. Voluntary departures may take place with organizational or financial support or independently. Pursuant to Art. 133a Penal Sanctions Enforcement Act (FLG. No. 144/1969 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 31/2025), persons convicted of a criminal offence have the option of voluntarily departing the country instead of serving the remainder of their sentence (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2026:20).

81 A Dublin transfer refers to the compulsory removal of an individual to another EU Member State that is responsible for examining the application for international protection (Art. 61 Aliens Police Act 2005), either by treaty or under the “Dublin Regulation” (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).

were not exclusively Afghan or Syrian nationals, but included both third-country nationals and European Union nationals. Among the top 20 nationalities with the highest number of departures, 77 percent – more than three times as many people – were removed to an EU Member State rather than to a third country (23%).<sup>82</sup> In contrast, voluntary departures were utilized to a far greater extent by third-country nationals (87%) than by European Union nationals (13%). The departures of Afghan nationals (50 removals, 32 voluntary departures) and Syrian nationals (41 removals, 808 voluntary departures) must be viewed separately: While removals of these nationalities ranked sixteenth (Afghanistan) and twenty first (Syrian Arab Republic), respectively, voluntary departures by Syrian nationals accounted for the second-highest figure, whereas Afghan nationals did not rank among the top 20 nationalities.<sup>83</sup>

**Table 1: Number of departures from Austria by category, 2021–2025**

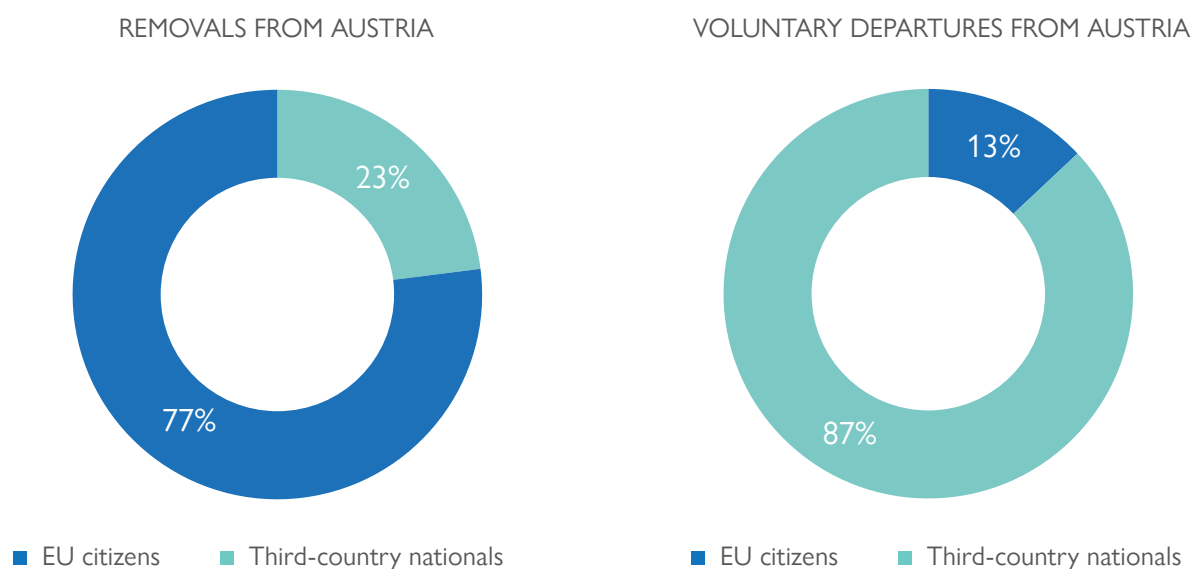
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Forced deportations</b>	4 197	4 471	5 990	6 973	6 827
Of which removals	3 359	3 371	4 750	5 792	5 879
Of which Dublin transfers	838	1 100	1 240	1 181	948
<b>Voluntary departures</b>	4 951	8 079	6 910	6 595	7 497
<b>Departures (total)</b>	9 148	12 550	12 900	13 568	14 324

Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior and Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2023:20, 2024:21, 2025:21, 2026:20; Ebner, 2022.

82 This assessment is based on the assumption that individuals were removed to the country of their nationality.

83 Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/B/8 (Asylum), 26 May 2026.

**Figure 5: Removals and voluntary departures from Austria in 2025 (top 20 nationalities) by nationality group**



Source: Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/B/8 (Asylum), 26 May 2026.

The removals carried out were intended, on the one hand, to remove the individuals concerned from the country, but also, on the other hand, to implement the “removal of convicted criminals to Afghanistan” announced by the Federal Minister of the Interior (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025q) as well as to continue the “tough and fair asylum policy” he had proclaimed (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025m). Some of the removals took place as part of several charter removals that were 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, 2025r). 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, 2025s).<sup>84</sup> In connection with the removals of 2025, particular attention should be paid to the Austrian removals to Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Somalia, all of which took place for the first time in several years or decades. In preparation for the removals to Afghanistan, representatives of the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum had already held working-level discussions with the Afghan administration at the operational-technical level at the beginning of the year. Another 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, 2025q; Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025b).<sup>85</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, 2025q). Further removals to Afghanistan followed on

<sup>84</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department V/B/10 (Return, Reintegration, and Quality Development), 22 January 2026.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

9 November 2025 and 18 December 2025 (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025t, 2025v; Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025d).<sup>86</sup>

The first removal to the Syrian Arab Republic since 2011 took place on 3 July 2025 and involved a Syrian national who had been convicted of a criminal offence in Austria (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, 2025a). 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, 2025n, 2025o). The latter took place after the European Court of Human Rights lifted, on 23 September, its interim measure prohibiting the removal of the man.<sup>87</sup>

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 (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025m).

Non-governmental organizations in particular criticized above all the first removal to the Syrian Arab Republic (Amnesty International Austria, 2025b; Asylkoordination Österreich, 2025; Brickner, 2025; Der Standard, 2025a). This also led the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances to request that the Federal Government inquire with the Syrian authorities regarding the whereabouts of the individual in question (Amnesty International Austria, 2025b; ORF.at, 2025e). The Federal Minister of the Interior rejected the inquiries requested in the corresponding letter (Leitner, 2025; Lorenz, 2025). The “consistent asylum policy” defended by the Federal Minister of the Interior in the Federal Council in early December – which would also include removals of “convicted criminals” to Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic (Parliament Austria, n.d.f) – was criticized by the opposition parties Austrian Freedom Party and the Austrian Green Party. While the Austrian Freedom Party called for more rigorous enforcement, the Austrian Green Party emphasized the importance of human dignity and human rights in the context of returns (Parliament Austria, 2025t).

With regard to the implementation of removals, on 22 May 2025, the Federal Chancellor signed, together with the Heads of State or Government of eight other EU Member States, an open letter,<sup>88</sup> advocating a discussion on the interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR; Federal Chancellery, 2025f). The call for a discussion on the reinterpretation of the ECHR and 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, 2025d). The Federal Minister of the Interior also considered the Europe-wide debate on a reinterpretation of the ECHR to be 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, 2025s). According to the

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

87 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 as well as prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment) in the event of removal (European Court of Human Rights, 2025).

88 See also Prime Minister of Denmark et al., 2025.

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 foreign nationals who have been convicted of crimes by final judgement from the country (Federal Chancellery, 2025d, 2025a). Within the coalition and among the opposition, various views on this initiative were expressed, ranging from concerns about the authority to interpret the ECHR to calls for a clear commitment to fundamental rights (Die Presse, 2025; Grüner Klub im Parlament, 2025).

With the aim of “making the systems stricter, more flexible, and fairer” and in the expectation of “gaining the legal means to conduct asylum proceedings outside Europe and establish return centres outside Europe”<sup>89</sup> (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025f), Austrian politicians spoke out in favor of asylum proceedings outside Europe as well as return centres. The Federal Minister of the Interior, for example, stated that consistent returns are essential components of the Common European Asylum System, which is why he also clearly supports the establishment of return centres (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2025k). In the run-up to the European Union’s Justice and Home Affairs Council on 8 December 2025, he further stated that the European Union Asylum and Migration Pact must also 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, 2025u). In addition, the Federal Ministry of the Interior also implemented measures at the operational level to strengthen return management, particularly in the Western Balkans region. Through the “Joint Coordination Platform” (JCP) unit, support was provided for various projects aimed at improving local return structures. As part of these initiatives, a total of 165 police officers from the Western Balkan States were trained by the Austrian Special Intervention Unit Cobra to serve as escorts for forced returns. These training measures not only served to immediately increase the efficiency of returns but also to bring partner States closer to European Union and international standards, thereby indirectly supporting their European Union accession processes. Furthermore, the project “Strengthening Return Management Systems in the Western Balkans,” funded by the European Commission with a total of EUR 13 million, was launched in 2025. This 48-month project aims to strengthen both forced and voluntary returns in the six Western Balkan States. In this context, the JCP serves as the technical secretariat and coordinates implementation. In terms of content, the project focuses in particular on building institutional capacity, intensifying cooperation with countries of origin and transit, and promoting voluntary return programmes, with the aim of establishing a more sustainable and structured return policy in the region.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Return centres outside the European Union are intended to temporarily house migrants who are subject to a departure order or a refusal of entry issued by an EU Member State. The migrants would be housed there until the EU Member State and/or Frontex processes their return to their country of origin. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the establishment of return centres would only be compatible with European Union law if clear and robust safeguards for fundamental rights were in place at the same time (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2025).

<sup>90</sup> Written input: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Joint Coordination Platform, 26 May 2026.

## 6 INTEGRATION



- Presentation of the plan for a mandatory integration programme
- Ban on headscarves for female pupils under the age of 14 at school
- Expansion of German language support and creation of orientation classes in schools

Integration in Austria is “a process involving the whole of society, the success of which depends on the participation of all people living in Austria and is based on personal interaction”, pursuant to the legal definition in the Integration Act<sup>91</sup> enacted in 2017. Accordingly, “integration [...] requires a coordinated approach by the various state and civil society actors and presupposes an active contribution by every single person in Austria within the scope of their own capabilities.” The Integration Act aims to facilitate the rapid integration of persons lawfully residing in Austria into Austrian society through integration measures and the obligation to actively participate in the integration process. The aforementioned “integration measures are intended to enable participation in social, economic, and cultural life in Austria. Central to this are participation through gainful employment, access to and acceptance of educational opportunities, gender equality, and the rapid attainment of self sufficiency.” Likewise, the Integration Act clarifies that “Austria’s liberal and democratic system of government is based on values and principles that are non-negotiable” and that the acquisition of Austrian citizenship is intended to mark the culmination of a comprehensive integration process (Art. 1 and 2 Integration Act).

As [Figure 6](#) shows, the number of naturalizations of people living in Austria has risen steadily in recent years. The naturalization rate<sup>92</sup> remained low at 0.8 percent despite a recent slight increase, and below the European Union average (Eurostat, n.d.e). It should be noted that as of 1 January 2025, 42 percent of foreign-born individuals who had been living in Austria for at least ten years held Austrian citizenship (Statistics Austria, 2025b:86). In 2025, there were 15,564 naturalizations of people living in Austria, of whom 32 percent (5,025) were individuals who had also been born in Austria. The remaining 68 percent (10,539) comprised individuals born abroad. Of the total 25,095 new citizens (naturalized both domestically and abroad) in 2025, 9,583 (38.2%) were residing abroad (Statistics Austria, 2026). This also included nearly all individuals (99.8%) who received citizenship under Art. 58c Citizenship Act 1985<sup>93</sup> namely those who were politically persecuted by the Nazi regime or their descendants. Statistical data on naturalization in Austria for the observation period 2021–2025 show that this group accounted for a significant proportion of the total number of naturalizations

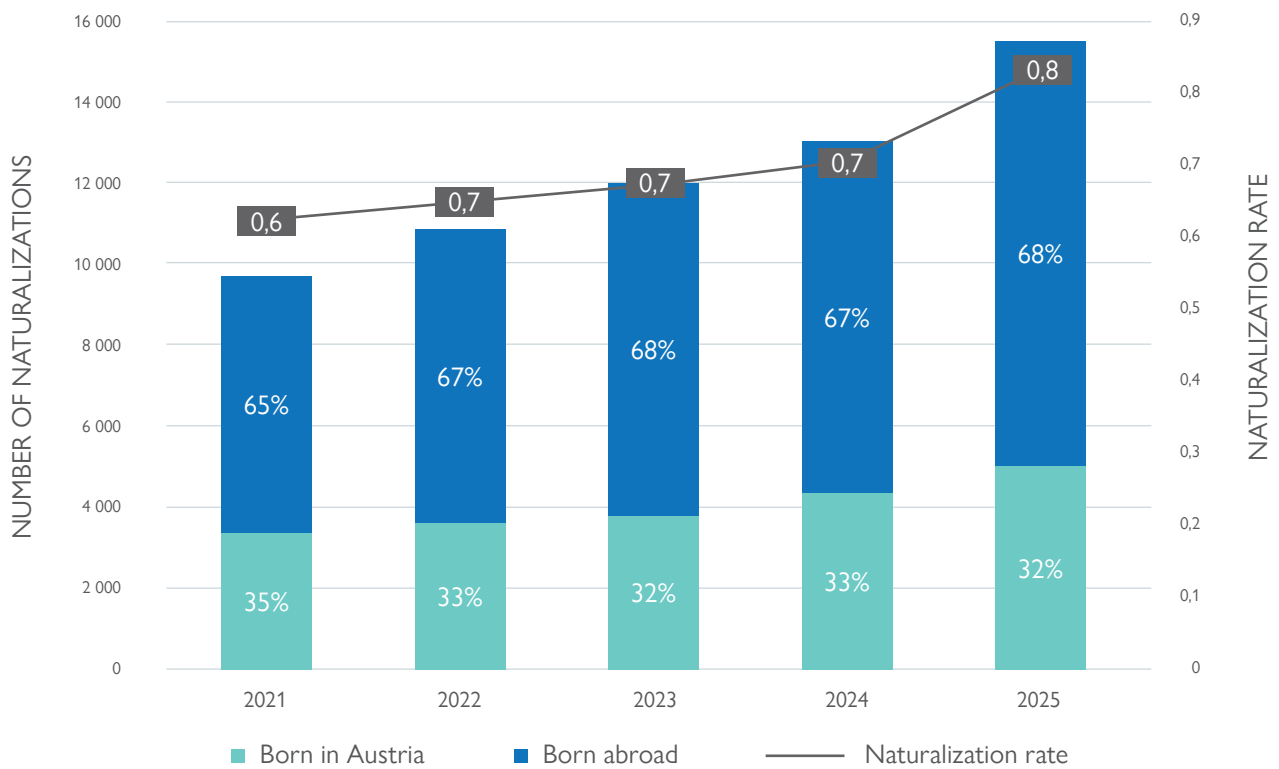
91 Integration Act, FLG. I No. 68/2017 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 76/2022.

92 The naturalization rate refers to the number of naturalizations per 100 non-Austrian nationals living in Austria (Statistics Austria, n.d.b).

93 Citizenship Act 1985, FLG. No. 311/1985 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 87/2025. For details, see Stiller, 2019, 2021.

in Austria. Their share stood at 40 percent in recent years, with only slight deviations in 2022 (47%) and 2025 (38%).

**Figure 6: Trend in naturalizations of persons living in Austria, broken down by country of birth, 2021–2025**



Source: Statistics Austria, n.d.a, n.d.b.

Note: The data refers exclusively to naturalizations of persons living in Austria; therefore, the acquisition of citizenship pursuant to Art. 58c Citizenship Act 1985 is not included in the figure. The naturalization rate for the year 2025 is based on preliminary data.

In light of the requirements and objectives set forth in the Integration Act, the mandatory integration programme – which is part of the government’s agenda<sup>94</sup> – was presented to the Council of Ministers on 28 May 2025 (Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2025). In their presentation to the Council of Ministers, the Federal Ministers for Europe, Integration, and Family, as well as for Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection, explained that significant challenges in integration policy had emerged over the past ten years (Federal Chancellery and Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, 2025). The new mandatory integration measures are intended to promote the integration process (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, 2025e).

94 For details, see Austrian People’s Party et al., 2025:97f.

Based on the understanding that integration is not an offer but an obligation (Federal Chancellery, 2025e), 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.

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, 2025e). 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 consequences in cases of non-compliance with integration obligations.<sup>95</sup> If integration measures are refused or courses are discontinued, social benefits are to be reduced or administrative penalties imposed (Federal Chancellery, 2025c, 2025e). The package is scheduled to be adopted in 2026 (ORF.at, 2025b)<sup>96</sup> and represents the biggest reform and further development in the area of integration since the entry into force of the Integration Act in 2017.<sup>97</sup>

Various stakeholders in the field of integration have received the mandatory integration programme differently. While, for example, the Austrian Integration Fund – entrusted by the government with implementing integration agendas – welcomed the integration programme (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025c), Asylkoordination objected to what it saw as the implication that the integration sector had been a legal vacuum, since sanctions and penalties had already existed previously and the regulations were therefore not new (ORF.at, 2025c).

In order to monitor the situation of migrants and the outcomes of integration policies, the European Ministerial Conference on Integration adopted the Zaragoza Declaration in 2010, which established indicators, among other measures, to achieve these goals (European Commission, 2025b; Eurostat, n.d.f). These indicators, collected by Eurostat, include the employment rate, the unemployment rate, the rate of higher education graduates, and overqualification (Eurostat, n.d.d). Based on the Austrian National Action Plan for Integration, corresponding integration indicators were also developed (Federal Chancellery, n.d.d), which are collected annually by Statistics Austria and supplemented with relevant information (Statistics Austria, 2025b:4). For example, as part of an annual migration survey – most recently conducted from March to April 2025 – the survey also assesses, among other things, the sense of belonging that immigrants have toward Austria or their country of origin (Statistics Austria, 2025d:6,7). In 2025, 76.5 percent (2024: 73.7%; 2023: 72.4%) of respondents stated that they felt more connected to Austria, while 23.5 percent (2024: 26.3%; 2023: 27.6%) answered the question in favor of their country of origin. Thus, in 2025, the percentage of immigrants who felt more connected to Austria rose for the third consecutive year, whereas, once again, fewer immigrants stated

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95 Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026.

96 Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 26 May 2026.

97 Written input: Federal Chancellery, Department II/2 (Integration Coordination), 21 January 2026.

that they felt more connected to their country of origin (Statistics Austria, 2023:97, 2024:97, 2025b:97). On 17 December 2025, the Austrian Integration Fund published the Integration Barometer (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025a). Since 2015, this survey is conducted every six months by a market and opinion research institute on behalf of the Austrian Integration Fund. It is administered to 1,000 Austrian citizens and covers topics such as social challenges, integration, and coexistence (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025a; Hajek et al., 2025a:6). While more than half (54%) of respondents rated coexistence with Ukrainian war refugees as very good or somewhat good, the Integration Barometer showed that a high percentage of respondents perceived coexistence with immigrants (60%), refugees (62%), or Muslims (66%) as somewhat bad or very bad (Hajek et al., 2025a:20). This represents a slight improvement in perception compared to the Integration Barometer from June 2025 (Hajek et al., 2025b:20). In December 2025, the Austrian People's Party launched a social media campaign with the slogan "Zero Tolerance" (Völker, 2025), in which the results of the Austrian Integration Fund Integration Barometer were presented. The campaign drew criticism from coalition partners the Social Democratic Party of Austria and NEOS, who objected to the sweeping generalizations and feared a division within society (Kubrak, 2025; Tschiederer and Völker, 2025). For example, the campaign included a post asking, "Did you know that two-thirds find living alongside Muslims difficult?" along with a reference to the Austrian Integration Fund Integration Barometer, which indicated that 72 percent believed integration was not working well or that 62 percent felt that living alongside refugees was difficult. Civil society groups also criticized the presentation of results and the methodology of the Austrian Integration Fund Integration Barometer, for example regarding the composition of the respondents, since it was not disclosed how many of the respondents themselves had a migration background or whether and to what extent they had personal contact with migrants (Neue Österreichische Organisationen, 2025).

With regard to gender equality in Austria, the Federal Government included in its government programme a proposed ban on headscarves for children under the age of 14 (Parliament Austria, 2025e), which was justified on the grounds of strengthening the self-determination of minor girls (Federal Chancellery, 2025g; Parliament Austria, 2025e:1).<sup>98</sup> According to the Federal Government, this ban is also 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, 2025e:1,2).<sup>99</sup> In accordance with the government programme, the Federal Minister of Education<sup>100</sup> therefore 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 (Der Standard, 2025c; Parliament Austria, n.d.c, n.d.d) an adapted Government bill was submitted to the National Council on 18 November 2025 (Parliament Austria, n.d.j, 2025g). Finally, on 30 December 2025, an amendment to the School Education Act was promulgated,<sup>101</sup>

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98 For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:99.

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

100 Under the Federal Ministries Act Amendment 2025, FLG. I No. 10/2025, promulgated on 18 March 2025, the educational responsibilities of the former Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research were transferred to the Federal Ministry of Education. This report therefore uses both names, depending on whether it refers to the period before or after the amendment.

101 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.

by which Art. 43a was enacted. 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 Federal Child and Youth Service Act 2013)<sup>102</sup> is to be informed. 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 School Education Act).<sup>103</sup> The comments received during the legislative review process offered varying assessments of the draft bill. For example, the Austrian Integration Fund viewed the proposed measure as a useful tool for integration policy that would strengthen the shared values of Austrian society. It was suggested that, alongside the headscarf ban, the content of integration measures and counseling be expanded in a targeted manner to comprehensively inform parents – and mothers in particular – about the headscarf ban and, specifically, the aim and purpose of the regulation (Austrian Integration Fund, 2025b). Similarly, the Professional Association of Austrian Psychologists welcomed the proposed legislative change, as, from a developmental psychology perspective, a nuanced examination of issues related to religious symbolism during childhood and adolescence is of great importance (Professional Association of Austrian Psychologists, 2025). Integration expert Emina Saric also spoke out in favor of the headscarf ban, arguing that young girls often do not wear the headscarf of their own free will, but rather as a result of family, religious, or social pressure, against which lawmakers could take preventive action to protect girls from coercion and ensure gender equality (Saric, n.d.). In contrast, however, the comments received also expressed concerns regarding the constitutionality of the proposed legislation, for example by the Association of Austrian Judges (Association of Austrian Judges, 2025) or the Federal Ministry of Justice (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2025). The proposal by the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration, and Family – which was ultimately not implemented – to elevate the law to constitutional status and thus place it on par with other fundamental rights in order to preempt any potential unconstitutionality was rejected by the Social Democratic Party of Austria (ORF.at, 2025g). Furthermore, critics pointed out, among other things, that other non-gender-neutral garments, such as the Jewish kippah or the patka worn by young male Sikhs, were deemed non-discriminatory, which contradicted the bill’s stated aim of preventing discrimination (Austrian National Union of Students and Verein Helping Hands, 2025). The Protestant Church in Austria, as a religious minority, expressed concern that the Federal Government intended to restrict the fundamental rights of another religious minority despite a ruling by the highest court and foreseeable legal challenges (Protestant Church in Austria, 2025) and the Social Democratic Teachers of Austria stated in their opinion that there were other, more pressing issues in education and youth policy (Social Democratic Teachers of Austria, 2025). The bill was ultimately passed with the votes of the governing parties and the Austrian Freedom Party, although the Austrian Freedom Party felt the headscarf ban did not go far enough and advocated for an expansion of the ban, for example to include female teachers as well. However, the motion in question did not secure a majority (Parliament

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

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

Austria, 2025u). Only the opposition Austrian Green Party, who while expressing sympathy for the initiative, voted against the bill because they considered the law unconstitutional (Nimmervoll, 2025; ORF.at, 2025h).

Since, according to the Federal Minister of Education, integration cannot function without the necessary language skills and since proficiency in the German language is the foundation for a successful school career (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025d), the Federal Minister of Education announced on 11 April 2025 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>104</sup> Based on the number of extraordinary pupils<sup>105</sup> in the 2024/2025 school year<sup>106</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>107</sup> In accordance with the plan outlined in the government programme<sup>108</sup> and the resolution of the National Council of 25 April 2025, which called upon the Federal Government, in particular the Federal Minister of Education, to further develop German language support classes (Parliament Austria, 2025b), the Federal Minister of Education presented a draft bill to the Council of Ministers on 10 December 2025, regarding the further development of German language support. Among other things, the bill provides schools with options for the concrete implementation of German language support (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025a). This is intended to strengthen the effectiveness and quality of German language support 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). 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.c).

According to the Federal Minister of Education, Science, and Research<sup>109</sup> family reunification has led to a significant influx of relatives of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status into Austria starting in 2023 (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, 2025i).<sup>110</sup> Consequently, on 24 July 2025, an amendment to the School Education Act<sup>111</sup> was promulgated,<sup>112</sup> introducing so-called orientation classes effective 1 September 2025. The aim of the new regulation was to support, in particular, pupils who, due to their refugee background, have little or no prior school experience in the Austrian education system. Orientation

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104 The goal of the German language support programme for extraordinary pupils is the early and intensive learning of German as the language of instruction, so that they can be taught in a classroom setting according to the curriculum for their respective school type and grade level as soon as possible (Federal Ministry of Education, n.d.a).

105 These are pupils who do not have sufficient knowledge of German, the language of instruction (Art. 4 para. 2 subpara. a School Education Act).

106 In the 2024–2025 school year, approximately 49,650 pupils across all types of Austrian schools were unable to follow regular classes 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). According to data from Statistics Austria, there were a total of 1,185,525 pupils in Austria for the 2024–2025 school year (Statistics Austria, 2025a).

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

108 For details, see Austrian People's Party et al., 2025:206.

109 Under the Federal Ministries Act Amendment 2025, FLG. I No. 10/2025, promulgated on 18 March 2025, the educational responsibilities of the former Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research were transferred to the Federal Ministry of Education. This report therefore uses both names, depending on whether it refers to the period before or after the amendment.

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

111 School Education Act, FLG. No. 472/1986 in the version of the federal law FLG. I No. 44/2025.

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

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). Since 1 September 2025, therefore, 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 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, n.d.b). Attendance in an orientation class is limited to a maximum of six months (Art. 4 para. 4a 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).

The amendment to the law was preceded by a review phase, during which the Union of Compulsory School Teachers, for example, welcomed the initiative, but also raised the question of how orientation classes could be implemented effectively and purposefully given a shortage of specialized staff and resources without further (extra)curricular support measures (Union of Compulsory School Teachers, 2025). The Austrian Association of Municipalities, which had no technical objections to the orientation classes, also noted that the orientation classes would inevitably entail costs for many municipalities due to the additional space requirements and demanded that any necessary additional expenses be borne entirely by the Federal State (Austrian Association of Municipalities, 2025). In its statement, the Federal Chamber of Labour pointed out the need for guidance, information, and support for legal guardians as well, who generally have little to no connection to the Austrian education system (Federal Chamber of Labour, 2025). The amendment was ultimately passed in the National Council with the votes of the governing parties (Parliament Austria, n.d.i). The opposition Austrian Freedom Party voted against it, arguing that it was merely a “placebo measure” and contending that the orientation classes would tie up additional teaching staff – despite the teacher shortage – for “people who shouldn’t even be here” (Parliament Austria, 2025p). The Austrian Green Party, however, supported the legislative amendment in the National Council (Parliament Austria, n.d.i).

# ANNEX

## A.1 Detailed statistics

**Table 2: Number of applications for international protection filed in Austria and number of withdrawn applications, 2021–2025**

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Absolute	Percent (of total)	Absolute	Percent (of total)	Absolute	Percent (of total)	Absolute	Percent (of total)	Absolute	Percent (of total)
<b>Total applications</b>	39 930	100%	112 272	100%	59 232	100%	25 360	100%	16 668	100%
Initial first-time applications	32 376	81%	102 452	91%	43 549	74%	10 311	41%	6 901	42%
Non-initial applications	7 554	19%	9 820	9%	15 683	26%	15 049	59%	9 767	58%
Multiple applications	2 010	5%	2 470	2%	3 074	5%	3 106	12%	4 162	25%
Family reunification (Art. 35 Asylum Act 2005)	2 462	6%	4 147	4%	9 175	15%	7 652	30%	1 058	6%
Children born subsequently	3 082	8%	3 203	3%	3 434	6%	4 291	17%	4 547	27%

Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2022:I,II,18, 2023:I,II,19, 2024a:I,II,20, 2025a:I,II,18, 2026a:I,II,19; Eurostat, n.d.a.

Note: The percentages for the year 2025 have been rounded in accordance with the original source.

## A.2 List of abbreviations

Term	Abbreviation
European Convention on Human Rights	ECHR
European Migration Network	EMN
European Union	EU
Federal Law Gazette	FLG
International Organization for Migration	IOM
NEOS – The New Austria	NEOS
Official Journal of the European Union	OJ
Provincial Law Gazette	PLG
Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union	TFEU
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR

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\* All hyperlinks were active at the time of writing this report.

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# EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

The European Migration Network (EMN) was established in 2003 by the European Commission on behalf of the European Council, to respond to the need for a regular exchange of reliable information in the field of migration and asylum at European level. Since 2008, Council Decision 2008/381/EC has provided the legal basis for the EMN.

The EMN consists of National Contact Points in the EMN Member Countries (EU Member States except Denmark) and in Observer Countries and is coordinated by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs.

Based on an agreement with the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, the National Contact Point Austria is located in the Policy Research and Migration Law Unit of the Country Office for Austria of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Since 1952, when Austria joined IOM as one of its first Member States, the IOM Country Office for Austria has worked to assist migrants and to analyse national migration issues and emerging trends to develop and implement projects and programmes.

The objective of the EMN is to provide European Union institutions and the authorities of Member

States with up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum in order to support evidence-based policymaking. The EMN also serves to provide the general public with relevant information.

The main tasks of the National Contact Points in implementing the work programme of the EMN include preparing reports, studies and other publications, providing information through so-called Ad-hoc Queries, and facilitating the exchange between research, policy and practice by organizing events and establishing national networks of relevant stakeholders.

All publications of the EMN are available on the website of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs and on the website of EMN Austria ([www.emn.at](http://www.emn.at)).



 Federal Ministry  
Interior  
Republic of Austria



The European Migration Network (EMN) is coordinated by the European Commission with National Contact Points established in each EU Member State (except Denmark) plus in EMN Observer Countries including Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania and the United Kingdom. The National Contact Point Austria is financed by the European Commission and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.