



COUNTRY FACTSHEET: IRELAND 2016

EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

1. Introduction

This EMN Country Factsheet provides a factual overview of the main policy developments in migration and international protection in Ireland during 2016, including latest statistics.

2. International Protection including Asylum

The International Protection Act 2015 came into operation from 31 December 2016. The Act replaces the former sequential asylum application process with a single application procedure, bringing Ireland into line with other EU Member States. The Act provides for applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) as well as permission to remain cases to be processed as part of a single procedure by one decision maker. From 31 December 2016, all applications for international protection are dealt with under the new provisions.

The International Protection Act 2015 contains transitional provisions regarding (i) applications for refugee status and subsidiary protection lodged with the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and (ii) appeals lodged with the Refugee Appeals Tribunal before 31 December 2016.

From 31 December 2016, the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner is replaced with the International Protection Office (IPO). The IPO is an office within the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) responsible for processing applications for international protection under the International Protection Act 2015. It also considers, as part of a single procedure process, whether applicants should be given permission to remain. The IPO is staffed by a chief international protection officer and international protection officers who are independent in the performance of their international protection functions.

From 31 December 2016, the first instance appeals body, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, is replaced by the statutorily independent International Protection Appeals Tribunal.

Progress was made during 2016 on the implementation of the 173 recommendations for the **improvement of the international protection process** published in June 2015. One of the main recommendations of the Report had been the enactment of the International Protection Act 2015.

Ireland also planned to extend the remit of the Offices of the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children to residents of direct provision centres, relating to the services provided to asylum applicants in the state-run accommodation centres.

The pilot scheme for access to **student support** for school leavers in the protection system (protection applicants and at leave to remain stage) continued for the academic year 2016/2017. It provided support in line with the national Student Grant Scheme. Applicants must have attended a minimum of five academic years in the Irish school system and successfully graduated from it.

With regard to **relocation and resettlement**, two Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs) were established in 2016 for asylum seekers relocated from the hotspots, and under the resettlement element of Ireland's Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). The two streams were accommodated separately. In addition, accommodation for about 230 people was temporarily set aside as an EROC in one asylum seeker accommodation centre. The facilities and services provided include onsite education, health and social protection services, orientation classes and weekly IRPP clinics.

In 2016, Ireland also deployed 12 experts to support the work of the European Asylum Support Office in Greece and Italy.

3. Unaccompanied Minors and other Vulnerable Groups

In November 2016, the government agreed to work with the French authorities to identify up to 200 unaccompanied minors previously living in the unofficial **migrant camp at Calais** and who have expressed a desire to be relocated to Ireland. The figure of 200 is to be included within the government decision of September 2015 to take in a total of 4,000 refugees by end 2017 under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP)

By the end of 2016, Ireland admitted 12 unaccompanied minors, as part of the relocation programme from **Greece**.

4. Legal Migration and Mobility

4.1. PROMOTING LEGAL MIGRATION CHANNELS

Web-sites of relevant immigration authorities contain up-to-date information related to conditions of legal migration for third-country nationals.¹ With regard to international students, information campaigns under the 'Education in Ireland' umbrella continued in 2016.

Education in Ireland and participating colleges participated at several international education fairs throughout the year, including in Malaysia, Vietnam, China and India.

4.2. ECONOMIC MIGRATION

The number of applications approved under the Atypical Working Scheme - a mechanism for streamlining entry for the purpose of **short-term work in specialised skills** without the requirement for an employment permit - continued to expand significantly in 2016, amounting to 3,000 approved applications. The greatest increase in applications continued to be in the categories of contracts for services and medical applicants.

New regulations adopted in August 2016 on employment permits brought in changes to the **Highly Skilled Eligible Occupations List and the list of ineligible categories of employment** to address skills shortages in the Irish economy. The regulations also provided for a range of other changes to existing employment permits, including that the minimum period a trainee under the Intra-Company Transfer Employment Permit Scheme is required to be in the employment of a foreign employer was reduced from six months to one month.

The new regulations also provided for the roll out of an employment permits **online system**, the system was launched in September 2016 and allowed for a quicker processing of employment permit applications.

With regard to migrant entrepreneurs, in 2016, 43 applications were approved under the Start-Up Entrepreneur Programme (STEP) – an entry scheme for high potential start-up businesses. An additional 273 applications for residence were approved under the Immigrant Investor Programme.

As to international students, the **International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016 – 2020** aims at increasing the economic value of the international education sector, which will involve over 37,000 additional higher education and English language training students arriving in Ireland by 2020, including third-country nationals. The policy approach to international students aims at ensuring that education providers operate to high quality standards, including student protection and immigration compliance.

4.3. FAMILY REUNIFICATION

The International Protection Act 2015 brings into effect revised rules for family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection, with effect from 31 December 2016. The Act introduces certain key changes over the provisions in the Refugee Act 1996 and the 2013 Subsidiary Protection Regulations (as amended). The definition of a family member covers spouses, civil partners, children (under 18) of the sponsor and parents/siblings of the sponsor (if sponsor and siblings are under age 18). The discretionary power of the Minister to allow other dependent family members to enter the State is not included under the new Act. Such persons can make applications for family reunification under the terms of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) *Policy Document on non-EEA Family Reunification*.

Time limits for family reunification applications from beneficiaries of international protection have been introduced. Applications must be made within twelve months of the granting of a declaration for international protection. A permission for family reunification for a person entering the State to be united with a family member, will cease to be valid if the person does not enter the State by the date specified by the Minister when making the declaration.

In December 2016, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service also published an update to the Policy Document on Family Reunification, to take account of certain factual developments including the International Protection Act 2015. The Policy Document covers applications for family reunification, where ministerial discretion is retained.

¹ e.g. the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service at www.inis.gov.ie, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation at www.djei.ie

4.4 MANAGING MIGRATION AND MOBILITY²

The **Irish Short Stay Visa Waiver Programme** was extended for a further five years in October 2016 until 31 October 2021. Under the Programme, tourists or business people who have lawfully entered the UK, including Northern Ireland, on a valid UK visa will be able to travel onto Ireland without the requirement to obtain an Irish visa. They will be allowed to stay in Ireland for up to three months or until their UK visa runs out, whichever is shorter. Nationals of eighteen (18) countries are included in the programme: India; Kazakhstan; Peoples Republic of China; Uzbekistan; Bahrain; Kuwait; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; the United Arab Emirates; Belarus; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Montenegro; Russian Federation; Serbia; Thailand; Turkey and Ukraine.

5. Integration

The **new Migrant Integration Strategy** which provides the framework for government action on migrant integration from **2017–2020** was published in February 2017. The Communities Integration Fund for funding actions by community organisations to promote integration in their local communities was launched alongside the Strategy. A total amount of 500,000 euro will be made available in 2017 to local community based groups to promote integration in their area, for example local sporting clubs, faith-based groups, theatrical and cultural organisations.

A call for project proposals under EU funds (AMIF and ESF) in relation to migrant integration, gender equality, and improving access to the labour market was made in 2016.

6. External Dimension of EU Migration Policy

Ireland supported awareness raising information campaigns targeted at prevention of illegal migration and human trafficking through its bilateral aid programme in Ethiopia. Implementing partners are local civil society organisations.

7. Irregular Migration and Return

7.1. THE FIGHT AGAINST FACILITATION OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION

In November 2016, Ireland launched an automated connection to **INTERPOL's Lost and Stolen Travel Documents Database**, leading to over 700,000 documents having been searched during the first eight weeks of its operation.

In the first eight weeks of operating systematic checks against this database a number of people were refused entry to Ireland on the basis of an alert on the system having been triggered.

7.2. RETURN OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS

The International Protection Act 2015, which came into force from 31st December 2016, updated the legal framework in relation to return of rejected protection applicants. Section 51 of the Act provides that, subject to the prohibition on *refoulement*, the Minister for Justice and Equality may issue a deportation order against an applicant who has been unsuccessful in applications for refugee status, subsidiary protection and permission to remain. The legal framework in respect of the return of other third country nationals illegally present in the State continues to be the Immigration Act 1999. In 2016, 143 persons returned voluntarily through IOM Assisted Voluntary Return, while 428 persons were deported from the State.

8. Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings

The **Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking** was launched on 17th October 2016. The Plan contains several actions to combat the crime of trafficking, covering criminal enforcement, victim support, raising public awareness and enhanced training for those likely to encounter victims. The Plan also sets out goals in relation to international cooperation, including law enforcement cooperation, in the fight against transnational trafficking.

One of the outputs of the EU-funded all-Ireland REACH project was the development of an **App** in March 2016, entitled "**Know Sex Trafficking**", aimed at frontline professionals working with vulnerable persons, who were not experts in the area of human trafficking including those in health, social work, law enforcement and immigration. The App was designed to equip professionals to respond to disclosures or signs of trafficking or exploitation in an appropriate manner and guide potential victims to the relevant services and supports available.

STATISTICAL ANNEX

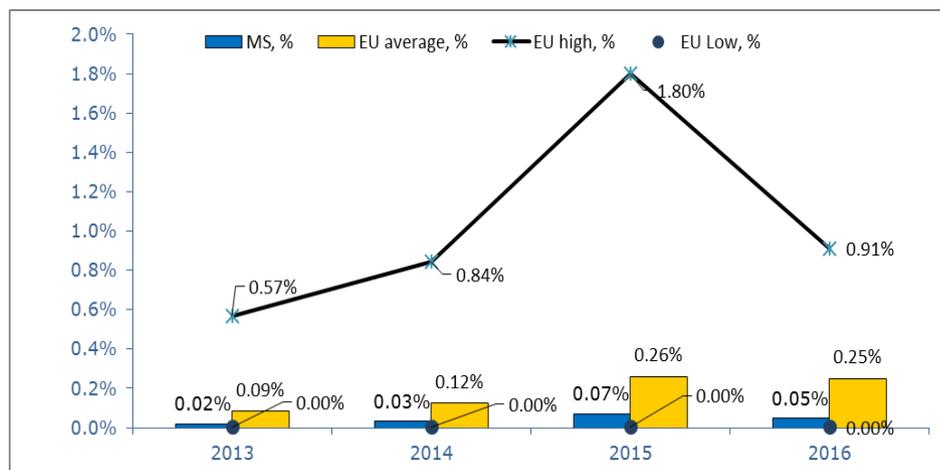
The Statistical Annex provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Ireland on aspects of migration and asylum (2013-2016), including residence, asylum, unaccompanied minors, irregular migration, return and visas. Where statistics are not yet available, this is indicated in the Annex as "N/A".

² "Managing migration and mobility" refers to the following themes: visa policy, Schengen governance and border monitoring.

Statistical Annex: Migration and Asylum in Ireland (2013-2016)

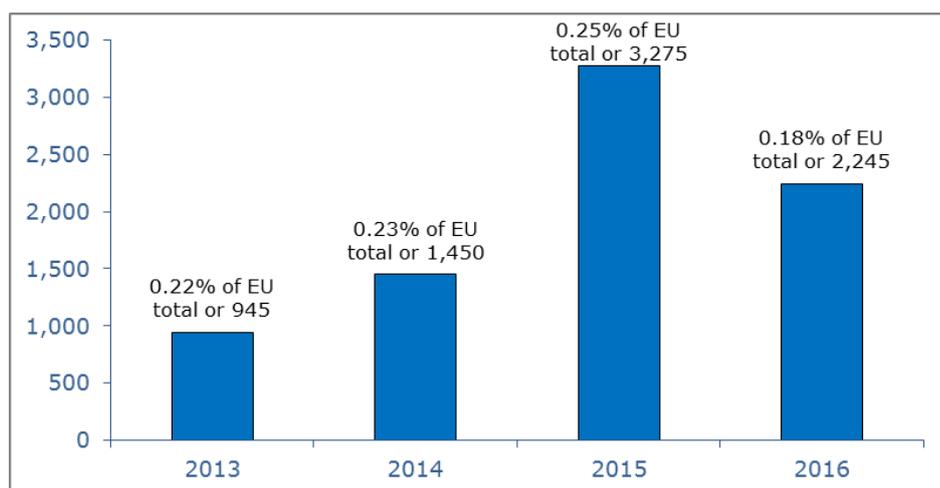
1. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND ASYLUM

Figure 1: Asylum applications as a share of the total population in Ireland, EU average and EU high and low (2013-2016)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_asyappctza](#))³, data extracted 02/08/2017

Figure 2: Number of asylum applications and as a share of the total number of applications in the EU (2013-2016)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_asyappctza](#)), data extracted 02/08/2017

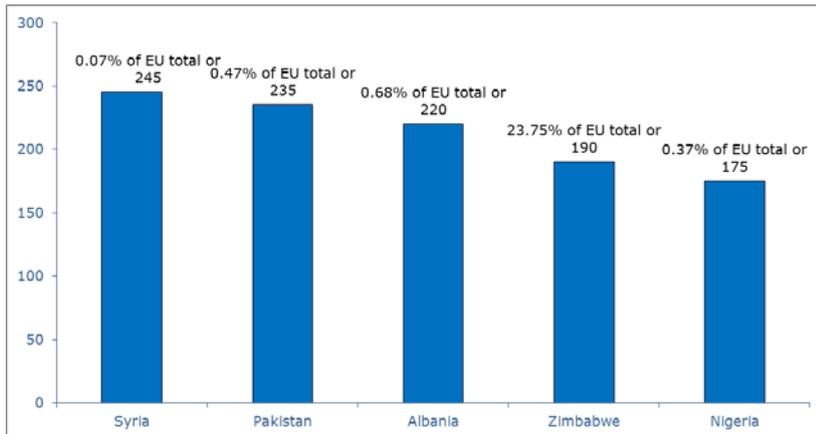
Table 1: Asylum applications: Top five third-country nationalities (2013–2016)

2013			2014			2015			2016		
Nationality	No.	% of total	Nationality	No.	% of total	Nationality	No.	% of total	Nationality	No.	% of total
Nigeria	130	14%	Pakistan	290	20%	Pakistan	1,355	41%	Syria	245	11%
Pakistan	90	10%	Nigeria	140	10%	Bangladesh	285	9%	Pakistan	235	10%
Congo Zimbabwe	70	7%	Albania Bangladesh	100	7%	Albania	215	7%	Albania	220	10%
Malawi	55	6%	Zimbabwe	85	6%	Nigeria	185	6%	Zimbabwe	190	8%
Albania Algeria	50	5%	Congo Algeria	75	5%	India	145	4%	Nigeria	175	8%

Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_asyappctza](#)), data extracted 02/08/2017

³ Figures regarding the total population were extracted from Eurostat ([demo_gind](#))

Figure 3: Asylum applications: Top five third-country nationalities as a share of EU total per given nationality (2016)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_asyappctza](#)), data extracted 02/08/2017

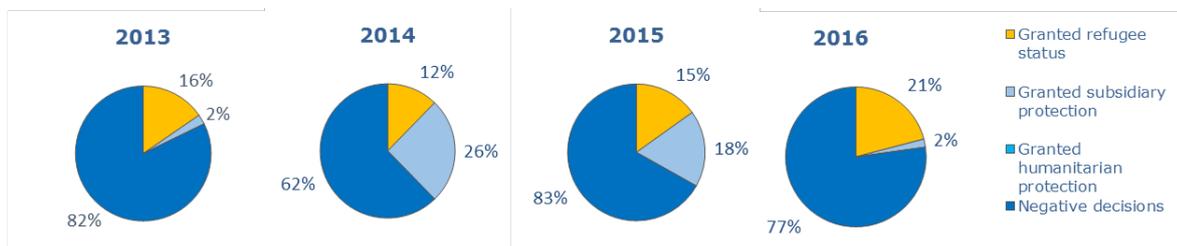
Note: the figure reads as: Ireland received 245 asylum applications from Syrians or 0.07% of all asylum applications lodged by Syria in EU in 2016.

Table 2: Asylum applications - First instance decisions by outcome (2013-2016)

Year	Total decisions	Positive decisions	Of which:		Humanitarian reasons	Negative decisions
			Refugee status	Subsidiary protection		
2013	840	150	130	20	N/A	695
2014	1,060	400	130	270	N/A	660
2015	1,000	330	150	180	N/A	665
2016	2,130	485	445	40	N/A	1,645

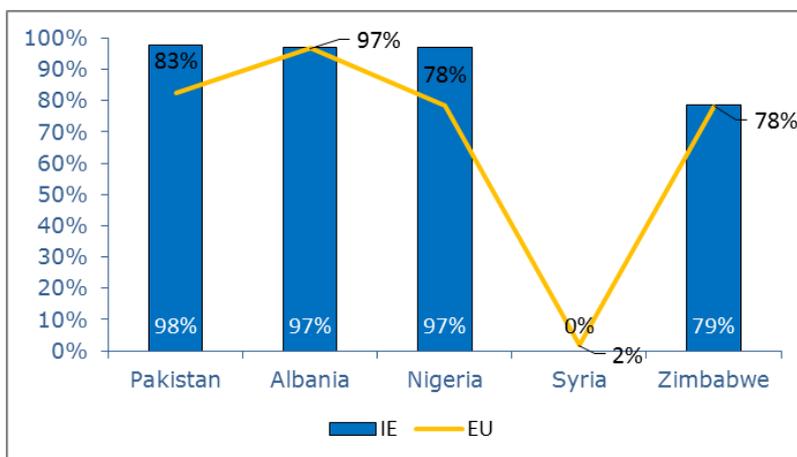
Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_asydcfsta](#)), data extracted 02/08/2017

Figures 4-7: Asylum applications - First instance decisions by outcome (2013-2016)



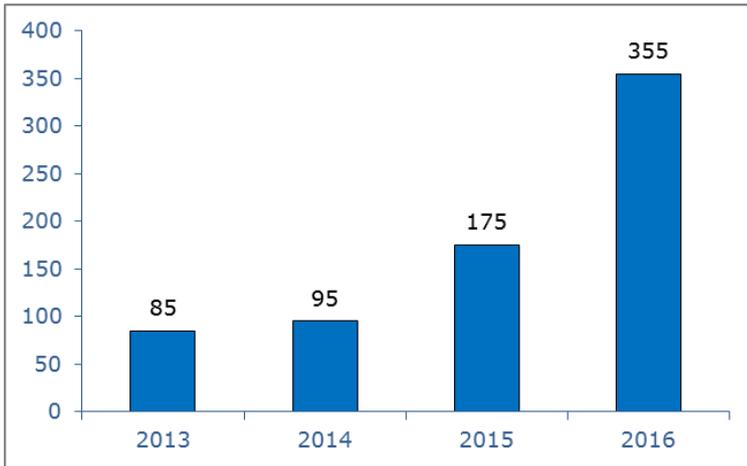
Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_asydcfsta](#)), data extracted 02/08/2017

Figure 8: Negative decision rate for the top five nationalities of applicants at the first instance in comparison with EU for the same given nationality (2016)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_asydcfsta](#)), data extracted 02/08/2017

Figure 9: Third-country nationals resettled (2013-2016)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_asyresa](#)), data extracted 09/05/2017

2. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Figure 10: Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum (2013-2016)

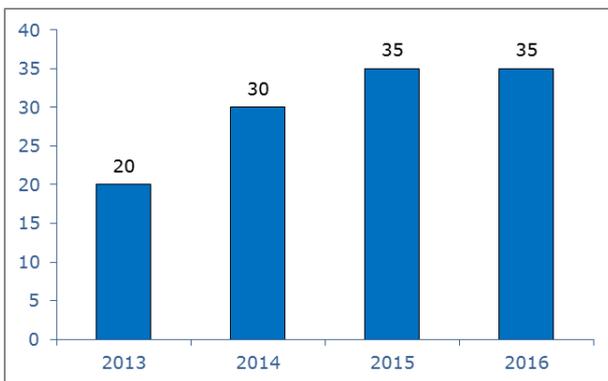


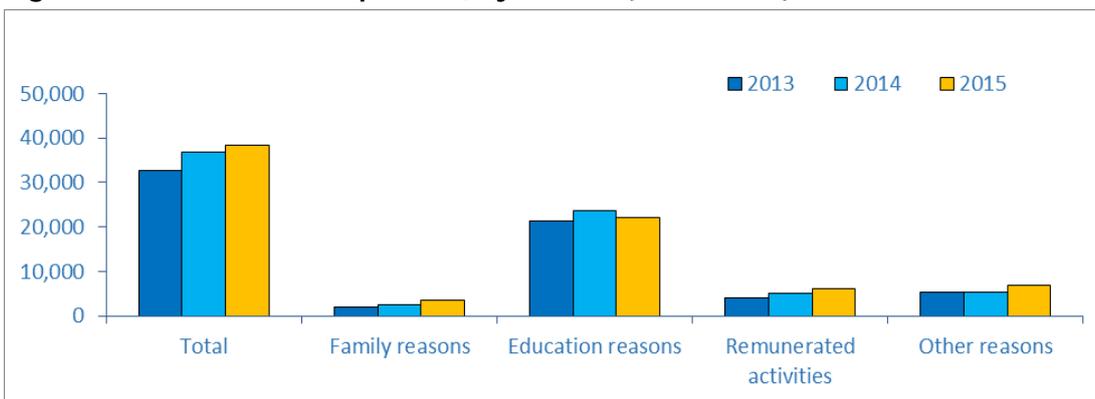
Table 3: Unaccompanied minors (2013-2016)

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Unaccompanied minors (total)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Unaccompanied minor asylum applicants	20	30	35	35

Source: Eurostat Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors by citizenship, age and sex Annual data (rounded) ([migr_asyunaa](#)), data extracted 17/04/2017; EMN NCPs

3. LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

Figure 11: First residence permits, by reason (2013-2015)



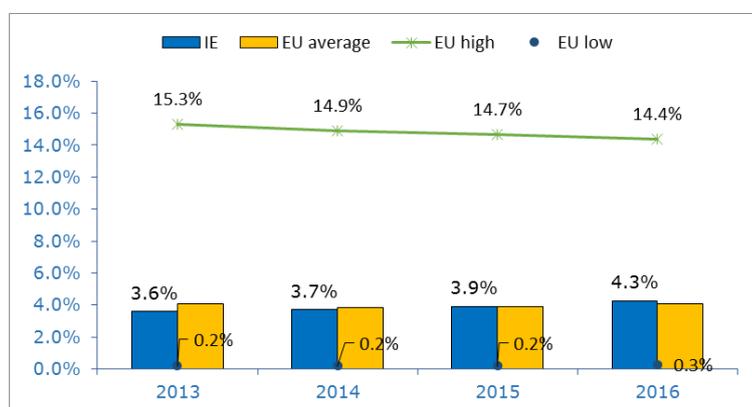
Source: Eurostat ([migr_resfirst](#)), data extracted 17/04/2017; EMN NCPs; 2016 not yet available

Table 4: First residence permits: Top five third-country nationalities (2013–2016)

2013		2014		2015		2016	
Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number
Brazil	7,263	Brazil	8,883	Brazil	10,955	N/A	N/A
United States	4,177	United States	4,737	India	2,883	N/A	N/A
India	2,506	India	2,897	United States	2,690	N/A	N/A
Venezuela	2,034	China (incl. Hong Kong)	1,956	China (incl. Hong Kong)	2,291	N/A	N/A
China (incl. Hong Kong)	1,813	South Korea	1,931	Pakistan	1,891	N/A	N/A

Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_resfirst](#)), data extracted 17/04/2017

Figure 12: Resident population of third-country nationals as a share of total population in Ireland, EU average, EU high and low (2013-2016)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_pop1ctz](#)), data extracted 17/04/2017

4. IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND RETURN

Table 5: Number of third-country nationals refused entry at external borders (2013–2016)

Third country nationals:	2013	2014	2015	2016
Refused entry at external borders	1,935	2,475	3,450	3,950
Found to be illegally present	1,465	900	2,315	2,315
Ordered to leave	2,145	970	875	1,355
Returned following an order to leave	635	345	365	585

Source: Eurostat migration statistics ([migr_eirfs](#))([migr_eipre](#))([migr_eiord](#)),([migr_eirtn](#)) data extracted 09/05/2017

Table 6: Third-country nationals returned (2013-2016)

Year	Returned as part of forced return measures	Returned voluntarily	Returned through an Assisted Voluntary Return Programme
2013	N/A	N/A	340
2014	114	242	192
2015	251	115	93
2016	428	187	143

Source: EMN NCPs

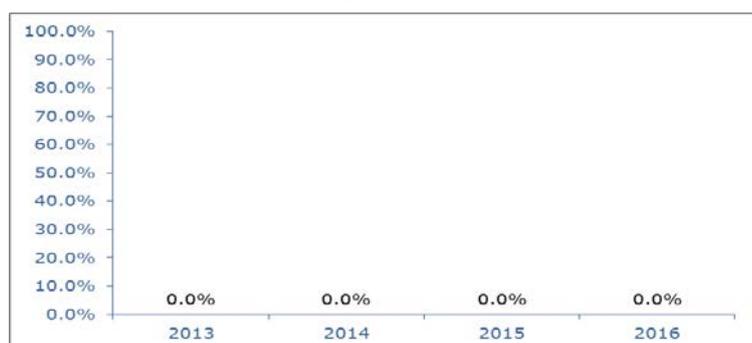
5. SECURING EUROPE'S EXTERNAL BORDERS

Table 7: Number of visas issued by type (2013–2016)

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total visas	86,683	90,382	97,193	104,572
Uniform visas (short-stay visas)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
National visas	86,683	90,382	97,193	104,572

Source: DG Migration and Home – Complete statistics on short-stay visas issued by the Schengen States EMN NCPs

Figure 13: Uniform visa applications received in MS as a share of the total number of uniform visa applications in all Schengen states consulates (2013-2016)



NB: Ireland does not issue Schengen Visas. Source: DG Migration and Home affairs – Complete statistics on short-stay visas issued by the Schengen States

Table 8: Top five countries in which the highest number of visa applications for MS was lodged (2013-2016)

2013		2014		2015		2016	
Countries	Number	Countries	Number	Countries	Number	Countries	Number
Russia	12,792	Russia	12,900	India	14,635	India	17,699
India	11,113	India	11,800	China	10,905	PRC	12,476
China	8,252	China	8,358	Russia	10,304	Russia	10,774
UK	7,574	UK	8,094	UK	8,739	UK	8,704
Saudi Arabia	5,387	Saudi Arabia	6,121	Saudi Arabia	6,150	Pakistan	8,042

Source: Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)