

COUNTRY FACTSHEET: BULGARIA 2012

EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

1. Introduction

This EMN Country Factsheet provides a factual overview of the main policy developments in migration and international protection in Bulgaria during 2012, including latest statistics. It has been prepared in conjunction with the European Commission's 4th Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (2012).

2. Legal Migration and Mobility

The **Annual Report for 2011** and the **Action Plan for 2012** regarding the implementation of the **National Strategy in the field of migration, asylum and integration (2011-2020)** was approved at the beginning of 2012, by the National Council for Migration Policy. During the same year, a **bill amending the Law for Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria (LFRB)** was drafted. The proposed changes included provisions on the issuance of visas in accordance with the Visa Code amongst others. The bill amending the LFRB was adopted by the National Assembly on 26th February 2013.

2.1. PROMOTING LEGAL MIGRATION CHANNELS

Bulgaria seeks to attract highly qualified third-country workers as there is a demand by local employers in various economy sectors. Several projects were successfully implemented in the major cities, under the framework of the European Fund for Integration of Third-Country Nationals (EIF). The projects aimed to familiarise employers with the EU Blue Card Directive and its transposition into Bulgarian legislation.

2.2. ECONOMIC MIGRATION

A significant political debate in 2012 was associated to amendments introduced to the **Investment Promotion Act**, when President Rosen Plevneliev returned the bill for further review, after such had been adopted by the National Assembly in December 2012, given that he considered the newly adopted provisions created extra obstacles for foreign investors by introducing unnecessarily heightened requirements for granting a permanent residence permit. In the

beginning of 2013, the amended Investment Promotion Act was adopted, in which provisions for acquiring prolonged or permanent residence permit or Bulgarian citizenship for foreign investors were introduced. Acquiring residence or citizenship for foreign investors is made conditional upon acquiring real estate or investing capital in a Bulgarian company with different thresholds depending on the type of residence permit or citizenship.

2.3. FAMILY REUNIFICATION

In 2012, legislative amendments were made to the **Law for Foreigners** which provided the possibility for family members to obtain prolonged residence after termination of marriage and in the event of emergency circumstances. In addition, family members of scientific researchers may receive a prolonged residence permit; its duration shall correspond to that of the respective scientific researcher's permit.

2.4. INTEGRATION

The **National Programme for Integration of Refugees** provides an overarching national framework for the integration of foreigners with humanitarian and refugee status. In 2012, a collaboration agreement was signed between the Employment Agency and the State Agency for Refugees which ensured that refugees can benefit from the Employment Agency job mediation services.

An **Employment Exchange for refugees** took place in September 2012 whereby employers from a number of industries offered job opportunities for refugees.

Also, **projects** aimed at promoting and ensuring equal treatment of migrants as well as encouraging active participation in the society were implemented in 2012 and financed through the EIF, including the projects: **"Online courses for immigrants – successful integration into the Bulgarian society"** and **"Provision of legal representation to asylum seekers"**.

During a conference organised by the Centre for European Refugees, Migration and Ethnic Studies

(CERMES) on October 8, 2012, Bulgarian and European experts discussed and shared good practices and successful integration policies for migrants into the labour market. Special focus was given to the results of the European **project MIGRAPASS** through analysis of good practices of countries with broad experience in migration and integration such as United Kingdom, France, Spain and Austria.

2.5 MANAGING MIGRATION AND MOBILITY¹

With regard to visa policy, Bulgaria has introduced the latest version of the **National Visa System**, which provides technical options for the collection of biometrics of visa applicants. The national biometric version of the Visa system was installed in 90% of the Bulgarian consular offices. In January 2012, a decision was adopted for the **implementation of visa-free regime** for holders of a valid uniform Schengen visa, valid long-stay visas and residence permits, issued by Member States fully implementing the Schengen *acquis*, in addition to Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Under the decision, holders of visas and residence permits are allowed to enter and reside in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria for no more than three months, during any six-month period from their first entry date and without having a short-stay Bulgarian visa. The Council of Ministers approved a decision² granting visa-free entry to certain categories of Turkish nationals (e.g. holders of Schengen visas, children (6-12 years), 25 year old people participating on cultural or educational events). With regard to Frontex operations, Bulgaria participated in ten joint operations.

3. International Protection and Asylum

An **expert working group was set up** in the State Agency for Refugees in order to amend the Law on Asylum and Refugees for the full transposition of Directive 2011/95/EU.³ Also, the bill amending the Law for Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria (LFRB) proposes the provisions to transpose Directive 2011/51/EU⁴ and thus creating the legal possibility for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection to acquire long-term resident status after five years of legal and continuous residence in Bulgaria. In 2012, a **transit centre in the village of Pustrogor**, within the Haskovo region, was opened and it currently operates with a capacity of 300 places. The centre is

¹ "Managing migration and mobility" refers to the following themes: visa policy, Schengen governance and border monitoring.

² Decision № 76 (prom. SG 9/31 January 2012) and the Decision № 48 of 27 January 2012 (prom. SG 9/31 January 2012)

³ On standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection.

⁴ Amending Directive 2003/109/EC to extend its scope to beneficiaries of international protection

strategically positioned near the town of Svilengrad, as the main stream of asylum seekers in mixed migration flows are coming through the southern neighbour Turkey.

The State Agency for Refugees also participated in a number of meetings, trainings and workshops organised by the European Support Office on Asylum (EASO). Finally, several resettlement activities were implemented during 2012, particularly, the government adopted a decision to include Bulgaria in the common European programme for a pilot resettlement quota of 20 refugees.

4. Unaccompanied Minors and other Vulnerable Groups

The **reception of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) looking for asylum**, previously responsibility of the Integration Centre at the State Agency for Refugees, was transferred to local offices accommodating asylum seekers, as of July 2012.

During the reference period, pursuant to the cooperation agreement between the General Directorate "Border Police", Ministry of Interior and UNHCR Representation in Bulgaria, **training for border staff** were organised on "Access to the area and production for refugee status in Bulgaria and application of the Dublin Convention". The training focused on issues regarding the implementation of the principle "*non-refoulement*" to asylum seekers and the respect for human rights and police ethics when working with vulnerable groups (i.e. unaccompanied children, minors and persons with special needs.)

5. Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings

The national policy to combat trafficking in human beings focuses on the implementation of specific objectives under the 2012 **National Programme for Prevention and Counteraction of Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of the Victims**. In 2012, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT), in partnership with NGOs, government institutions and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, actively implemented the National Referral Mechanism for victims of trafficking. Eight local committees to combat trafficking of human beings were established in risk regions (i.e. Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Varna, Montana, Pazardjik, Plovdiv, Ruse and Sliven) in December 2012. The NCCHT also participates as a partner in the **project "Development of common guidelines and procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings"** (November 2011 - November 2013) which aims at improving and harmonising methods and procedures to identify victims of trafficking in European Union and

to ensure equal treatment of victims, by developing a network of national contact points between participating countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Romania, France and Netherlands) to exchange best practices and develop common guidelines and procedures to identify victims of trafficking. In 2012, the NCCHT also worked on the following international projects: **"An integrated approach to the prevention of labour exploitation in countries of origin and destination"** in partnership with Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Former Republic of Macedonia, Cyprus and Hungary; **"Prevention of trafficking people, ethnic groups, with a focus on the Roma minority in Bulgaria"** under bilateral cooperation between Bulgaria and France and; **"Improvement of national policy on the fight against human trafficking through the transfer of knowledge, experience and good practices"** a bilateral project between Bulgaria and the Netherlands. In 2012, under the implementation of the European Refugee Fund (ERF) annual programme, aimed at enhancing cooperation with countries of origin, three meetings were held with representatives of the diplomatic and consular departments of Afghanistan (January 2012), Lebanon (March 2012) and Iraq (November 2012).

6. External Dimension of EU Migration Policy

The National Strategy on Migration, Integration and Asylum (2011-2020) states that Bulgaria pays particular attention to the positive relation between migration and development, as an essential element of migration management. Bulgaria takes part in the **Mobility Partnerships with countries from the Eastern Partnership**, such as Moldova, Georgia and Armenia and also in the envisaged partnership with Azerbaijan. The country mainly contributes to administrative capacity building, information activities and sharing best practices. Bulgaria also participates in activities under the Global Forum on Migration and Development, Black Sea Cooperation Platform amongst others.

7. Irregular Migration

Due to increased migratory pressures in 2012, improved collaboration was established with the Turkish border authorities. Regarding **border monitoring**, in 2012, the use of **integrated and control systems started on the Bulgarian-Turkish border**. The system contributed to better identify those attempting to illegally enter the state border. In order to enhance the effectiveness of border control and the timely intersection of those attempting to illegally cross the Bulgarian-Turkish border, a **specialised police operation** was held in October 2012. Following the Strategic Response to EU Action

on Migratory Pressures⁵, Bulgaria has developed both a draft **trilateral agreement for the establishment of a trilateral common contact centre for police, border and customs cooperation** between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, and the **draft Agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey for joint patrols** along the border. Also in 2012, Bulgarian Border Police participated in a joint operation **"Poseidon land borders"** by sending 67 officers and technical staff in the International Coordinating Centre in Alexandroupoulos, Greece. In November 2012, the Ministry of Interior hosted the **third meeting of the Working Group for the Black Sea region**⁶. The meeting focused on the links between legal and illegal migration in the region. The results and feedback from participants such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan were highly positive. Regarding **return**, the Strategic Programme on Integrated Management of Return (2011-2013) was implemented during 2012.

In accordance with Article 8 of the Law for Foreigners, monitoring the forced return and the effective implementation of activities developed under the European Return Fund, an explicit rule was introduced under which the implementation of administrative enforcement measures shall be observed by representatives of national and international NGOs and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria. Amendments were also made to Article 33 which regulates the grounds for expulsion of a third-country national who has been granted international protection in the first Member State before having been granted long-term residence in Bulgaria. **Amendments** to the Law on Legal Aid were proposed **to introduce free legal assistance to the third-country nationals who are subject to return proceedings**.

8. Provision and Exchange of Information to support Policy Development

The **National Conference of the European Migration Network**, organised by the national contact point in the Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, was held in November 2012 in the town of Pravets.

STATISTICAL ANNEX

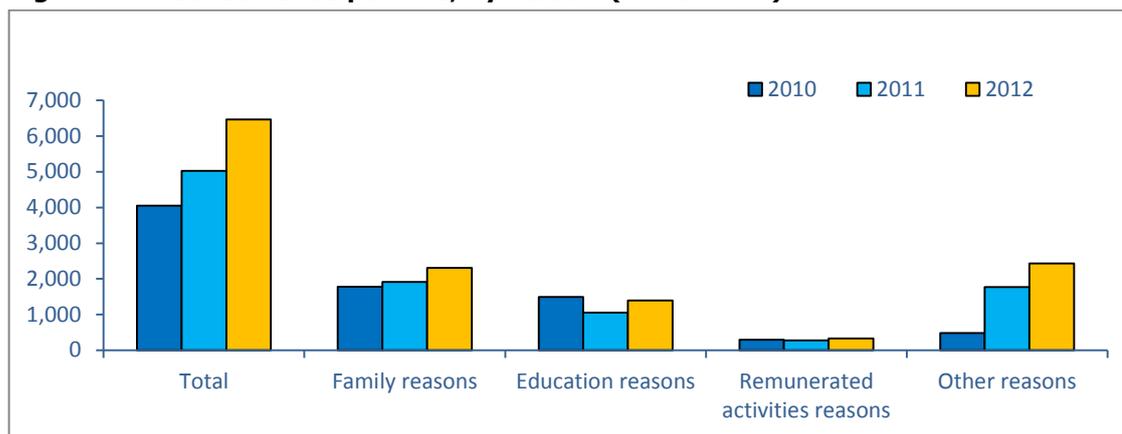
The Statistical Annex provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Bulgaria on aspects of migration and asylum (2010-2012), including residence, asylum, unaccompanied minors, irregular migration, return and visas. Where statistics are not yet available, this is indicated in the Annex as "N/A".

⁵ Strategic Priority III. Preventing illegal migration via the Greek-Turkish border

⁶ Bulgarian Border Police Bust 20 Illegal Immigrants from Ivory Coast | Sliven.NET новини

Statistical Annex: Immigration and Asylum in Bulgaria (2010-2012)

Figure 1: First residence permits, by reason (2010-2012)



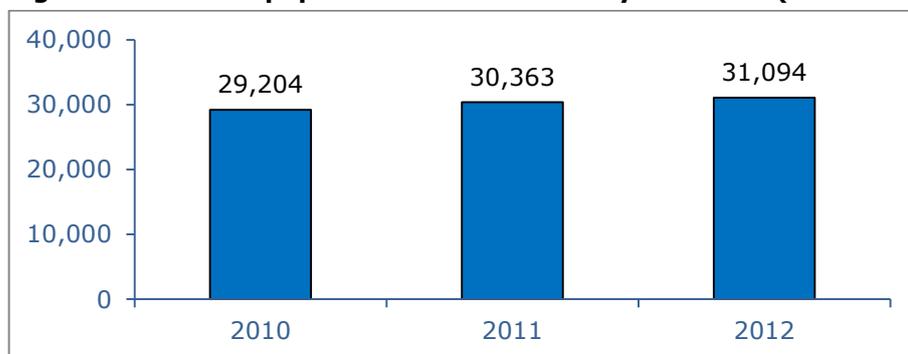
Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_resfirst) for 2010 and 2011; Data for 2012 obtained from National contribution for APR 2012

Table 1: First residence permits: Top 5 nationalities (2010-2011)

2010	2011	2012*
1. Turkey – 1,510	1. Russia – 1,819	1. Russia – 2,572
2. Russia – 777	2. Turkey – 1,335	2. Turkey – 1,578
3. Ukraine – 249	3. Ukraine – 297	3. Ukraine – 398
4. Moldova – 224	4. United States of America – 196	4. Moldova – 180
5. United States of America – 214	5. Moldova – 176	5. Kazakhstan – 171

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_resfirst) and: * Information provided by the EMN National Contact point

Figure 2: Resident population of third-country nationals (2010-2012)⁷



Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_pop1ctz)

Table 2: Resident population: Top 5 nationalities (2010-2012)⁸

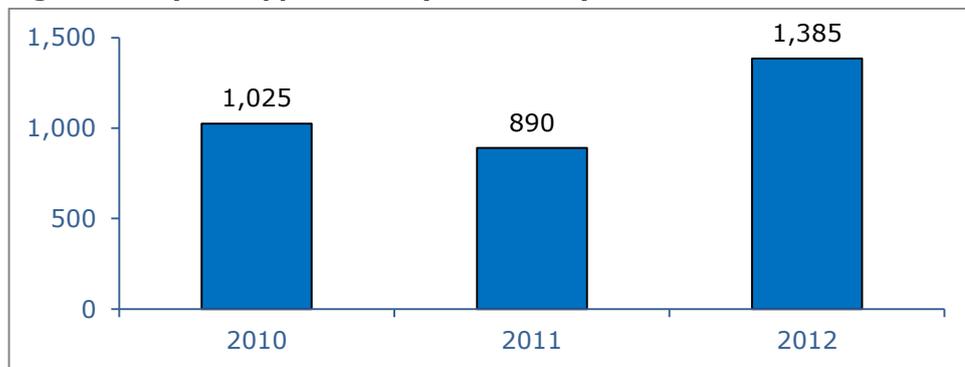
2010	2011	2012*
1. Russia – 12,018	1. Russia – 12,018	1. Russia – 12,031
2. Ukraine – 3,020	2. Ukraine – 3,084	2. United Kingdom – 3,265
3. Turkey – 1,981	3. Turkey – 2,737	3. Ukraine – 3,185
4. United Kingdom – 1,796	4. United Kingdom – 2,605	4. Turkey – 3,025
5. Stateless – 1,708	5. Stateless – 1,707	5. Greece – 1,789

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_pop1ctz) and; *Information provided by the EMN National Contact Point.

⁷ As of 01 January of each year

⁸ Ibid

Figure 3: Asylum applications (2010-2012)



Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asyappctza)

Table 3: Asylum applications: Top 5 nationalities (2010-2012)

2010	2011	2012
1. Iraq – 450	1. Iraq – 345	1. Syria – 450
2. Stateless – 100	2. Afghanistan – 90	2. Iraq – 325
3. Afghanistan – 60	3. Syria – 85	3. Stateless – 155
4. Iran – 60	4. Stateless – 70	4. Afghanistan – 110
5. Armenia – 60	5. Somalia – 40	5. Algeria – 75

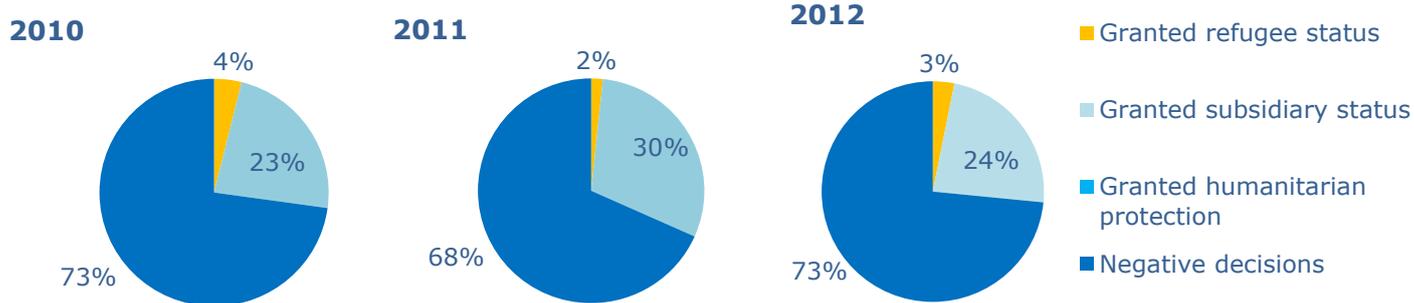
Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asyappctza)

Table 4: Asylum applications - First instance decisions by outcome (2010-2012)

	Total decisions	Positive decisions	Of which:			Negative decisions
			Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian reasons	
2010	515	140	20	120	N/A	375
2011	605	190	10	180	N/A	410
2012	640	170	20	150	N/A	470

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asydcfsta)

Figures 4-6: Asylum applications - First instance decisions by outcome (2010-2012)

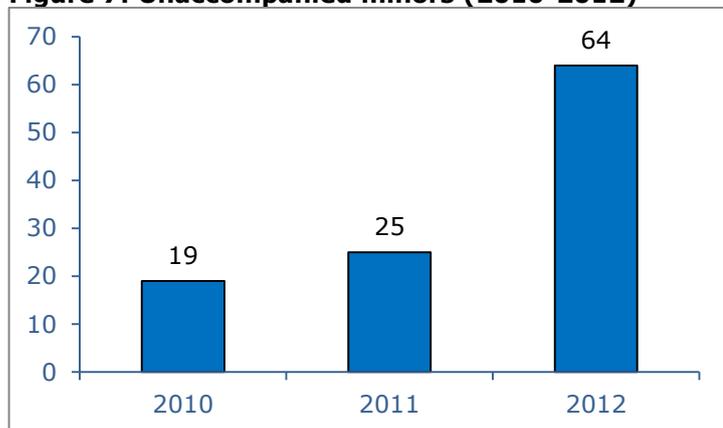


Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asydcfsta)

Table 5: Third-country nationals relocated and resettled (2012)

	2010	2011	2012
Third-country nationals relocated	N/A	N/A	N/A
Third-country nationals resettled	N/A	N/A	0

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asyresa) and National contributions to EMN Annual Policy Report

Figure 7: Unaccompanied minors (2010-2012)

Source: National contributions to EMN Annual Policy Report

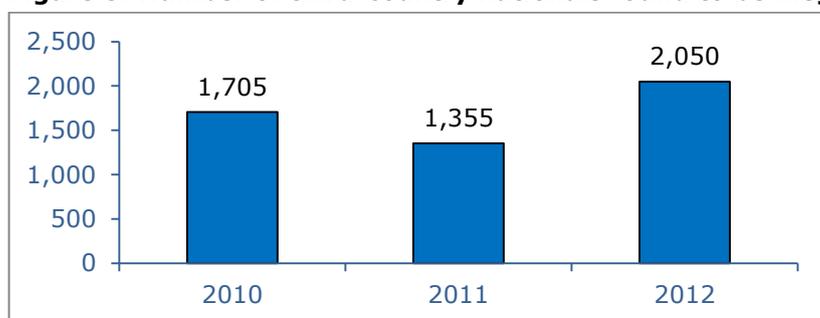
Table 6: Unaccompanied minors (2010-2012)

	2010	2011	2012
Unaccompanied minors (total)	19	25	64
Unaccompanied minors not applying for asylum	N/A	N/A	0
Unaccompanied minor asylum applicants	20	25	60

Table 7: Number of third-country nationals refused entry at external borders (2010-2012)

	2010	2011	2012
Third-country nationals refused entry at external borders	3,070	2,810	3,070

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_eirfs)

Figure 8: Number of third-country nationals found to be illegally present (2010-2012)

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_eipre)

Table 8: Third-country nationals returned (2010-2012)

	Third-country nationals ordered to leave	Returned as part of forced return measures	Returned voluntarily	Returned through an Assisted Voluntary Return Programme
2010	1,705	N/A	N/A	N/A
2011	1,355	N/A	N/A	N/A
2012	2,050	837	76	51

Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_eiord) and National contributions to EMN Annual Policy Report

Table 9: Number of visas issued by type (2010-2012)

	2010	2011	2012
Total visas	N/A	N/A	818,775
Schengen visa (short-stay visas)*	616,607	742,760	N/A
National visa	N/A	8,460	818,775

Source: Commission Staff Working Documents on the Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum; * DG HOME Statistics on Visa Policy website: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/index_en.htm