



Federal Ministry
of the Interior, Building
and Community



Federal Office
for Migration
and Refugees

2016/2017 Migration Report: Key Results



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Key Results

The Federal Government's Migration Report aims to provide the most up-to-date, comprehensive and adequately detailed statistical data possible on migration, and thus to offer a basis for migration policy decisions by governmental and administrative bodies. It is also intended to inform the public about how migration is evolving.

Taking all immigrant groups into account, the report includes not only general data on migration to and from Germany, as well as a detailed portrayal of the various forms of migration, but also a European comparison of the migration picture and of immigration by persons seeking asylum. The report also addresses emigration from Germany by Germans and persons of other nationalities, explores the phenomenon of illegal and/or irregular migration, and provides information about the structure and demographics of the population with a migration background.

At a glance

Distinct decline in immigration

In 2016, 1.87 million persons migrating into Germany and 1.37 million persons migrating away from Germany were recorded in total. That represents a net migration gain of +499,944 immigrants – a substantial reduction from the net total for 2015 (+1,139,402). The downtrend continued in 2017, with 1.55 million persons migrating into the country, and 1.13 million persons leaving. Thus these figures indicate a decline of 16.9% in both immigration and emigration, and the net migration gain was +416,080 persons.

Two-thirds of all immigrants come from European states

In 2017, 67.0% of all immigrants came to Germany from another European state¹ (2016: 56.3%). As had been the case in 2016 as well, in 2017 Romania was the principal country of origin for immigrants, followed by Poland. By contrast, the numbers of immigrants from Syria, who still came to 326,872 in 2015 (first place), continued to decrease considerably between 2016 and 2017 (-67.5%, from 155,412 – third place – in 2016 to 50,551 – sixth place – in 2017).

Fewer applications for asylum

Asylum applications reflect the substantial decline in refugee migration in 2016 and 2017. Where 2016 saw 722,370 first-time applications filed, the figure for 2017 declined to 198,317 (-72.5%).

More family reunification immigration from third countries

Immigration from third countries for purposes of family reunification increased steadily in 2016 and 2017. A total of 114,861 residence permits were granted for family reasons in 2017, compared to 105,551 permits in 2016 (for persons who immigrated in each reporting year).

More foreign students begin studies

The number of students who received their basic education outside Germany and have now taken up university studies in this country also rose again in 2017. The increase came to 3.6%, from 101,294 students in 2016 to 104,940 in 2017.

¹ European Union and European third countries, including Turkey and the Russian Federation (official statistics count both as part of Europe).

Increase in migration for employment purposes

Looking at third-country nationals' migration for employment purposes (as defined in secs. 18 through 21 of the German Residence Act (*Aufenthaltsgesetz*)), there was an increase in this form of immigration from 26,386 immigrants in 2009 to 60,882 in 2017 (+130.7%). For skilled and highly qualified workers, who constitute a subgroup of these immigrants, there was an increase from 16,149 to 38,082 immigrants during the same period (+135.8%).

Germany remains a primary destination in the EU

Compared to the rest of Europe, Germany remains a primary destination for migration (by both EU citizens and third-country nationals) over the other EU states, and has grown significantly more attractive in recent years.

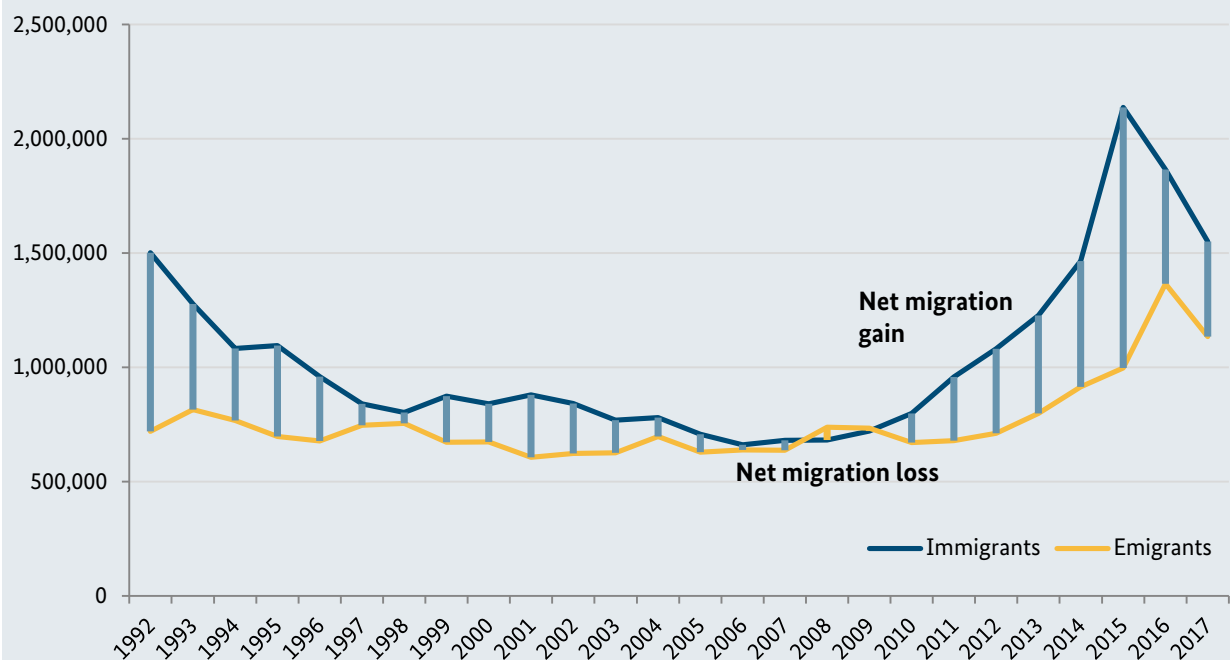
2016 and 2017: Substantial decrease in immigrants

While the number of immigrants remained relatively constant from 2006 to 2009, there was a considerable increase in subsequent years. The peak level to date was reached in 2015, with 2.14 million immigrants, a 45.9% increase from 2014. An influx of persons seeking protection was a particular feature of 2015. Numbers of immigrants decreased substantially in the next two years. A total of 1.87 million immigrants into Germany and 1.37 million emigrants out of Germany were recorded in 2016. Thus the number of immigrants was 12.7% below the prior year, and the number of emigrants was 36.9%² higher. All in all, the net migration was +499,944 immigrants – and thus the net migration gain was down substantially from 2015 (+1,139,402).

The downtrend continued in 2017, with some 1.55 million immigrants and 1.13 million emigrants.

² The large increase in emigrants in 2016 was most notably the consequence of a change in the recording method. Since 2016, the statistics have also taken account of immigration and emigration by Germans whose former or new place of residence is unknown. These were formerly largely left out of the migration statistics, and consequently from population extrapolations.

Immigrants and emigrants entering and leaving Germany from 1992 to 2017*



Source: Federal Statistical Office

* Comparability of results from the 2016 and 2017 reporting years with prior-year figures is limited because of methodological changes and refinements of measuring techniques.

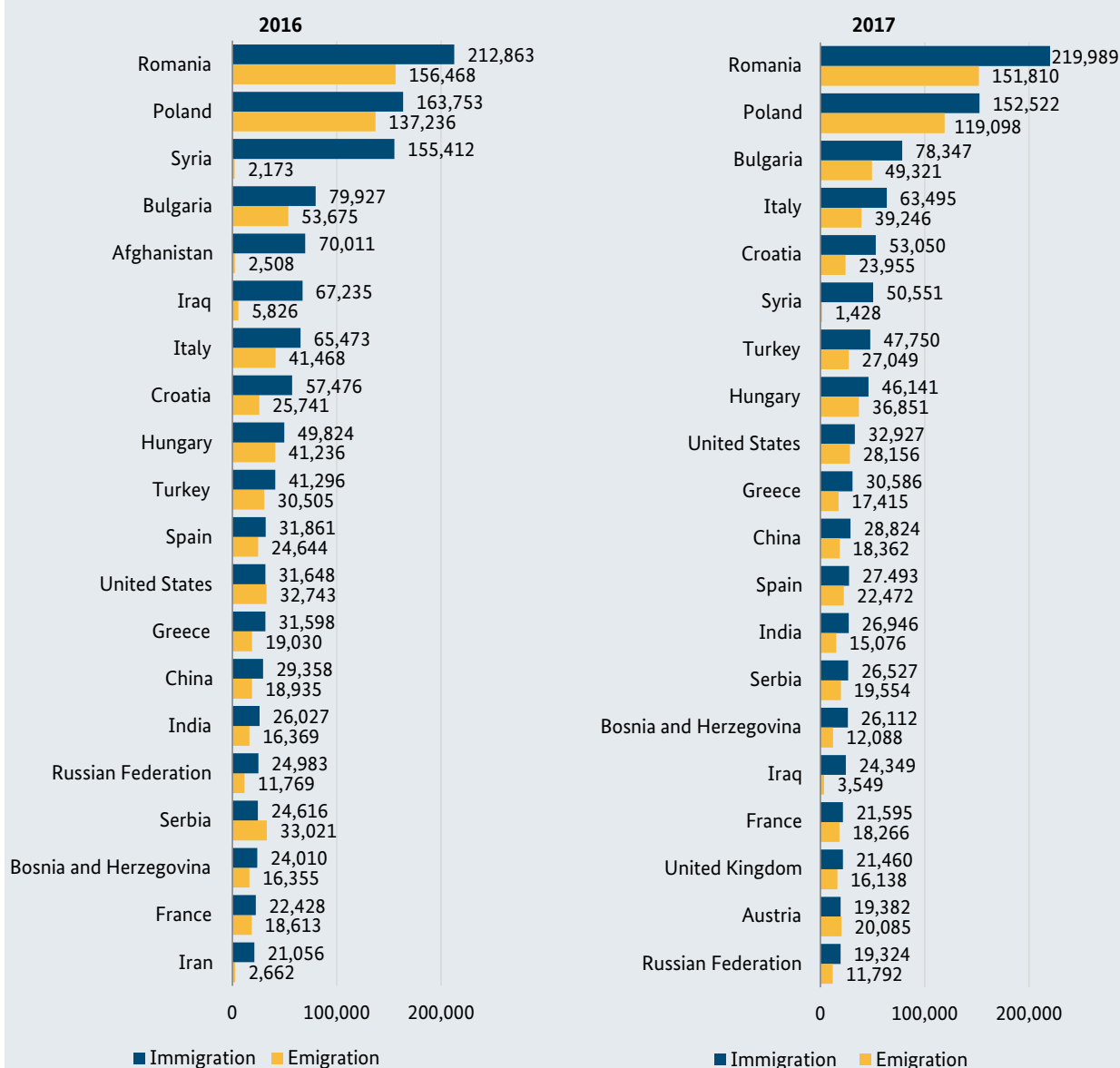
Consequently the numbers of both immigrants and emigrants were down by -16.9% from the prior year. The net migration gain came to +416,080 persons.

In 2017, as in 2016, Romania was the main country of origin for immigrants, with 219,989 persons (14.2% of all immigrants). This represented an increase of 3.3% from the prior year. Poland accounted for the second-largest group, with 152,522 immigrants (9.8% of all immigrants), a 6.9% decrease from the prior year. The decrease in immigrants from Syria was much more substantial (by 67.5%, from 155,412 to 50,551). At the high tide of refugee immigration to Germany in 2015, 326,872 immigrants from Syria were registered. Figu-

res were also down for other principal countries of origin for asylum seekers, such as Afghanistan (-88.2%), Iraq (-63.8%) and Iran (-51.3%). There were rising numbers of immigrants from Macedonia (+28.4%), Kosovo (+27.0%) and Turkey (+15.6%).

The leading destination countries for emigrants in 2016 were Romania (11.5% of emigrants), Poland (10.1%) and Bulgaria (3.9%). A large migration volume to and from these countries is thus evident. They dominated the emigration figures for 2017 as well, with percentages of 13.4% (Romania), 10.5% (Poland) and 4.3% (Bulgaria).

Immigration and emigration by most common countries of origin and destination in 2016/2017*



Source: Federal Statistical Office

* Comparability of results from the 2016 and 2017 reporting years with prior-year figures is limited because of methodological changes and refinements of measuring techniques.

The net migration gain in 2016 was highest for Syria (+153,239; 2015: +316,732). The gain from Afghanistan as a country of origin was next, though considerably lower, at +67,503 (2015: +89,931), followed by Iraq at +61,409 (2015: +67,345), and Romania at +56,395 (2015: +86,274).

The net migration gain from most countries of origin was down in 2017 in comparison to 2016. The figure did increase from the western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina: +14,024, Serbia: +6,973, Kosovo: 6,611), as it did from Turkey (+20,701) and India (+11,870). There was still a substantial net migration gain from Syria, but at +49,123 the figure was far below what it had been in 2016 (+153,239). There was also a net migration gain from some EU Member States, such as Romania (+68,179), Poland (+33,424), Croatia (+29,095) and Bulgaria (+29,026).

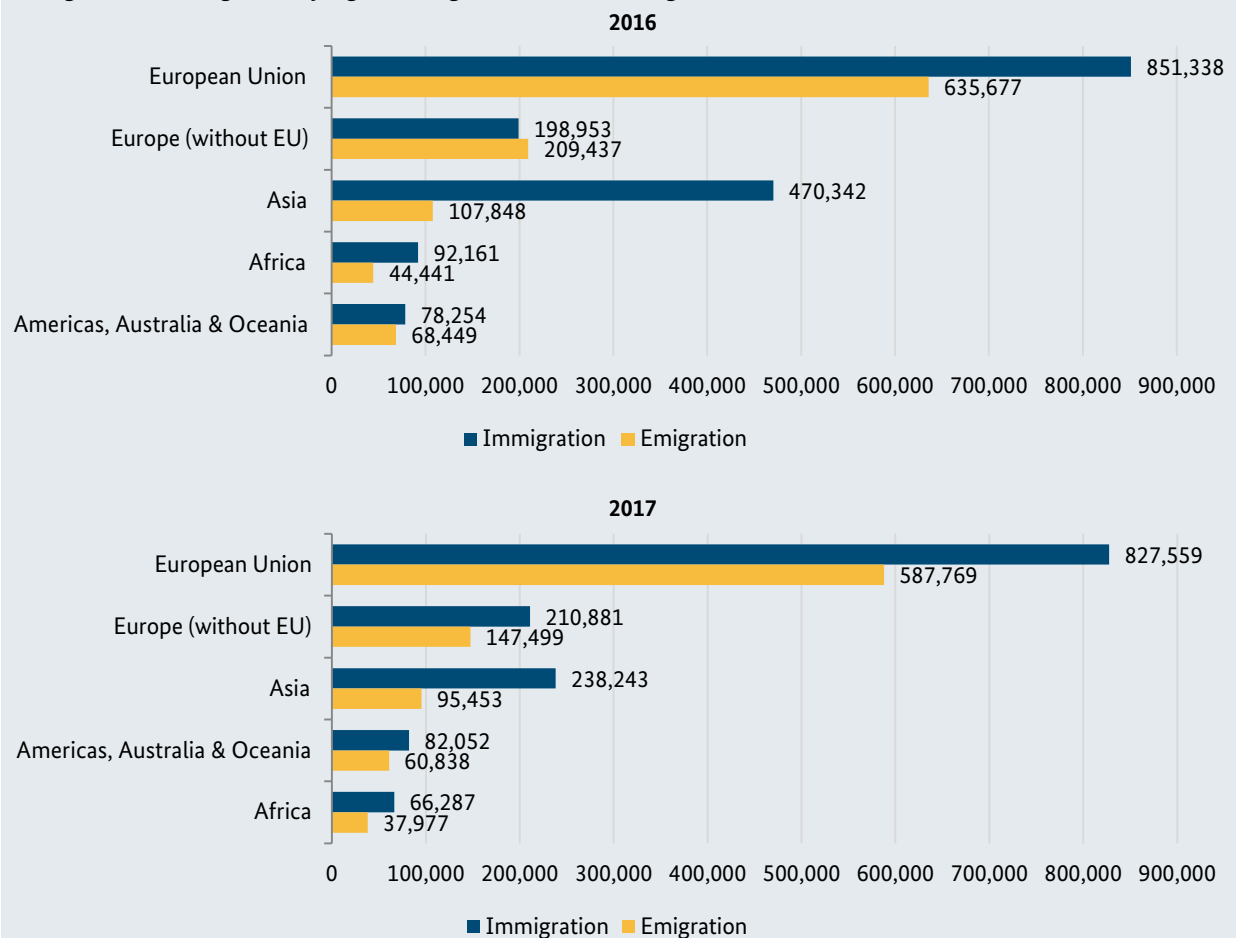
Two-thirds of all immigrants come from European states

Migration to and from Germany is dominated primarily by migration to and from other European countries.³ For example, in 2017 67.0% of all immigrants (2016: 56.3%, 2015: 57.2%) arrived in Germany from another European state (although they were not necessary nationals of those states). Another 15.4% of immigrants came from a country in Asia. Only 4.3% came to Germany from African countries, and 5.3% from the Americas, Australia and Oceania.

Almost two-thirds of emigrants from Germany also moved to another European country in 2017 (64.8%). Emigrants to Asia accounted for 8.4% (2016: 7.9%);

³ European Union and European third countries, including Turkey and the Russian Federation (official statistics count both as part of Europe).

Immigration and emigration by region of origin and destination region in 2016/2017*



Source: Federal Statistical Office

* Comparability of results from the 2016 and 2017 reporting years with prior-year figures is limited because of methodological changes and refinements of measuring techniques.

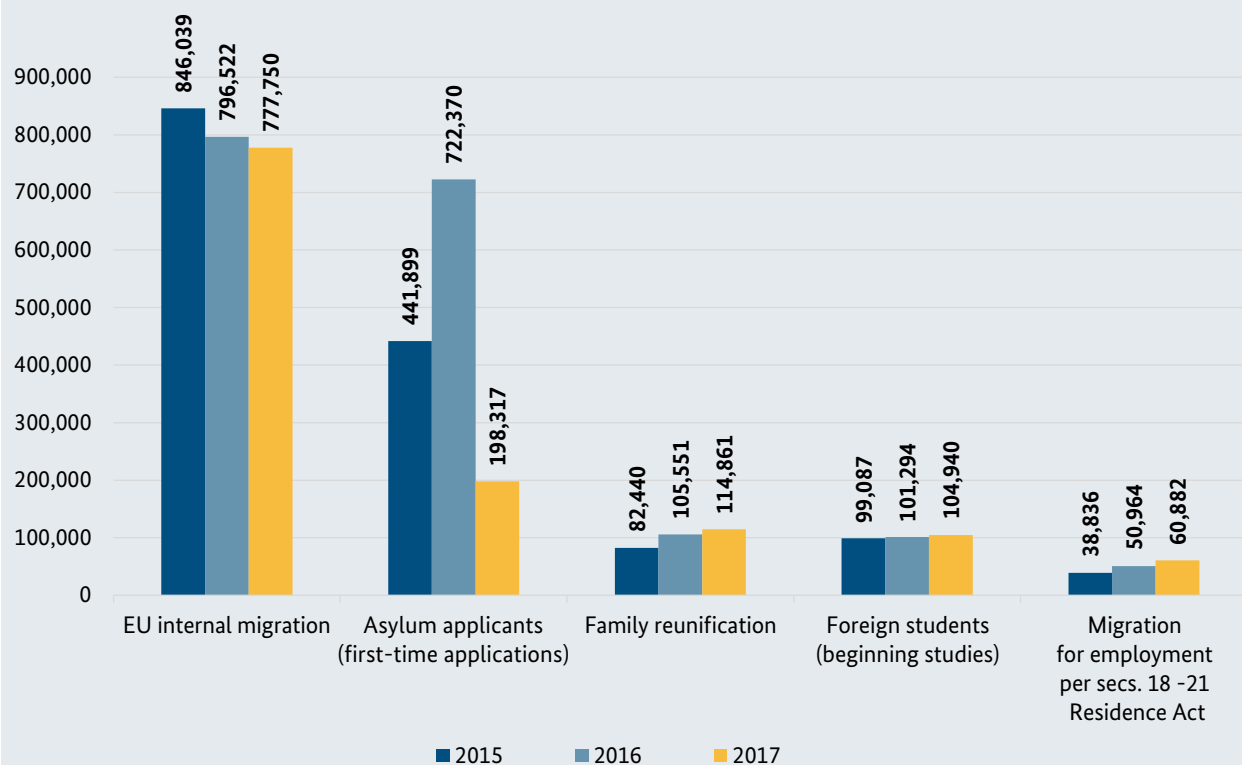
those to the Americas, Australia and Oceania came to 5.4% (2016: 5.0%). Only 3.3% emigrated to Africa (2016: 3.3%).

The largest migration gain in 2017, at +239,790, came from EU states; the prior year's figure was somewhat lower, at +215,661. Thus the net migration from European Union states was again somewhat lower than in 2015 (+332,511). The net figure from Asia was significantly lower, at +142,790 (2016: +362,494, 2015: +577,480). Migration gains from Africa were likewise significantly lower than in previous years (2017: +28,310, 2016: +47,720, 2015: +82,520). From the Americas, Australia and Oceania there was a migration gain of +21,214 (2016: +9,805, 2015: +8,421).

Overview of individual immigrant groups

Germany remains an important destination country for EU citizens: some 780,000 EU citizens immigrated to Germany in 2017 (2016: 797,000). Migration for humanitarian reasons decreased substantially. Where 722,370 applications for asylum were filed in 2016, the figure decreased to 198,317 in 2017 (-72.5%). In 2017, 114,861 third-country nationals immigrated to Germany for family reasons (2016: 105,551); approximately the same number of students (who had received their basic schooling in a system outside Germany) took up studies at a German university-level institution. Within the field of migration for employment purposes, 60,882 persons who had entered the country in 2017 received residence permits under sections 18 through 21 of the Residence Act (2016: 50,964).

Overview of main immigrant groups entering Germany, 2015–2017



Sources: Federal Statistical Office, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Central Register of Foreign Nationals

It is not possible to add up the immigrant groups into a total, because of different recording criteria (e.g., per-case vs. per-person statistics) and duplicate counts (e.g., EU internal migration and seasonal workers from EU states).

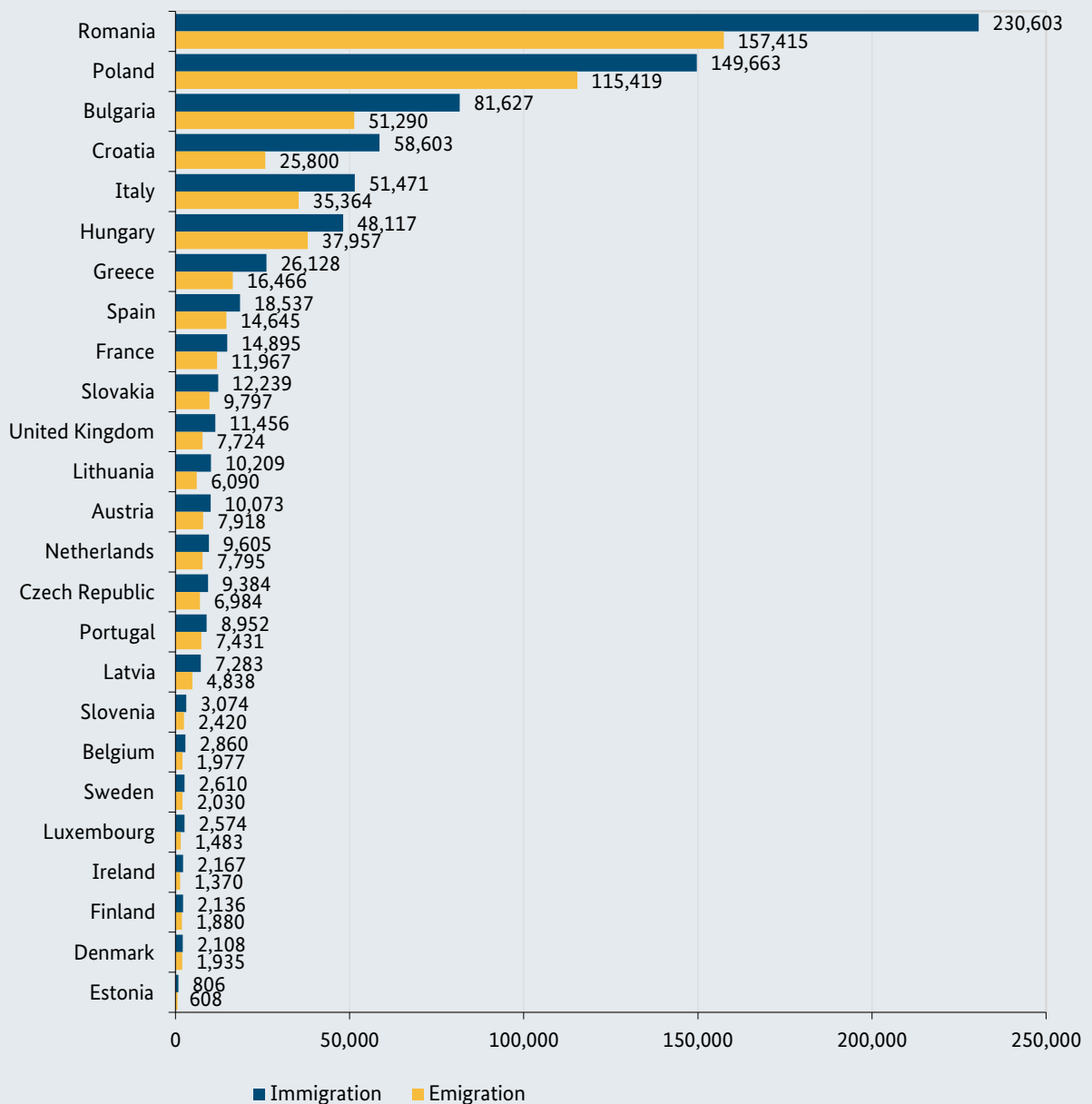
Migration of EU citizens within the EU

In 2017, nationals from other EU states represented 50.2% of all immigrants to Germany, or 777,750 immigrants (2016: 42.7%, 796,522 immigrants); 29.7% of EU-citizen immigrants were Romanian nationals (2016: 27.9%), and 19.2% were Polish (2016: 20.2%). Thus nationals from these two Member States accounted for almost half of all immigrants from within the EU in 2016 and 2017. Further significant groups

were nationals from Bulgaria, at 10.5% (2016: 10.4%); Croatia, at 7.5% (2016: 7.8%); Italy, at 6.6% (2016: 6.6%); and Hungary, at 6.2% (2016: 6.5%).

The total number of EU citizens who emigrated in 2017 came to 538,959 (2016: 584,470). Internal migration within the EU as a percentage of total emigration rose from 42.8% in 2016 to 47.5% in 2017.

Immigration and emigration of EU citizens entering and leaving Germany in 2017* (excluding Cyprus and Malta)



Source: Federal Statistical Office

* Comparability of results from the 2016 and 2017 reporting years with prior-year figures is limited because of methodological changes and refinements of measuring techniques.

Asylum applications decrease

Immigration to Germany in 2015 was still dominated by a larger than proportionate migration of refugees; the number of persons expressing a desire for asylum (asylum seekers) reached a historic high, at roughly 890,000.⁴ At the same time, because of this sharp increase, no formal asylum application could be filed promptly after the person's first registered as an asylum seeker in every case. Consequently, in 2015, the number of asylum applications was considerably lower than the number of foreigners first registered as asylum seekers (2015: 441,899 first-time asylum applica-

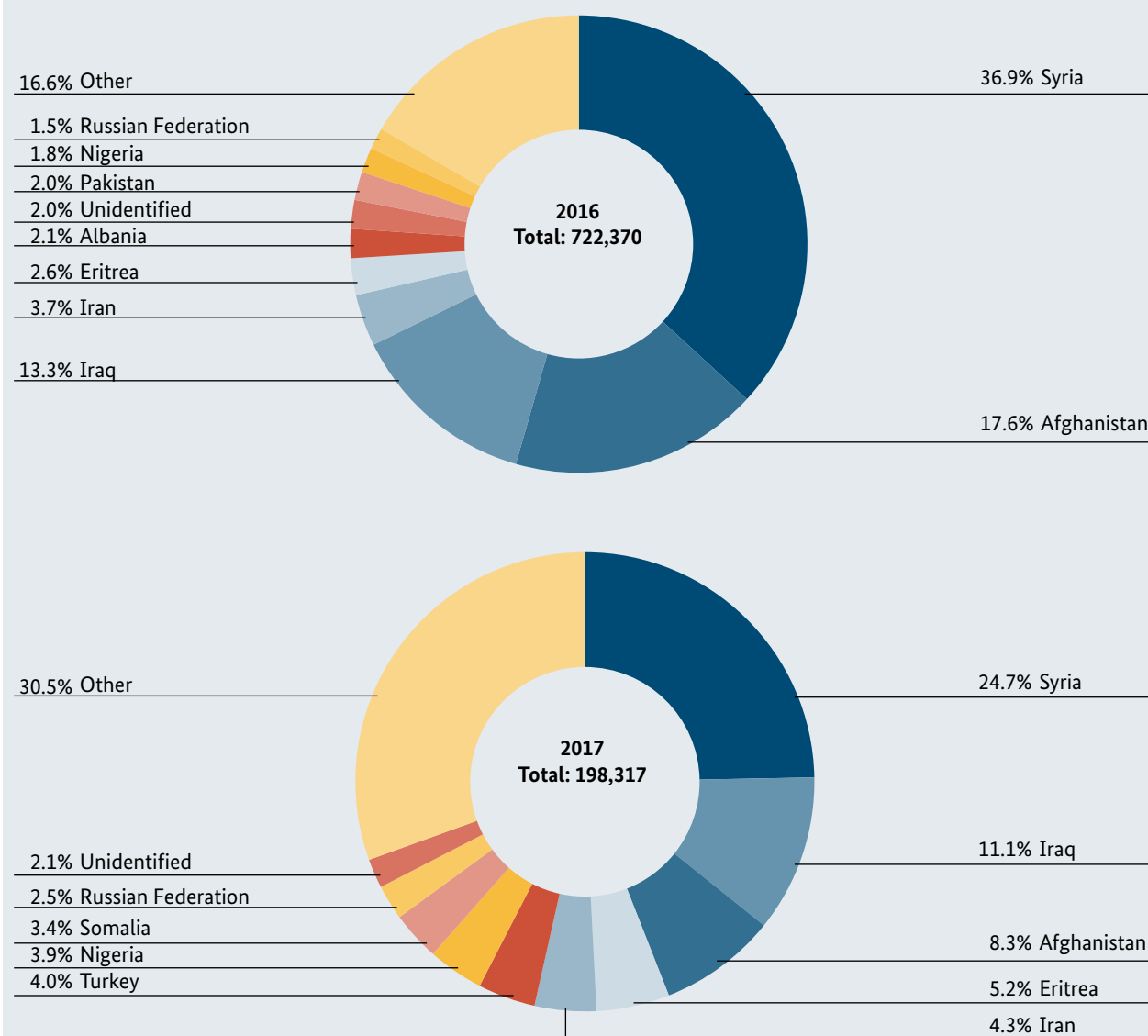
tions). A considerable number of persons were registered as asylum seekers for the first time in 2015 but were not yet able to file a formal asylum application that same year; this backlog was caught up in 2016. Consequently 722,370 asylum applications were filed in 2016, while only 280,000 people were registered as asylum seekers.⁵ In 2017, the number of first-time applications dropped to 198,317, a 72.5% decrease. For the same year, 186,644 persons were registered as asylum seekers.

In 2017, Syria was still first among the ten nationalities with the highest numbers of immigrants (48,974 first-

4 See the BMI press release of 30 September 2016.

5 See the BMI press release of 11 January 2017.

Asylum applicants (first-time applications) by the ten most common countries of origin in 2016/2017



Source: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

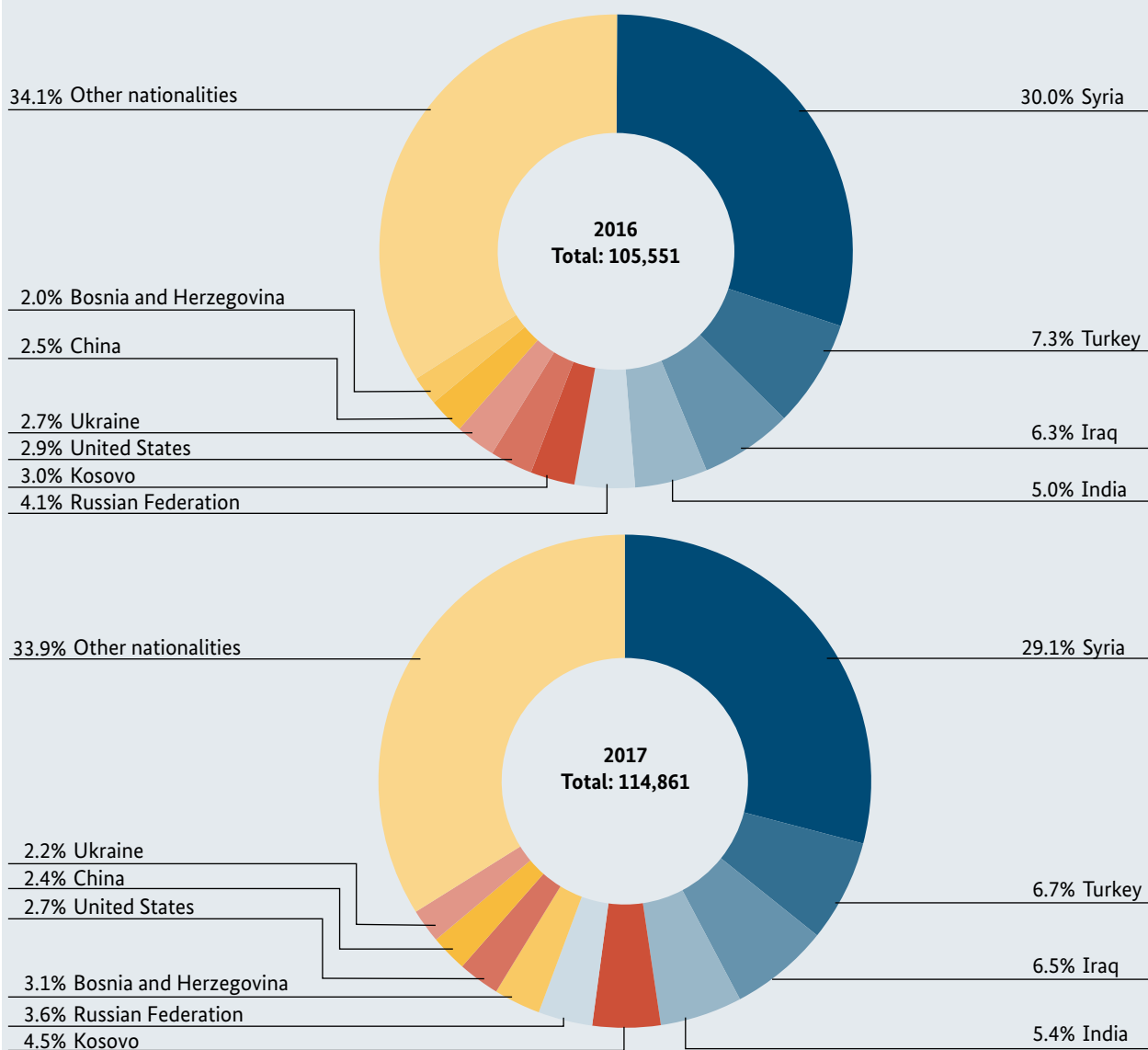
time applications, -81.8%), followed by Iraq (21,930 first-time applications, -7.2%), which had been in third place the year before. Afghanistan (formerly second) had the third-largest number in 2017 (16,423 first-time applications, -87.1%). Only Turkey, with 8,027 first-time applications, had an increase from the prior year (2016: 5,383, +49.1%); all other nationalities saw decreases.

In 2017, the group of countries of origin with the highest levels of immigration differed from the prior year by only two countries. Albania was no longer among the ten main countries of origin in 2017. Thus, this group no longer includes any nationals from the western Balkan states. Pakistan as well no longer appears, while Somalia and Turkey re-joined the ten main countries of origin for 2017.

Family reunification of third-country nationals increases

Family reunification has regained significance in recent years. Following around 106,000 immigrants in 2016, the 2017 figure rose to nearly 115,000 immigrants. This change is associated with an increase in reunification of the families of persons granted protection. Since 2015, Syrian nationals have been the largest group for family reunification. In 2017, 33,389 Syrian family members immigrated (2016: 31,782). The majority of these immigrants were children joining their parents (around 60%). The second largest group was Turkish nationals, with 7,670 reunified family members (2016: 7,770), followed by Iraqi nationals, with 7,481 residence permits granted for family reasons (2016: 6,678).

Family reunification, ten most important nationalities in 2016/2017
(persons who immigrated in the indicated reporting year)



Source: Central Register of Foreign Nationals

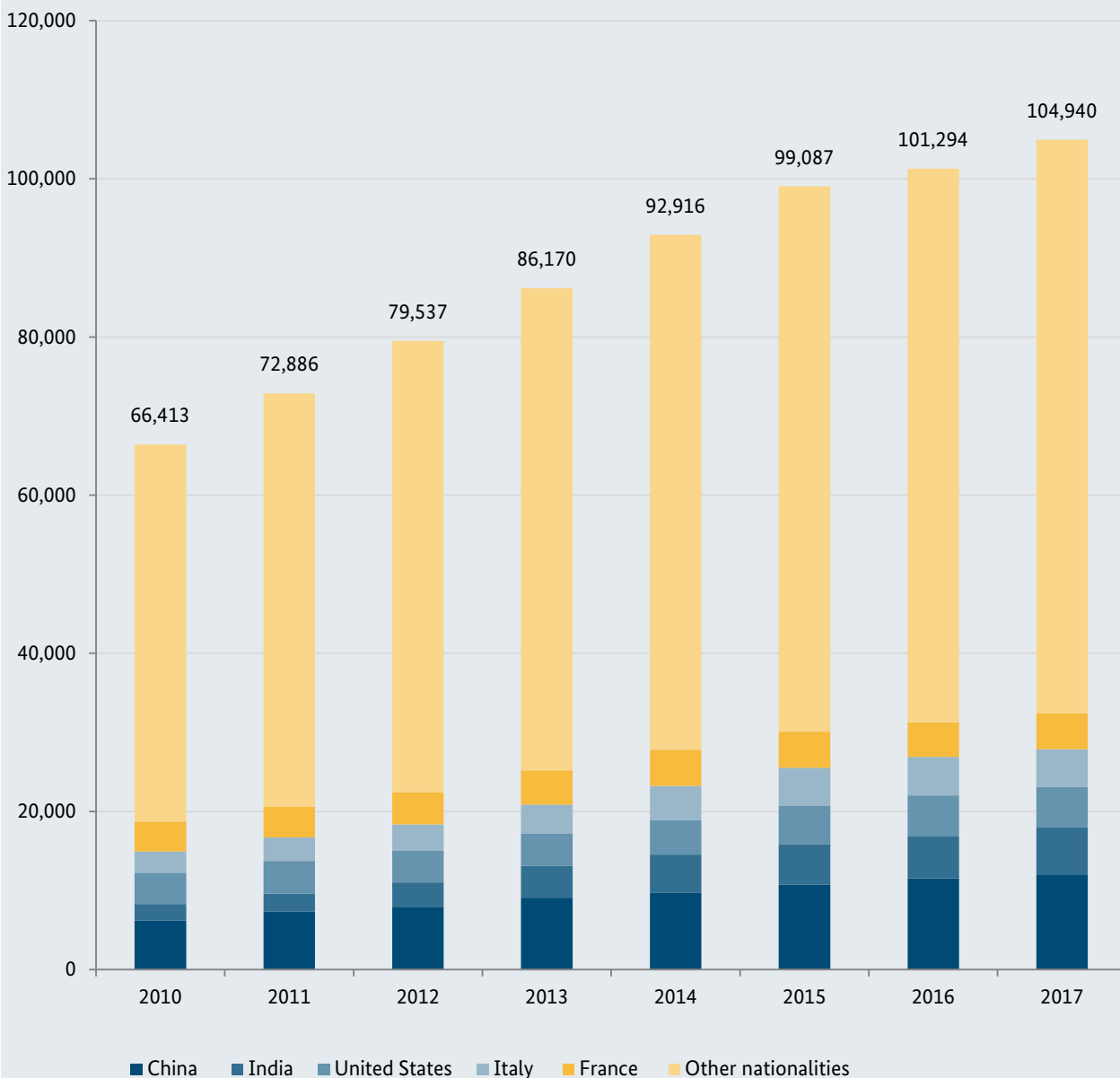
Germany still attractive to foreign students

The number of students initially schooled outside Germany who began a course of studies here rose once again in 2017. An increase of 3.6% was found from the prior year, from 101,294 (2016) to 104,940 (2017) students (2015: 99,087). This means that 2017 saw the highest number to date of such individuals who took up studies. As in the year before, the main country of origin was China.

More immigration of skilled foreign workers

In an overall consideration of migration by third-country nationals for employment purposes (secs. 18 through 21 of the Residence Act), one finds an increase from 26,386 immigrants for employment purposes in 2009 to 60,882 such immigrants in 2017. An increase from 16,149 to 38,082 immigrants was found among skilled and highly qualified workers during the same period.

Students beginning studies (initially schooled outside Germany) by selected nationalities 2010–2017
(summer semester and subsequent winter semester for each year)



Source: Federal Statistical Office

This substantial increase is due in part to the provision incorporated in October 2015 into the German Employment Regulation (Beschäftigungsverordnung), under which, subject to certain conditions, consent to exercise any occupation can be given to nationals of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in the years 2016 to 2020 (sec. 26(2) of the Employment Regulation, known as the “West Balkan Provision”).

Some 10,000 persons entered the country with an EU Blue Card in 2017. Of these, 40.7% received the EU Blue Card for employment in what has been called a “bottleneck” occupation, i.e., one involving skilled work in human medicine, IT, engineering, mathematics or the natural sciences. Most of the EU Blue Cards were granted to nationals of India, followed by China and the Russian Federation. Looking at total immigration from third countries for employment purposes,

one finds that by now almost one out of every five immigrants for employment purposes holds an EU Blue Card. A total of about 37,000 EU Blue Cards were granted in the period from August 2012 to December 2017. This form of residence permit has thus established itself as an important tool for recruiting skilled workers in Germany.

Resettlement of ethnic Germans to Germany remains at low level, but rising

Following a steady decrease from 2001 (98,500 persons) to 2012 (1,800 persons) a slight increase was recorded in subsequent years in the immigration of resettled ethnic Germans and their family members. In 2017, 7,059 persons were registered in this category. This is equivalent to a 7.1% increase from the prior year (2016: 6,588 persons).

Immigration from third countries for employment purposes, 2009-2017

(persons who immigrated in the indicated reporting year)

Immigration for employment purposes under	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Sec. 18 (3) Residence Act (no qualified employment)	8,405	9,941	11,291	11,050	9,481	9,995	10,697	18,208	22,800
Sec. 18 Residence Act (employment in general, old rules)	1,832	468	846	346	170	186	131	151	-
Skilled and highly qualified workers:									
Sec. 18 (4) Residence Act (qualified employment)	14,816	17,889	23,912	23,191	17,185	19,515	18,994	22,387	25,723
Sec. 19 Residence Act (highly qualified persons)	169	219	370	244	27	31	31	25	33
Sec. 19a Residence Act in conjunction with Sec. 2 (1) No. 2 (EU Blue Card)	-	-	-	2,190	4,651	5,378	6,792	8,038	9,652
Sec. 19b (1) Residence Act (ICT Card)*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Sec. 20 Residence Act (researchers)	140	211	317	366	444	397	409	422	877
Sec. 21 Residence Act (self-employment)	1,024	1,040	1,347	1,358	1,690	1,781	1,782	1,733	1,788
Total skilled workers	16,149	19,359	25,946	27,349	23,997	27,102	28,008	32,605	38,082
Total immigration for employment purposes	26,386	29,768	38,083	38,745	33,648	37,283	38,836	50,964	60,882

Source: Central Register of Foreign Nationals

* The Act Implementing Residence Directives of the European Union on Migration for Employment Purposes (*Gesetz zur Umsetzung Aufenthaltsrechtlicher Richtlinien der Europäischen Union zur Arbeitsmigration*), which also transposed the ICT Directive into German law, went into force on 1 August 2017. Technical implementation for statistical recording by the Central Register of Foreign Nationals was completed at the end of November 2017.

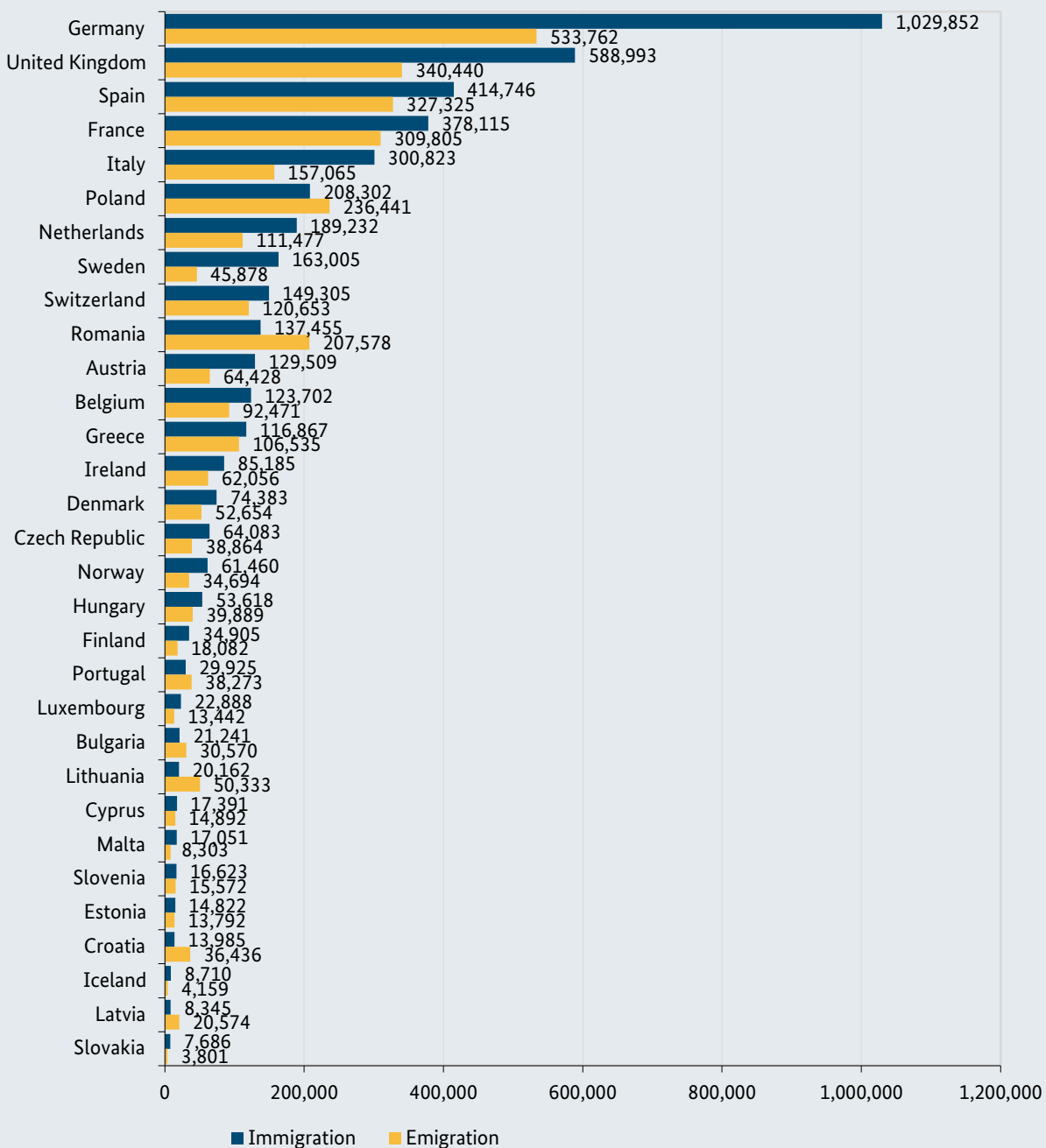
Germany ranks first as European destination country

Compared to the rest of Europe, it is evident that Germany remains more than ever a primary destination for migration, and its appeal in comparison to other European countries has increased significantly in recent years. By contrast, immigration to Spain, the primary

host country from 2006 to 2008, has declined considerably. Immigration figures were also high for the United Kingdom, Spain and France.⁶

⁶ Migration figures for the EU only become available after a delay of about two years, so that here only the figure for 2016 can be considered.

Immigration and emigration (as defined by the UN*) in 2016 for selected EU states, Switzerland and Norway



Source: Eurostat (10 October 2018)

* The UN's definition differs from the definition in the German official migration statistics by requiring an intended duration of at least one year for the immigrants' stay, while the German statistics do not include this factor. This means that the UN's definition does not generally include temporary forms of migration, so that the German figures for both immigration and emigration are lower than was previously indicated in this document.

Almost one-fourth of the population in Germany has a migration background

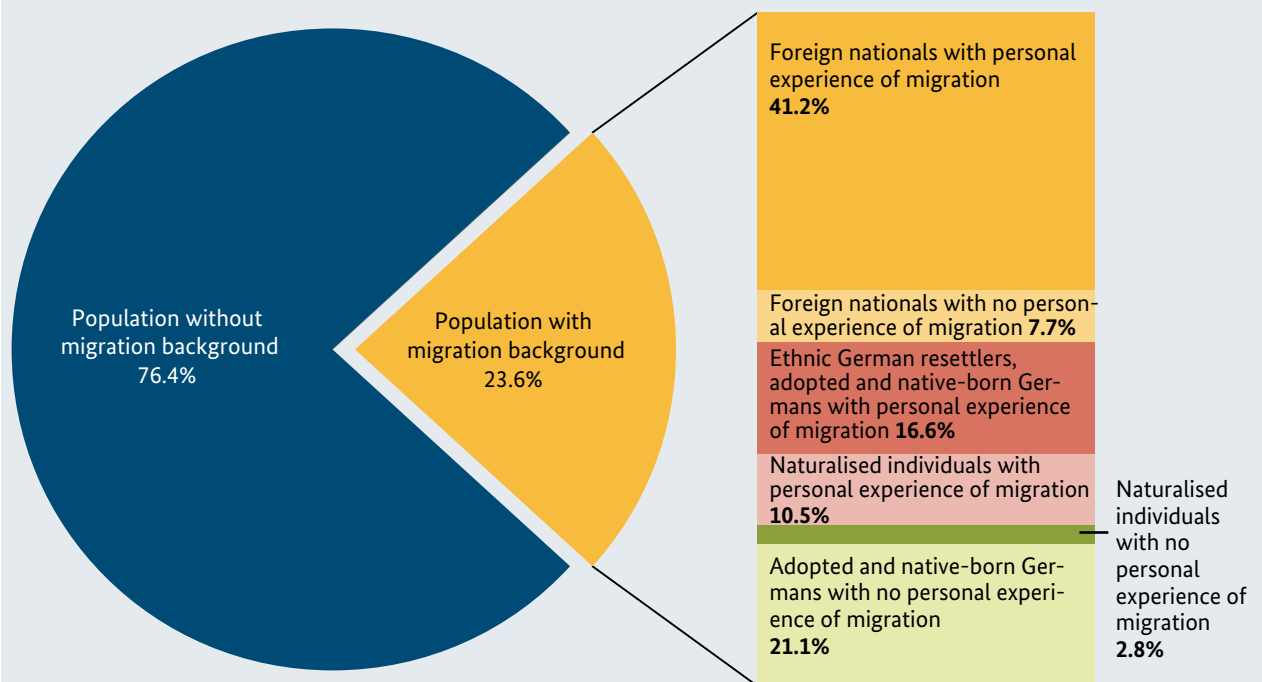
According to the 2017 microcensus, out of the 81.7 million people living in private households in Germany, some 19.3 million have a migration background. About 9.8 million persons in this group are Germans, and about 9.4 million are foreign nationals. All in all, persons with a migration background amount to 23.6% of the population according to the 2017 microcensus; this figure has risen in recent years (2016: 22.6%, 2015: 21.2%). Out of the roughly 19.3 million people with a migration background in 2017, some 2.8 million (14.4%) had roots in Turkey, 2.1 million (10.9%) in Poland, 1.4 million (7.2%) in the Russian Federation, 1.2 million (6.4%) in Kazakhstan, and 0.9 million (4.5%) in Romania. Germans with a migration back-

ground accounted for 12.0% of the population in private households, while foreign nationalities accounted for 11.5%.

According to the 2017 microcensus, foreign nationals with personal migration experience – i.e., those who had immigrated themselves – were the largest group of persons with a migration background, at 41.2% (about 7.9 million persons). Foreign nationals born in Germany accounted for 7.7% of those with a migration background (second generation or later; about 1.5 million persons). Some 48.9% of those with a migration background did not have German citizenship.

All in all, about two-thirds (68.4%) of the population with a migrant background were immigrants themselves (first generation), while nearly one-third (31.6%) had been born in Germany (second or later generation).

Breakdown of population with a migration background in Germany in 2017



Source: Federal Statistical Office, 2017 Microcensus

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