PRAGUE PROCESS
ПРАЖСКИЙ ПРОЦЕСС



Kosovo*

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

General Information

Population

1 576 876 (World Bank 2025)

1 586 659 (STAT XK 2024)

Immigration

5 846 (STAT XK 2023)

Emigration

21 158 (STAT XK 2023)

Working-age population

1 095 985 (World Bank 2025)

1 063 687 (STAT XK 2024)

Unemployment rate

10.7 % (STAT XK 2023)

GDP

12 456 403 306.8 current prices USD (World Bank 2025)

9 680 068 000 current prices EUR (STAT XK 2023)

Refugees, Asylum seekers, IDPs

Refugees

40 863 (UNHCR 2025)

30 (MIA XK 2023)

Asylum Seekers

134 (UNHCR 2025)

179 (MIA XK 2023)

IDPs

209 453 (UNHCR 2025)

16 000 (IDMC 2024)
UNHCR data refers to Serbia and Kosovo: S/RES/1244 (1999)

Citizenship

By Birth

Yes (conditional) (GLOBALCIT 2024)

By Descent

Yes (conditional) (GLOBALCIT 2024)

Years of Residency

5 years of residence required (GLOBALCIT 2024)

Territory

10 887 km^2 (CIA World Factbook)

Data from international sources is updated automatically as it becomes available.

Migration Authorities

Responsible Body

Ministry of Internal Affairs

Line Ministries

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora

Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Local Government Administration

Ministry of Economy

Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

Office of the Prime Minister

Kosovo Police

Agencies

Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo

National Commission for Refugees

Kosovo Agency of Statistics

Key Policy Documents

National Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings 2022-2026

National Migration Strategy 2021-2025

The State Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo on Integrated Border Management 2020-2025

Law No. 06/L-026 on Asylum 2018

Law No. 4/L-219 For Foreigners 2013

Law No. 04/L-215 on Citizenship of Kosovo 2013

Law No. 04/L-216 on Cooperation Between Authorities Involved in Integrated Border Management 2013

Law No. 04/L-218 on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of Victims of Trafficking 2013

Law No. 04/L-205 on the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo 2013

Law No. 04/L-095 on the Diaspora and Migration 2012

Law No. 04/L-072 on State Border Control and Surveillance 2012

Law No. 04/L-076 on Police 2012

Law No. 04/L-003 on Civil Status 2011

Law No. 03/L-208 on Readmission 2010

Relevant Publications

Western Balkans 2035: Demographic Resilience and Strategic Migration Planning under EU Integration and Isolation Scenarios

Prague Process Handbook on Concluding Readmission Agreements and Organising Returns

Prague Process Handbook on Identification of Irregular Migrants

ICMPD Policy Brief, Germany’s Western Balkans Regulation: Inspiration for facilitating refugee labour mobility?, 2023

ICMPD Policy Brief, Diasporas‘ Contribution to the Socio-Economic Development in the Western Balkans (ECONDIAS), 2023

ICMPD Study, Study of the Diasporas’ Contributions to the Socio-Economic Development in the Western Balkans, 2023

ICMPD Guide, A Practitioner’s Guide - Developing and Monitoring National Anti-Trafficking Response, 2021

ICMPD Assessment on the needs, gaps and good practices - Developing, implementing and monitoring of the anti-trafficking strategic response in the MARRI Participants, 2021

ICMPD, The Way Forward in Establishing Effective Transnational Referral Mechanisms in Trafficking Cases - A Report Based on Experiences in South-Eastern Europe, 2012

ICMPD, Handbook on Anti-Trafficking Data Collection in South-Eastern Europe: Developing Regional Criteria - second edition, 2010

ICMPD, Guidelines for the Development of a Transnational Referral Mechanism for Trafficked Persons: South-Eastern Europe, 2009

ICMPD, Cooperation beyond Borders - Development of Transnational Referral Mechanism for Trafficked Persons, 2009

ICMPD, Listening to Victims: Experiences of identification, return and assistance in South-Eastern-Europe, 2007

The Republic of Kosovo*, with a population of 1,585,590 in 2024, is characterized by a predominantly young demographic and high emigration rates. Between 2017 and 2024, net migration was negative in all but one year (2020), with the sharpest population loss recorded in 2021. Although the decline has since slowed, outward migration continues to drive overall population decrease.

Past emigration waves have created a sizeable Kosovar diaspora. National estimates from 2023 indicate that 359,244 Kosovars – about 22.6% of the population – lived abroad. Within the EU alone, Kosovars held 416,484 valid residence permits at the end of 2023 (in comparison to 408,987 in 2022 and 381,581 in 2021), with Germany, Italy and Slovenia being the top issuers. Switzerland, the United States and the UK are also major destinations for Kosovar emigrants. Family reunification, employment and education remain the main reasons for emigration, primarily to EU and EFTA countries. Geographic proximity, better wages, stronger labour protection, and access to quality healthcare and education remain the key pull factors of migration to the EU+ countries.

According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, an estimated 37,451 residents (2.4% of population) emigrated from Kosovo in 2024. The number of first residence permits issued to Kosovars in the EU has risen steadily, reaching 48,937 in 2023 (in comparison to 46,965 in 2022 and 43,636 in 2021), with most issued for family reasons (23,732), followed by employment (19,021), and education (1,357). Germany and Italy granted over half of all family-related permits, while most work-related permits were primarily issued by Germany (7,662), Slovenia (4,307) and Croatia (4,045). The growing labour emigration continues to drive up the flow of remittances. In 2023, remittances to Kosovo amounted to 1,335.8 million euros (13.8% of the GDP), marking a 9.9% increase from 2022 (1,223 million euros) and 67% increase from 2018 (800 million euros). The three main countries of origin for remittances remained unchanged, led by Germany with 38.2% of total remittances, Switzerland with 18.8% and the US with 7.3%. In 2023, 3,098 Kosovars renounced their citizenship to acquire German (81%), Austrian (13.3%) or Slovenian (3%) passports.

Alongside regular migration, irregular movements to and asylum application in the EU have also grown. The number of Kosovars found to be illegally present in the Union rose by 27%, from 4,265 persons in 2023 to 5,415 persons in 2024, and up 36% compared to 2022. Most cases were recorded in Germany (52%), followed by Italy (15%), Hungary (8%) and France (7%). Since 2021, detections have increased in Germany and Italy but declined in France. Of the estimated 2,910 Kosovars ordered to leave in 2024, 1,775 persons were returned. France issued the most removal orders (37.5%), while Germany carried out the highest number of returns (30%). Asylum applications of Kosovars in the EU have climbed from 1,515 first time applications in 2020 to a peak of 5,635 applications in 2024, with more than half of them in France and 30% in Germany. The 143.9% surge from 2023 to 2024 may be linked to visa liberalisation introduced in January 2024. In response, Kosovo has initiated information-sharing with EU Member States, strengthened awareness campaigns on Schengen rules, and increased bilateral cooperation with affected EU MS. It has also been included to the EU list of "safe countries of origin" to speed up asylum decisions.

Compared to out-migration, immigration to Kosovo remains modest but has been rising steadily in recent years. In 2023, the country recorded an estimated 5,846 immigrants, most of them returned or readmitted Kosovo nationals, while 1,262 were foreign nationals. During the same year, foreigners received 6,785 temporary residence permits – 7.8% more than in 2022 – continuing the upward trend observed since 2020. The largest share of permits was granted to the nationals of Türkiye (25%), followed by Serbia (19%), Albania (16%), Bangladesh (11%), and North Macedonia (9%). Over half (54%) of these permits were issued for employment purposes, followed by family reunification (36%), and education (8%). Labour shortages caused by the large-scale emigration of Kosovars have driven growing demand for foreign workers, particularly in the construction sector. While Turkish nationals remained the largest group of foreign workers in 2023, holding over 1,000 temporary work permits, labour migration from Bangladesh has surged dramatically – from as few as four permits in 2021 to over 700 permits in 2023 – making Bangladeshis the second-largest group of temporary workers after Turks.

In contrast to rising regular migration, Kosovo has seen a sharp decline in irregular border crossings – from 2,564 in 2020 to 634 in 2023 – reflecting shifts in migration routes and the country's reduced role as a transit point toward the EU. Asylum applications in Kosovo have followed the same downward trend, falling from 1,410 in 2020 to only 179 in 2023, a drop of 67% compared to 2022. Most applicants came from Syria, Morocco, Palestine, Iraq, and Libya, mirroring the countries of origin for irregular migration. In previous years, the high number of asylum applications was largely driven by families fleeing conflict zones in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, but by 2023 these were no longer considered active war zones. The opening of the Temporary Migrant Reception Centre in 2023 also contributed to the decline in asylum applications enabling better profiling and screening of new arrivals. Of the applications processed in 2023, 13% were granted refugee status, 11% subsidiary protection, and 9% temporary protection.

The issue of trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation remains a government priority in Kosovo. Between 2018 and 2022, eleven victims of trafficking were identified, mostly women and children, often from marginalised communities. In 2023, two migrants were recognised as victims of human trafficking, returned to their country of origin, and provided support under the Standard Operating Procedure for victims of trafficking. In 2024, the government improved victim support services, increasing shelter funding, and extending the reflection period for alleged victims.

Aiming to improve its migration management, Kosovo adopted a new National Migration Strategy 2021-2025 to ensure effective, coordinated, and sustainable migration governance that benefits both migrants and national development, while aligning with EU standards and human rights principles. Its Action Plan was revised and approved in June 2024. On 15 March 2024, the government submitted the draft law 'On Foreigners' to the Assembly. The law defines residence permit types and related procedures, introduces new concepts and obligations for foreigners and employers, and is awaiting adoption by the Assembly.

International cooperation remains central to Kosovo's European path. The EU-facilitated Dialogue on the normalisation with Serbia continues as a key requirement under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans. Kosovo has readmission agreements with 24 countries, including 20 EU and Schengen states, with negotiations concluded in 2024 on an agreement with Lithuania.

However, there is currently no readmission agreement with the EU. Border demarcation is complete with North Macedonia but pending with Montenegro, while discussions continue on green-blue border monitoring with Serbia. Significant progress has been made in joint patrols with the Albanian and North Macedonian police, as well as in synchronized patrols with the police of Montenegro. The short-term goal is to adopt and implement an agreement on cross-border police cooperation with Montenegro.

In 2022, Kosovo and the European Union Asylum Agency signed a roadmap for cooperation aimed at strengthening of the asylum and reception system in line with the Common European Asylum System and relevant EU standards. In March 2024, its implementation deadline was extended by one year to complete outstanding objectives.

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