

Slovenia is on the Balkan route

Between 2015 and 2022, the Slovenian police recorded the following number of people who crossed its borders without permission, recorded literally as *not-allowed* migration (*nedovoljene migracije*)¹

(for the year 2022, the numbers include first 11 months, the last month is missing in the statistics; to be updated later)

2022 – 27.224 (cut in pushbacks, new government, new orders and new strategy on migration)

2021 – 10.067 (pandemic and ongoing pushback practices, populist regime)

2020 – 14.592 (pushback practises continue in full scale, joint patrols on the borders)

2019 – 16.252 (more pushbacks, chain pushbacks both from Austria and Italy to Slovenia)

2018 – 9.149 (Slovenian police pushes people back to Croatia and denies access to asylum)

2017 – 1.930 (pushbacks get massive from Croatia and Hungary to Serbia)

2016 – 1.148 (closure of the Balkan corridor, route works further, kick-off of pushbacks)

2015 – 306.215 (Balkan corridor period, Slovenia opened its borders in October 2015)

2014 – 768 (Balkan route migrant movement, route is old and been active all the time)

Since the complete closure of the semi-official Balkan corridor in late winter and early spring 2016, the EU member states immediately started with actions of pushback of people moving toward the north and west of Europe. The domino effect of pushing people back to the south began geographically from the north². In short, while the corridor is closed the route is not. People are still on the move.

What has become the focus of many activist groups and non-governmental organisations along the Balkan route is the massiveness of pushbacks accomplished by the national police units, the level of violence used against migrants and the construction of fences on various borderlines touching the Schengen zone.

The first report about pushbacks concerning the involvement of the Slovenian police was published by the Infokolpa initiative in 2019 with an English translation. It covers illegal practices of collective expulsion on the Slovene-Croatian border, a percentage of people who were able to claim the right to international protection at certain police stations dropped **from 98% to 3%**. The national police chiefs received special orders on how to stop people on the move and what kind of “legal” backgrounds to use to prove the “legality” of expulsions, both individual and collective.³

In April 2022 the Foreigners Act went through the process of amending and ratification. The Act introduced **two new sub-articles, 10a and 10b, that ban the entrance of people on the move and refuse the right to ask for asylum** under the new definition of the so-called complex migration crisis⁴. A complex migration crisis determines the eventual arrival of a huge number of migrants.

Such amending resulted after the most massive migrant movement in 2015 and 2016 when a few ten thousand people crossed the country on the green border lines with Croatia. As a result, the government ordered the construction of wired fences in the spring of 2016. In 2022, the new government promised to remove the fences and adopted new orders from the ministry on how to treat people on the move.

1 <https://www.policija.si/o-slovenski-policiji/statistika/mejna-problematika/nedovoljene-migracije-na-obmocju-republike-slovenije>

2 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/mediterranean-journeys-in-hope/long-year-of-migration-and-balkan-corridor/>

3 <https://push-forward.org/novica/report-illegal-practice-collective-expulsion-slovene-croatian-border>

4 <http://pिसrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO7776#>

The number of pushbacks reduced drastically⁵. The number of applications for asylum (international protection right) increased sharply⁶. In 2022, people from Afghanistan consisted of the majority of asylum seekers. People on the move consider Slovenia primarily as a transit country, which indicates a more or less stable number of people accommodated in all available capacities/camps of the state, and their number constantly rests between 200 and 400 people per month. It means that people leave the country for another destination before and after the procedure of completing the application for international protection.

According to the Dublin regulation, more people came back, and numbers increased in 2022 compared to 2021. Principally people on the move are well informed, but some groups do not possess enough information on how to proceed forward or what kind of rights and procedures they must go through in case they stay in Slovenia. The winter period and the lack of accommodation capacities in other European countries serve as justification to reside over the winter in Slovenia.

The Schengen Agreement and its border area moves more south⁷

Slovenia was the first Schengen country in the Western Balkans geography; with the entrance of Croatia into the Schengen zone on 1.1.2023, the mode of patrolling and controlling the mobility of people in border areas has taken new forms. The execution methods in the southern parts of the country will be similar to what has been functioning in other border areas with Hungary, Austria and Italy during the last 15 years of the Schengen zone. At the same time, Croatia starts executing the Schengen type of border control on its southern borderlines with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

The border line is 1370 km on land (rivers taken into account) and includes 670 km between Slovenia and Croatia. Approximately 1400 policemen will be patrolling the border areas since all borders of Slovenia belong to the Schengen agreement starting January 1, 2023. The buildings on the sites of official border crossings will be removed slowly⁸. The Slovenian police will be executing **compensatory measures** inland and along the border lines. **Seven** police units work on accomplishing the compensatory measures. Two of their main tasks are to reveal illegal crossings and cease the smugglers⁹. These police units with special compensatory tasks possess necessary classic and digital equipment.

Upgrading the police equipment

In December 2022, the Slovenian police introduced **40 new police vehicles**. This is to secure the work of units and also for compensatory measures since these measures contain mobile units for operative actions on the terrain¹⁰. The new "vans", which replace partially worn-out older intervention vehicles, are special combined trucks of the Citroen brand, Jumper type, with a very powerful 165 HP engine. The vehicles, which are blue-yellow-white in colour, are intended for regional police stations (**75** of them in the country), mainly for the direct implementation of police work, such as patrolling, intervention, stricter control, and blockades.

5 <https://www.policija.si/images/stories/Statistika/MejnaProblematika/IlegalneMigracije/2022/November2022.pdf>

6 <https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne-sluzbe/VOIM/STATISTIKA/December-2022/Novo-nastanjeni-prosilci-po-letih-2022-12.pdf-correctedByPAVE.pdf>

7 <https://www.policija.si/eng/areas-of-work/state-border-control/border-crossings>

8 [RTV SLO](#), Nova južna schengenska meja je dolga 1350 km, national TV news by Marta Razboršek, aired 1.1.2023

9 <https://www.policija.si/o-slovenski-policiji/organiziranost/policijske-postaje/policijska-postaja-za-izravnalne-ukrepe>

10 <https://www.policija.si/medijsko-sredisce/sporocila-za-javnost/sporocila-za-javnost-gpuc/116285-policijski-vozni-park-bogatejsi-za-40-novih-maric-prilagojenih-potrebam-policistov-na-terenu>

In 2021, the Slovenian police collaborated with the Statistical office to realise and complete a joint project. The goal was to improve the national infrastructure and software to achieve the reliability, punctuality and consistency of statistical data acquisition, editing, storage and transmission. The purpose was to procure, install and test software and hardware for improved national infrastructure regarding **the illegal migration** statistics and statistics of returns (deportations, pushbacks) and to implement procedures using upgraded technology¹¹.

The Slovenian police published a document¹² 60 years of information and telecommunications police system, where they have described and explained in details the developments in the field of digitalisation of data bases including the systems that count the migration flows and register border passings. Although the publication is 6 years old (2017), it has defined the perspectives of future developments of national databases within the existing transnational and supranational large systems like SIS II, EUROPOL and INTERPOL systems. Currently there is no other document published by the authorities about the usage of more complicated or upgraded systems.

¹¹ <https://www.policija.si/medijsko-sredisce/sporocila-za-javnost/sporocila-za-javnost-gpue/115691-uspesno-je-bil-izveden-projekt-st-101035547-2020-si-migration>

¹² https://www.policija.si/images/stories/Publikacije/PDF/60Let_ITSP_Brosura.pdf