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Labour Migration in Times of Labour Shortages. Lithuanian report

2024/2

EMN STUDY



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**Labour Migration
in Times of
Labour Shortages.
Lithuanian report**

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VILNIUS, 2025

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SUMMARY

In Lithuania, there are no formal legal definitions for 'labour shortage' or 'shortage occupation'. Instead, within the context of labour migration, these concepts are practically defined by the Shortage Occupations List - an annually updated list by the Employment Service that highlights sectors with persistently high demand and insufficient local labour supply. Key sectors affected by these shortages include construction, transportation, and services, where gaps in the workforce impact both economic stability and growth.

Public debates on labour shortages and migration policy have centred on several themes. Simplifying procedures to attract talent has been a focus for business groups, who advocate for streamlined immigration processes, lower wage thresholds, and easier permit requirements to make Lithuania more competitive in the international job market. Another major theme is security concerns regarding Belarusian migrants, given the Russia-Ukraine war. The growing number of Belarusian nationals has raised concerns among policymakers, with discussions around security screenings and permit restrictions aimed at balancing workforce needs with national security. Linguistic integration has also emerged as an issue, particularly with the increase in Russian-speaking migrants from former Soviet states. Public discussions emphasise the importance of Lithuanian language proficiency in the workforce, especially in service roles, highlighting the need for balanced integration policies to support language and cultural assimilation.

Lithuania's labour migration policy primarily follows an employment-based approach, allowing third-country nationals to fill roles only when vacancies cannot be met by local or EU labour. The Migration Policy Guidelines emphasise prioritising local labour, while still fostering opportunities for high-skilled foreign professionals whose expertise aligns with national needs, such as researchers, investors, and graduates of Lithuanian institutions.

Lithuania's recent legal changes in labour migration policy reflect an initial liberalisation phase, starting in 2022, followed by restrictive regulatory adjustments in 2024. The liberalisation measures focused on easing entry for foreign workers to address labour shortages. Key reforms included simplifying qualifications for high-skilled roles, waiving the labour market test for certain positions, and allowing third-country nationals to apply for temporary residence permits from abroad through an external service provider.

In 2024, the approach shifted toward a more regulated framework, seeking to align foreign workforce integration with economic and security priorities. Foreign workers are now required to obtain temporary residence permits instead of working solely on visas, with new conditions on employment stability and limits on multiple employer arrangements. In 2025, Lithuania replaced sector-specific quotas with a unified annual foreign worker quota, capped at 1.4% of the population. In 2024, Lithuania introduced amendments to the State Language Law, mandating that from January 2026, businesses and service providers must conduct customer interactions in Lithuanian, adhering to government-set language proficiency standards.

Lithuania's national labour migration policy employs a variety of instruments to address workforce shortages and align with strategic goals. Key tools include work permits issued based on labour market needs, labour market tests to verify the necessity of foreign labour, and a Shortage Occupations List that identifies high-demand professions for easier recruitment. A quota system restricts the number of foreign workers per sector, with a new fixed annual quota implemented from 2025 based on a percentage of the permanent population. Additionally, a list of high value-added shortage professions facilitates the recruitment of foreign experts in critical fields, offering simplified immigration procedures. Amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners have also streamlined the recruitment and integration of highly skilled foreign workers, modifying requirements such as the labour market test and salary thresholds, and enhancing provisions for family integration and residency retention.

Lithuania's approach to attracting foreign talent lacks a centralised national recruitment mechanism, instead relying on the List of High Value-Added Shortage Professions for high-skilled foreign workers and the Shortage Occupations List to guide the hiring of mid- and low-skilled foreign workers in sectors with high demand. Although there are no dedicated legal pathways for irregular migrants, recent changes now permit them to work legally after 12 months of residence. Regional imbalances in the distribution of mid- and low-skilled workers remain a challenge, with foreign labour heavily concentrated in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipėda.

1.

Overview of
labour shortages
debate and
conceptualisation

Question 1. Does your country have a definition of the terms '**labour shortage**' and '**shortage occupation**'? YES/NO. If YES, please provide these definitions.

No.

There is no formal definition of the terms 'labour shortage' or 'shortage occupation' in Lithuanian law. For practical purposes, shortage occupations are occupations listed on the List of Occupations for which there is a Shortage of Workers in the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - the [Shortage Occupations List](#)) and the List of High Value-Added Professions with a Shortage of Workers in the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - the [List of High Value-Added Shortage Professions](#)). Looking at the way these lists are made provides an insight into both how the terms are understood and why their formal definitions are lacking.

The **Shortage Occupations List** is drawn up annually by the Employment Service based on labour market monitoring, assessment of the labour market situation and projections of its evolution. The following criteria are used to identify occupations with a worker shortage: the registered labour demand for the occupation must be at least twice the labour supply in the industrial, construction, and agricultural sectors, and at least five times the supply in the service sector. Additionally, registered vacancies in the occupation must represent at least 5% of the total workforce in that occupation, based on data from the State Social Insurance Fund Board under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.¹

There is a quota that applies on the number of foreign nationals allowed to work in Lithuania in specific high-demand occupations listed in the Shortage Occupations List. The calculation of the **quota for shortage occupations** in Lithuania is a structured process grounded in labour market data, projections, and recommendations from various agencies.² Each year, the Employment Service assesses data from the previous two years, specifically from July 1 to June 30, to identify labour market trends. This includes a review of job vacancies for professions listed in the Shortage Occupations List across economic sectors and an analysis of the number of job seekers qualified in these professions. The Employment Service uses data from registered job openings in shortage professions and the availability of qualified job seekers to establish the level of shortage in each profession and sector. Using these insights, it drafts a quota proposal for the upcoming calendar year, reflecting the average shortage across all professions on the Shortage Occupations List. This proposed quota considers statistical trends and projections to estimate the number of foreign workers required to meet labour needs in each profession. After determining the overall quota size, it is distributed across economic sectors in proportion to the demand for specific professions. Sectors with a higher demand for particular professions receive a larger portion of the quota, with allocations presented as both numeric values and percentages. Once this quota is exhausted, third-country nationals may still enter the workforce but are subject to a labour market test.

The **List of High Value-Added Shortage Professions** is approved by the Minister of Economy and Innovation. Professions included on this list belong to the primary groups 1, 2, or 3 in the Lithuanian Classification of Occupations. The list is compiled based on data provided by business and employer associations, information from national human resource monitoring conducted as per the Government's established procedures, and recommendations from the agency responsible for promoting foreign direct investment under the Ministry of Economy and Innovation (Invest Lithuania).³ There are currently 85 occupations on the list. It should be noted that this list is **not**

¹ The criteria are established in Section II of [Order of the Director of the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour on the Approval of the Procedure for Issuing, Renewing, and Revoking Documents Granting Foreign Nationals the Right to Work in the Republic of Lithuania, and the Procedure for Rejecting Applications for Such Documents](#), dated 12 June 2019, No. V-298.

² The process is described in [Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour on the Approval of the Procedure for Establishing Quotas for the Calendar Year, dated 12 June 2020, No. A1-545](#).

³ This is defined in Article 48¹(7) of the [Law on Employment](#).

intended to identify occupations for which there is a shortage of workers and to apply simplified immigration rules to them, but rather to identify the State's priority occupations for which financial incentives are available to attract workers to Lithuania.

From the description above, we can conclude that, in practice, a 'shortage occupation' in Lithuania is understood as a high-demand profession for which local supply consistently falls short, particularly in sectors essential for economic stability and growth, and is continuously reassessed to align with Lithuania's workforce and investment priorities. It should be emphasised that, in addition to an insufficient local workforce, this conceptualisation also considers the economic importance of the occupation, the need to support growth in key sectors, and the changing labour market trends, which are regularly monitored and adjusted.

Question 2. Based on a summary of statistical data provided in the annex, please describe briefly in two paragraphs, which sectors are most affected by labour shortages in your country?

Based on the trends of the past three years, the three sectors most affected by the labour shortage in Lithuania are the **service sector** (mainly transport services), **construction**, and **industry**.

The statistical report on Lithuania's human capital status by Strata⁴ indicates that the average annual demand for workers is projected to be 13.7 thousand between 2024 and 2033. The highest demand is expected for jobs requiring high qualifications, such as specialists, technicians, and junior specialists, which would account for nearly half of the annual workforce demand.

Most new job opportunities are projected in the transport and education sectors, as well as in administrative and service activities. The greatest average annual demand by occupation is anticipated for heavy truck and bus drivers. Additionally, there will be a need for software and applications developers and analysts, primary and secondary education teachers, and cleaners and housekeeping staff for homes, hotels, and offices.

Question 3. Has there been any **discussion or public debate** regarding labour migration in the context of labour shortages, as well as alternatives to labour migration (e.g. paying local workforce higher wages to motivate them to take on jobs considered as unattractive) in your country since 2021? YES/NO. If YES, please briefly describe what the key points were (possible sources: secondary literature, interviews, or media analysis of a centre newspaper)?

Yes.

Since 2021, Lithuania has witnessed a significant rise in its foreign resident population, increasing from 100 200 to 221 800 by 2023. Concurrently, the influx of third-country nationals arriving for employment purposes has surged, with temporary residence permits issued on employment grounds growing from 39 088 in 2021 to 79 401 in 2023. This substantial increase in migration from third countries in recent years has propelled labour migration to the forefront of the political agenda. Key themes in these ongoing debates, which typically intensify around legislative proposals, include the need to attract foreign labour to address workforce shortages, balancing this demand

⁴ The State of Human Capital in Lithuania. Government Strategic Analysis Center, 'The state of human capital in Lithuania', 2024, https://strata.gov.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2024_Lietuvos_zmogiskojo_kapitalo_bukle_FINAL.pdf

with state security concerns, and ensuring the linguistic and cultural integration of third-country residents. A summary of these public discussions and debates is provided below.

The need to attract foreign labour

The 18th Government of the Republic of Lithuania, which took office at the end of 2020, [included in its program](#) the task of simplifying migration procedures for highly skilled foreigners. This marked a shift from previous migration policies, which primarily focused on encouraging the return of Lithuanian nationals who had emigrated. While return migration remained an important goal, the debates between stakeholders and the legislative initiatives undertaken in 2021-2022 demonstrated a broadened approach, aiming to attract foreign talent to address labour shortages and support economic growth in Lithuania.

On 24 September 2021, the Lithuanian Business Council, consisting of the Confederation of Lithuanian Industrialists, the Investor's Forum Association, the Lithuanian Employers' Confederation and the Association of Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, [submitted proposals to the Government](#) on simplification of the immigration procedures, which were discussed with the Prime Minister. The proposals aimed to address Lithuania's labour shortage by enhancing migration processes to attract foreign talent, particularly high-skilled professionals. Key suggestions included removing barriers for graduates from Lithuanian institutions to enter the job market and reducing wage requirements for high-demand professions like IT, allowing businesses to attract talent with more flexible salary options. The proposal also highlighted the need to streamline visa and work permit procedures, enabling foreign workers and their employers to track application progress and adjust plans accordingly. Additionally, it advocated for specific exemptions and simplified procedures for IT specialists, who often faced hurdles due to unconventional qualifications, and suggested special entry conditions for their families. Another focus was increasing the accessibility of migration services by enabling remote application submission and reducing in-person requirements at Lithuanian consulates abroad. Proposals recommended simplifying procedures for foreign workers to switch roles within the same company and promoting faster integration of family members. Additional suggestions included improving the migration system's efficiency by digitalising services, providing multilingual support, and ensuring high service standards. The Lithuanian Business Council argued that, by implementing these adjustments, the Government would create a more efficient, transparent, and competitive environment to attract essential talent to Lithuania's workforce and support its economic growth.

Of the 27 proposals, 17 were taken into account when [drafting the amendment](#) to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners. Changes included redefining qualifications, allowing practical experience to substitute for formal education in high-demand fields, and lowering wage thresholds for EU Blue Card holders. These adjustments enabled businesses to offer more competitive salaries and attract mid-level talent, directly responding to the proposal for flexible compensation structures. Additionally, streamlined processing allowed foreign workers and employers to track application progress and plan accordingly, while remote submission options through service providers reduced the need for in-person visits, making the process more accessible. The amendments also enhanced family integration by reducing residency requirements for reunification, allowing critical workers' families to join them sooner. Seasonal and temporary work permits were updated, addressing the need for temporary foreign labour in high-demand sectors. These changes cut down administrative burdens, simplified employment reporting requirements, and created a more efficient migration process in line with the business sector's feedback.

Following the drafting, discussions were also held in the Tripartite Council and the Seimas. In the [29 March 2022, Tripartite Council meeting](#), discussions focused on the proposed amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, emphasising simplified migration processes and improved

administrative efficiency to attract skilled foreign labour. Government representatives advocated for streamlining procedures to align with European Union (EU) standards, especially concerning high-skilled foreign workers, to address labour shortages and support economic competitiveness. There was also a strong emphasis on maintaining wage equality between foreign and domestic employees to prevent any adverse effects on the local labour market. Employer representatives generally supported the proposed changes, seeing them as beneficial for accessing a broader pool of talent. They also favoured additional flexibility in hiring criteria for foreigners. Labour unions, however, expressed concerns over potential wage reductions for high-skilled roles, emphasising the need to uphold fair labour standards and protect foreign workers from exploitation. The council agreed to continue discussions, with social partners encouraged to provide further input to refine the legislative changes.

The Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners [was amended on 30 June 2022](#).

Balancing the demand for foreign labour with concerns regarding state security

In 2020 and 2021, Lithuania's Ministry of Economy and Innovation actively encouraged Belarusian businesses and their employees to relocate to Lithuania, leading to an increase in Belarusian citizens in the country. At the beginning of 2024, there were 62 165 Belorussian nationals residing in Lithuania, up from 48 804 in 2023, 31 028 in 2022, and 23 440 in 2021. There was also a slight increase in the number of Russian nationals (15 888 in 2024, up from 15 706 in 2023, 13 367 in 2022, and 12 809 in 2021), despite the sanctions. In the context of the ongoing Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, the doubling number of nationals of 'hostile' states raised security concerns. The legislative debates summarised here underscore the complex task of balancing Lithuania's economic needs, security priorities, and human rights considerations. With 2024 being an election year for both the Seimas and the presidency, these issues have gained further public attention.

Since November 2022, Lithuania's Migration Department has required Russian and Belarusian nationals applying for residence permits or national visas to complete a security questionnaire. This survey collects information on their educational background, employment history, military service, business connections, and affiliations with non-NATO and non-EU states, and includes a section for applicants to express their stance on Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Based on this screening, [over 1 000 individuals have been identified as national security risks](#), leading to denied or revoked permits and entry bans.

On 4 May 2023, the Law on Restrictive Measures Due to Military Aggression Against Ukraine was [approved by the Seimas](#), which limited both Russian and Belarusian citizens' access to visas. However, while Russian citizens faced additional restrictions on obtaining temporary residence permits, Belarusian citizens were still allowed to apply for and obtain these permits. Moreover, while Russian nationals were subject to enhanced border security checks, and a ban on property ownership, this did not apply to Belarusian nationals. This distinction meant that Belarusian nationals, who constitute a significant part of Lithuania's foreign workforce, were treated more leniently than Russian nationals.

The law [generated debate](#) regarding Lithuania's efforts to protect national interests without undermining workforce availability, particularly given the critical role of Belarusian workers in sectors like transportation. The [President vetoed the law](#), arguing that both Russian and Belarusian nationals should face equal restrictions, as both countries actively support aggression against Ukraine, and unequal treatment undermines Lithuania's principles of equality and national security. However, [the Seimas overrode the President's veto](#), with [business sector influence](#) underscoring the Belarusian workforce's economic importance.

In 2023, concerns over labour migration and national security in Lithuania further intensified, driven by geopolitical tensions and increasing migration flows. Key figures from the governing party, such as the Chairman of the National Security and Defence Committee, and the [Minister of the Interior, voiced significant apprehensions](#). They pointed out that existing migration protocols lacked sufficient scrutiny and security checks, which could allow hostile actors to exploit Lithuania's migration system for espionage, sabotage, or other influence activities. The State Security Department [supported these concerns](#), emphasising that unchecked migration could pose significant security threats.

To address these risks, the Minister of the Interior announced stricter migration control measures, including enhanced background checks and the rejection of work and residence permits for applicants flagged as potential security threats. A significant part of these efforts involved [new regulations effective 1 July 2024](#), which required foreign nationals to have either a temporary or permanent residence permit to work in Lithuania, eliminating the previous allowance for work under visa-free regimes or visas issued by other countries. The new regulations underscored the importance of thorough vetting and employer responsibility, ensuring that only those meeting stringent criteria could be hired, reflecting a cautious approach to balancing economic needs with security measures. In 2024, approximately 1 800 companies were audited, resulting in the revocation of permits for thousands of individuals on grounds of security or illegal employment.

In 2024, Lithuanian authorities, including prominent members of the governing party, raised concerns over [the frequency of trips made by Belarusian residents](#) of Lithuania back to their home country. A proposal was put forward to limit Belarusian residents to one trip every three months, with more frequent travel potentially leading to the revocation of their residence permits. However, despite the security concerns, the [Seimas did not approve the strict travel limitations](#). The proposal failed to gain majority support, with 20 members voting in favour, 47 against, and 45 abstaining. Some parliamentarians acknowledged that reducing travel frequency would ease the burden on national security checks but emphasised the need for balance due to economic dependencies, like the significant number of Belarusian drivers in Lithuania. Some others, including the Minister of Economics and Innovation, called for a more proportionate approach, noting that such restrictions could impact those with legitimate reasons for travel, such as family obligations.

The linguistic and cultural integration of third-country residents

Given that the majority of third-country nationals arriving to work come from the former Soviet-Union and often speak Russian only, and that [about 40% of the Lithuanians do not speak any Russian](#), this has caused some friction and has become an issue that has been picked up by political parties gearing up for the big election year of 2024.

Beneficiaries of temporary protection

In 2023, the issue of linguistic integration first came up in relation to the Ukrainian war refugees. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, approximately 84 000 Ukrainian refugees settled in Lithuania, altering the linguistic and social landscape, particularly in major cities. The influx of Ukrainians, many of whom relied on the Russian language to communicate, sparked discussions and concerns about the increased use of Russian in public spaces and workplaces.

In 2021, the State Language Inspectorate initially proposed a 12-month exemption from language proficiency requirements for Ukrainian refugees, which was extended to 24 months by the government in March 2022.⁵ As the exemption period neared its end, discussions on how to handle language requirements for refugees gained traction. In March 2023, Lithuania's State Language Inspectorate [announced intentions](#) to enforce Lithuanian language proficiency

⁵ For a detailed description of the situation and the course of events, see the Annual Report of the State Language Inspectorate for 2023, pp. 9-14. Accessible online at <<https://vki.lrv.lt/media/viesa/saugykla/2024/4/EQMX0fcUTHQ.pdf>>

checks for Ukrainian refugees working in the country. The goal was to ensure that employees could communicate in Lithuanian, aligning with citizens' expectations for services to be provided in the state language. The Inspectorate argued that such measures were necessary to protect the linguistic rights of Lithuanian citizens.

This announcement met significant backlash from various political figures and organisations. The Speaker of the Seimas [criticised](#) the Inspectorate's plans, emphasising that the focus should be on creating supportive conditions for refugees to learn the language, not on penalising them. Other government officials, [including ministers](#) and social welfare representatives, also expressed concerns about the policy's impact on empathy and social cohesion. They stressed that the integration process should encourage learning without creating undue pressure or consequences. Critics also emphasised that this policy [might exclude many refugees](#) from the workforce, posing risks to sectors such as retail and hospitality, where many Ukrainians were employed.

The intense debate led to the [government's decision](#) to extend the period from two to three years during which Ukrainian refugees could learn Lithuanian before being subject to language proficiency check. Efforts to centralise and improve language learning opportunities were ramped up, with additional funding allocated and flexible course structures introduced to accommodate the needs of working beneficiaries of temporary protection.

Amendments to the Law on State Language

In July 2024, [proposed amendments](#) to Lithuania's State Language Law were introduced and subsequently adopted in October. [These revisions, effective January 2026](#), require businesses and service providers to conduct customer interactions in Lithuanian, with language proficiency standards set by the government.

This measure was introduced to protect the linguistic rights of Lithuanian citizens and ensure that public services reflect the nation's cultural and linguistic standards. Proponents of the changes, including various parliamentary members, argued that mandating the use of Lithuanian in customer interactions was essential to preserving national identity and fostering social cohesion. They emphasised that many Lithuanians faced challenges when services were provided in foreign languages and noted that maintaining the use of Lithuanian in public and professional spaces supported integration efforts for immigrants and upheld cultural norms.

The amendments met with significant opposition from business groups and some public figures. Critics argued that the law could deter foreign investment and complicate the hiring of non-Lithuanian-speaking workers, particularly in sectors such as retail and hospitality that rely on international labour. Business organisations highlighted that strict language mandates could increase operational costs and reduce labour availability, [potentially leading to economic setbacks](#). Some suggested that modern translation technologies [could offer a more balanced solution](#), allowing businesses to meet customer needs without imposing stringent language requirements on all employees.

Despite the mixed reactions, the amendments were passed with substantial parliamentary support, reflecting a strong commitment to reinforcing the use of Lithuanian in public life. The law provided businesses until mid-2025 to prepare for the changes, ensuring a transition period for compliance.

2.

Legal and policy
frameworks regarding
labour migration

Question 4. What is your country's current labour migration policy approach (demand-driven i.e. employment-based⁶ or supply-based i.e. occupation driven approach,⁷ or a human capital-oriented strategy⁸ or a mix) on the basis of its key characteristics? If the policy approach has any components that have been introduced during the study period (January 2021 - June 2024) please identify them and describe them in more detail.

A key strategic document - Migration Policy Guidelines, which were approved by [Government Resolution No. 79 of 22 January 2014](#), posited the **workforce compensation principle** as one of the essential principles of migration management: the employment of third-country nationals to address labour shortages is permitted **only** when these gaps cannot be filled by local workers, returning Lithuanian citizens, or citizens of other EU member states under the freedom of movement principle. According to the Guidelines, while Lithuania aims to stay competitive in attracting third-country labour, its policy prioritises the remigration of Lithuanian nationals and emphasises that employers should not rely on low-cost foreign labour before fully utilising the domestic workforce; it also seeks to prevent third-country workers from using Lithuania as a transit to other EU nations, discourage emigration among Lithuanian citizens, and avoid creating additional social tensions.

On the other hand, the Guidelines also encourage attracting foreign professionals whose **skills align with Lithuania's strategic needs**, such as high-skilled workers, researchers, investors, and recent graduates from Lithuanian institutions. These individuals are offered favourable conditions to facilitate their integration and contribution to economic, technological, and social progress in Lithuania.

Against the background of these strategic principles and goals, Lithuania's labour migration policy is **primarily employment-based**, although it has some elements of a human capital-oriented strategy, especially with regard to the categories of professionals mentioned above.

The [Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners](#) provides a comprehensive overview of all legal pathways available for third-country nationals seeking employment in Lithuania. Below, recent developments in two key areas are highlighted: Article 44 (low- and medium-skilled workers) and Article 44¹ (high-skilled workers).

Issuing a temporary residence permit on the basis of employment (Article 44 of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners)

In 2021, **a quota was introduced** for foreigners entering the Republic of Lithuania to work in a profession included in the Shortage Occupations List. As long as the quota is not exhausted, the employer of the foreigner is exempted from the obligation to carry out a labour market test, and once the quota is exhausted, the employer intending to employ the foreigner must first carry out **a labour market test**. Thus, until the end of 2024, the quota applies for the simplified procedure for issuing a temporary residence permit. Once the quota is exhausted, the normal procedure for issuing a temporary residence permit applies and a labour market test is carried out before the temporary residence permit is issued. The employer of a foreigner who intends to work in an occupation which is not included in the list of shortage occupations must carry out a labour market test, regardless of whether or not the quota has been exhausted.

⁶ Employment based approaches accept foreign workers who have been selected by an employer, i.e. the admission is predominantly dependent on employment offered (e.g. European Union Blue Card, or H-1B Visa in the U.S.), which grant temporary residence first, and then allow for transition into permanent residence.

⁷ Occupation driven approaches grant access to people who are qualified in occupations that are decided by government to be in short supply, without necessarily requiring a work contract. Skilled Occupation lists would be a key policy instrument in such approaches.

⁸ A human capital-oriented approach is not based on arranged employment nor limits admission to specific occupations, instead it focuses on the observable qualifications/characteristics of the applicant. Point systems that provide points for desirable characteristics, as was used by Canada in the past, would be a key policy instrument of such an approach. These systems would usually grant permanent residence from the beginning. Regarding these typologies, see also Kolb, H., 'Labour Migration Policies: A Typology'. 2023, in Bean, F. and Brown, K. (eds.), Selected Topics in Migration Studies, Springer.

The Employment Service, in order to match the supply of labour with the demand, prepares each year the **List of Shortage Occupations**. The List of Shortage Occupations for 2024 was approved by [Order No V-223 of 23 November 2023 of the Director of the Employment Service](#) under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, which included 110 occupations (of which: 35 occupations belonged to the construction sector, 64 - to the industrial sector, 8 - to the service sector and 3 - to the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector).

From 1 January 2025, Lithuania implements a **fixed annual quota** for foreign nationals entering the country for work, limited to a maximum of 1.4% of the permanent population as recorded on 1 July of the previous year by the State Data Agency. This quota, established jointly by the Minister of Social Security and Labour and the Minister of the Interior, aims to manage workforce entry strategically.

Once the quota is reached, foreign nationals may still obtain temporary residence permits for work under specific conditions:

- If the employer commits to paying a salary at least 1.2 times the average Gross National Income (GNI) for the last published calendar year.
- If the foreign worker is employed in a high-value occupation that is experiencing labour shortages, as specified in the list approved by the Minister of Economy and Innovation, with a salary matching or exceeding the latest average Gross Value Added (GVA) for the last calendar year.

Certain groups will be exempt from this quota, including foreign nationals who:

- Complete studies or vocational training in Lithuania and seek employment,
- Are granted temporary protection,
- Are persecuted by non-democratic regimes or face repression, making return to their country of origin unfeasible, when they are assisted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Issuing a temporary residence permit on the basis of a highly qualified job (Art. 44¹ of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners)

Since 1 August 2022, Lithuania has simplified immigration procedures, aligning with the EU Directive (EU) 2021/1883 on conditions for the entry and residence of third-country nationals for highly skilled work, which replaced Council Directive 2009/50/EC. These changes to Article 44¹ of the Law include the following:

- **Employer Commitment:** Employers must now commit to employing a foreign worker for at least six months (previously, it was one year) if the role requires high professional qualifications.
- **Labour Market Test:** The labour market test has been eliminated for issuing temporary residence permits on the basis of high qualifications. This change reflects the stance that foreign professionals meeting Article 44¹ requirements are considered essential due to labour shortages.
- **Minimum Salary Requirements:**
 - For most high-skill roles, employers must pay a minimum salary of 1.5 times the average monthly earnings - which currently amounts to € 3 020.70 gross (€ 2 043.09 net).

- For roles listed in the List of High Value-Added Shortage Professions, approved by the Minister of Economy and Innovation, the minimum salary requirement is set at 1.2 times the average monthly earnings (€ 2 416.56 gross, or € 1 646.81 net).
- **Job Change Flexibility:** A foreign worker with a temporary residence permit issued on this basis only needs to inform the Migration Department of a job change within the first year of the permit's validity. After the first year, they may change employers without notification.
- **Additional Work Rights:** Foreign nationals holding a temporary residence permit for high-skilled work are also permitted to engage in additional professional activities.

Question 5. Which type(s) of **labour shortages** (long/medium/acute shortages) does your country's current labour migration approach **address**?

Lithuania's current approach to labour migration **primarily addresses acute workforce shortages**. The Shortage Occupations List in Lithuania is approved by the Employment Service annually, taking into account labour market forecasts for the upcoming year. In contrast, the List of High Value-Added Shortage Professions, overseen by the Minister of Economy and Innovation, takes a more strategic approach by identifying long-term needs and prioritising occupations for which financial incentives are provided to attract skilled workers to Lithuania.

Question 6. What are the main national labour migration **policy instruments** in addressing shortages (e.g. labour market tests, shortage occupation lists, streamlined procedures) in your country? Please briefly describe them.

Lithuania's national labour migration policy uses several instruments to address workforce shortages and ensure adherence to the strategic goals of the state in this area:

1. **Work Permits:** Generally, foreign nationals must obtain a work permit to be employed in Lithuania unless they meet specific exemptions. The Employment Service issues and renews these permits based on labour market needs. Work permits are usually issued for one year.
2. **Labour Market Tests:** This test, conducted by the Employment Service, assesses whether there are qualified domestic workers available to fill a position before granting permission to hire a foreign worker. If the job is not on the shortage list, or if the quota has been reached, employers must undergo this test to confirm the need for foreign labour, aligning foreign recruitment with actual market demands.
3. **Shortage Occupations List:** Compiled annually by the Employment Service, this list identifies professions experiencing labour shortages in Lithuania and guides the recruitment of foreign workers in these high-demand roles. Roles on this list, primarily in sectors like construction, industry, and agriculture, qualify for expedited residence permit processes, helping employers meet urgent labour needs. On 23 November 2023, the Director of the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania issued Order No. V-223, approving the [2024 Shortage Occupations List](#). This list includes 110 occupations, divided by sector as follows: 35 occupations in construction, 64 in industry, 8 in services, and 3 in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.

4. Quota System for Shortage Occupations: Since 2021, Lithuania has implemented an annual quota for foreign nationals intending to work in professions listed on the Shortage Occupations List, approved by the Employment Service. For 2023, [the quota was set at 40 250](#), divided among sectors based on labour demand:

- Services: 25 100 positions (62.4% of the quota),
- Construction: 9 800 positions (24.4%),
- Industry: 5 050 positions (12.5%),
- Agriculture: 300 positions (0.7%).

When the quota is reached, employers must follow standard hiring processes, including obtaining a work permit and/or labour market test approval for additional foreign workers.

(Please note that, **from 1 January 2025**, Lithuania implements a **fixed annual quota** for foreign nationals entering the country for work, limited to a maximum of 1.4% of the permanent population as recorded on 1 July of the previous year by the State Data Agency. This quota applies only to foreigners seeking a temporary residence permit for employment. Temporary residence permits granted for other reasons will not count toward the quota. Furthermore, only newly issued temporary residence permits will be deducted from the quota; renewals or changes to existing permits will not impact it. Temporary residence permits issued on the basis of completed studies or vocational training in Lithuania with an intent to work, on grounds of temporary protection, or under Article 40(1)(8) of the Law due to persecution or repression by a non-democratic regime (with entry facilitated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and inability to return to the home country) will be exempt from the quota. The fixed annual quota system will replace the quota system which was in place.)

5. List of High Value-Added Shortage Professions: The list serves as a targeted tool in labour migration policy, streamlining the recruitment process for foreign professionals in critical roles. It identifies professions where there is a significant shortage of local talent, particularly in high-skilled fields like engineering, IT, and biotechnology. Foreign workers in these roles benefit from simplified immigration procedures, including exemption from the labour market test and lower salary thresholds compared to other professions.

6. Streamlined procedures: As of 1 August 2022, the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners [was amended](#) to facilitate the recruitment of foreign highly skilled workers. Major updates included:

- [Expanded Recognition of Qualifications:](#) Three years of professional experience in IT and telecommunications is now accepted as equivalent to a high qualification.
- [Removal of Labour Market Test:](#) High-skilled foreign workers, especially those applying for the EU Blue Card, no longer need a labour market test.
- [Adjusted Salary Thresholds:](#) Workers in high-value-added shortage roles require a salary of at least 1.2 times the average wage, while other high-skilled roles need 1.5.
- [Reduced Minimum Employment Duration:](#) Employers can now commit to hiring foreign workers for a minimum of 6 months instead of one year.
- [Simplified Employment for Blue Card Holders:](#) No Migration Department approval is needed to change roles within the same employer. Blue Card holders may work with a secondary employer without additional approvals, provided they continue with the primary employer. Blue Card holders who lose their job may stay for up to six months to find new employment.

- Enhanced Family Integration: Family members of Blue Card holders who have resided in the EU for five years, with at least two years in Lithuania, may receive a permanent residence permit more quickly.
- Retained Residency Despite Absence: Permanent residence permits for Blue Card holders or family members will remain valid if absences from the EU do not exceed two years.

Question 7. Have there been any legal and/or policy changes since 2021 to your country's labour migration framework that are related to labour shortages? YES/NO? If YES, please highlight the main changes and indicate in which ways these changes were related to labour shortages.

Yes.

As of 1 August 2022, Article 44¹ of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners was amended to **simplify the requirements for highly qualified workers seeking temporary residence permits on the grounds of employment** in Lithuania, aligning with the transposition of Directive (EU) 2021/1883. The key changes include:

- The minimum employment commitment required from employers has been reduced from 1 year to 6 months.
- The labour market test requirement for issuing temporary residence permits for highly qualified work has been abolished.
- Employers must ensure a minimum gross salary of 1.5 times the average monthly wage (€ 3 020.70, equating to € 2 043.09 after tax). For roles included in the List of High Value-Added Shortage Professions, the minimum salary is set at 1.2 times the average (€ 2 416.56, equating to € 1 646.81 after tax).
- Foreign workers are required to obtain approval from the Migration Department to change employers during the first year of their residence permit's validity but may change employers freely thereafter.
- Holders of temporary residence permits issued under Article 44¹ are allowed to engage in additional work activities.

There were also changes concerning the issuance of temporary residence permits to third-country nationals on the grounds of employment under Article 44 of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners.

In 2021, **a quota system** was introduced for third-country nationals entering Lithuania to work in occupations included in the Shortage Occupations List. As long as this quota remains unfilled, employers are exempt from conducting a labour market test. However, once the quota is reached, employers must conduct a labour market test before hiring a foreign worker. This quota applies exclusively to foreigners seeking temporary residence permits under Article 44 of the Law and does not apply to highly qualified workers or those entering Lithuania on other grounds. Employers hiring foreigners for professions not listed as Shortage Occupations must complete a labour market test, which can be done prior to submitting an application for a temporary residence permit.

From 1 August 2022, the requirements for issuing temporary residence permits based on employment in Lithuania were simplified. Foreigners now only need to meet one of the following: have the required work experience (at least 1 year over the past 3 years), possess the necessary qualifications, or have an employer who commits to paying a salary that is not lower than the most [recently published](#) average monthly gross wage in the national economy (€ 2 013.80, equivalent to € 1 249 after tax). Temporary residence permits can also be granted to foreigners working under temporary employment contracts, with labour market tests required in all cases.

As of 1 January 2023, Lithuania began allowing third-country nationals to **apply for temporary residence permits while still residing abroad through VFS Global**, an external service provider chosen by the Migration Department. Operating in 30 countries, VFS Global handles the initial application process, including the collection of documents and biometric data, and forwards them to the Migration Department, which makes the final decision within 1 to 3 months. Approved permits are then sent to applicants abroad, enabling them to enter Lithuania without needing an additional visa. As of 1 December 2024, Lithuania has tightened the rules for submitting applications through the external service provider. Now, only citizens of the country where the external service provider operates are allowed to submit their applications at those offices. This change aims to improve control over immigration flows and align with national security priorities, as well as the capacity of state institutions to process applications. Exceptions to this rule include applicants seeking family reunification, highly qualified workers, students enrolled in approved academic programs, or researchers and lecturers working with Lithuanian institutions.

Starting from 1 July 2023, **national visas in Lithuania are no longer issued on the basis of employment**. Prior to this change, many foreign nationals obtained national visas for employment purposes, especially in occupations listed as shortage professions or with work permits from the Employment Service. Under the new regulations, such workers are required to apply for temporary residence permits instead, provided they meet the necessary criteria for these permits.

Amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, [adopted on 20 June 2024](#), stipulate that from 1 July 2024, **third-country nationals are no longer be permitted to work during their legal stay** in Lithuania under specific conditions. This applies to foreigners who are in Lithuania under a visa-free regime, holding a valid Schengen visa, a national visa, or a residence permit issued by another EU country. Previously, these individuals could begin employment with a Lithuanian-registered company before obtaining a residence permit. This change impacts especially those whose professions are included in the Shortage Occupations List. Following the amendments, foreigners can only be employed if they hold a valid temporary or permanent residence permit issued by Lithuania. Certain exceptions apply, including foreign nationals seconded to Lithuania as employees of companies established in EU or The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states, crew members on ships flying the Lithuanian flag, and individuals engaged in short-term business activities related to contract execution, training, or equipment installation.

From 1 July 2024, **new rules regarding temporary residence permits for employment** in Lithuania came into effect. A permit can only be issued to a third-country national if their employer demonstrates genuine business activities in Lithuania and invites the foreigner for a period of at least six months. Employers must also hold valid licenses, have no administrative violations related to foreigner data reporting or false data submission, and be free of significant tax arrears. Additionally, they must commit to employing the foreign national under a contract lasting no less than six months with full-time work conditions.

Under the **new regulations, a temporary residence permit can be revoked** not only due to administrative violations by the employer but also in cases where the company has tax debts exceeding one basic social benefit amount to the Lithuanian state budget. Additionally, if the company loses the necessary licenses or permits, or fails to meet the conditions for conducting

licensed activities in which the foreign worker is employed, the permit can also be revoked. If a permit is revoked, it will not remain valid during an appeal process unless the court issues interim measures to suspend the decision.

As of [1 August 2024](#), **employers in Lithuania must pay a state fee of €50 for each intermediary letter** submitted for a foreign worker's temporary residence permit or national visa. This fee is processed through the MIGRIS system, and the intermediary letter is only considered submitted once the payment is completed. Exceptions are provided for lecturers, researchers, students, high-level athletes, religious workers, performers, journalists, and participants in government or recognised volunteer programs, who are exempt from this fee.

As of 1 September 2024, [rules for Ukrainians without temporary protection](#) in Lithuania have tightened. Ukrainians and other third-country nationals unable to return to Ukraine due to the war and who do not qualify for temporary protection must now wait for their residence permit to be approved before starting work. Previously, such individuals could begin working upon submitting their residence permit application. This change does not affect Ukrainian war refugees benefiting from the EU's temporary protection mechanism; they continue to have the right to work from the moment they submit their residence permit application. Additionally, Ukrainians and their family members who have previously worked without an Employment Service permit and are maintaining employment with the same employer can continue working under certain conditions.

Amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, [adopted on 20 June 2024](#), also stated that **from 1 January 2025, a fixed quota for foreign workers entering Lithuania will be introduced**. The Shortage Occupations List and the labour market test by the Employment Service will be abolished, and the quota will no longer be segmented by economic sector. The law sets an annual quota limit at a maximum of 1.4% of Lithuania's permanent population, as published by the State Data Agency on 1 July of the previous year. The quota size will be determined by the Minister of Social Security and Labour, in consultation with the Minister of the Interior.

On 3 October 2024, the Seimas of Lithuania approved [amendments to the State Language Law](#), effective 1 January 2026, **requiring all businesses and organisations providing goods or services to ensure customer service in Lithuanian** at a government-specified proficiency level. This change aims to protect residents' right to receive services in their national language, addressing the needs of around 40% of Lithuanians who may face language barriers. Exceptions are permitted only in specific cases outlined in the Law on Science and Studies. Implementing regulations must be adopted by 1 July 2025.

Question 8. Has your Member States designed a labour migration policy approach to attract foreign talent? YES/NO. If YES, please describe it by filling out the table below:

No.

Insofar as this question concerns low- and medium-skilled talent.

The priority groups of foreigners to be attracted to Lithuania are outlined in the [Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines](#), approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, which aim to establish the main objectives and principles of migration policy, define directions to manage migration flows in line with national needs, and set procedures for monitoring policy implementation. Priority groups in the Guidelines include foreigners entering to work in high-skilled professions, those arriving for academic purposes such as studying or conducting research, individuals planning to teach at Lithuanian academic institutions, entrepreneurs creating new businesses or jobs (especially in technology and high-value sectors), and investors contributing to Lithuania's economic and social development.

Question 9. Does your country have different types of legal entry pathways for work? YES/NO? If YES, what are the most important (in terms of numbers of arrivals) **legal entry pathways** currently available for foreign workforce in your country?

Yes.

Legal pathway (focusing on the entry on labour migration grounds)	Skill level(s) targeted (high/medium/low/or combination of them)	Key admission conditions (describe using bullet points - e.g. separate or joint residence and work permits, minimum income; minimum language level)
<p><i>Legal pathway 1:</i></p> <p>Blue Card</p>	<p>High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High professional qualification, which refers to qualifications demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A higher education diploma or an equivalent higher education qualification. ○ Specific criteria for managers and professionals in IT and communication technology services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum of 3 years of relevant professional experience acquired within the last 7 years. ▪ Alternatively, at least 5 years of professional experience equivalent to a higher education qualification. ○ The professional experience must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be relevant to the profession or sector specified in the employer's commitment to employ the foreigner or the employment contract. ▪ Be necessary for the position outlined in the employment contract. • Employers must offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A monthly salary of not less than 1.5 times the average gross monthly wage (GMW). ○ If the profession is listed as a high added value profession with a shortage of workers in Lithuania, a monthly salary of not less than 1.2 times the GMW. • No labour market test is required.

Legal pathway (focusing on the entry on labour migration grounds)	Skill level(s) targeted (high/medium/low/or combination of them)	Key admission conditions (describe using bullet points - e.g. separate or joint residence and work permits, minimum income; minimum language level)
<p><i>Legal pathway 2:</i></p> <p>Temporary residence permit for employment (Article 44 of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners)</p>	<p>Medium or low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employer must provide a commitment to employ the third-country national under an employment contract for no less than six months with full-time working hours. If the employment is under a temporary employment contract, the employer must be listed in the State Labour Inspectorate's registry of temporary employment agencies and must commit to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employing the third-country national for at least six months. ○ Paying a monthly salary that is at least the average gross monthly wage (GMW) during active employment and no less than the government-approved minimum wage during periods between assignments. • The employer must submit information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The foreign national's qualifications relevant to the job, and at least one year of work experience within the past three years related to the job; or ○ The planned monthly salary, which must be no less than the GMW. • The Employment Service must make a decision on the foreign national's suitability based on the labour market needs of Lithuania (labour market test). <p>Exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions in the points above do not apply to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Third-country nationals who have completed studies or formal vocational training in Lithuania and apply for a temporary residence permit or its renewal within 10 years of completing their studies or training. ○ Third-country nationals whose profession is on the Shortage Occupations List, provided the quota has not been exhausted. ○ Third-country nationals granted temporary protection applying for their first employment-based temporary residence permit or renewal, as long as the employer remains the same. <p>Note: These exceptions do not apply to third-country nationals seeking employment under a temporary employment contract.</p>

Legal pathway (focusing on the entry on labour migration grounds)	Skill level(s) targeted (high/medium/low/or combination of them)	Key admission conditions (describe using bullet points - e.g. separate or joint residence and work permits, minimum income; minimum language level)
<i>Legal pathway 3:</i> Temporary Residence Permit for Citizens of Select Countries for Work or Legal Activities in Lithuania	Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be a national of Australia, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, New Zealand, South Korea. • Must be employed under a contract of employment or have a commitment from the employer to employ him/her under a contract of employment. • Or be a participant or manager of an enterprise which carries out activities in Lithuania as specified in its founding documents and the purpose of his/her entry is to work in that enterprise. • Or be engaged in another lawful activity or submit documents proving that he/she intends to engage in another lawful activity, including self-employment.
<i>Legal pathway 4:</i> Temporary Residence Permit for Foreign Graduates and Researchers Seeking Employment in Lithuania	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has completed studies or formal vocational training program(s) or scientific research and experimental development work in Lithuania. • Can start working with this permit.
<i>Legal pathway 5:</i> Temporary Residence Permit for Foreign Lecturers and Researchers	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The third-country national intends to work as a lecturer or researcher under an employment contract with a research and study institution. • Researchers are also entitled to work as lecturers.

Question 10. Are there currently any changes foreseen to the legal framework and the labour migration policy approach **pertaining to labour shortages in progress?**⁹ YES/NO. If YES, please elaborate briefly.

Yes.

Amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, adopted on 20 June 2024, established that from 2025, **a finite quota will be applied for foreigners coming to work in Lithuania.** The Shortage Occupations List and the labour market test conducted by the Employment Service have been abolished. The law states that the annual quota cannot exceed 1.4 percent of the number of permanent residents in Lithuania as published by the State Data Agency on 1 July of the previous calendar year. The quota size will be determined by the Minister of Social Security and Labour, in coordination with the Minister of the Interior.

⁹ I.e. ongoing but not adopted yet.

Question 11. Does your country use indicators for monitoring, or does it conduct other evaluations (e.g. collecting feedback from employers or migrants or other tools) to assess the outcomes of labour migration policies in terms of attracting and retaining foreign workforce? YES/NO. If YES, please provide examples if available.

Yes.

Statistical indicators are used for monitoring, such as [immigration statistics](#) and [labour market indicators](#).

Question 12. Has your country implemented policies intended to positively influence the duration of stay of foreign talent in your country (e.g. measures to retain workers)?¹⁰ YES/NO. If YES, please provide an example, if available.

Yes.

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania [introduced amendments to the Employment Law](#) in 2022, creating a pilot program running until the end of 2024 to financially incentivise the relocation and retention of highly skilled foreign specialists, as well as Lithuanian expats returning from abroad. This initiative is designed to address skill shortages in high-value sectors such as information and communications technology, engineering, and life sciences, by covering relocation costs for eligible individuals and reimbursing companies for expenses associated with hiring and retaining these professionals.

Qualified individuals are eligible for a one-time relocation incentive of up to € 3 788 if they have not been permanent residents of Lithuania for the previous five years, hold an open-ended employment contract with a Lithuania-based employer, work in a high-value profession from the government's approved list, and earn a gross monthly salary that is at least 4.1 times the minimum wage in Lithuania. Applicants may seek this benefit between six months and two years after starting their employment in Lithuania, with the application deadline set for 31 May 2025.

Ukrainian citizens fleeing the ongoing conflict are also eligible for this incentive under slightly modified criteria. For them, the required gross monthly salary threshold is lower (2.4 times the minimum wage, or approximately € 2 217), and they are not required to work in a high-value sector. Ukrainians may apply for this benefit between three months and two years after starting employment.

Employers who hire these eligible specialists are also incentivised with a reimbursement of up to € 6 652, provided they retain the employee for at least one year. Applications for this benefit must be submitted between one and two years after the employee's start date.

These incentives are designed to encourage employers to source talent internationally and to foster knowledge sharing and skill development within Lithuania's workforce. Additional eligibility requirements for professionals and companies apply, and a decision regarding the continuation of this program will be made after the pilot period ends.

¹⁰ The insertion of question has been called for by a policy stakeholder, since policy actors are interested to learn, which policies do not only attract but also make retention of workers more likely.

Question 13. What are lessons learned– if any- in your MS about labour migration policy and legal pathways, regarding the objective of reducing labour shortages?

In response to labour shortages, Lithuania introduced several key adjustments to its labour migration policy, as detailed in the answer to Q3. In 2022, immigration procedures were simplified, allowing foreign workers to qualify if they met one of the following criteria: relevant work experience (one year within the last three years), necessary qualifications, or an employment offer at a minimum wage of 1 MGW ([€ 2 013.80 gross, approximately € 1 249 net](#)). Additionally, temporary residence permits became available to foreigners intending to work under temporary employment contracts, with labour market testing required in each case. To further ease access, a 2023 policy enabled foreigners to apply for temporary residence permits from abroad through external service providers.

These adjustments significantly enhanced accessibility, facilitating a marked increase in immigration flows in 2023 and early 2024.

Question 14. Please highlight the main challenges - if any- faced in your country regarding your labour migration policy and legal pathways, regarding the objective of reducing labour shortages.

At the end of 2023, the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and other relevant institutions conducted an [internal assessment](#) of the impact of the legislative amendments passed on 30 June 2022, on the Lithuanian labour market, national security, and demographic situation. Issues of misuse were identified during the assessment, such as the emergence of new companies that do not conduct business but act as intermediaries for temporary residence permits for foreigners, or companies inviting foreign workers for high-demand professions but actually leasing them to other firms without temporary employment agency status. Additional concerns included the increase in foreigners registered as self-employed but failing to submit required tax declarations, employers not adhering to wage commitments, and employers inviting foreign workers despite not meeting regulatory requirements (e.g. lacking necessary licenses or permits). Other issues involved foreigners arriving with revoked national visas from other Member States. The [draft amendment addressing these issues](#) was passed by the Seimas on 20 June 2024.

Another challenge is that the increasing number of foreign workers in Lithuania, particularly the significant rise in Russian-speaking foreigners from former Soviet Union countries, has led to heightened social tension regarding their linguistic and cultural integration. In response, state institutions are exploring ways to improve the accessibility of Lithuanian language courses. At the same time, the Law on the State Language was amended to require all individuals working in customer service to be proficient in Lithuanian, with this requirement set to take effect in 2026.

As the number of foreign workers in Lithuania increases, cases of workplace exploitation have become more frequent. A notable investigative report titled '[Lorry Slaves](#)' highlighted these issues in 2021. This investigation revealed that many foreign drivers, primarily from non-EU countries, face poor working conditions and unlawful pay deductions.

To combat the exploitation of foreign workers and illegal employment, interagency cooperation has been strengthened. The State Labour Inspectorate, under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, focuses inspections on sectors with a high concentration of foreign employees. Additionally, institutions like the State Border Guard Service, the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior, and the State Labour Inspectorate conduct joint workplace inspections. There is also collaboration with trade unions to inform foreign workers about labour regulations and employee rights.

Question 15. Please highlight good practices of your labour migration policy and legal pathways, regarding the objective of reducing labour shortages.

One of the good practices in Lithuania's labour migration policy is its adaptive approach to **simplify and expedite employment for qualified foreign professionals**. Since 1 August 2022, amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners removed the requirement for a labour market test for foreigners with high professional qualifications. Additionally, changes effective from 1 March 2021, allowed foreigners intending to work in roles requiring high professional qualifications to begin employment immediately upon submitting their application. This has simplified immigration procedures and reduced administrative burdens for both employers and foreign employees.

Lithuania has also implemented a mechanism since 1 January 2017, that **equates relevant professional experience to higher education qualifications**. Initially optional under Council Directive 2009/50/EC, this approach became mandatory under Directive (EU) 2021/1883, which sets entry and residence conditions for high-skilled employment for third-country nationals. This mechanism is particularly useful in fast-evolving sectors like ICT and IT.

Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Lithuania **allowed Ukrainian refugees to start working immediately after registering** with the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior, without the need for work permits or labour market tests. [This decision](#) not only reduced administrative and financial burdens in managing the influx of war refugees but also accelerated their integration into the Lithuanian labour market.

3.

Practices and initiatives to attract and recruit foreign talent to tackle labour shortages

Question 16. Has your country institutionalised/coordinated a national recruitment mechanism for foreign talent in shortage occupations (e.g. via a public/state-related agency¹¹ offices, strategy)? YES/NO.

No.

There is no coordinated or institutionalised national recruitment mechanism for foreign talent in Lithuania. There is no new information not covered by the 2024 inform on foreign talent. The key instruments for influencing the recruitment of mid- and low-skilled employees are described in the answer to Q6 (in particular, the Shortage Occupations List).

Question 17. Does your country have other initiatives (programmes, projects, information campaigns or other actions) in place designed to attract mid- and low-skilled workers from third countries, i.e. not yet reported under Q16? If yes, please describe up to three initiatives.¹²

No.

Question 18. Does your country offer structured legal employment pathways for irregular migrants for shortage occupations? If yes, to what extent this is a part of the overall labour migration policy strategy and a substantial labour migration channel?

There are no structured legal employment pathways specifically for irregular migrants. However, under Article 140¹³ (1) and (3) of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, third-country nationals who meet the criteria in Article 140⁸ (3) and (4) (i.e. those who crossed the border illegally and may or may not have applied for asylum) are eligible to work or engage in self-employment 12 months after their registration in the Lithuanian Migration Information System. These individuals can access information, counselling, and employment mediation services offered by the Employment Service, and can participate in programmes led by international and non-governmental organisations to gain or enhance professional qualifications, which support their integration into the labour market. As of 8 June 2024, such individuals are also exempt from the requirement to obtain a work permit.

¹¹ An example here would be the German Agency for International Healthcare Professionals.

¹² Please base your answer on expert' opinions or objective/empirical evaluation reports and include the perspective of social partners, and other critical stakeholders, in your evaluation.

Question 19. Does your country encounter regional imbalances,¹³ e.g. regional differences regarding the ability to attract foreign talent **within** your country? YES/NO and if YES, are there any initiatives to mitigate those?

Yes.

Lithuania experiences regional imbalances in attracting foreign talent, with the majority of foreign workers residing in a few major cities, primarily the capital, Vilnius. While regional development policies exist, they are not specifically targeted at foreigners. To address this, International House Klaipėda was established on 1 June 2023, aiming to enhance Klaipėda's capacity to attract skilled foreign professionals. This centre supports highly qualified professionals, entrepreneurs, EU citizens, and their families. International House Vilnius was launched on 11 November 2021, to offer similar services.

Distribution of foreigners in cities

Year	Vilnius	Kaunas	Klaipėda	Other	Total
2023	58 098 (34%)	17 020 (10%)	17 429 (10%)	76 963 (45%)	169 510
2022	29 399 (33%)	8 270 (9%)	9 160 (10%)	42 005 (47%)	88 834
2021	25 119 (32%)	7 207 (9%)	8 255 (11%)	37 695 (48%)	78 276

Data of the Migration Department

Question 20. Are EU instruments on labour migration designed from 2021 onwards (e.g. Talent Partnerships, Migration Partnership Facility, and the proposed Talent Pool) used in your country to attract foreign talent? YES/NO. If YES, please refer to any insights thereto by your Member State, if available.

No.

There is no new information not covered by the 2024 inform on foreign talent.

¹³ For country specific examples see section 4.4. of: European Labour Authority (ELA), 'EURES Report on Labour Shortages and Surpluses 2022'. 2022, <https://www.ela.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-09/ELA-eures-shortages-surpluses-report-2022.pdf>, p. 39-43, last accessed on 11 July 2024.

4.

Conclusions

First, Lithuania's approach to labour migration in the face of workforce shortages predominantly focuses on **addressing immediate employer needs** without fully integrating long-term labour market strategies. The current policy structure is employment-driven, heavily relying on the Shortage Occupations List, which is updated annually to respond to labour shortages in specific sectors, such as construction, transportation, and industry. Foreign workers in these roles can enter Lithuania more easily due to streamlined permit processes and quotas, allowing them to fill urgent vacancies quickly.

The Migration Policy Guidelines emphasise that labour migration should supplement the workforce only when local labour, returning citizens, or EU nationals cannot meet demand. While **high-skilled workers are somewhat prioritised** through a human capital-oriented approach, particularly those whose expertise aligns with Lithuania's strategic goals, the overall framework remains focused on short-term needs rather than sustainable workforce development: current employer demands are prioritised, and immigrants are selected based on qualifications relevant to high-demand sectors.

Although policy adjustments such as permit quota caps and streamlined application processes have increased accessibility, Lithuania has yet to implement comprehensive initiatives to balance regional labour needs effectively or mitigate future labour shortages.

Second, during the study period, Lithuania's **migration policies were shaped significantly by its geopolitical landscape**, particularly due to tensions with neighbouring Belarus and Russia. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and associated security risks have led Lithuania to implement tighter controls on migration from certain countries, emphasising national security alongside labour needs. Belarusian and Russian nationals face additional scrutiny, including security screenings and permit restrictions, as policymakers aim to prevent potential security threats while still accommodating labour market demands.

In response to the influx of asylum seekers and economic migrants from regions affected by geopolitical conflict, Lithuania has introduced policies that balance humanitarian obligations with labour market utility. **Ukrainian refugees**, in particular, were granted facilitated access to the labour market, enabling them to work in Lithuania without lengthy administrative processes. A streamlined entry process helped to address immediate labour needs while supporting displaced individuals. At the same time, pathways for other temporary and low-skilled labour migrants remain more restrictive, ensuring that only applicants meeting specific sectoral needs are permitted entry.

Third, the influx of Russian-speaking migrants from Ukraine, Belarus, and Central Asian republics, while essential in filling Lithuania's labour shortages, has introduced nuanced **challenges for social cohesion and integration**. With these migrants forming a sizable and linguistically aligned community, there is a risk of social isolation and the development of parallel societies within Lithuania. Policymakers increasingly recognise that a sustainable labour migration strategy must extend beyond economic contributions to encompass meaningful integration efforts, particularly through Lithuanian language acquisition.

In conclusion, Lithuania's labour immigration policy primarily aims to address short-term business needs, focusing less on creating a stable, long-term workforce strategy. Over the study period, this approach demonstrated some fluctuations, starting with initial liberalisation efforts, which were then followed by more restrictive adjustments within two years. These changes often mirror the influence of political cycles on migration policies, with adjustments frequently influenced by current political priorities and external factors.

Statistical data on labour migration

Annex

Question 1. Which occupations does your country believe are most in need of migrant workers and how are those needs identified (e.g. based on national migration occupation shortage lists or other appropriate, objective empirical sources)? In case your country also has regional shortage lists, you may also add them here.

The Employment Service, to align the supply of labour with demand, annually prepares a list of occupations with worker shortages in the Republic of Lithuania, categorised by economic activity (the Shortage Occupations List). The 2024 Shortage Occupations List was approved by [Order No. V-223 on 23 November 2023](#) by the Director of the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. It includes 110 occupations: 35 in the construction sector, 64 in the industrial sector, 8 in the service sector, and 3 in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector.

The Shortage Occupations List is based on the Employment Service's labour market monitoring, labour market assessments, and forecasts of market changes.

Shortage occupations are identified according to these criteria:

1. The registered labour demand in the industrial, construction, and agricultural sectors exceeds supply by at least twice annually, and by at least five times in the service sector.
2. The number of registered vacancies in an occupation constitutes at least 5% of the total number employed in that occupation, according to data from the State Social Insurance Fund Board under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

The Employment Service consults with the Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania. The draft Shortage Occupations List is made public for five days, allowing employers, employer associations, trade unions, employee representative organisations, municipalities, and foreign investment development agencies to provide justified information to the Employment Service regarding anticipated demand growth, investments, and job creation over the coming years.

By [Order No. V-342 on 18 November 2022](#), the Director of the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Shortage Occupations List for 2023, which included 175 occupations: 53 in the construction sector, 101 in the industrial sector, 11 in the service sector, and 10 in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector.

The Minister of Economy and Innovation approves a list of high value-added occupations with a shortage of workers in Lithuania. This list includes occupations classified in main groups 1, 2, or 3 of the [Lithuanian Classification of Occupations](#). It is compiled based on data from business and employer associations, information from national human resource monitoring, and recommendations from Invest Lithuania. The current list, approved by [Order No. 4-404 of 23 July 2024](#) of the Minister of Economy and Innovation, contains 85 occupations. This list is not intended to identify occupations with labour shortages for simplified immigration processes. Instead, it identifies priority occupations for which financial incentives are offered to attract workers to Lithuania.

Question 2. Based on national statistics please report data on **stock** (permits for employment at the end of the year) and **flows** (first permits for employment) of foreign workforce broken down by **sector**.

Please provide the information in the tables below. If no data is available, insert that this information is not available (n.i.a.).

Foreign talent 2021-2023 broken down by economic sector (flow)

Economic Sectors	2021 flows	2021 stocks	2022 flows	2022 stocks	2023 flows	2023 stocks
Temporary residence permits issued for employment, in total	27 747	N/A	37 490	N/A	58 323	110 447
National visas (issued for employment before 1 July 2023)	34 009	N/A	18 351	N/A	5 810	N/A
Temporary residence permits issued to foreigners who intends to work in highly skilled jobs	1 267	N/A	3 924	N/A	1 706	N/A

The following statistics include both newly issued and amended temporary residence permits, so discrepancies in numbers may occur. Data source: Migration Policy Guidelines Reports <https://vrm.lrv.lt/lt/veiklossritys/migracija/>.

- In 2023, the highest number of temporary residence permits, by economic sector, was issued to foreigners working in services (51 807), construction (11 104), and industry (5 401).
- In 2022, by economic sector, most temporary residence permits in Lithuania were issued to foreigners planning to work in road freight transport (36 482), construction (7 866), water, heating, electrical, and other equipment installation (751), shipbuilding (716), and metal structure and parts manufacturing (657).
- In 2021, 25 281 foreigners were employed based on Shortage Occupations List, reflecting a 34.9% increase compared to 2020 (16 733). The majority were employed as international freight transport drivers (18 217 in 2021, up from 10 790 in 2020), followed by 944 welders, 1 120 concrete workers, 423 plasterers, 419 metal ship hull assemblers, and 325 bricklayers.

EMN is a network composed of migration experts which aims to collect, analyse and provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum. By the decree of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania International Organization for Migration Vilnius Office acts as the national coordinator for the EMN activities in Lithuania.

The EMN National Contact Point (NCP) in Lithuania is composed of representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, the Migration Department, the State Border Guard Service as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Vilnius Office which acts as the national coordinator for the EMN activities in Lithuania. EMN NCP in Lithuania also collaborates with other entities from governmental as well as non-governmental institutions working in the area of migration.
