

THE MIGRATION OFFICE

OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

25

YEARS (1993-2018)



MINISTRY
OF INTERIOR
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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25 YEARS OF EXISTENCE

"Migration will objectively influence our future and therefore we have to influence the migration."

This small brochure providing a brief overview of activities performed by the Migration Office is presented to you as a summary of our 25-year history.

Twenty-five years is a rather short period; however, those years witnessed an intense building of our office's background. We were looking for the right way when making decisions affecting human lives but also fighting to win positions to defend walls which shall not be trespassed. The walls are human rights of persons who have chosen, whether voluntarily or not, the Slovak Republic to apply for international protection.

Migration and asylum are issues that everyone believes to understand and that is why everyone feels competent to comment upon it. As a rule, such comments are rather desultory. Another evidence to this fact is an unprofessional approach taken by media from time to time. Nevertheless, it appears that these issues and, in particular, insulting professional work of our migration officers are a good way to score political points. However, everyone who understands our work knows that the Slovak Republic has a competent authority protecting the interests of Slovak nationals while respecting international commitments binding our country.

Let me take a deep bow and doff an imaginary hat to all employees of the Migration Office who work hard to show that we are a democratic country respecting human rights.



Bernard Prielcel
Director of the Migration Office

SOURCES/AUTHORS OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS

Martin Droppa: cover photograph, photographs 5, 9

Vladimir Benko/Ministry of Interior: photograph 1, 2, 3, 4

Migration Office: photograph – director's speech, photograph 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20

Ministry of Interior: photograph 6, 10

www.minv.sk: photograph 7, 22, 23,

David Ištok: photograph 11, 12

Marek Jančúch: photograph 21

MAP OF FACILITIES OF THE MIGRATION OFFICE

Migration Office: photograph of the Migration Office and Integration centre in Zvolen

Vladimir Benko/Ministry of Interior: Photograph of the accommodation centre in Rohovce, Opatovská Nová Ves and Reception centre in Humenné

THE MIGRATION OFFICE

OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (hereafter the Migration Office) was established by Resolution No. 501 of the Government of the Slovak Republic dated 13 July 1993 to perform duties in migration policy.

The Migration Office has fully replaced the former Secretariat of the Slovak Government's Commissioner for Refugees (SSV SR for Refugees), appointed to the position from 1 June 1991.

Until the end of 2012, the Migration Office acted as a budgetary independent organisation of the Ministry of Interior; **at present it operates as one of its organisational entities.**

DIRECTORS OF THE MIGRATION OFFICE

- **1991 – 1994** Lt. Col. JUDr. Ivan Slezák (Director of the SSV SR for Refugees)
- **1994 – 1998** Col. Ing. Vladimír Belo Caban
- **1998 – present** Ing. Bernard Prielcel

The Migration Office is a professional division of the Ministry of Interior acting in the area of asylum, integration of refugees and foreigners, who were provided subsidiary protection and in the field of documentation and foreign cooperation to this extent.*

The Migration Office performs the following tasks:

- **DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASYLUM POLICY** and partial development of the national migration and integration policy; the Migration Office coordinates the development of strategic goals of the migration policy of the Slovak Republic such as the Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Outlook 2020, currently valid.
- **DECISION MAKING** in administrative procedure **RELATED TO GRANTING ASYLUM**, providing subsidiary protection and provision of temporary shelter, includ-

* Regulation No 39/2015 of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic on the Organisational structure of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

PROCEDURAL DEPARTMENT

This department is in charge of asylum-related administrative procedures and carries out comprehensive activities in this respect. Its responsibility is to ensure compliance of the asylum procedure with the national principles of the migration policy, EU legislation, and international agreements and treaties in this regard, to which the Slovak Republic has acceded and is bound.

ORGANIZATION AND LEGAL DEPARTMENT

This department prepares draft legislation governing asylum matters and is involved in transposition of EU legislation in this field into national law. Additionally, responsibilities of this department include legal representation of the Ministry before courts in international protection matters. It also performs activities of filing, personal data protection, confidential information protection, statistics and electronic data processing.

MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION DEPARTMENT

This department cooperates with competent government authorities, local governments and non-governmental organisations in integration of beneficiaries of international protection into society, in particular, accommodation, employment, social security and education; including preparation, implementation and coordination of projects involving asylum matters. The department provides methodological guidance and it manages and supervises social work at asylum facilities.

DIRECTOR OF THE MIGRATION OFFICE

DUBLIN CENTRE

The Dublin Centre performs the specific function of a national access point of the Slovak Republic which is in charge of the implementation of the Dublin Regulation, aiming to determine which EU Member State is responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged by an asylum seeker or a third-country national without permit to reside in the territory of the Slovak Republic.

DEPARTMENT OF DOCUMENTATION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

This department is responsible for documenting activities and provides information and analysis about countries of asylum seekers' origin. It is in charge of the Migration Office's activities related to international cooperation, including tasks resulting from the Slovak Republic's membership in the European Union and cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office.

ASYLUM FACILITIES UNIT

This unit manages, coordinates and supports the asylum facilities, the integration centre, and the transit centres at the international airports. It is fully in charge of the reception of asylum seekers. Additionally it fulfils tasks resulting from the "Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic, UNHCR and IOM concerning the humanitarian transfer of refugees in need of international protection through the Slovak Republic". It cooperates with relevant international and non-governmental organisations, governmental authorities and local governments focusing on refugee issues.

ing the Ministry's legal representation in asylum cases at courts, and documentation of the situation and **ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION ABOUT ASYLUM SEEKERS' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN**. The Migration Office also performs responsibilities in the field of the so-called **DUBLIN PROCEDURE**.

- **ESTABLISHMENT OF ASYLUM FACILITIES** and operation thereof in the field of **RECEPTION**, which includes **SOCIAL WORK** in **COOPERATION** with **LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL** institutions, authorities and organizations. The Migration Office is in charge of activities of the Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreign Nationals in the territory of the Slovak Republic; it acts as the national contact point of the Slovak Republic for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

The organisational structure of the Migration Office reflects the variety of tasks performed by the Office, whether in direct relationship to applicants for international protection and beneficiaries of international protection, or in representing the Slovak Republic at specialized forums on national and international levels. These tasks are the responsibility of departments and a unit of the Migration Office, based upon their competence and scope of activities (*see chart on the left*).

The structure of the Migration Office also includes the asylum facilities (centres) falling under management of the Asylum Facilities Unit. Current-

ly, the Migration Office is in charge of the following facilities:

ASYLUM FACILITIES

1. Reception Centre in Humenne,
2. Accommodation Centre in Opavtowska Nova Ves,
3. Accommodation Centre in Rohovce,
4. Transit Centres in the premises of Bratislava, Košice and Poprad international airports,
5. Transit Centre at Humenne reception centre.

RECEPTION CENTRES

On 1 January 1993 a Reception Centre for Refugees with capacity of 220 beds was established in Gbeľy-Adamov as the first centre in the territory of the independent Slovak Republic. In February 2006 the centre was closed.

Asylum seekers were also placed in Rohovce (2001-2007), Opavtowska Nova Ves (2003-2007) and Liptovske Vlchy (2004-2007). Some of those facilities terminated their activities owing to falling numbers of asylum seekers in Slovakia; others were, after Slovakia's accession to the European Union, transformed from reception centres to accommodation centres.

Currently the only **reception centre** is in Humenne, close to the external Schengen border with Ukraine. It was put into service in December 2006. The capacity of the centre is 524 persons (*photograph 1*).

Since its establishment over 5500 asylum seekers have been placed in the centre.

After applying for asylum the applicant is placed in a reception cen-

tre. In the centre, the applicant is submitted to a health examination. The applicant is not allowed to leave the centre without a special permit issued following the determination of the applicant's health condition by a doctor.

At the reception centre the applicant is initially provided with the information on his/her rights and obligations under the asylum procedure. The applicant is registered and issued the Asylum Seeker ID Card. A personal interview is the next step. During the entire stay at the reception centre, professional social advisory counselling is available for the applicant. The applicant's social his-



PHOTOGRAPH 1



PHOTOGRAPH 2

tory is recorded and is subsequently updated during his/her stay at each asylum facility.

ACCOMMODATION CENTRES

As a rule, the applicant is moved to an accommodation centre within one month from lodging an application for international protection.

In 1995 the Migration Office opened the first accommodation centre in Brezova pod Bradlom, which was intended for unaccompanied minors and families with children. After a fire in 2006 the centre was closed.

Currently there are two **accommodation centres** falling under the competence of the Migration Office: in Opatovska Nova Ves (Veľký Krtíš district) and Rohovce (Dunajská Streda district).

The Opatovska Nova Ves centre is designed for families with children and so-called vulnerable persons. The capacity of the accommodation centre is 140 persons (*photograph 2*).

The accommodation centre **in Rohovce** is intended mainly for adult male individuals. The capacity is 140 persons (*photograph 3*).

The asylum facilities provide comprehensive care of applicants.

Asylum seekers are provided with accommodation, meals and urgent medical care; they are offered Slovak language courses, social and legal advisory services, as well as psychological guidance and leisure activities (*photograph 4*).



PHOTOGRAPH 3



PHOTOGRAPH 4

Upon request, and after the asylum seeker meets the legal requirements, the Migration Office can permit the asylum seeker to stay outside the accommodation centre, at the asylum seeker's own costs.

After asylum or subsidiary protection is granted, as a part of the integration process, the beneficiaries of international protection are provided with assistance when looking for accommodation, employment, language preparatory courses, education and/or assistance in social issues and access to healthcare.

INTEGRATION CENTRE IN ZVOLEN

The purpose of the centre is to assist persons who have been granted asylum with their integration into the

Slovak society. The facility comprises twelve apartments, with housing capacity of 25 persons and potential expansion up to 35 persons.

HUMANITARIAN CENTRE

Since 1992 the Humanitarian centre in Gabčíkovo has played an important role in providing accommodation, initially to a specific group of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, which at that time was ravaged by civil war. Later, asylum seekers were accommodated in Gabčíkovo until 2008. The centre was then temporarily used to accommodate persons who had been provided subsidiary protection. In 2015-2016 the premises were used to assist Austria, which was facing a high number of applicants for asylum.

“Upon request, and after the asylum seeker meets the legal requirements, the Migration Office can permit the asylum seeker to stay outside the accommodation centre, at the asylum seeker's own costs.”

FACILITIES OF THE MIGRATION OFFICE

1. Migration Office



3. Accomodation centre in Rohovce



4. Accomodation centre in Opatovská Nová Ves





2. Reception centre in Humenné



5. Integration centre in Zvolen



25 YEARS

OF EXPERIENCE

During its 25 years in existence, the Migration Office has been involved in the implementation of a number of successful projects.

Before the official establishment of the Migration Office, Slovakia was involved in assisting the **refugees leaving the countries comprising the former Yugoslavia, owing to its civil war**. During 1992-1993 the office admitted children from Croatia, predominantly from Vojvodina region, and later from Serbia and Bosna and Herzegovina. It was assumed that after the conflict was over those persons would voluntarily return home, and that is why, rather than permanent residence, they were provided with temporary shelter. Those persons had the status of “de facto refugees”.

They stayed in the Humanitarian centre in Gabčíkovo awaiting repatriation. The first groups returned to their country of origin in 1996. Thirty-five persons, mixed families who could not return, stayed in Slovakia and were granted refugee status in 1997.

One of the first specific programs of resettlement to Slovakia was the **transfer of Ukraine citizens of Slovak origin affected by the Chernobyl disaster**.

This transfer included Slovaks who were in 1947 displaced to the region that was later affected by the Chernobyl disaster. Thus, during **1993-1998** more than a thousand persons were resettled based on Resolutions of the Slovak Government. The Slovak Government, acting through the Migration Office, arranged accommodation and education in 19 districts of Slovakia and provided them with healthcare and social security. They are currently citizens of the Slovak Republic.

In 2003-2004, Slovakia experienced its own “migration crisis”. During that period the average annual number of received applications for asylum reached eleven thousand. As a part of the crisis management, the Migration Office, in cooperation with civil defence and the army, constructed tents in the existing Gbeľy-Adamov and Rohovce centres in order to expand the insufficient capacities of the asylum facilities.

Since 2015, when Europe was affected by the migration crisis, the Ministry of Defence has been organising a regular military exercise called “New Horizon”. The objective of the exercise is to facilitate and test mutual cooperation among various stakeholders, including the Migration Office, for the protection and defence of the state border during a crisis. In the course of the exercise, the Migration Office demonstrates its professional preparedness to manage refugee crisis situations – from registration of the refugees, through their medical examinations to emergency accommodation (*photographs 6-7*).

In 2009 the Migration Office started implementation of the pilot **project of humanitarian transfer**. (*photographs 5*)

On 20 July 2009 the Slovak Government signed the “*Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic, UNHCR and IOM concerning humanitarian transfer of refugees in need of international protection through the Slovak Republic.*” According to the Agreement the Slovak Government undertook to provide accommodation, meals and basic sanitary needs of refugees and persons under protection of the UNHCR, until their resettlement to a third country of final destination, which was predominantly the USA, Canada, Norway or Sweden.

The first persons under the protection of the UNHCR, coming to our territory on 26 August 2009, were Palestinian refugees. These were comprised mainly of three-generation families with children. Further groups included Afghan mothers with children and refugees from So-



PHOTOGRAPH 5



PHOTOGRAPH 6



PHOTOGRAPH 7



PHOTOGRAPH 8



PHOTOGRAPH 9

malia, Eritrea, Lebanon and other countries. Since 2009 the number of persons which have been resettled through the Slovak Republic equalled 1047 persons, including 502 children; including 17 children born in the territory of the Slovak Republic (*photograph 9*).

The humanitarian transfer is a unique project of its kind, implemented by only two countries in the world: Slovakia and Romania.

The specific projects implemented by the Migration Office have also included **cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Austria at the time of culminating migration crisis in 2015-2016**.

The uniqueness of this bilateral cooperation was in the signing of the

“Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Federal Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Austria on the temporary provision of accommodation facilities to applicants for international protection whose application are being processed by the Republic of Austria”, which was the basis for providing temporary accommodation and meals to applicants for international protection from Syria.

The cooperation's purpose was to relieve Austrian facilities and make it possible for applicants for international protection to stay in decent conditions, provided by the special-purpose facility in Gabčíkovo, until their applications for asylum were



PHOTOGRAPH 10



PHOTOGRAPH 11

processed and examined by Austrian authorities. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 21 July 2015, with validity for two years. In view of the improved situation in Austria, the validity of the Memorandum has not been extended. During this unique cooperation, Syrian families with children (totalling 1228 persons) were placed in Gabčíkovo. Implementation of the project was highly appreciated by the Secretary General of the UN Pan Ki-mun during his visit of Slovakia (*photographs 10-12*).

The Migration Office was also involved in implementation of the project based on admission of 149 internally displaced **Assyrian Christians**, resettled from the refugee centre in Erbil, Iraq. The Slovak Republic received them voluntarily en masse in December **2015**.

Since 2016 sixteen persons in total, women with children, have been voluntarily relocated from hotspots in Greece into the Slovak Republic.



PHOTOGRAPH 12



PHOTOGRAPH 13



PHOTOGRAPH 15



PHOTOGRAPH 14



PHOTOGRAPH 16

The Migration Office sent its first employees to support EU Member States which needed help beginning in 2010; at that time it referred mainly to Greece.

The number of deployed experts has been growing since the migration crisis in 2015. Deployment of the Migration Office's employees to the EASO "asylum support teams" is an expression of solidarity by the Slovak Republic. This includes assistance to countries facing extreme pressure of migration influx and a sharp increase in the number of applications for asylum. The support provided is based upon operation plans signed between the EASO Executive Director and representatives of the Member States of concern; in particular such support teams operate in Italy and Greece. Another type of assistance is

provided based upon special support plans, as in Cyprus and Bulgaria for example. (*photographs 13-17*)

The purpose of the asylum support teams is to provide assistance and support to local authorities, ministries, and/or relevant authorities or directly at hotspots.

Since 2015 the Slovak national experts have committed nearly 1500 man-days providing support to the national authorities in various EU Member States, explicitly Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy.

During their deployment, the Migration Office experts assist in executing the Dublin procedure, in processing information about asylum seekers' countries of origin, in assuring reception conditions and also in implementing the EU-Turkey Statement.

The Migration Office has been involved in development of the migration policy since its establishment.

The first “Principles of the Slovak Republic Migration Policy” were adopted in 1993. After Slovakia’s accession to the European Union, the Principles were replaced by the Concept of the Slovak Republic Migration Policy. The currently valid Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Outlook 2020, which was adopted on 31 August 2011 by Resolution No. 574 of the Slovak Government, provides the basic framework for performance of migration and asylum related activities. The Migration Office is in charge of fulfilment and coordination of tasks resulting from the aforementioned document and further elaboration of the document into the Action plans for different sectors.

The Migration Office also coordinates cooperation between central government authorities regarding asylum and migration activities. The platform for such coordination is the **Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreigners**, chaired by the Director of the Migration Office.

When providing care of asylum seekers and during integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the Slovak society, the Migration Office cooperates not only with other government authorities and local governments, but also with churches, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The Migration Office also collaborates with a number of interna-

tional organisations and authorities in asylum and migration areas (photographs 18-19) such as: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). After Slovakia’s accession into the European Union the following EU agencies and authorities became major partners in international cooperation: the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX). The Migration Office, as a part of the contact point of the Slovak Republic to the European Migration Network (EMN) is involved, on a long-term basis, in activities and projects of the aforementioned platform.



PHOTOGRAPH 17



Every June the Migration Office organizes *EASO Information Day*, where the public is informed of the Office's participation in various activities carried out under the auspices of the EASO (*photograph 20*).



An important aspect of the work either with asylum seekers or with beneficiaries of international protection is the introduction of Slovak culture and expectations regarding successful integration into Slovak society. That is one of the reasons why the Migration Office has issued the manual for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection under the heading **New Start in the Slovak Republic**. The information included in the manual provides foreigners applying for asylum in the Slovak Republic a true and fair view of the country, reflecting the values and certain “expectations” that the Slovak citizens may have with respect to foreigners. The manual is based on practical experiences of the employees of the Migration Office, as well as foreign nationals' recommendations, identifying the most important issues and manners to learn after arriving into another country. The publication is available in various language versions.



In order to improve the awareness by professionals and the general public in regards to migration and asylum topics, representatives of the Migration Office organise and promote various types of educational activities, such as provision of information during festivals and cultural events and discussions and lectures at schools (*photographs 21-23*).



PHOTOGRAPH 22



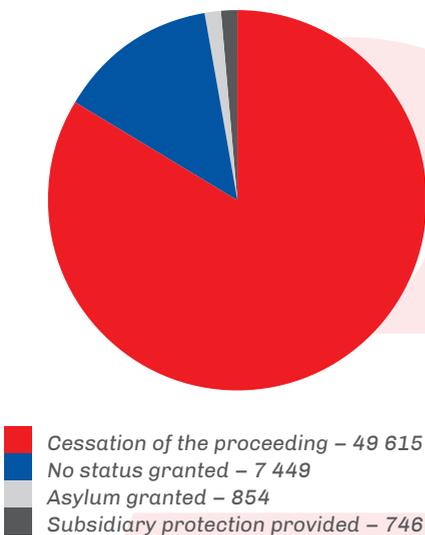
PHOTOGRAPH 23

The Migration Office has also issued an information leaflet explaining basic terms such as “a refugee”, “an asylum seeker” or “a migrant”. The leaflet provides information necessary to gain a basic understanding of migration and asylum issues which are often misinterpreted.

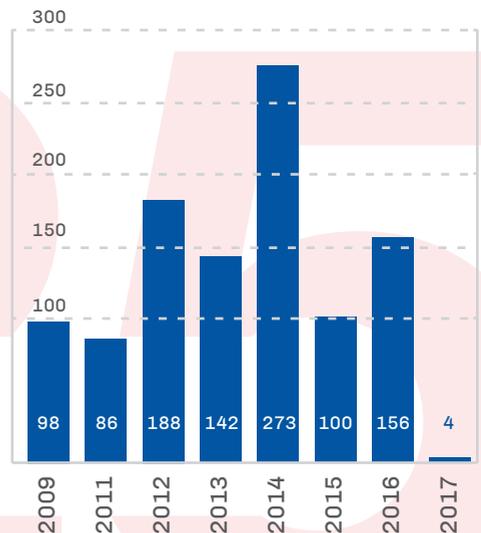
Another important activity of awareness raising is the Migra-

tion Office's initiative in the field of the prevention of potential radicalisation and extremism, whether it be the actions of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection or the Slovak nationals' majority. In this regard, the Migration Office cooperates with a number of institutions such as the National Crime Agency.

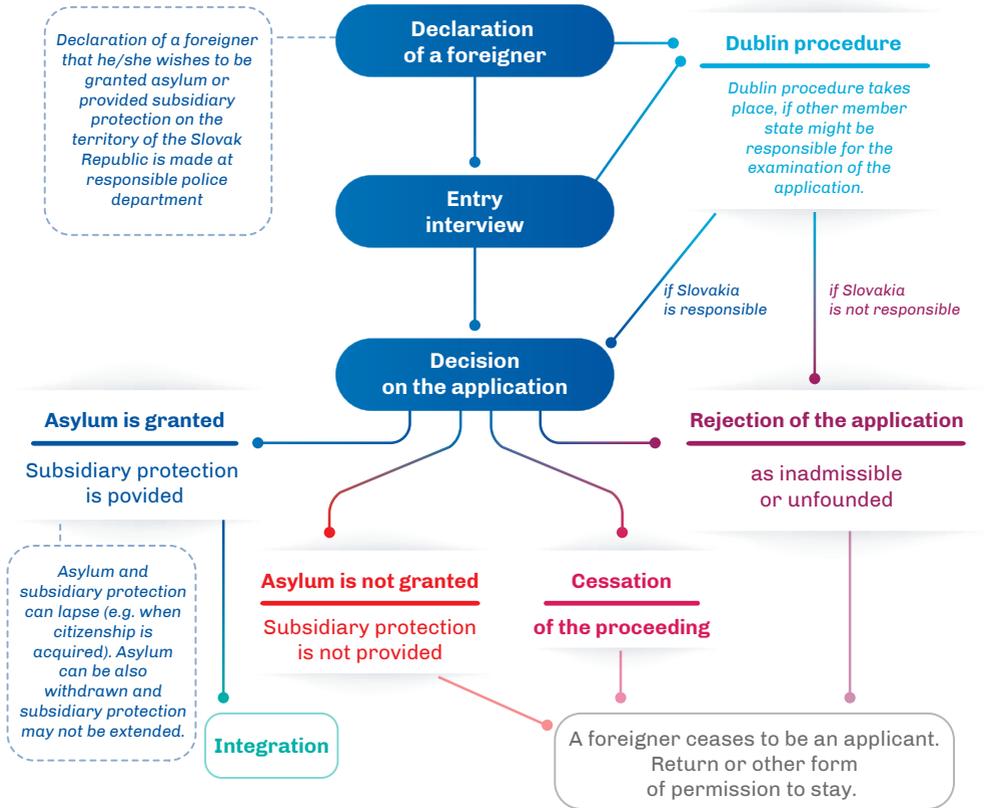
Graph 1. Asylum procedures january 1993 – December 2018



Graph 2. Humanitarian transfer (number of persons)



Scheme 1. Scheme of asylum process



„Dublin procedure takes place, if other member state might be responsible for the examination of the application.“

TIMELINE

OF SELECTED EVENTS

Secretariat of the
Slovak Government's
Commissioner for
Refugees

1991

Adoption of Act No.
283/1995 Coll. on
Refugees
Opening of the
accommodation
centre in Brezova pod
Bradlom

1995

Opening of the
reception centre
in **ROHOVCE**
(transformed into
an accommodation
centre in 2007)

2001

2004

91

92

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02

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04

1993

Establishment of the
MIGRATION OFFICE

Adoption of the **PRINCIPLES
OF MIGRATION POLICY
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

Opening of the reception
centre in **GBELY - ADAMOV**

Providing temporary shelter
to de-facto refugees from
the conflict in the former
Yugoslavia

Preparation and actual
resettling of Slovaks
from the Chernobyl region
(Resolution No. 583/1990
of the Slovak Government)

1996

Adoption of the first
integration concept:

**"COMPREHENSIVE
SOLUTION OF THE
INTEGRATION
OF FOREIGNERS WHO
HAVE BEEN RECOGNISED
AS REFUGEES INTO
SOCIETY"**

2002

New Asylum Act
No. 480/2002
Coll. (effective
from 1. 1. 2003) -
introduction of the
terms "applicant for
asylum and person
who has been
granted asylum"

2

