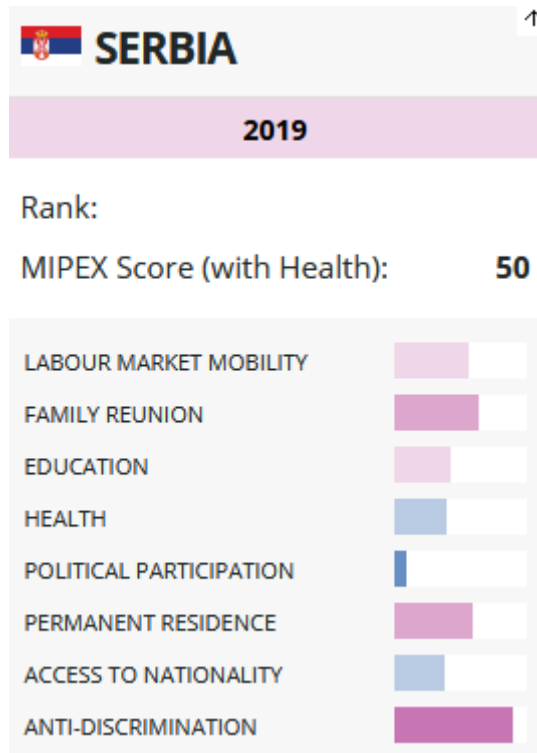




## SERBIA



### Changes in policy

Over the past five years, non-EU workers and families in Serbia have benefitted from several improvements in integration policies in several areas of life, such as in the labour market, family reunification, education and health. Serbia improved by +5 points on MIPEX from 2014 to 2019, following the international reform trends of other MIPEX countries (+2 points on average). In fact, Serbia is the country that improved the most among Western Balkan countries.

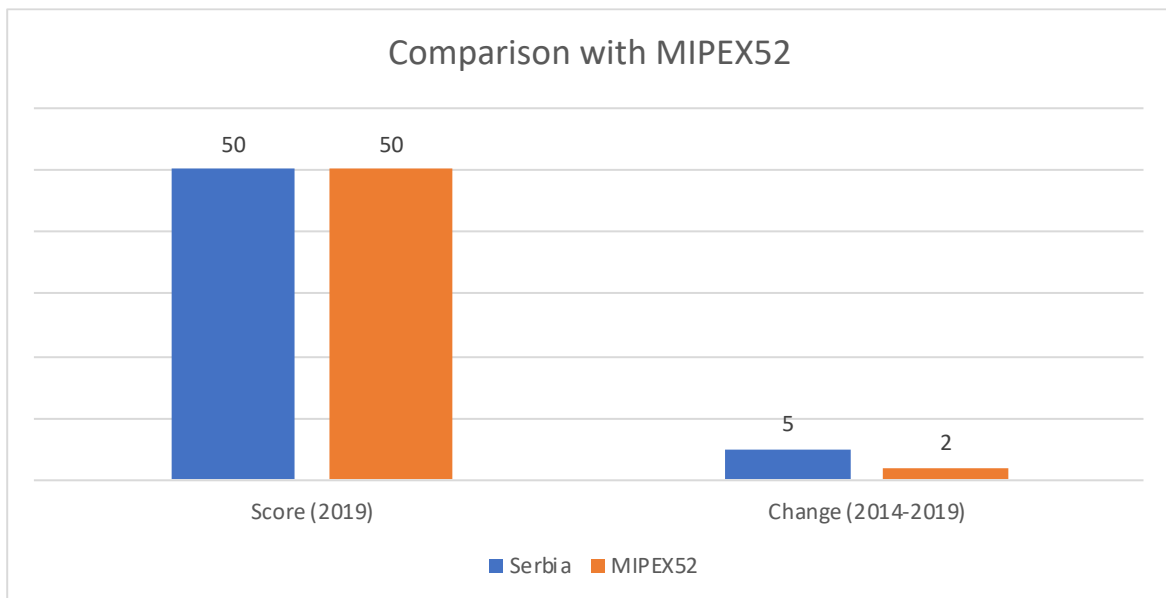
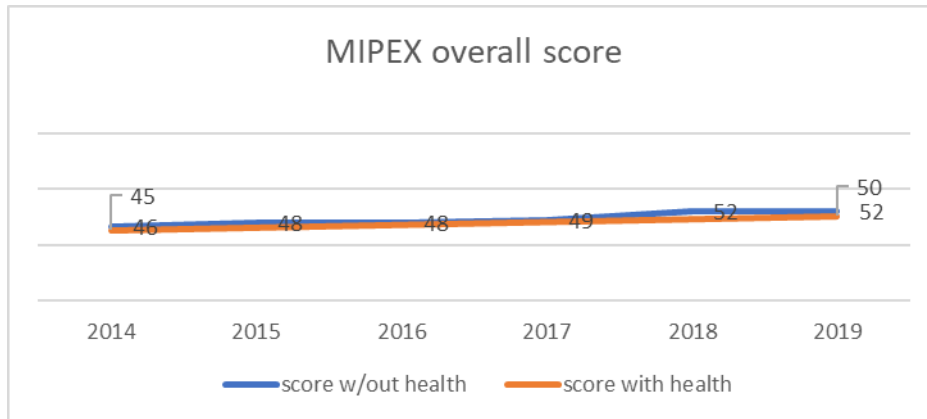
#### Positive changes on MIPEX indicators:

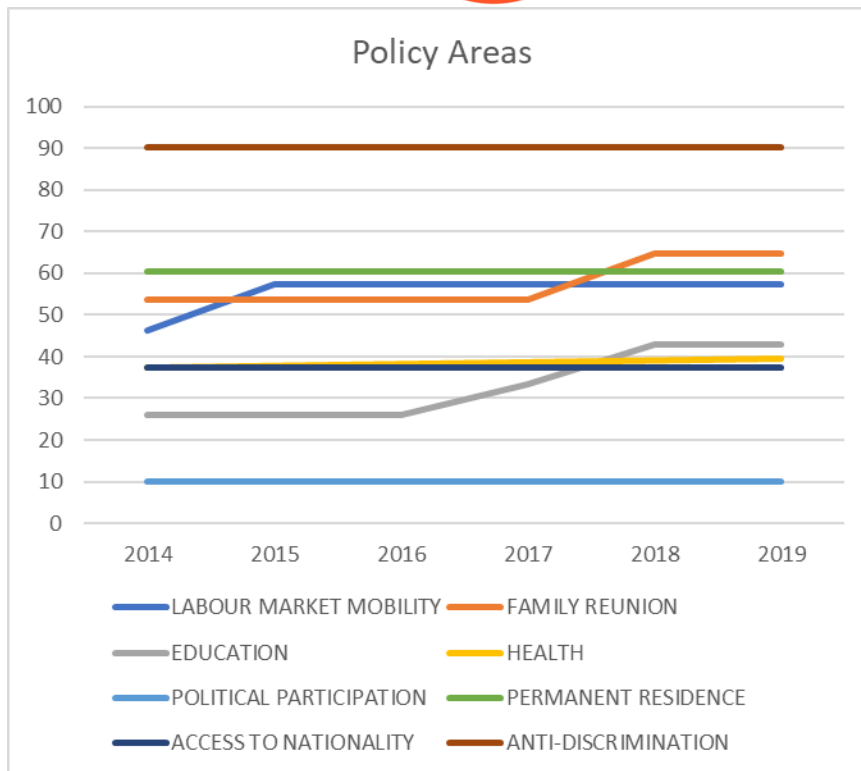
- Recognition of academic qualifications
- Personal circumstances considered before refusal or withdrawal of family reunification permit
- Right to autonomous residence permit for partners and children
- Educational guidance at all level
- Language instruction in education
- Communicative/academic fluency in education
- Language instruction standard in education
- Conditions for inclusion for undocumented migrants in the health system



**Negative changes on MIPEX indicators:**

- None





## Conclusions and recommendations

Non-EU immigrants who can access a legal status in Serbia experience halfway favourable integration policies, typical of the average MIPEX country. Serbia scores 50/100, like the MIPEX average country. This means that immigrants in Serbia encounter as many obstacles as opportunities to integrate. Obstacles seem to emerge in political participation and health, similar to the obstacles in other Western Balkan countries. Obstacles also emerge for immigrants to access Serbian nationality, similar to the problems in Croatia and North Macedonia.

Serbia's approach to integration is classified by MIPEX as 'equality on paper' only. As in the other Western Balkan countries (Albania, Croatia, and North Macedonia), immigrants in Serbia enjoy basic rights and long-term security, but they do not enjoy equal opportunities.

A country's approach to integration matters because policies influence whether or not integration works as a two-way process. The way that governments treat immigrants strongly influences how well immigrants and the public interact and think of each other. Drawing on 130 independent scientific studies using MIPEX, integration policies emerge as one of the strongest factors shaping not only the public's willingness to accept and interact with immigrants, but also immigrants' own attitudes, belonging, participation and even health in their new home country.

Serbia's is a regional leader, as its policies are more developed than in Albania, Croatia and North Macedonia. Serbia's policies seem most similar to policies in neighboring Romania.



- **Labour market mobility:** *Halfway favourable:* Permanent residents and reuniting families enjoy equal access to the labour market, including self-employment. However, these newcomers only receive general and no targeted support to improve their professional skills and career.
- **Family reunification:** *Slightly favourable:* While immigrants can apply for their close relatives, the policy is more discretionary than in most countries, as authorities have several vague grounds for rejection. Reunited families can feel more secure under the new Law on Foreigners (2018), which gave them the opportunity to become autonomous residents after four years.
- **Education:** *Halfway favourable:* Immigrant pupils have the same rights to education as nationals and, since 2017, additional guidance from the Education Ministry has been issued in order to facilitate organization of language support in primary and secondary schools to migrant children (referring to only children- third country nationals from current mixed migration flows). More systematic support could help all pupils learn to live with diversity and specifically help immigrant pupils progress into full academic fluency and higher education.
- **Health:** *Slightly unfavourable:* Migrants' inclusion into the Serbian health system is unconditional for legal immigrants and asylum seekers, but conditional and discretionary for undocumented patients. Immigrants who are accommodated in asylum and reception centers can access basic information and cultural mediators regarding entitlements and use of health services, but health services are generally not prepared to respond to specific information and health needs of migrants.
- **Political participation:** *Unfavourable:* Foreign legal residents are informed from time to time about local opportunities to participate in public life, but they are not consulted, supported or allowed to vote or join political parties.
- **Permanent residence:** *Slightly favourable:* After five years of stay on granted temporary residence (or three years on the grounds of temporary residence for family reunification), migrants who can meet the legal requirements (including economic requirements) can become permanent residents, although practical obstacles may emerge all along the way.
- **Access to nationality:** *Slightly unfavourable:* After eight years, foreign citizens can become Serbian citizens, but they have to renounce their previous nationality, which is a major obstacle to integration. The children born in Serbia from non-Serbian-national parents are only entitled to become Serbian citizens if their parents are stateless or unknown. Serbia has not yet followed international trends on dual nationality for all naturalising adults and citizenship entitlements for children.
- **Anti-discrimination:** *Favourable:* Serbia's area of strength on integration is anti-discrimination. In the legal framework strong laws and enforcement mechanisms have been on force but stronger equality body and policy could help raise discrimination awareness and reporting.



# MIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY INDEX 2020

