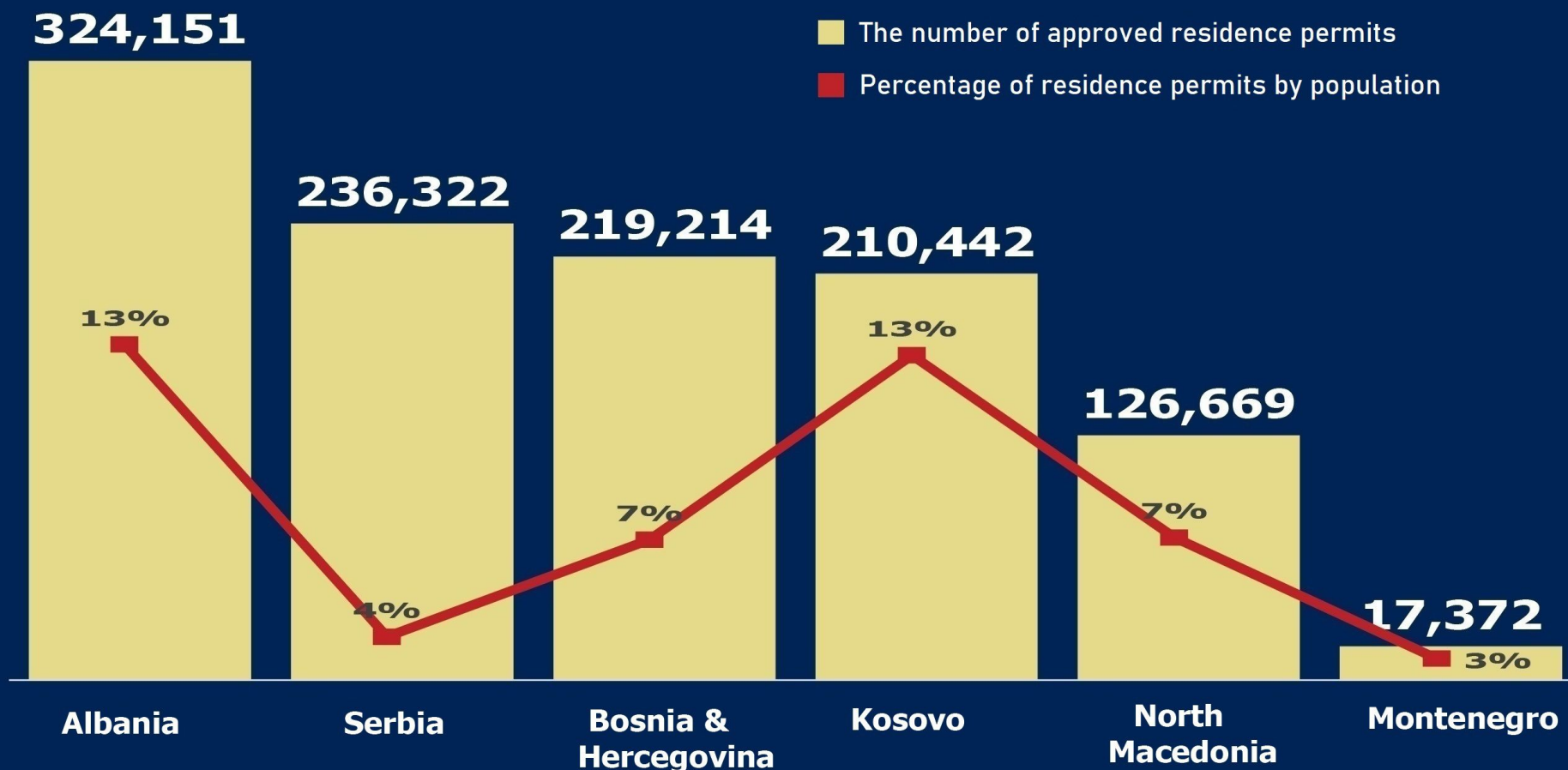


Emigration towards European Union from the Western Balkans 2020 – 2024



According to Eurostat, during 2020–2024, around **1.13 million** people from the Western Balkans received first-time residence permits in the EU. Albania leads with over 324 thousand residence permits, followed by Serbia with about 236 thousand. Albania and Kosovo have the highest emigration flow to the EU, with about 13% of their population receiving first-time residence permits during 2020–2024, while Montenegro has the lowest level with only 3% of its population.

Figure 1. Total first-time residence permits issued by the European Union member states to citizens of the Western Balkans (2020–2024)

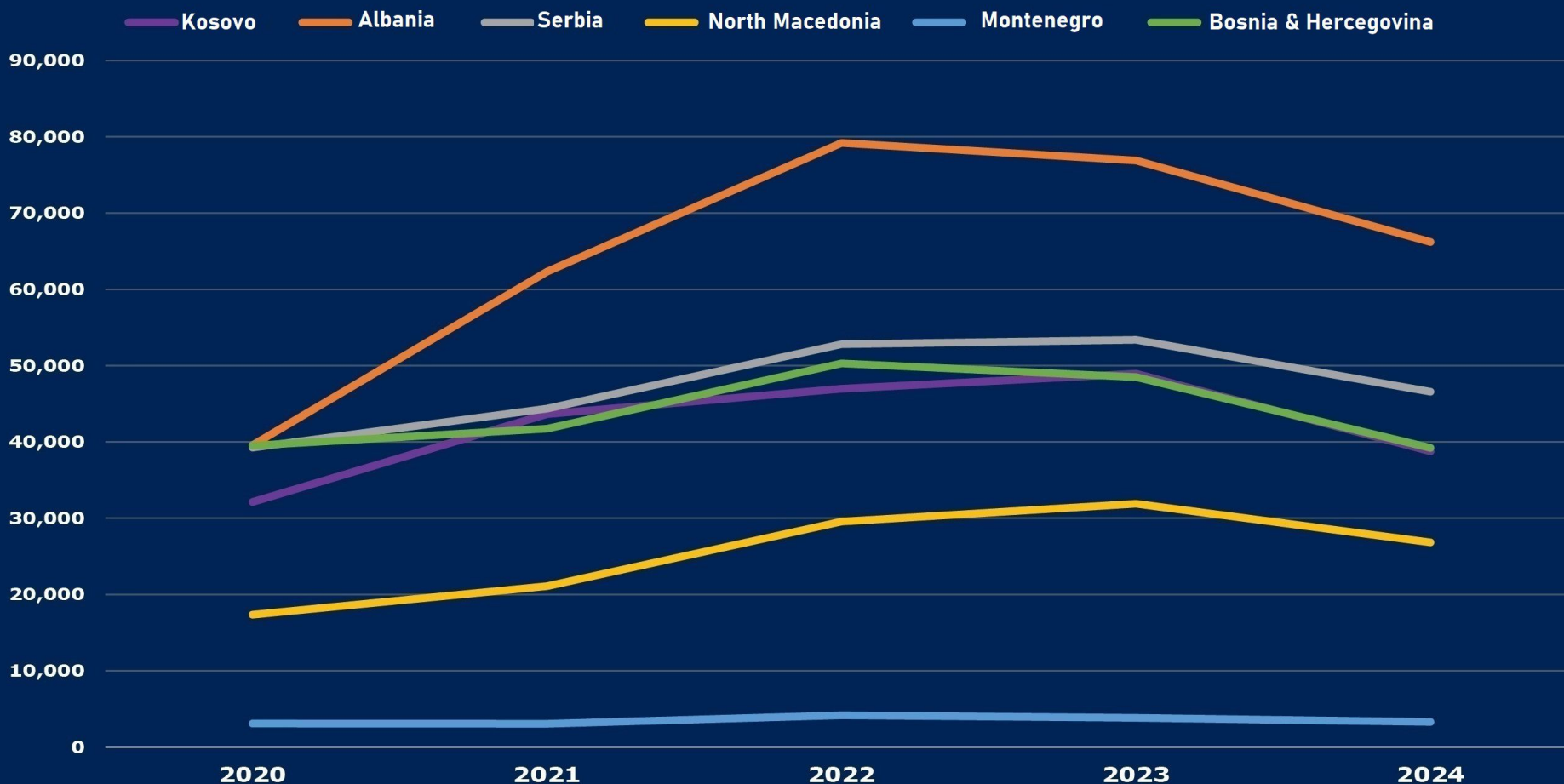


Source: Eurostat

Trend of residence permits issued by the EU (2020–2024)

Residence permits for Western Balkan citizens in the EU increased from 2020 to 2023, but declined in 2024. Kosovo recorded an increase from 32,134 permits in 2020 to 48,937 in 2023, ranking among the countries with the highest number of permits, although still with lower figures than Albania and Serbia.

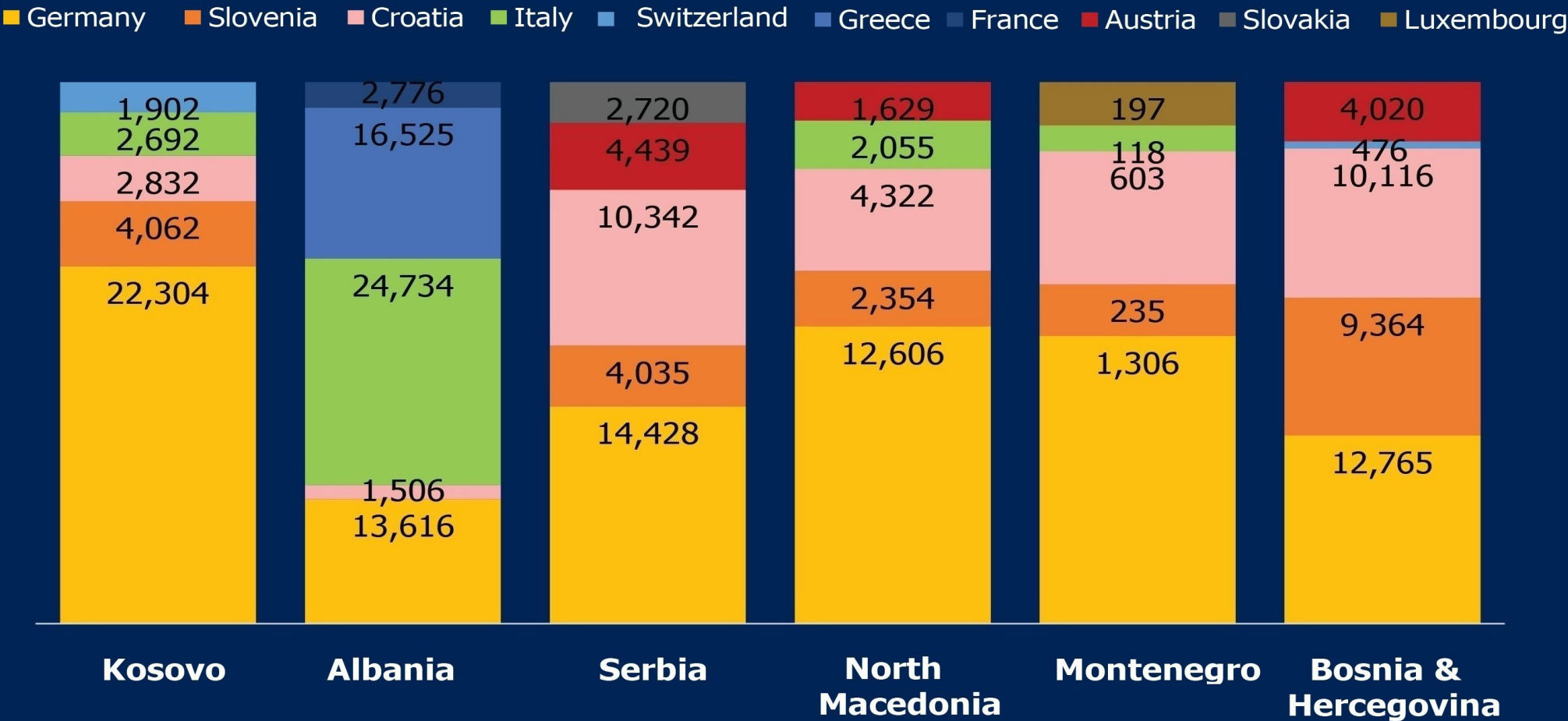
Figure 2. Trend of residence permits issued by EU member states to citizens of the Western Balkans (2020–2024)



Main destinations of emigration from the Western Balkans

In 2024, the main destination of emigrants from Albania was Italy, which accounted for 37% of all residence permits. For all other Western Balkan states, the primary destination was Germany. This country represented 58% of all residence permits issued to citizens of Kosovo, 31% to citizens of Serbia, 37% to citizens of Albania, 40% to citizens of Montenegro, 47% to citizens of North Macedonia, and 33% to citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Figure 3. Top destinations of residence permits issued to Western Balkans citizens in 2024.



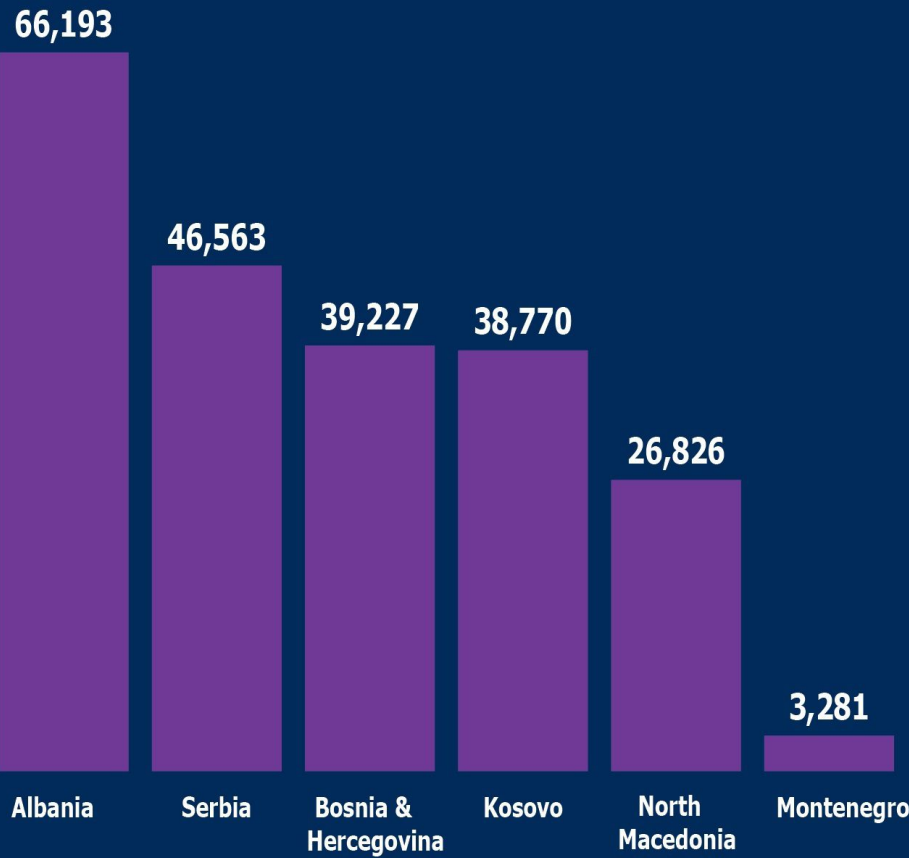
Source: Eurostat

Residence permits issued in 2024 and the reasons of their approval

Based on the number of residence permits issued by EU member states, Albania leads the list (66,193), followed by Serbia (46,563), Bosnia and Herzegovina (39,227), Kosovo (38,770), North Macedonia (26,826), and Montenegro (3,281).

More than half of all residence permits for citizens of Kosovo and Albania, and nearly half for citizens of North Macedonia, were issued for family reunification purpose, compared to Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, where the main reason was employment.

Figure 4. Total first-time residence permits issued by the European Union member states to citizens of the Western Balkans (2024)



Source: Eurostat

Figure 5. Reasons for approval of residence permits by the European Union member states to citizens of the Western Balkans (2024)



Source: Eurostat