

# Latvia

September 2021

**Influx from Belarus:** Latvia saw an increase of irregular arrivals from Belarus and has declared an emergency situation, limiting access to asylum at the border areas.

**Solidarity:** Latvia successfully participated in EU relocation and resettlement efforts, a good practice which hopefully can be developed into a regular Latvian resettlement programme.

**Protection of children:** Latvia grants automatic citizenship to children of parents considered as 'non-citizens' born after 1 January 2020.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN\*

Refugees	<b>667</b>
Asylum-seekers	<b>73</b>
Stateless persons	<b>209,167*</b>
Total population of concern	<b>209,907</b>

\*This number comprises almost entirely of persons that Latvia refers to as "persons with undetermined citizenship".

## TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN\*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Syria	<b>314</b>	Belarus	<b>33</b>
Afghanistan	<b>63</b>	Azerbaijan	<b>5</b>
Russia	<b>58</b>	Georgia	<b>5</b>

\*Data source: UNHCR 2020 Global Trends Report and UNHCR data finder platform

## COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

**Advocacy:** UNHCR liaises with authorities and partners to ensure that persons of concern are included in pandemic prevention and response programmes.

**Inclusion:** Refugees are included in the national response and provided with social support to mitigate their unemployment/income loss. However, there is a lack of contingency plans from governmental and non-governmental sectors. Partners are monitoring the potential impact on vulnerable refugee families and preparing for intervention.

**Communication with Communities:** UNHCR's partners have modified services to ensure assistance remotely. NGOs continue their outreach to refugee communities through various contact lists and groups on social media to provide timely information on COVID-19 in different languages.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### 377 people

had arrived irregularly by 5 September, mostly from Belarus, compared to 23 in 2020. The Latvian government refers to the increase of arrivals as "instrumentalization".

### 1151

persons have been deterred from irregularly entering Latvia (as of 13 September) from Belarus during state of emergency according to Latvian State Border Guard.

## Statelessness

A new law providing for automatic acquisition of citizenship to children of non-citizens born after January 2020, entered into force, entailing that from 2020 no children will be born with non-citizen status in Latvia.

### "I COMPLETELY DECIDED THAT THIS IS MY COUNTRY"



Syrian Aladin, who fled his country to Latvia, discussed identity, home and belonging with Lalita, who fled her home country Latvia during World War II.

## Key Priorities

- **Advocacy:** UNHCR and partners advocate for implementation of EU standards and developments..
- **Protection Sensitive Entry Systems:** UNHCR supports border monitoring activities to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to territory and asylum, and assists with capacitation of border guards so that all asylum requests are identified and referred to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.
- **Detention:** UNHCR advocates for the use of detention as a measure of last resort, promotes alternatives to detention, and encourages to refrain from detention of children.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR works with counterparts to ensure the quality and efficiency of asylum procedures, supports contingency preparedness and dignified reception arrangements with due regard to special needs.
- **Resettlement and Complementary Pathways:** UNHCR is advocating for Latvia to re-engage in resettlement and consider sustainable programmes, including complementary education and employment pathways for refugee admission.
- **Integration:** UNHCR encourages the development of a holistic integration strategy to ensure mainstreaming of services into social assistance programmes and provision of targeted support (language, housing and employment). UNHCR also supports regular public campaigns and awareness raising activities to promote diversity and prevent xenophobia against refugees and migrants.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR works with [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), [the Ministry of the Interior](#), [the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs](#), and [the State Border Guard](#)

are the main governmental bodies responsible for policy/planning on asylum issues, matters related to “non-citizens” and persons with the status of stateless persons. On integration, UNHCR cooperates with [the Ministry of Welfare](#) and [the Ministry of Culture](#). UNHCR collaborates with [the Ombudsman’s Office](#), [Latvian Diversity Charter](#) and [NGOs: Latvian Center for Human Rights, Providus, Patvērums "Drošā māja" - Shelter "Safe House", Latvian Red Cross](#), and [I want to help Refugees](#).

- **External Engagement:** UNHCR is working with partners to raise awareness on asylum and statelessness issues. During key events, such as the World Refugee Day and the annual opinion festival “Lampa”, UNHCR promotes inclusion of refugee voices in national public debates.

## Statelessness

- Latvia is a state party to both Statelessness Conventions and is a strong supporter of the UNHCR’s #Ibelong campaign to End Statelessness. Latvia is on of the twenty-one countries in the world with statelessness determination procedures.
- UNHCR offers support to the Government in their efforts to find solutions to the situation of non-citizens and stateless persons through facilitating naturalization or by other measures.

## UNHCR in Nordic and Baltic Countries

### Staff:

21 National Staff  
 10 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Regional Office in Stockholm  
 1 Liaison Office in Copenhagen  
 1 Liaison Office in Vilnius

## Financial information (28 September 2021)

Information relates to the Representation for the Nordic and Baltic countries, which includes Representation for Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden

### Financial requirements

**USD 4.9 M**

Funding gap  
 43%  
 2.7 M



Funded  
 57%  
 2.8 M

UNHCR is grateful to the donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the 2021 global programmes. Donors of USD 10 million or more are:

[Norway](#) | [Sweden](#) | [Private donors Spain](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [Denmark](#) | [Private donors Korea](#) | [United Kingdom](#) | [Germany](#) | [Private donors Japan](#) | [Japan](#) | [France](#) | [Switzerland](#) | [Private donors Italy](#) | [Private donors Sweden](#) | [Ireland](#) | [Belgium](#) | [Italy](#) | [United States of America](#)