

# Latvia

September 2023

**Assistance to refugees from Ukraine:** Latvia extended the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians facilitating access to rights and services for Ukrainians on an equal basis to Latvian citizens in 2023.

**Belarus-Latvia border:** In September, Latvia closed one of two border crossing points, thereby limiting access to territory, limiting access to asylum and territory.

**Education Reform:** An education reform has been implemented in Latvia, which aims to gradually ensure all children, including refugees have access to learning in Latvian language.

## UNHCR POPULATION STATISTICS (as of mid-2023)\*

Refugees	<b>45,239</b>
Asylum-seekers	<b>375</b>
Stateless people	<b>187,565</b>

### Top three countries of origin\*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Ukraine	<b>43,843</b>	Afghanistan	<b>79</b>
Syrian Arab Republic	<b>323</b>	Russian Federation	<b>72</b>
Russian Federation	<b>307</b>	Syrian Arab Republic	<b>53</b>

\*UNHCR 2023 Mid-Year Trends and UNHCR data finder

## UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION RESPONSE

**Protection monitoring:** To strengthen protection monitoring, UNHCR and its partner carried out 321 interviews with refugees from Ukraine, collecting information about refugee profiles, displacement patterns, urgent needs and access to rights and services.

**Coordination:** In 2023, Latvia joined the **Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP)** for the Ukraine situation along with 14 partners to complement the government's efforts in supporting refugees. Based on identified gaps in assistance, UNHCR and partners advocate for solutions covering **education, accommodation, reception** at external borders and other relevant topics.

**Inclusion:** UNHCR and partners supporting refugees from Ukraine with their socioeconomic inclusion, including through **support groups for women, activities for older people and host communities**, and additional **mentorship assistance**. UNHCR is also facilitating Baltic-Nordic cooperation of municipalities to strengthen local inclusion.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Increased number of asylum applications

So far in 2023, 753 asylum applications were registered, a 100 per cent increase from 2022 (308 applications).

### Latvia-Belarus border

So far in 2023, the State Border Guard prevented 6,800 crossing attempts at the Latvia-Belarus border, while 315 persons were admitted on humanitarian grounds in 2023. In June 2023, UNHCR published its observations in regard to then adopted regulations limiting further access to territory. UNHCR recommended to revisit the adopted regulations.

### Protection services

So far in 2023, 3,900 asylum-seekers and refugees have received protection services, including **integration services, legal support, information provision** and **referrals** through UNHCR partners.



### Two Refugees Share Their Stories at The Lampa Festival

At the annual LAMPA Festival in June, UNHCR facilitated a conversation between Tetiana from Ukraine, and Faruk from Türkiye. The two talked about shared experience in their journeys as refugees, and the obstacles they overcame in rebuilding their lives in Latvia. For more, see [here](#).

## Key Priorities

- **Law and policy:** UNHCR promotes Latvia's compliance with international and European standards relating to international protection for refugees, including in times of emergency.
- **Access to territory:** UNHCR conducts border monitoring activities to ensure asylum-seekers have access to territory and asylum, and assists with developing the capacity of border guards with the objective of proactive identification of asylum-seekers, and their efficient referral to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. In 2023, UNHCR published observations recommending to the government to revise legislation to ensure protection against refoulement.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR works with national counterparts to ensure the quality and efficiency of asylum procedures, contingency preparedness and dignified reception arrangements with due regard to living standards and special needs.
- **Detention:** UNHCR advocates for alternatives to detention for refugees and asylum-seekers, and encourages the authorities to refrain from detention of children.
- **Inclusion:** UNHCR through its partner provides inclusion support to asylum-seekers through regular municipality visits, support groups on employment, social support and other activities.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR maintains close cooperation with national authorities to ensure a favourable protection space, which has allowed for fruitful engagement when addressing key priorities affecting displaced persons.

- **External engagement:** UNHCR and partners participate in the annual Conversation festival LAMPA to raise public awareness of the plight of refugees, while sharing their stories and achievements, and inform on UNHCR's activities globally.
- UNHCR, together with the Latvian Football Federation, launched a football team comprising of refugees from Ukraine, which participated in the UNITY EURO CUP tournament in Germany in June to raise awareness about sports being an integral part of refugee integration into society.

## Statelessness

- Latvia has acceded to both the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions on Statelessness, and is a strong supporter of UNHCR's [#Ibelong campaign](#) to end statelessness.
- There are currently two groups of concern to UNHCR, namely: "non-citizens" and stateless persons. While "non-citizens" in Latvia are entitled to rights beyond those minimum prescribed by the 1954 Convention, they have a certain and limited access to employment and political rights. UNHCR continues to follow any developments concerning the situation of groups of concern to UNHCR.

## UNHCR Presence in Nordic & Baltic Countries

### Staff:

18 National Staff  
 15 International Staff  
 2 Affiliate Work Force

### Offices:

1 Regional Office in Stockholm  
 1 Office in Vilnius, Lithuania  
 1 Office in Riga, Latvia  
 1 Office in Tallinn, Estonia

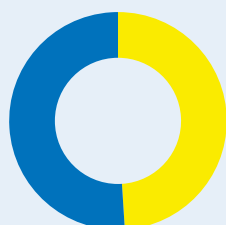
## Financial information (September 2023)\*

\*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

**\$ 14 M**

**Funding gap 51%**  
**\$ 7.2 M**



**Funded 49%**  
**\$ 6.8 M**

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