



On 11 August, UNHCR participated in the Arvamus Festival, an annual event held in Paide, Estonia, aimed at enriching the culture of debate within the country. © Mondo/ Mari Jõgiste

## Operational context

Since 24 February 2022, Estonia has received a high number of refugees from Ukraine, amounting to more than 3 per cent of Estonia’s population. From the outset of the war in Ukraine, the Estonian Government and civil society have responded with steadfast solidarity towards refugees from Ukraine, including by providing access to employment and public services. Challenges facing refugees from Ukraine include access to affordable accommodation, access to decent work, and access to medical support.

As of 2023, Estonia is included in [the Ukraine Regional Refugee Response Plan \(RRP\)](#), complementing the government-led response. The plan is coordinated by UNHCR and has been developed by 14 humanitarian organizations in Estonia.

Following the increase in refugee and migrant arrivals via Belarus to Lithuania, Latvia and Poland in 2021, Estonia has adopted amendments to the State Border Act which allow for denial of access to the asylum procedure in situations of mass influx.

## KEY FIGURES

- 49,970 applications for temporary protection lodged by refugees from Ukraine since February 2022\*
- 3,565 individuals granted asylum or subsidiary protection in 2023
- 3,426 asylum applications lodged in 2023
- 64,297 stateless persons

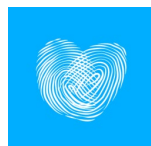
\*Renewal of permits is ongoing and may result in changes of figures.

## Working with partners

UNHCR [works closely with partners](#) to provide protection and support to refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people in Estonia and advocate for their inclusion.



Mondo



Estonian Human Rights Centre /  
*Eesti Inimõiguste Keskus*



Estonian Refugee Council

## Highlights of UNHCR's and partners' activities



### COUNSELLING SERVICES

- UNHCR and partners provided information and legal counselling to newly arrived asylum-seekers and refugees about asylum procedures, access to temporary protection and access to rights and services to facilitate their inclusion and integration. As of the third quarter, 394 individuals had been assisted with in-person legal counselling by UNHCR and partners. In total, 107 children benefitted from child protection services.



### PROTECTION MONITORING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- As of the third quarter of 2023, some 4,538 individuals had been reached through outreach activities through UNHCR and partners, the majority through the Estonian Refugee Council. This figure also includes those reached through UNHCR and partner Mondo: a total of 315 refugees and asylum-seekers and 930 host community members participated in workshops at schools, focusing on two-way communication between local and refugee youth.
- As of the end of September, UNHCR and partners had conducted a total of 235 protection monitoring visits in 2023 at various locations including Tallinn, Pärnu, Jõhvi, Kohtla-Järve and Narva.
- In mid-September, a protection monitoring exercise was commenced and combined with a light Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment. By the end of September, 359 interviews had been completed by IOM and the Estonian Refugee Council, covering nine out of fifteen counties. The exercise ran through 15 October and will provide input for the development of the 2024 Refugee Response Plan.
- By the end of the third quarter, 3,293 refugees had taken part in community events organized by UNHCR and partners throughout Estonia. Among others, refugees participated in language cafés, music and yoga workshops for women, as well as various visits for families to local theatres, farms and museums.
- To date in 2023, with the aim of raising awareness about refugees from Ukraine in Estonia, 40 communication interventions and/or content pieces have been produced promoting a positive narrative about refugees and their active role in society.



### TRAININGS AND CONFERENCES

- UNHCR participated in the *Arvamusfestival*, an annual democracy festival, on 11 August 2023. This year, UNHCR hosted a discussion, 'Refugees in Estonia Before and After the Full-Scale War in Ukraine: What Has Changed?', facilitating a dialogue between the local community and refugees. The discussion featured two panellists: Tahsin, an engineer from Türkiye, and Behnam, a film director from Iran. A short overview of the event has been published on the UNHCR Representation for the Nordic and Baltic Countries' democracy [festivals page](#).
- By July, UNHCR and partners had provided training for 24 staff members of the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB), focusing on vulnerable persons in the context of forced migration.



### COORDINATION

- An introductory mission of the new UNHCR Representative to Estonia took place in August. Both the Representative and Deputy Representative visited Tallinn and met with key government counterparts and civil society partners. During this visit, UNHCR signed a bilateral agreement of cooperation with the Police and Border Guard Board, who issued a [press release](#) on the signing.
- UNHCR organized inter-agency coordination meetings with participation of representatives from NGOs, UN agencies and relevant line ministries. The participants shared information on their activities and discussed existing challenges and needs of refugees from Ukraine. Meetings were also utilized as an opportunity to continue preparations for the Refugee Response Plan 2024 (RRP) process.