



UNHCR and partners continue to organize events across Latvia. © UNHCR/Takashi Mori

## Operational context

Since 24 February 2022, Latvia has received a high number of refugees from Ukraine, amounting to approximately 2 per cent of Latvia’s population. From the outset of the war in Ukraine, the Latvian Government and civil society have responded with steadfast solidarity towards refugees from Ukraine, including by facilitating access to rights and services on equal footing with Latvian citizens. Challenges facing refugees from Ukraine include access to long-term accommodation, psychosocial assistance and Latvian language courses.

As of 2023, Latvia 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 organisations in Latvia.

Following the increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving via Belarus in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland in 2021, Latvia introduced a state of emergency, limiting access to asylum for those trying to reach Latvia irregularly through Belarus. In June 2023, Latvia adopted new legislation, formalizing this approach which UNHCR is concerned will effectively authorize pushbacks.

## Working with partners

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

### KEY FIGURES

- 49,467 applications for temporary protection lodged by refugees from Ukraine since February 2022. \* Officially estimated presence: 32,313
- 1,536 asylum applications lodged as of November 2023
- 187,564 stateless persons and “non-citizens” in Latvia as of January 2023.\*\*

\*Renewal of permits is ongoing and may result in changes of figures.  
\*\* With respect to persons under UNHCR’s statelessness mandate, this figure includes persons of concern covered by two separate Latvian laws. 160 persons fall under the Republic of Latvia’s Law on Stateless Persons on 17 February 2004. 187,404 of the persons fall under Latvia’s 25 April 1995 Law on the Status of those Former USSR Citizens who are not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other State (“Non-citizens”). In the specific context of Latvia, the “Non-citizens” enjoy the right to reside in Latvia ex lege and a set of rights and obligations generally beyond the rights prescribed by the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, including protection from removal, and as such the “Non-citizens” may currently be considered persons to whom the Convention does not apply in accordance



**Gribu Palīdzēt  
Bēgļiem / I Want  
to Help Refugees**

LATVIJAS  
CILVEKTIESĪBU  
CENTRS  
LATVIAN  
CENTRE FOR HUMAN  
RIGHTS



**Latvian  
Centre for  
Human  
Rights**



**Drošā Māja /  
Shelter Safe House**

## Highlights of UNHCR's and partners' activities



### COUNSELLING SERVICES

- UNHCR and partners provided support, information and legal counselling to newly arrived asylum-seekers and refugees regarding asylum procedures, access to temporary protection, and access to rights and services, amongst other issues. So far in 2023, 3,814 refugees and asylum-seekers have been assisted by partner "I want to help refugees" (GPB) through its Information Centre in Riga and other outreach activities in border areas and municipalities. The main questions related to Latvian language courses, filling out documents, social support, transportation services, and medical assistance. NGO partner "Latvian Centre for Human Rights" (LCHR) provided counselling to 126 individuals during the third quarter. UNHCR partner "Shelter Safe House" (SSH) provided legal counselling to 95 individuals. Countrywide, SSH in 2023 has provided MHPSS services to 52 individuals.



### MONITORING VISITS

- UNHCR partner GPB organized a visit to Limbaži municipality, where 49 refugees from Ukraine are currently staying in an accommodation centre. Discussions revolved among other things around accommodation.
- In the month of September, NGO partner GPB and UNHCR embarked upon a Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) and completed 136 interviews with refugees from Ukraine by the end of the third quarter. The aim is to complete 400 interviews in the fourth quarter. Of the individuals interviewed, some 80 per cent are employed or have business. About half of the refugees live in accommodation they themselves rent while 23 per cent are staying in a hotel or collective accommodation. When asked about the most urgent needs, 26 per cent of Ukrainians participating in the interviews responded that employment was the most urgent of needs.
- During the month of August, GPB and UNHCR conducted 68 protection monitoring interviews. Among the participants, 24 per cent are unemployed and they shared the lack of knowledge of local language as one of the main reasons of unemployment.



### TRAININGS & CONFERENCE

- In August, GPB organized a discussion event in Riga for refugees from Ukraine on education. During the event, practical information regarding the education system and available support was shared. The speakers at the event were from the Ministry of Education and Science and related institutions. Around 50 refugee children and youth from Ukraine, including their parents, participated in the event, in addition to Ukrainian coordinators at municipal level from municipalities such as Kekava and Ventspils.



### INTEGRATION AND COMMUNICATION

- UNHCR launched a [video](#) and [web story](#) about Latvia's participation in the UNITY EURO Cup. The video features three players from Ukraine who all took part. The video was also shared on UNHCR's global YouTube channel and Latvian Football Association published the video on their website.
- A video about the LAMPA festival was finalized and published on UNHCR's website, both in [Latvian language](#) and [English language](#), and also placed on social media. During the LAMPA Opinion Festival, which took place on 9-10 June, UNHCR showed a film from Za'atari refugee camp and hosted a [conversation between two refugees in Latvia](#), from Ukraine and Türkiye respectively, who shared their experiences of arriving and re-building their lives in Latvia.
- UNHCR participated in a seminar for legal professionals called 'Theoretical and Practical Issues in The Provision of Legal Aid in the Field of Asylum' organized by UNHCR's partner the Latvian Centre for Human Rights. UNHCR participated with a presentation on access to territory and asylum and in the discussion

afterwards. The seminar was held at Daugavpils and was attended by 28 people, half of whom were legal professionals while the rest were members from different organizations including the State Border Guards as well as NGOs.

- UNHCR participated in a discussion in Riga about the 'Reception of Ukrainian Civilians in Latvia' organized by UNHCR's partner GPB. The event was attended by more than 40 individuals from 12 municipalities, eight state institutions, four NGOs, and IOM.
- GPB organized an event for elderly Ukrainian refugees and elderly Latvian locals at a community garden in cooperation with the Riga Active Seniors' Alliance. In total, 13 persons participated, including 10 refugees from Ukraine. Participants played games and listened to a lecture on the history of Riga that was given by a local guide. GPB also organized an excursion for 20 elderly people, including 19 refugees from Ukraine, to pick mushrooms in the forest in Riga.



## **COORDINATION**

- UNHCR organized monthly inter-agency coordination meetings in Latvia with participation of representatives from NGOs, UN agencies and the relevant line ministries. The participants shared information on their activities and discussed existing challenges and needs of refugees from Ukraine. At the latest meeting, the participants also discussed current trends related to formal and non-formal education for refugees from Ukraine. In September, a Latvia Refugee Response Plan 2024 planning briefing took place, with emphasis on key priorities, findings from protection monitoring.