



Led by UNHCR's partner Mondo, young refugees from Ukraine and Estonian youth visited the Rural Urban Art street art festival and took part in creative workshops to create street art together. © Mondo/ Mari Jõgiste

Operational context

Since 24 February 2022, Estonia has received a high number of refugees from Ukraine, amounting to more than 3% 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 organisations 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.

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.

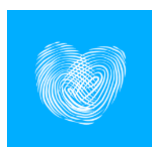
KEY FIGURES

- **46,631** applications for temporary protection lodged by refugees from Ukraine since February 2022*
- **1,082** individuals granted asylum or subsidiary protection in Q2 2023
- **1,042** asylum applications lodged in Q2 2023
- **68,111** stateless persons

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



Mondo



Estonian Human Rights Centre



Estonian Refugee Council

Highlights of UNHCR's and partners' activities



COUNSELLING SERVICES

- UNHCR and partners provided information and legal counselling to new arrivals and refugees about asylum procedures, access to temporary protection and access to rights and services to facilitate their inclusion and integration. In the second quarter, 71 individuals were assisted with in-person legal counselling by UNHCR and partners, and 238 were assisted with counselling through email or phone.



PROTECTION MONITORING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- UNHCR and partners reached 95 refugees and asylum-seekers and 814 host community members through workshops at schools, focusing on two-way communication between local and refugee youth. The students engaged with virtual reality films and games that explore issues related to forced displacement, and they took part in activities focusing on the contribution of refugees to the culture of host societies.
- From April to June, 1,324 refugees took part in community events organized by UNHCR and partners throughout Estonia. Among other, refugees participated in language cafés, music and yoga workshops for women, as well as various visits for families to local theatres, farms and museums.
- UNHCR has visited Pärnu, Haapsalu, Rakvere and Tallinn municipalities and met with refugees from Ukraine, civil society organizations – including refugee-led organizations – and municipal representatives. While housing is a challenge in some municipalities, employment and education are challenges in other municipalities. Overall, UNHCR observed that the response towards refugees from Ukraine has been mainstreamed into general municipal programmes through additional coordination, referral, human resources and inclusion initiatives which go beyond existing social services.



TRAININGS AND CONFERENCES

- On 1-2 June, the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, in cooperation with IOM, WHO and UNHCR, organized the first ever conference and workshop on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Crises. Participants included the First Lady of Estonia, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Social Protection as well as around 100 specialists from government and civil society. The Estonian response to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine was highlighted as a particular success, especially the contingency planning, use of international approaches and inclusion of faith-based organizations in the response. The conference will be followed by a WHO global simulation exercise on MHPSS in crises, taking place in Estonia in September 2023.
- On 23 May, UNHCR and partners provided training for staff members of the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB), focusing on vulnerable persons in forced migration.
- On 4 May, UNHCR provided training for detention centre staff, focusing on the basics of international protection and standards and guidelines regarding detention of asylum-seekers, with a special focus on vulnerable persons.



COORDINATION

- UNHCR organized inter-agency coordination meetings in Estonia in April and May 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. The meetings focused on mental health and psychosocial support services, refugees with specific needs, and the situation in the education sector.
- On 14 June, UNHCR and RRP partners provided a briefing for selected embassies located in Estonia. Here the partners gave an overview of the situation for refugees from Ukraine in Estonia.