Operational update
ESTONIA
1 October – 31 December 2024

In 2024, UNHCR partners in Estonia RLO Ukrainians in Haapsalu and RLO Ukrainian Centre in Pärnu made meaningful progress in helping refugee inclusion Estonian society. ©Ukrainians in Haapsalu.

Operational context

Since 24 February 2022, Estonia has received a high number of refugees from Ukraine. From the outset of the war, the Government of Estonia and civil society have responded with steadfast solidarity towards refugees from Ukraine, including by providing access to employment and public services. However, according to a protection monitoring survey carried out by UNHCR, challenges refugees from Ukraine face include access to documentation, access to work, and access to healthcare.

Since 2023, Estonia has been included in the Ukraine Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP), complementing the government-led response. In 2024, a new plan was launched, coordinated by UNHCR and developed in collaboration with 14 other humanitarian organizations.

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

- **56,747** applications for temporary protection lodged by refugees from Ukraine since February 2022*
- **218** individuals granted asylum or subsidiary protection in Q4
- **285** asylum applications lodged in Q4
- **62,216** stateless persons

**Renewal of permits is ongoing and may result in changes of figures. The current figure has been determined as 32,867 but is subject to constant fluctuations.*

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's partner, the Estonian Human Rights Centre (EHRC), assisted 77 individuals with legal counselling, including 36 people from Ukraine in the final quarter of 2024. In totality in 2024, 344 people received full counselling sessions. UNHCR and partners provided legal counselling and information for asylum-seekers and refugees regarding asylum procedures, access to temporary protection, and access to rights and services to aid their inclusion and integration.

PROTECTION MONITORING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- In the fourth quarter of 2024, UNHCR partner Estonian Refugee Council (ERC) reached 680 individuals through outreach activities, making a 2024 total of 2,631, including 2,547 Ukrainians. Added to this, Mondo reached over 700 individuals: 103 refugees and 598 members of the host community. In 2024, ERC identified and referred for services 95 persons from Ukraine with specific needs.
- In 2024, ERC conducted 85 protection monitoring visits with 31 in the last quarter alone, while EHRC carried out 26 in the course of 2024, including visits to Tallinn Airport and the Port of Tallinn. Refugees raised concerns over the uncertainty of their legal status and availability of material assistance. On the other hand, access to education for children and integration activities, as well as Estonian language courses, are viewed positively.
- Advocacy, capacity-building, and specialized services are undertaken by UNHCR and partners to ensure that protection of children is strengthened and services to meet their specific needs are improved. In 2024, UNHCR's partner Mondo organized training on working with children with trauma for 134 female teachers both from Ukraine and the host community, and provided Estonian language courses for 40 teachers from Ukraine to facilitate their participation in the labour market. In December, Mondo conducted an online training for teachers on how to work effectively with refugee children. UNHCR participated with a presentation about what teachers should know and discuss with children about refugee topics, introducing the mandate of UNHCR, global trends and the situation in Estonia. The training also demonstrated good practices on teaching about refugee matters by a youth worker of *Pärnu Ühisgümnaasium*, a refugee from Syria and Mondo.

EVENTS

- In October, UNHCR carried out several one-day training sessions on how to address issues of sexual misconduct for NGO partners. There were in total 53 participants from eight different organizations, including UNHCR's NGO and RRP partners in Estonia.
- UNHCR participated in an introductory conference on the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The event featured presentations about the EU Pact by the European Commission Representation in Tallinn and the Ministry of the Interior, a panel discussion with UNHCR, and open thematic discussions. Around 500 people attended the event in-person or online. Questions from the audience regarding the implementation of the Pact focused on coordination, financing, realistic implementation dates, border procedures, misuse of migration, legal counselling and assistance, as well as potential influx of high numbers of refugees.

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- In October, the inter-agency unit finalized the submission process for the 2025-2026 Refugee Response Plan (RRP), a multisectoral mechanism that coordinates partner activities and drives funding. Partners submitted their planned projects, budgets, and target population numbers for both years.