Estonia

January – June 2023

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 suitable accommodation, access to decent work, and access to medical support and language training. UNHCR works closely with implementing and Refugee Response Plan (RRP) partners to provide protection and support to refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people in Estonia and advocate for their inclusion. As of 2023, Estonia is included in the Ukraine RRP, complementing the government-led response.

The plan is coordinated by UNHCR and has been developed by 14 humanitarian organisations in Estonia. The RRP outlines the multi-partner and multi-sector response strategy and financial requirements of UNHCR and 14 partners helping refugees from Ukraine. It provides all actors with a common plan and financial appeal for each organization. This operational update provides an overview of RRP partner activities to date.

KEY FIGURES*

5,949,500
Individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe (as of 11 July)

46,815
Applications for temporary protection from Ukrainian citizens recorded in Estonia (as of 8 July)

5,190
Asylum applications for international protection recorded in Estonia (as of 8 July)

8,498
Ukrainian citizens registered in the state education system in Estonia (as of 2 June)

2023 REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN (RRP) FOR THE UKRAINE SITUATION**

USD 1.69 B
Overall financial requirements

10%
Overall percent funded

USD 9.1 M
Estonia financial requirements

11 %
Estonia percent funded

14
Partners involved in the Estonia response

*See the **Operational Data Portal for the Ukraine Refugee Situation** for more details on refugee population figures and information resources. **See the **Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan** for a breakdown of sectoral response priorities and requirements and the **Refugee Funding Tracker** for RRP funding information.

Operational context

Since 24 February 2022, more than 5.9 million people from Ukraine have sought refuge across Europe. As of 08 July 2023, Estonia had received 46,815 applications for temporary protection by Ukrainian citizens, which enables access to healthcare, education, and the labour market. Estonia has also received 5,190 asylum applications for international protection by Ukrainians, which are currently being processed. As of 2 June 2023, 8,498 Ukrainian citizens were registered in the state education system including primary, secondary and VET or language courses.

In June 2023, the inter-agency coordination platform, led by UNHCR, liaised with the 14 humanitarian partners of the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) on their funding situation and its impact on programming. The current funding situation indicates that more than half of the appealing partners need to adjust their activities due to funding gaps; with local NGOs being severely affected. The sectors most affected are basic needs, protection and livelihood and economic inclusion. The 2023 RRP requires US$9,135M for activities in Estonia, of which 11 per cent are funded as of quarter 2.

In June UNHCR commenced a new protection profiling and monitoring exercise with the aim of better understanding the needs of the refugees, many who have now stayed over a year in Estonia. Over 100 interviews with refugees from Ukraine (covering around 300 persons) have been conducted by UNHCR and the partner organisation Estonian Refugee Council. Results of the survey will be published in October.

IOM has published the results of its most recent DTM intentions survey covering April to May. 485 interviews were completed in 4 counties of Estonia. Key findings include that 90% of respondents do not intend to move, 2% intend to move to place of origin in Ukraine, 1% to another country (Germany, Finland, Spain, and Lithuania). 36% were employed, 30% unemployed and looking for work, 3% unemployed and not looking for work, 8% retired. Top needs included employment (27%), health services (23%), financial support (22%), documentation and registration (11%). Main areas of assistance received included free transportation (83%), food items (67%), financial support (57%), long-term accommodation (31%). Inclusion challenges were employment (27%), language barriers (23%), housing (18%) and recognition of professional skills and diplomas (7%).

Spotlight on: Institute of Baltic Studies Policy Research

The Institute of Baltic Studies (IBS) is a policy research think-tank which conducts research to influence integration and migration policies in Estonia. In the first half of 2023 IBS have conducted several studies which include:

- Study of Estonian language learning among groups living in restricted environments, one of which was Temporary Protection holders. Based on the results of the study, the main language learning opportunity provider – Integration Foundation can implement needed changes to make the language learning opportunities more accessible and suitable for Ukrainian refugees.
- Analysis of counselling services for applicants for international protection and returnees, where the current and functioning counselling service provided by the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB) was studied to make practical suggestions and recommendations for improving the service and international protection and return procedures.
- Central Baltic Mentoring for Migrant Women seeking Employment (CeMeWe) – a two-year project where women with migration background are supported in the process entering the labour market process. IBS will develop a series of educational videos.
- Final evaluation of the ESF measures for adaptation and integration – assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the measure(s) implemented under ESF funds.
- European Website on Integration – providing research information and best practices related to the Estonian migration field, including information on Ukrainian refugees.
- Study of the use of Cohesion Policy funds in Estonia for the European Parliament to see how they have been used in Estonia in relation to refugee support, and what opportunities for flexibility of the funds may be possible.

Sectoral Achievements

Protection

Achievements and Impact

During the reporting period, counselling, legal assistance, guidance on procedures and practices in Estonia and emotional support services have been provided to Ukrainian and other refugees seeking assistance and information. A strong focus on the provision of information; child protection issues; and support services for victims of gender-based violence remains key.

- The Estonian Refugee Council provides individual and group counselling to refugees in Estonia. Individual counselling is provided daily in Tallinn and through phone, Viber, Telegram, e-mail, and other digital channels. Group counselling sessions are provided on topics of particular interest, such as Estonian digital services, housing, legal issues, and employment.
- MTU Eluliin has opened a phone line to provide emotional support to Ukrainian refugees which is staffed by 40 Ukrainian speaking volunteers.
- The Estonian Human Rights Centre (EHRC) offers legal assistance to refugees as well as advocacy and court interventions as needed. EHRC has successfully represented asylum applicants in two strategic litigation cases in recent months, including about access to territory and international as well as temporary protection.
- EHRC has also created short explanatory videos providing guidance on what steps an individual needs to take when applying for asylum in Estonia and how the EHRC can assist them throughout the process. The videos are available in English with subtitles in English, Russian, Ukrainian, and Estonian.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Partners have identified a continued need for information about the general organization of health and social services, including about the organization of medical care, finding a family doctor, and access to a doctor.

Child Protection

Achievements and Impact

- The Estonian Union of Child Welfare (EUCW) has delivered training for child protection officers and has held seminars and other awareness raising activities.
- IOM has provided cultural adaptation sessions for youth and has been training child protection officers of municipalities together with Tallinn University and Mondo.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- EUCW identifies a need for more guidance and support for refugee parents from Ukraine regarding a variety of issues, including how the child protection system works, questions about guardianship / custody, and

awareness-raising about the rules of child-rearing in Estonia, such as positive parenting. For children, materials about losing parents may also be needed.

Gender-Based Violence

Achievements and Impact

- NGO Eluliin recruited one refugee from Ukraine as an outreach worker to work at grassroots level and is planning to add three more Ukrainian specialists. Their work involves outreach to sex workers and offering support and information around GBV and human trafficking.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Partners identify that many refugees from Ukraine have limited knowledge about assistance and services for survivors of GBV and some are not registered for temporary protection. Partners have also identified cases of violence at home, psycho-traumas of losing a loved one, cross-generational violence and domestic violence.

Education

Achievements and Impact

RRP partners have supported schools, students, and teachers to better understand the needs of the refugees and the education system in Estonia. As a result, the collaboration between refugees and their host has increased, although more funding and addition awareness and language learning opportunities are needed to ensure successful integration of Ukrainian students and teacher.

- The Estonian Refugee Council is currently developing an updated methodology for supporting schools which have taken in a large number of children with refugee or migrant backgrounds. Additional funding will be needed to cover the costs of piloting this programme in autumn. ERC has continued its work targeting kindergartens with already-developed approaches.
- Mondo has been organizing workshops and meetings between students and refugees in Estonian schools to support the awareness of Estonian youth on forced migration. Ukrainian refugee students have participated in interactive methods like virtual reality workshops. They have also been able to participate in joint an activities. With Estonians, which is particularly beneficial for Ukrainian youth who otherwise have limited contact with Estonian youth. Estonian educational workers have improved their understanding of refugee matters because of the trainings and seminars.
- Ukrainian refugee teachers in Estonia have participated in the Mondo Ukraine Academy training program to gain a deeper understanding of the Estonian education system. As a result, Ukrainian refugee teachers have become more active in organizing events at their schools such as global education days.
- 161 Ukrainian children from 3 schools in Tallinn attended focused adaptation courses, designed to enhance the settling experience for children. The courses are developed by IOM in collaboration with the Social

Insurance Board, the Estonian government agency responsible for implementing social security and welfare legislation.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There is a need for additional training for Ukrainian refugee teachers to improve their opportunities in the Estonian education system. The teachers have particularly requested further Estonian language trainings.
- Mondo has established a cooperation with the program of art therapy at Tallinn University for the provision of art therapy for refugees. Art therapy has the potential to improve the psychosocial well-being of refugees and can help refugees process their trauma and express their emotions in a safe and supportive environment. Mondo has identified that refugee youth as well as educational workers, who could apply the technique with their students, would benefit from learning art therapy methods.

Health and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

The focus in the health sector has been on mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS), with strong involvement on the national authorities, WHO, IOM and UNHCR. While a national coordination structure is now up and running, given the trauma experienced by the displaced additional capacity needs remain.

- The first ever national MHPSS conference under the patronage of Sirje Karis, First Lady of Estonia took place in Tallinn on 1st of June followed by multiple workshops on 2nd of June. It was organized in collaboration with Ministry of Social Affairs, WHO country office in Estonia, WHO regional office for Europe, WHO headquarters, IOM and UNHCR. The conference received more than 120 in-person participants on day 1 and more than 85 in-person participants on day 2.
- WHO organized a seminar in February in Tallinn about the MHPSS component in responding to crises and contingency planning. The seminar was attended by 30 staff and experts who are or will be playing a role in the organization and delivery of MHPSS services in different types of crises and emergencies, including the Ukraine refugee response. The seminar utilized a participatory approach to present and analyze the Inter-Agency Standing Committee MHPSS intervention pyramid.
- Multiple in-person and online meetings have taken place between WHO and the mental health department of the Ministry of Social affairs to set up and plan the MHPSS national coordination. The first meeting of the MHPSS coordination group was held on 15th of June.
- IOM provided assistance to 45 particularly vulnerable beneficiaries to improve their state of health and accessibility of medical services and medicines (dental care, purchase of medicines, rehabilitation).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The need to have more capacity building events (trainings, workshops, seminars) related to MHPSS still remains and was further highlighted by the MHPSS mapping that WHO and the Ministry of Social Affairs conducted in 2022-2023.

- During the MHPSS conference panel discussion and later during the workshops it was also highlighted that culture exchange events with MHPSS component could be organized. These were not planned during the writing of the 2023 RRP but could be planned.

Basic Needs

Achievements and Impact

Basic needs, such as food packages and renovation and transportation assistance continue to be covered by RRP partners. While the number of people transiting Estonia has decreased, support needs remain for those remaining in Estonia.

- Since January 2023, IOM Estonia has provided transit support to 358 refugees from Ukraine (171 male/ 187 female) travelling through Estonia to other European countries, including temporary accommodation provision (286 beneficiaries), pre-travel screening and movement support (245 beneficiaries).
- 16 food banks continue to provide food packages every week to on average 1600 Ukrainian families (4000 Ukrainian people). Three quarters of the food is donated by producers, supermarkets, and private people and one quarter of the food is purchased.
- Hands for Ukraine have completed renovation works on 3 of 7 apartments provided by the Tallinn City Government to accommodate refugees from Ukraine.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The basic needs sector has remained underfunded despite the growing needs related to rising prices and housing shortages.
- Partners identified that needs for supporting refugees transiting Estonia have decreased due to low numbers of refugees transiting in recent months.

Livelihoods and Socio-Economic Inclusion

Achievements and Impact

According to a recent report, Estonia has the highest employment rate of refugees from Ukraine among the countries analyzed, thanks in part to less language barriers than in other countries. The RRP partners are capitalizing on this through entrepreneur programmes, cultural adaptation, and on-the-job language training. Further attention to this area, including language training, is nevertheless needed to assist refugees to fully integrate.

- The Estonian Refugee Council is planning to conduct another cycle of its entrepreneurship programme targeting refugees in Estonia in the autumn of 2023. The program assists refugees with creating refugee-led

micro-businesses and this year will feature a new component which supports refugees looking to enter the labour market.

- Köömen has conducted a training program for a group of Ukrainian refugees through which they completed 6 months' work experience, on the job Estonian language study and job culture adaptation counseling. Many of the participants have now found employment in Estonia after the program.
- 1,308 adults have received cultural adaptation courses delivered by IOM trainers under an AMIF-funded project. 21 vulnerable Ukrainian refugees (single mothers and pensioners) participated in focused adaptation courses on specific topics such as digital social services, e-identity, and its affiliations (mobile-ID, smart-ID), and working in Estonia: rights and obligations of both employees and employers.
- IOM Estonia has also supported volunteer centers and refugee aid organizations (in the form of food and NFI, hygiene products, child nutrition, etc.): a total of 14 organizations have been supported with more than 500 beneficiaries reached.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- A joint report by Eurofound and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights was published on 14 June 2023 which analyzed barriers to employment of displaced Ukrainians in Estonia. The report noted that Estonia has the highest employment rate of refugees from Ukraine among the countries analyzed. This can be explained by the fact that most Ukrainians are bilingual, speaking also Russian, which is widely used in the Baltic States, facilitating their labor market access. The report also recommended drawing attention to gender differences, mental health support and working conditions, including the fact that refugees tend to be employed in short-term low-skilled jobs.

Image: A Syrian refugee teaching her cuisine and culture to local Estonians with RRP partner Köömen

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There is a remaining need for language learning opportunities both for adults and children. The Institute of Baltic Studies estimates that the number of available language courses does not correspond to the language learning demand. Language learning opportunities are especially limited outside of big Estonian cities and on the islands.
- There is also a need for the activities involving interaction of Estonian population and Ukrainian refugees to assist the integration of the newcomers and address social barriers and migration-related biases.
- IOM plans to continue delivering activities in Estonia that support livelihoods, social cohesion and inclusion and access to services for Ukrainian refugee children and adults into society - from both the refugee's and

from the perspective of the host society. IOM has identified a growing need to deliver focused adaptation courses regionally in Estonia with specific requests from local cities and municipalities hosting Ukrainian refugees on various topics including employment regulations, summer jobs for children, digital social services etc. IOM also plan to deliver specific summer camps enhancing opportunities for Ukrainian children with their Estonian peers.

Cross-Cutting Priorities

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

- The Estonian Refugee Council has started with its MindSpring program which helps refugees to cope with trauma and adaptation challenges. ERC aims to reach at least 180 people with group-based mental health support in 2023.
- IOM has delivered seven psychosocial support sessions for 154 child protection specialists, social workers, and teachers working with Ukrainian refugees across Estonia. These have been held in close collaboration with researchers and scholars from the Tallinn University.
- IOM will continue to deliver specific psychosocial support sessions for first responders across Estonia, including to experts from the Police and Border Guard Board.
- An MHPSS crisis coordination group has been established by the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs, Department of Mental Health. Members include representatives of governmental institutions Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, Social Insurance Board, Health Board, Rescue Board, international organizations IOM, WHO, UNHCR and civil society organizations, including Estonian Red Cross, Estonian Refugee Council and Ukrainian War Refugees Psychosocial Crisis Assistance Fund. The coordination group will liaise with the RRP coordination mechanism on MHPSS issues.

Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities

- The Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities has offered individual counselling for refugees to be able to acquire the needed assistance from the complex social protection system. Counselling focuses on disability status and employment capacity issues.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Support groups and information seminars for people with disabilities which were planned by the Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities have not begun due to lack of funding received through the RRP appeal.

Working in partnership

- On 22 February 2023, the Ukraine Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) was launched in Estonia. The RRP outlines the multi-partner and multi-sector response strategy and financial requirements of UNHCR and 14 partners helping refugees from Ukraine, complementing the government-led response. It provides all actors with a common plan and budget in support of government-led coordination. Meetings between the RRP partners are held on a monthly basis.
- On 14 June 2023 a RRP strategic partners briefing was held at the residence of the British Ambassador to Estonia in Tallinn. The briefing provided a space for RRP partner organisation to meet with embassy partners and present updates on achievements of their programmes and highlight ongoing needs and gaps in refugee support in Estonia.

Partners

Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities | Estonian Food Bank | Estonian Human Rights Centre | Estonian Refugee Council | Estonian Union for Child Welfare | Hands for Ukraine | Institute of Baltic Studies | International House Tartu | IOM Estonia | Johannes Mihkelson Centre | Köömen | Mariupoli Sõbrad MTÜ

Image: RRP strategic partners briefing, Residence of the British Ambassador to Estonia, 14 June 2023.

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LINKS

Regional data portal – Ukraine Situation RRP – Refugee Funding Tracker