

## Operational update LITHUANIA

1 October – 31 December 2024



On 5 December, UNHCR opened the art exhibition of refugee artists "Art as Refuge" in Vilnius with Artscape as part to UNHCR funded mentorship project activity. ©Artscape.

### Operational context

Since the outset of the war in Ukraine in early 2022, the Lithuanian Government and civil society have responded with steadfast solidarity towards refugees from Ukraine, including by providing access to employment and all public services. While immediate access to employment, education, and availability of mainstream social benefits and services have created favourable conditions for integration of refugees from Ukraine, factors such as lack of local language skills, de-skilling in workplaces, the breakdown of family units and uncertainties about the length of stay, may hinder integration into local society.

Since 2023, Lithuania has been included in the Ukraine Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP), complementing the government-led response. 2024 saw a new [plan](#), coordinated by UNHCR and developed in collaboration with 18 humanitarian organizations in Lithuania. Following the increase in refugee and migrant arrivals via Belarus to Lithuania in 2021, Lithuania introduced temporary measures limiting access to asylum. In April 2023, the adopted amendments to the State Border Law further reinforced the restrictions at the border. UNHCR is concerned that the law may authorize pushbacks and lead to individuals not being granted effective access to territory and the right to seek asylum.

### Working with partners

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

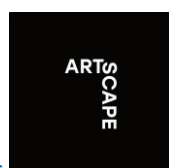
### KEY FIGURES

- Around **90,000** applications for temporary protection by refugees from Ukraine since February 2022.
- Current estimated presence: **45,000** individuals.\*
- **117** individuals granted refugee status in 2024.
- **297** asylum applications lodged by end of 2024.
- **2,283** stateless persons in Lithuania as of 1 January 2024

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



Lithuanian Red Cross



Artscape Ref



Refugee  
Council of Lithuania

## Highlights of UNHCR's and partners' activities



### COUNSELLING SERVICES

- In the course of 2024, UNHCR and partner the Lithuanian Red Cross (LRC) reached a total of 1,102 refugees, asylum-seekers, and those newly arrived in country with legal consultations. Consultations are carried out both at reception and detention centres and outside centres and included 341 Ukrainians.



### PROTECTION MONITORING

- In 2024, LRC conducted a total of 52 protection monitoring visits, often to multiple locations and targeting facilities such as refugee reception and foreigners' registration centres.
- In October, UNHCR visited a collective accommodation site for Ukrainians in Vilkija, that houses 103 individuals, including 35 children. Refugees said that they felt safe and well-informed. Discussions also revolved around limited and seasonal job opportunities available locally, with access to larger cities considered challenging. UNHCR further visited two care institutions for unaccompanied and separated Ukrainian children in Pastogė and Vija. In December, UNHCR visited Šeimos slėnis, a complex-service centre where 26 foster children from Ukraine, aged from 2 to 9, are accommodated.
- In November, UNHCR organized a focus group discussion with refugees from Belarus. Refugees reported encountering difficulties during their integration, such as complications with having their diplomas recognized, inconsistent quality of integration support across different NGOs implementing the state integration program, and lack of clear and reliable information regarding their rights and access to services.



### INTEGRATION AND OUTREACH

- LRC supports the integration and inclusion of refugees, among others through social counselling, guidance, referrals and information provision. In 2024, 3,078 individuals, including 2,647 Ukrainians, were assisted through such activities. Outreach activities were organized by UNHCR's partners, LRC and Artscape. In 2024, LRC engaged 6,784 participants, including 5,531 refugees from Ukraine; Artscape reached a total of 237 people, including 172 Ukrainians, mostly through its art therapeutic 'creative missions' as well as through its mentors' programme.



### EVENTS

- UNHCR contributed to the October 2024 annual human rights film festival in Lithuania, the *Inconvenient Film Festival*, where the documentary film *Forest* was premiered in Kaunas and Vilnius. In both cities, the screening was followed by a discussion with participants from Poland and UNHCR Lithuania about the border response, the importance of support and impact of the pushback laws and restrictive policies on lives.
- On 5 December, UNHCR opened the [art exhibition of refugee artists "Art as Refuge"](#) in Vilnius with Artscape as part of the UNHCR funded mentorship project.



### COORDINATION

- In October, UNHCR presented the initial findings of the **Socio-Economic Insights Survey** (SEIS) to representatives from various municipalities during an online event organized by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and attended by 120 participants. The presentation focused on topics such as enrolment in Lithuanian educational institutions, acquisition of the Lithuanian language, and promoting social cohesion among communities, while emphasizing the importance of local integration activities. In November, excerpts from the SEIS results were presented at a conference on psychosocial services (MHPSS) organized by Ukreate.