UNHCR supports local NGO Mondo to run the Mondo Ukrainian Academy in Tallinn – an initiative that enables Ukrainian teachers and pupils to thrive in the Estonian education system. © Mondo/Henno Luts

Operational context

Since 24 February 2022, Estonia has received a high number of refugees from Ukraine, amounting to more than 3 per cent of Estonia's population. From the outset of the war in Ukraine, 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. Challenges facing refugees from Ukraine include access to employment commensurate with their level of education, lack of education opportunities beyond ninth grade, access to medical support including for mental health, and a shortage of language courses.

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 organizations 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.

KEY FIGURES

- **50,654** applications for temporary protection lodged by refugees from Ukraine since February 2022*
- **4,238** individuals granted asylum or subsidiary protection in 2023
- **3,984** asylum applications lodged in 2023
- **64,297** stateless persons

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

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

- Throughout the course of 2023, UNHCR and partners regularly provided information and legal counselling to asylum-seekers and refugees regarding asylum procedures, access to temporary protection and access to rights and services to aid their inclusion and integration. By the end of 2023, UNHCR's partner, the Estonian Human Rights Centre (EHRC), had assisted 510 individuals with in-person legal counselling.

PROTECTION MONITORING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- By the end of 2023, a total of 5,266 individuals had been reached through outreach activities via UNHCR and partners, the majority courtesy of the Estonian Refugee Council (ERC). This figure also includes those reached through UNHCR and Mondo: a total of 355 refugees and asylum-seekers and 1,765 host-community members participated in workshops at schools, focusing on two-way communication between local and refugee communities.
- By the end of the year, UNHCR and partners - predominantly ERC - had conducted a total of 315 protection monitoring interviews at various locations including Tallinn, Pärnu, Jõhvi, Kohtla-Järve and Narva.
- By mid-October, data collection for the multi-sectoral needs assessment was concluded, with 565 interviews having been carried out by local partners ERC (196 interviews), and IOM Estonia (369 interviews). The number of interviews conducted exceeded the initial target by more than double. A validation of the preliminary results was organized for the RRP partners in December. UNHCR presented the collected data on demographics, protection, including status, social tensions, child protection, accountability for affected people (AAP), education, social economic inclusion and livelihood, health, accommodation, and partners participated in discussions on interpretation of the results for the final report. The exercise provided input for the development of the 2024 RRP.
- In 2023, with the aim of raising awareness about refugees from Ukraine in Estonia, through Mondo 69 communication interventions and/or content pieces were produced promoting a positive narrative about refugees and their active role in society.

TRAININGS AND CONFERENCES

- A Baltic Partners Strategic Meeting between UNHCR and partners in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania took place in Tallinn in early October. Over the two days, participants shared insights into their current projects and plans for 2024, evaluated the sector-planning parameters for the 2024 RRP while ensuring compatibility with local context, and identifying areas for improvement. The meeting provided a platform for partner organizations to share insights and experience, collaborate on future strategies, and enhance coordination for more effective approach to regional challenges.
- Over two consecutive days in October, UNHCR co-organized two regional events on integration topics under the framework of the joint FOR-IN project with the Nordic Council of Ministers and other partners. On the first day, a Pan-Baltic Exchange Seminar took place in Tallinn, to discuss future formats of Pan-Baltic cooperation of integration actors, as well as to exchange experiences and good practices regarding reception and integration of refugees in the Baltic countries. The next day, the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia, the University of Tartu, Tartu Welcome Centre, UNHCR, and the Embassy of Sweden in Tallinn held an international conference 'Integration through Education and Engagement of Local Actors'. The conference reached around 150 participants.
- A two-day integration conference 'From Security to Solidarity: Challenges of Integration in the Times of Crisis' was organized by the Ministry of Culture and the Integration Foundation in mid-November. During the

conference UNHCR launched the UNHCR-Migration Policy Group (MPG) toolkit for local practitioners, recently translated and published into Estonian. This was a hybrid event with a live broadcast. The event was attended by relevant ministries, municipalities, NGOs, CSOs, association of local governments, universities, think tanks, and other relevant integration actors.

- In mid-November, a training took place on the Stress and Trauma Handbook (materials are accessible online at Mondo's site), organized by Mondo and carried out by a specialist trainer from MTÜ Traumateadlik Eesti (NGO Trauma-aware Estonia). Nine people whose jobs are related to children and/or Ukrainians attended.

COORDINATION

- Partner submissions for the 2024 RRP closed on 20 October with a total of 14 partners for Estonia having submitted their proposed projects and budgets for activities aimed at supporting refugees. The total appeal for Baltic countries in 2024 will amount to $35,722,486, including $10,589,248 for Estonia.
- In late November, the Inter-Agency team held two virtual training sessions on resource mobilization, conducted by UNHCR. About forty individuals joined these sessions to learn more about the fundraising cycle and donor management.