Operational update
ESTONIA
1 April – 30 June 2024

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, workshops in arts, crafts and cooking were organized in Tallinn. ©UNHCR

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. 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.

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 by 14 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

- **53,378** applications for temporary protection lodged by refugees from Ukraine since February 2022*
- **341** individuals granted asylum or subsidiary protection in Q2
- **335** asylum applications lodged in Q2
- **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 103 individuals with legal counselling, including 57 people from Ukraine in the second quarter of 2024. UNHCR and partners routinely provide 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

- Through the second quarter, by the end of June, UNHCR partner Estonian Refugee Council (ERC) reached a total of 850 individuals through outreach activities. ERC identified and referred for services 22 persons with specific needs, all of whom were from Ukraine.
- In the second quarter of 2024, ERC conducted 24 protection monitoring visits, while EHRC carried out eight, including one in June to the Tallinn detention centre in the village of Soodevahe, where both migrants and asylum-seekers are detained. UNHCR monitors the overall conditions in this centre and based on its findings, makes recommendations to the centre's management.
- UNHCR's partner Mondo organized art therapy workshops for 88 Ukrainian children (55 girls, 33 boys). UNHCR and partners engage in advocacy, capacity-building and specialized services in order to ensure that protection of children is strengthened and services to meet their specific needs are improved.

EVENTS

- World Refugee Day (WRD) celebrations were held in Tartu and Tallinn. The activities in Tartu were organized by the International Women's Network in Estonia, and included a human library with participants from Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Ukraine, as well as workshops, and a dance class. The WRD event in Tallinn was organized by ERC, Mondo and IZUM youth club, offering workshops on arts, crafts and cooking. Refugees had the opportunity to sell their food and crafts, and organizations such as ERC and the Tallinn Central Library were present to introduce their services. UNHCR presented information about the global refugee situation and the local response.

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- In April, the UNHCR Inter-Agency team conducted a workshop with RRP partners, refugee-led organizations, and representatives from several government ministries. The workshop provided agencies with the opportunity to discuss and suggest additional questions to include in the Socio-Economic Insights Survey 'SEIS' data collection. Data collection in Estonia was extended until mid-July, with interviews being conducted throughout the country by IOM and ERC.
- An inter-agency discussion on the prevention of gender-based violence and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse took place in May. The objective of the meeting was for partners to consider joint actions focused on raising awareness, reporting mechanisms, referral pathways and capacity development activities to prevent and response to GBV and PSEA in Estonia.
- An inter-agency meeting with partners was held in June, where UNHCR provided a progress update on the Refugee Response Plan for Ukraine. ERC also provided a summary of the most recent refugee coordination meetings, where topics such as TP renewal, non-recognition of documents from occupied areas, and AMIF funding were discussed.