

Lithuania

February 2022

A large, unprecedented increase in the number of **asylum-seekers and migrants** arriving via Belarus in 2021 overwhelmed Lithuania's reception and asylum systems.

In response to the emergency, **legislative changes** were adopted restricting access to asylum, expanding the use of detention, limiting asylum-seekers' rights and impacting procedural safeguards.

Following **advocacy** interventions by UNHCR, **conditions at the reception centres** gradually improved, though concerns about accommodation conditions remain.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

Refugees	1,880
Asylum-seekers	455
Stateless persons	2,721
Total population of concern	5,056

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Russian Federation	688	Iraq	198
Syrian Arab Republic	463	Belarus	107
Afghanistan	230	Russian Federation	43

*Data source: UNHCR 2021 Mid-Year Statistical Report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

HIGHLIGHTS

Global Refugee Forum pledges

During the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021, Lithuania reported on implementation of its pledges in the areas of reception and integration made at the 2019 GRF. Establishment of the Refugee Council, a refugee-led organization in Lithuania, was also highlighted.

NGO cooperation in action

Under the Lithuanian Red Cross' leadership and coordination, NGOs successfully contributed to the 2021 emergency response, providing essential humanitarian aid and services to asylum-seekers and migrants.

Reception in focus

Lithuania has improved reception conditions for asylum-seekers and migrants, moving them from tents, unsuitable facilities and border units to reception facilities with better access to rights and services, although serious concerns remain regarding the detention-like conditions.

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Advocacy: UNHCR regularly monitors developments and is in contact with authorities and partners to ensure that persons of concern are included and mainstreamed in pandemic prevention and response programmes.

Inclusion: Asylum-seekers and refugees are included in the national vaccination programme and eligible for free COVID-19 vaccination through mobile teams or medical services. They are vaccinated upon request, including revaccination, however, there is still hesitancy among them towards vaccination.

Communication with Communities: Posters/leaflets are available at reception centres in various languages. WHO supported NGO partners present at sites with the information material to conduct health and vaccine promotion.

UNHCR STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION AT LITHUANIA'S BORDER WITH BELARUS



[Read](#) the press statement from UNHCR's Representation for the Nordic and Baltic Countries on the situation at the border, Lithuania's response, and continued concerns about legislative actions and accommodation conditions.

Key Priorities

- **Protection monitoring:** UNHCR and partners closely monitor the protection situation of refugees and asylum-seekers at borders and at reception facilities, coordinating with relevant stakeholders, and providing technical advice as necessary on all refugee protection matters and adherence to the 1951 Convention.
- **Access to territory:** UNHCR advocates for changes to the current legislation and works to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to territory, including in times of emergency.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR monitors asylum procedures and advocates for fair asylum processing and procedural safeguards.
- **Solutions:** UNHCR supports Lithuania's comprehensive approach to integration and further capacitates national and local authorities to provide support for refugees. UNHCR promotes local-level integration and labour market inclusion. UNHCR also works with partners to improve regulations and remove practical obstacles related to family reunification.
- **Community empowerment and self-reliance:** UNHCR supports refugee-led organization Refugee Council to become a voice for refugees in Lithuania.
- **Capacity-building:** UNHCR supports capacity-building activities for newly recruited asylum decision-makers, staff of the appeal instance and legal service providers.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR works with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support asylum, integration, and statelessness legal and policy development. UNHCR

works with the Migration Department and the State Border Guard Service to ensure access to the territory, asylum procedures and adequate reception conditions. With the Lithuanian Red Cross, Caritas Vilnius, Artscape, Diversity Development Group, Diversity Charter, Refugee Council and WHO and IOM, UNHCR is helping the Government to address emergency-related challenges and to foster local integration of refugees in Lithuania.

- **External engagement:** UNHCR is working with partners to raise awareness on asylum. During key events and other relevant occasions, UNHCR promotes the inclusion of refugee voices in national public debates.

Statelessness

- Lithuania is party to the Statelessness Conventions and UNHCR promotes the establishment of a statelessness determination procedure.
- Stateless persons in Lithuania predominantly have long-term (permanent) residence permits and enjoy access to a wide range of rights.
- Through its dedicated efforts, Lithuania has reduced the number of stateless persons to 2,721 and has implemented 2 out of 3 pledges made at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness.
- UNHCR's legal partner the Lithuanian Red Cross provides counselling and advice to stateless persons on procedures for acquiring citizenship.

UNHCR in Nordic and Baltic Countries

Staff:

21 National Staff
11 International Staff

Offices:

1 Regional Office in Stockholm
1 Liaison Office in Vilnius
1 Liaison Unit in Copenhagen
1 Liaison person in Riga

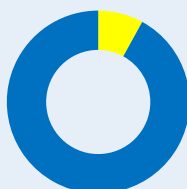
Financial information (22 February 2022)

Information relates to the Representation for the Nordic and Baltic countries, which includes Representation for Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden

Financial requirements

USD 5.6 M

Funding gap
92%
5.2 M



Funded
8%
0.4 M

UNHCR is grateful to the donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the 2022 global programmes. Donors of USD 10 million or more are:

Sweden | Norway | Netherlands | Denmark | Germany | Switzerland | Belgium | Ireland

Unearmarked contributions provide UNHCR with vital flexibility in determining how best to protect and assist persons of concern who are in the greatest need or at the greatest risk.