

Estonia

February 2021

Refugee Protection: Estonia is signatory to refugee and human rights treaties and hosts a small refugee community which it is helping to successfully integrate into the society.

European Solidarity: Estonia successfully participated in EU relocation and resettlement efforts, a good practice which hopefully can be developed into a regular Estonian resettlement program.

Global Engagement: Estonia is UNHCR's largest donor in the Baltics and contributes to finding solutions for the causes of displacement, including as member of the UN Security Council

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees	296
Asylum-seekers	18
Stateless people	74,288*

* This indicates almost entirely persons Estonia is referring to as "persons with undetermined citizenship".

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Syria	104	Russian Federation	6
Ukraine	45	Tajikistan	5
Russian Federation	31	Turkey	5

Data source: UNHCR 2020 Mid-Year Statistical report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

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

Inclusion: Refugees in Estonia are included in [the national response](#) and provided with social support and other measures to mitigate their unemployment/income loss. Asylum-seekers and refugees living in the collective reception centre have been prioritized for vaccination and the majority have already been vaccinated.

Communication with Communities: UNHCR's legal partner Estonian Human Rights Centre has modified its legal aid to ensure assistance remotely. Other NGO partners also continue their outreach to refugee communities through various contact lists and groups on social media to provide timely information on COVID-19 in different languages.

HIGHLIGHTS



71%

of refugees in Estonia feel in control of their own situation, demonstrating high self-reliance (recent UNHCR survey).



49%

of asylum applicants to Estonia in 2020 are women and children.



Digital identity expertise

As a part of Global Refugee Forum pledge, Estonia seconded a digital identity expert to UNHCR's Global Data Service.



Statelessness

Almost all people recorded as stateless have permanent residence and enjoy more rights than foreseen in the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.



Corona causes anxiety – also for refugees

The global COVID-19 pandemic also leaves its mark on the lives of refugees living in Estonia. UNHCR examines how refugees living in Estonia are coping with the corona crisis. Read more [here](#).

Key Priorities

- **Advocacy:** UNHCR and Estonian partners advocate for EU legal and policy developments, and implementation of EU standards in accordance with international obligations.
- **Protection Sensitive Entry Systems:** UNHCR promotes the development of an independent border monitoring mechanism, works to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to the territory and asylum, and helps with capacitation of border guards on refugee law and related practice.
- **Detention:** UNHCR promotes alternatives to detention in migration context and encourages to refrain from detention of children.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR is helps to improve the quality of asylum procedure with a focus on refugee status determination, access to and quality of state legal aid and the identification of vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees.
- **Resettlement and Complementary Pathways:** UNHCR is advocating for Estonia to re-engage in resettlement and consider complementary pathways in higher education.
- **Integration:** UNHCR is working with government counterparts and partners to support Estonia's comprehensive approach to integration and to further capacitate national and local authorities in providing support for refugees. UNHCR also promotes local level integration by encouraging Estonian cities' accession to the Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme and labour market inclusion by working with employers engaged with the Estonian Diversity Charter. UNHCR is also working with partners to improve regulations and remove practical obstacles related to family reunification.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR is working with [Ministry of the Interior](#), [Ministry of Culture](#), [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) and [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) to support asylum and statelessness legal and policy development, and with

[Police and Border Guard Board](#) to ensure the quality of asylum procedures, further reinforced by the partner [Estonian Human Rights Centre](#) with advocacy and legal interventions. With governmental counterparts such as the [Social Insurance Board](#), NGOs like [Estonian Refugee Council](#) and local authorities, UNHCR helps to foster local integration of refugees in Estonia.

- **External Engagement:** UNHCR is mostly working with partners to raise awareness on asylum and statelessness issues. During key events, such as the World Refugee Day and the annual Opinion Festival, UNHCR promotes the inclusion of refugee voices in national public debates.

Statelessness

- Estonia has not acceded to the Statelessness Conventions and does not have a statelessness determination procedure, therefore UNHCR promotes accession to the convention and adoption of the procedure.
- Almost all stateless persons (referred to by Estonian authorities as “persons with undetermined citizenship”) have strong bonds with Estonia and could benefit from naturalization. Estonia has made significant efforts to enhance the inclusion of this population, including offering citizenship agreements with free language courses.
- UNHCR is working with the Estonian government to help foster sense of belonging among the stateless population that would lead to a higher naturalization rate.

UNHCR in Nordic and Baltic Countries

Staff:

14 National Staff
 10 International Staff

Offices:

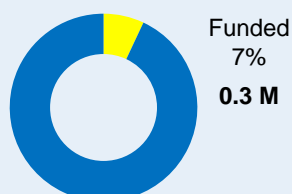
1 Regional Office in Stockholm
 1 Liaison Office in Copenhagen
 1 Liaison Office in Vilnius

Financial information* 28 February 2021

*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 4.9 M

Funding gap
 93%
4.6 M



UNHCR is grateful to the major donors of unearmarked contributions* to the 2021 global programmes (USD, as of 28 February):

Norway 80 M | Sweden 66.9 M | Netherlands 36.1 M | Denmark 34.6 M | Germany 22.1 M | Switzerland 16.4 M | Ireland 12.5 M | Belgium 11.9 M

*Unearmarked contributions allow UNHCR for critical flexibility in how best to reach populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Above are donors of USD 10 million or more