

# Iceland

February 2024

**International protection:** Iceland remains a favourable protection environment for forcibly displaced and stateless people.

**Increase of funding:** Iceland has responded to rising displacement needs globally by increasing its funding to UNHCR, from USD 1.9 million in 2021 to USD 4.2 million in 2023.

**Improving access to education:** UNHCR is coordinating with national authorities to improve timely access to education for refugee asylum-seeking children in Iceland.

## UNHCR POPULATION STATISTICS (as of mid-2023)\*

Refugees **6,193**  
Asylum-seekers **2,827**  
Stateless people **64**

### Top three countries of origin\*

| Refugees  |              | Asylum-seekers |              |
|-----------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| Ukraine   | <b>3,107</b> | Venezuela      | <b>1,533</b> |
| Venezuela | <b>1,171</b> | Ukraine        | <b>828</b>   |
| Iraq      | <b>338</b>   | Nigeria        | <b>70</b>    |

\*UNHCR mid-2023 Trends and UNHCR data finder

## Socio-economic inclusion of refugees in Iceland

### Iceland Submits Pledges at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF)

During the 2023 GRF, Iceland pledged to enhance social and labour integration of refugees for the period 2024 - 2025. This includes identifying meaningful employment opportunities for refugees with a focus on supporting their economic self-reliance and drawing on their education and skills, including through work-related language training.

### Integration of Refugees Through Sport (IRTS) Networking Platform

As a member of the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), Iceland and other partner countries support the IRTS Networking Platform objectives to empower people working or volunteering in refugee inclusion through sport by offering in-person and online opportunities to meet and gain recognition for their initiatives, while connecting with other humanitarian actors. The platform builds on ISCA's experience and outcomes from three earlier EU-supported projects. The current project is co-financed by the European Commission under its 'EAC Sport as a Tool for Integration'.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Proposed legislative amendments

Iceland's Ministry of Justice recently proposed amendments to the Foreign Nationals Act, including to remove free legal aid at first instance of the asylum procedures, and to introduce closed residence measures.

### Voluntary return to Venezuela

The Government of Iceland in cooperation with Frontex arranged a return flight for 180 Venezuelans from Reykjavik to Caracas in November 2023.

### Family Reunification from Gaza

Iceland's Directorate of Immigration gave acceptance for family reunification of 100 people from Gaza. The Government is currently working with the Red Cross to locate and arrange for the transfer these individuals.



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### UNHCR and UN Association Iceland Launch Icelandic Teaching Material About Refugees

The purpose of the teaching material is to help teachers bring the complex issue of refugees and forced displacement into the classroom in a fact-based and inclusive manner. The education material has been developed by UNHCR translated into several languages.

For more on the teaching material, see [here](#).

## Key Priorities

- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR advocates for fair and efficient asylum procedures with national authorities and provides technical guidance. UNHCR also works with various stakeholders to strengthen capacity linked to the asylum procedure, facilitating trainings, workshops and other initiatives.
- **Resettlement and complementary pathways:** Iceland has currently paused its small but long-standing resettlement programme. UNHCR is in dialogue with the Government regarding its resumption. Iceland also plays a leading role in facilitating family reunification.
- **Inclusion:** UNHCR supports the significant steps taken by Iceland with regards to its inclusion policies, including to ensure that all refugees have the same access to employment and inclusion support. Iceland is currently undertaking a comprehensive revision of its system for refugee inclusion, including relevant institutional developments. UNHCR also cooperates with key integration authorities regarding capacity building initiatives for national and local actors.
- **Legal aid:** UNHCR supports NGOs to strengthen their capacity to help asylum-seekers' access rights and services. UNHCR also advises lawyers offering legal aid and representation to asylum-seekers in Iceland.
- **Law and Policy:** UNHCR works to support the Government in developing and strengthening national laws and policies around international protection and improve public attitudes towards refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people in Iceland.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR works with a range of partners in Iceland, including government agencies, municipalities, and NGOs to strengthen the local response and to support the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people, while improving public attitudes towards forcibly displaced people.

## Statelessness

- Iceland has acceded to both the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions on statelessness.
- Iceland has taken steps towards operationalizing Statelessness Determination Procedures, including through developing and implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). UNHCR supported the drafting of the SOPs, which are in line with the recently amended Icelandic Aliens Act.
- Iceland is committed to the #IBelong Campaign to ending statelessness. UNHCR is continuing advocacy for Iceland to join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, which seeks to build on the concrete gains and momentum achieved by the #IBelong Campaign.

## UNHCR Presence in Nordic & Baltic Countries

### Staff:

- 19 National Staff
- 14 International Staff
- 1 Affiliate Work Force

### Offices:

- 1 Regional Office in Stockholm
- 1 Office in Vilnius, Lithuania
- 1 Office in Riga, Latvia
- 1 Office in Tallinn, Estonia

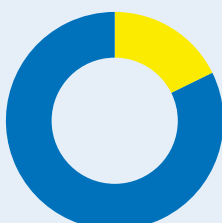
## Financial information\* (31 January 2024)

\*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 for 2024

**\$ 14 M**

**Funding gap 89%**  
**\$ 12.4 M**



**Funded 11%**  
**\$ 1.6 M**

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