

# Latvia

February 2022

**Emergency situation:** Amid the continued arrival of asylum-seekers and migrants via Belarus, Latvia has extended the state of emergency until May 2022, limiting access to asylum.

**Border areas:** UNHCR remains concerned about reports of pushbacks at the border with Belarus, and has repeatedly encouraged Latvia to respect international protection principles.

**COVID-19 assistance:** Through UNHCR and partner efforts, families with children with subsidiary protection status were provided the same one-off financial assistance as refugees.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN\*

Refugees	<b>678</b>
Asylum-seekers	<b>23</b>
Stateless persons	<b>209,168</b>
Total population of concern	<b>209,869</b>

## TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN\*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Syrian Arab Republic	<b>312</b>	Belarus	<b>8</b>
Afghanistan	<b>62</b>	Iraq	<b>5</b>
Russian Federation	<b>61</b>	Russian Federation	<b>5</b>

\*Data source: UNHCR 2021 Mid-Year Statistical Report and UNHCR data finder platform

## COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

**Advocacy:** UNHCR liaises with authorities and partners to ensure that persons of concern to UNHCR are included in pandemic prevention and response programmes.

**Inclusion:** Persons of concern to UNHCR are included in the national response and provided with social support and other measures to mitigate their unemployment/income loss. Partners have intervened to ensure that families with subsidiary protection receive the same COVID-19 support as refugee families.

**Communication with Communities:** UNHCR's partners modified their services to continue 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.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### 582

Asylum applications submitted in Latvia in 2021, four times more than in 2020. The three main countries of origin were Iraq, Afghanistan and Belarus.

### Society Integration Foundation

has been assigned responsibility to coordinate local integration programmes and seek solutions for refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries in Latvia, filling a previous gap in this area.

### Statelessness

A new law has entered into force providing for automatic acquisition of citizenship to children of non-citizens born after January 2020, meaning that from 2020 onwards no children in Latvia will be born with non-citizen status.

### DESPITE CHALLENGES, REFUGEES OPTIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE IN THE BALTIC COUNTRIES



A UNHCR survey among refugees in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania reveals their willingness to start a new life and integrate in the society, while also highlighting remaining challenges. Read more [here](#).

## Key Priorities

- **Advocacy:** UNHCR and partners advocate for support for European Union (EU) legal and policy developments, and implementation of EU standards in accordance with international obligations, including in times of emergency.
- **Protection-sensitive entry systems:** Through an MoU, UNHCR supports border monitoring activities to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to territory and asylum, and assists with capacitation of border guards so that all asylum requests are proactively identified and efficiently referred to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.
- **Detention:** UNHCR advocates for the use of detention as a measure of last resort, promotes alternatives to detention, and encourages authorities to refrain from detention of children.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR works with counterparts to ensure the quality and efficiency of asylum procedures, support contingency preparedness and promote dignified reception arrangements with due regard to living standards and special needs.
- **Resettlement and complementary pathways:** UNHCR advocates for Latvia to re-engage in resettlement and consider sustainable programmes, including complementary education and employment pathways for admission of refugees.
- **Integration:** UNHCR encourages the development of a holistic integration strategy focusing on all beneficiaries of international protection to ensure mainstreaming of services into social assistance programmes and provision of targeted support, including for language, housing and employment. UNHCR also supports regular public campaigns and awareness-raising activities to promote diversity and prevent intolerance and xenophobia against refugees and migrants.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR works with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, and the State Border Guard as the main governmental bodies responsible for policy/planning on asylum issues, matters related to “non-citizens” and persons with the status of stateless persons. On integration, UNHCR cooperates with [the Ministry of Welfare](#), [the Ministry of Culture](#) and [the Society Integration Foundation](#). UNHCR closely collaborates with [the Ombudsman’s Office](#), [Latvian Diversity Charter](#) and NGOs.
- **External engagement:** UNHCR is working with partners to raise awareness on asylum and statelessness issues. UNHCR promotes inclusion of refugee voices in national public debates.

## Statelessness

- Latvia is a State party to both the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions and is a strong supporter of the UNHCR’s [#belong campaign](#) to End Statelessness.
- There are two groups of concern to UNHCR: the “non-citizens”, and stateless persons as determined by the statelessness determination procedure. While the “non-citizens” in Latvia are entitled to rights that generally extend beyond the minimum rights prescribed by the 1954 Convention, when compared with the situation of citizens of Latvia, differences exist in access to employment, property purchases, political rights and retirement grants.

## 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

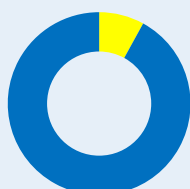
## Financial information (22 February 2022)

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**

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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.