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Migration Affairs
Republic of Latvia

EMN

European Migration Network



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REPORT ON MIGRATION AND
ASYLUM IN LATVIA
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Pursuant to Council Decision 2008/381/EC of 14 May 2008, the European Migration Network was established; its objective is to meet the information needs of institutions of the European Union and its Member States by providing up-to-date, objective, reliable, and comparable information on migration and asylum, with a view to supporting policymaking in these areas in the European Union. The European Migration Network also serves to provide the general public with information on these subjects. The Network is composed by the European Commission and the contact points designated by the Member States. Each contact point establishes a national migration network. The contact point of each state prepares studies, whose topics have been set in the respective annual program of activities. The topics of studies are related to the area of migration of third-country nationals.

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SUMMARY

Legal migration

In 2021 8136 initial temporary residence permits were issued. On 17 June 2021 the *Saeima* adopted the Amendments to the Personal Identification Documents Law¹, which provides the issue of a new type of the personal identity card - a foreigner's personal identity card or foreigner's eID card afterwards, when the foreigner would have been registered with the Register of Natural Persons. The new foreigner's eID card will facilitate identification of foreigners in the Latvian digital environment.

International protection and asylum

The number of asylum seekers increased 4 times - there were 582 asylum seekers in 2021. The huge increase in the number of asylum seekers is to be explained with the hybrid attack organised by the A. Lukashenko regime.

Unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups

The number of unaccompanied minors entering Latvia increased - in 2021, 16 unaccompanied minors entered Latvia, and almost all of them requested the asylum.

¹ Law on Amendments to the Law on Personal Identification Documents¹ - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 118, 19.06.2021 - [entered into force 28.06.2021

Integration

In 2021, immigrants from third countries were able to learn the Latvian language, get to know life in Latvia, as well as attend integration courses and receive help to find a job more successfully; they also had the opportunity to receive the support of a social mentor. State and non-governmental organizations implemented integration and Latvian language courses for asylum seekers and third-country nationals online.

Citizenship and naturalization

In 2021, 419 persons were admitted to Latvian citizenship through naturalization.² The majority of people who received Latvian citizenship (83%) were non-citizens of Latvia. The number of third-country nationals who received Latvian citizenship through naturalization has decreased - in 2021, 69 individuals became citizens of Latvia.³

Border control, visas and Schengen management

On 3 September 2021, the amendments to the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia entered into force⁴, in order to ensure fulfilment of functions of the SBG. Amendments to the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia determine cases and criteria, when a patrol lane and a border surveillance zone may be established at the external border, as well as clarify the determination of the national border zone along water bodies.

² Data source: OCMA.

⁴Law [on Amendments to the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 160A, 20.08.2021 - [entered into force on 03.09.2021]

On 12 November 2021 Law on Construction of the External Land Border was adopted⁵. The purpose of the law is to ensure the rapid and efficient construction of the infrastructure necessary for the protection of the external land border by establishing a special legal framework.

In accordance with Paragraph 1 of the Cabinet Order No. 518 "Regarding the Declaration of Emergency Situation",⁶ adopted on 10 August 2021, the emergency situation was declared in *Ludza* municipality, *Krāslava* municipality, *Augšdaugava* municipality and *Daugavpils* city from 11 August 2021 to 10 February 2022. The emergency situation was prolonged until 10 May 2022.⁷

The State Border Guard (hereinafter - SBG) participated in joint operations organized by Frontex⁸ which provided support to both EU Member States and third countries.

Irregular migration

On 2 September 2021, amendments to the Immigration Law⁹ were adopted which oblige an accredited educational institution to inform the SBG in writing immediately, but no later than within three working days, that a third-country national who has obtained a temporary residence permit for the purpose of study or learning:

- 1) has dropped out or has been dismissed from the list of students;
- 2) has been absent from learning or study process for 14 consecutive days without a valid reason and cannot be contacted.

⁵ [Law on Construction of the External Land Border](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 221A, 13.11.2021 - [entered into force on 14.11.2021]

⁶ Cabinet of Ministers Order No.518 of 10 August 2021 "[Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation](#)" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.152A, 10.08.2021 - [entered into force 10.08.2021]

⁷ Cabinet of Ministers Order No 45 of 1 February 2022 "[Amendment to Cabinet of Ministers Order No 518 of 10 August 2021 Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.24, 03.02.2022 - [entered into force 01.02.2022]

⁸ European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

⁹ Law on Amendments to the Immigration Law - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.176A, 13.09.2021 - [entered into force 27.09.2021]

Trafficking in human beings

12 persons have been identified as suspects in criminal proceedings for human trafficking and one person has been convicted. Two third-country nationals have been recognized as victims of trafficking in human beings.

In 2021 a trend was noticed in Latvia in relation to involvement of women from Ukraine, Moldova and Russia in prostitution, as well as cases of exploitation were established, where nationals of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and India were among the identified victims. Third-country nationals are also involved in recruitment of women and trafficking in human beings and the proportion of use of digital technologies in the implementation of these crimes is increasing.¹⁰¹¹

On 28 September 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a new Plan for Combatting of Human Trafficking 2021-2023¹² aimed at ensuring a continuous and coherent national policy to prevent trafficking in human beings.

Return and readmission

In 2021, 21 people were removed and 742 returned voluntarily to their home country. In 2021, the Riga Office of the International Organization for Migration (hereinafter - IOM) provided assistance to 97 persons for the implementation of voluntary return.

International cooperation

Migration experts have participated in a number of migration forums and projects to share and gain experience in cooperating with third countries.

¹⁰ Construction and catering are the biggest trafficking risks; involvement in prostitution is on the rise - Available: <https://www.delfi.lv/news/national/criminal/lielakie-cilvektirdzniecibas-riski-buvnieciba-un-edinasana-pieaug-iesaiste-prostitutcija.d?id=54274960>

¹¹ The number of victims of human trafficking in Latvia increased last year - more third-country nationals - Available: <https://www.delfi.lv/news/national/criminal/latvija-pern-pieaudzis-cilvektirdzniecibas-upuru-skaitsvairak-treso-valstu-pilsonu.d?id=54274950>

¹² Cabinet Regulation No. 690 of 28 September 2021 "[Regarding Plan on Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings for 2021-2023](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.190, 01.10.2021 – [entered into force on 28.09.2021]

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

On 14 April 2021, the Latvian Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines 2021-2027 were approved¹³, noting that Latvia's development cooperation policy shall, as far as possible, be implemented in coordination with security, migration and trade policies.

¹³Cabinet Order of 14 April 2021 No. 245 ["On Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines 2021-2027"](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 73, 16.04.2021 - [entered into force 14.04.2021]

INTRODUCTION

The Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in Latvia (hereinafter - the Report) provides information on the most significant and notable changes in the migration and asylum policy in Latvia in the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021 and at the beginning of 2022. The report includes information from migration policy makers, implementers, as well as published research and media analysis.

The report is based on the specification developed by the European Commission and the National Contact Points of the European Migration Network (hereinafter - EMN), which allows to compile uniform and comparable information on all EU Member States and EMN observer states. Once fully drawn, the synthesis report on migration and asylum in the EU and EMN observer states in 2021 will be available on the website of the EMN Latvia contact point www.emn.lv.

The information required for the Report was obtained from the Ministry of the Interior, SBG, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, IOM Riga Office, Society Integration Fund, Society "Shelter "Safe House"" and Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (hereinafter - OCMA).

In order to reflect the prevailing opinions in the society and to view the discussions that took place in the political environment, the Report used articles, opinions and assessments published on various news and public policy portals, as well as information available on the websites of other state institutions. Literature and other sources used in the Report are included in the list of literature and other sources. The data collected by national data providers and Eurostat are used in the Report. The data are coordinated with migration and asylum experts. All terms used in this Report correspond to the definitions available in [the EMN Glossary of Asylum and Migration Terms](#)¹⁴.

¹⁴Available: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary_en.

OVERVIEW OF CHANGES IN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY

General changes in the field of migration

In 2021 the migration processes and their management were significantly affected by the events, taking place in foreign countries as well as in Latvia.

In order to limit the Covid-19 pandemic, the emergency situation was declared in Latvia from 11 October 2021 to 28 February 2022.¹⁵ The Cabinet Order [No. 720 "Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation"](#) provided to stop the rapid spread of Covid-19 infection and the overloading of the health sector and to reduce the preventable mortality, concurrently ensuring the continuity of important State functions and services.

On 11 October 2021 another legal act - the Cabinet Regulation No. 622 "Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of Covid-19 Infection" entered into force¹⁶ They stipulate the regulations for entry to the Republic of Latvia, including specify the need to present a negative Covid-19 test upon entering and provisions for comply with the mandatory isolation.

In June 2021 the number of migrants increased, who attempted to enter the territory of Lithuania, Poland and Latvia from Belarus. The majority of migrants were from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. The government authorities of Belarus deliberately did not make any obstacles for

¹⁵Cabinet of Ministers Order No 720 of 9 October 2021 "[Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation](#)" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 195A, 09.10.2021 - [entered into force [09.10.2021](#) Expired: [01.03.2022](#)]

¹⁶Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 28 September 2021 No 662 "[Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection](#)" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.191A, 04.10.2021 - [entered into force 11.10.2021]

border crossing, in order to weaken the safety of the borders and the capacity of the asylum system of the European Union. Such activity was described as a hybrid war against the European Union.

As a result of these events, another emergency situation was declared in Latvia - this time in the field of migration. The emergency situation on the border of Belarus was declared from 11 August to 10 November 2021 in four administrative territories: *Ludza* region, *Krāslava* region, *Augšdaugava* region and the city of *Daugavpils*. As far as Belarus continued to implement the hybrid attack and the number of persons, who attempted to irregularly cross the Latvian - Belarusian state border, remained high, the Emergency Situation was prolonged for another two times until 10 February 2022¹⁷ and 10 May 2022¹⁸.

In the emergency situation the National Armed Forces (NAF) and State Police (SP) provided support to the State Border Guard (SBG) for provision of the Latvian - Belarusian border enforcement, in order not to permit irregular border crossing, including the right to use the funds available at its disposal in order to prevent the persons from irregular crossing of the Latvian - Belarusian border. Submissions of persons regarding granting a refugee or alternative status were not accepted by the structural units of the State Border Guard located in the territory where the emergency situation was declared as well as by other institutions.

FRONTEX experts and the Latvian National Guard commenced the work on the border enforcement in Latvia for the first time.

On 2 June 2021 *Krišjānis Kariņš*, the Prime Minister, signed with the representatives of the New Conservative Party (*Jaunā konservatīvā partija*), National Unions (*Nacionālā apvienība*), *Attīstībai/Par!* and the New Unity (*Jaunā Vienotība*) a Memorandum of Understanding on the objectives of mutual cooperation¹⁹ and the agreement on cooperation of factions of the *Saeima* forming the

¹⁷Cabinet of Ministers Order No 749 of 21 October 2021 "Amendments to Cabinet of Ministers Order No 518 of 10 August 2021 "Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation"". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 205, 22.10.2021 - [entered into force 21.10.2021]

¹⁸Cabinet of Ministers Order No 45 of 1 February 2022 "Amendment to Cabinet of Ministers Order No 518 of 10 August 2021 Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.24, 03.02.2022 - [entered into force 01.02.2022]

¹⁹ Memorandum of Understanding between the partners on the objectives of mutual cooperation - Available: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/9705/download>

future government^{20,21} On 3 June 2021, the *Saeima* showed trust to four new ministers - the Minister of Economy *Jānis Vitenbergs* (National Union), the Minister of the Interior *Marija Golubeva* (*Attīstībai/Par!*), the Minister of Education and Science *Anita Muižniece* (New Conservative Party) and the Minister of Welfare *Gatis Eglītis* (New Conservative Party).

²⁰ Agreement on further cooperation between factions of the *Saeima* forming the Cabinet of Ministers of the 13th *Saeima*. – Available: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/9708/download>.

²¹ Agreement on key government work and further cooperation - Available: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/vienojas-par-galvenajiem-valdibas-darbiem-un-turpmaku-sadarbibu>.

LEGAL MIGRATION

The total number of initial temporary residence permits issued 2021 has increased by 1.4 times compared to the previous year: 8136²² (5669 in 2020) initial temporary residence permits were issued.

Starting as of 13 January 2021, the OCMA started to issue residence permit cards, corresponding to the current provisions of the European Council Regulation (EC) No. 1030/2002²³.

On 4 March 2021 the Cabinet Regulation No. 141 "Procedures for the Recognition of Travel Documents of Foreigners" were adopted²⁴, the purpose of which is to prescribe the procedures by which the travel documents of foreigners are recognised in the Republic of Latvia. Regulations were developed with the purpose to revise the Cabinet Regulation No. 215 of 29 April 2003 "Procedures for the Recognition of Travel Documents of Foreigners", making several technical and substantive changes therein. The Regulation provides for both, the possibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not to recognize the travel document or recognize it with additional condition as well as further storage of specimen of foreigner's travel documents with the SBG, and specifies the action of the involved institutions, upon receipt of the documents to be assessed or information about the foreigner's travel document, which is not recognized in the Republic of Latvia.

On 6 July 2021 the Amendments to the Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection were adopted²⁵, extending the validity period of the issue or registration of a permanent residence permit decision for third-country nationals, not including the time period from 12 March 2020 to 31 December 2021 in the validity period thereof.

²² Data source: OCMA. The original data on temporary residence permits, which are compiled by Eurostat, will be adjusted later.

²³ Regulation (EU) 2017/1954 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2017 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1030/2002 laying down a uniform format for residence permits for third-country nationals - Official Journal of the European Union L 286, 01.11.2017.

²⁴ Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 4 March 2021 No 141 "[Procedure for Recognition of Foreigners' Travel Documents](#)" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 46, 08.03.2021 - [entered into force 09.03.2021]

²⁵ Law on [Amendments to the Law on the Management of the Spread of Covid-19 Infection](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 139, 22.07.2021 - [entered into force 23.07.2021]

On 17 June 2021 the *Saeima* adopted the Amendments to the Personal Identification Documents Law²⁶, which provides the issue of a new type of the personal identity card - a foreigner's personal identity card or foreigner's eID card afterwards, when the foreigner would have been registered with the Register of Natural Persons. A foreigner will be able to receive an eID card of a foreigner:

- who has legal relationship with Latvia on the basis of which mutual rights and obligations are forming or have been established in the field of immovable property, commercial activity, health, taxation, benefits, asylum, and education;
- who wishes to receive a Latvian identity card - (electronic identification card) in order to promote the development of economic, scientific, educational or cultural relations;
- who wishes to receive State administration services in Latvia electronically by means of electronic identification issued by a European Union Member State, a state of the European Economic Zone, or the Swiss Confederation.
- is an asylum seeker in the Republic of Latvia.²⁷

The new foreigner's eID card will facilitate identification of foreigners in the Latvian digital environment. Unlike other types of personal identity cards, the foreigners eID card will not be a mandatory personal identification document. The eID card will be issued to foreigners for allocation of the electronic identification tools that will in general provide a possibility to use the range of services provided by the State, for example, to use the public administration e-services, to use e-address, to electronically identify and sign documents. Amendments to the Personal Identification Documents Law were necessary in order to introduce the provisions of the Cabinet of Ministers Order No, 439 of 11 August 2016 "On Conceptual Report on the Register of Natural Persons"²⁸, which provides for foreigners in Latvia to obtain a digital identity: eID card and electronic signature.

²⁶Law on [Amendments to the Personal Identification Documents Law](#)" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 118, 19.06.2021 - [entered into force 28.06.2021]

²⁷ Annotation to the draft law "Amendments to the Law on Personal Identification Documents" - Available: <http://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/SaeimaLIVS13.nsf/0/166AB7E5105A9F47C22586E8004AC494?OpenDocument#B>.

²⁸Cabinet of Ministers Order No 439 of 11 August 2016 "On the Conceptual Report on the Register of Natural Persons". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 156, 15.08.2016 - [entered into force 11.08.2016]

Amendments to the Law on the Register of Natural Persons were adopted on 17 June 2021²⁹. To expand the range of persons, about whom the information is included and updated in the Register of Natural Persons, as well as to expand the scope of information to be included in the Register of Natural Persons, determining that the Register of Natural Persons shall include the information on the contact address of a foreigner and original form of the given name in the original language, as well as shall include, update and renew the information about entries in the civil registries. Amendments were necessary in order to introduce the provisions of the Cabinet of Ministers Order No, 439 of 11 August 2016 “On Conceptual Report on the Register of Natural Persons”³⁰, which provides for foreigners in Latvia to obtain a digital identity: eID card and electronic signature.

Simplification of administrative procedures was performed, refusing from preparation of certain decision in the migration field in writing. In simple cases the data on the adopted decision is specified only in the information system, notifying the person electronically on the need to appear at the OCMA for arrangement of the eID card (the document confirming the right of stay). The purpose of simplification of the administrative procedures was to reduce the administrative burden on the authority and the time of processing of documents, which served as a basis for absence of employees from work due to incapacity for work due to the spread of Covid-19 infection.³¹

In accordance with the publicly available information, the Republic of Belarus supports the war activity commenced by the Russian Federation in the territory of Ukraine. In response to the above-mentioned, the EU has applied the economic and individual sanctions against the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. Besides, also other countries continue to determine sanctions against the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. Considering the seriousness of situation, the Commission on Defence, Interior and Prevention of Corruption has developed the relevant amendments to the Immigration Law. On 7 April 2022 amendments were made to the Immigration Law, which provides for a time period³² to suspend the issuance of initial temporary residence permits to the nationals of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, at the

²⁹ Law on [Amendments to the Law on the Register of Natural Persons](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 118, 19.06.2021 - [entered into force 28.06.2021]

³¹ Source: OCMA

³² For a time period until 30 June 2023.

same time determining exceptions - the possibility to issue temporary residence permits on the basis of reunification of the family, international protection, employment under the legal acts of the EU or necessary for employment of their employees in the company, having at least 51% of the capital of legal persons or nationals of the Member States of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and moving its operation to the Republic of Latvia from the Russian Federation or the Republic of Belarus, the need for studies or study internship, determined by legal acts of the European Union, and state interests or human considerations. The need of such exceptions is to justified with the fulfilment of international obligations and possible provision of relocation of companies from the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Latvia. The Amendment to the Immigration Law also provides for a duty of examination performed by the State Security Service in the issue of the temporary residence permit, which is justified with employment in the company transferred and justified on the needs of studies or study internship, thus ensuring that the entry of the relevant citizen of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in the Republic of Latvia will not cause threat to the state security or public order and safety. Amendments to the Law also supplemented the legal framework for issue or registration and annulment of residence permits.³³

On 1 February 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the amendment to the Immigration Law that would permit third-country nationals to request a permanent visa for one year, if the person wishes to stay in Latvia, maintaining the employment relations with the employer registered abroad of the Republic of Latvia or continuing to remotely perform the activities of a self-employed person. In order to obtain a remote work visa, a foreigner will have to prove employment with the employer registered in a foreign country, which has lasted at least six months, besides, it is planned to determine that the salary shall be in the amount of at least 2.5 average salaries (in 2021 - EUR 2857.50). The right to employment in the Republic of Latvia would not be granted to the recipient of visa, as well as they will not have the right to receive social support, and they are not socially insured in the Republic of Latvia.

³³ Law on Amendments to the Immigration Law - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.70A, 08.04.2022 - [entered into force 09.04.2022]

It is planned that after expiry of the visa it will be possible to request for a repeated visa in relation to performance of remote work for another year. The draft law should be reviewed and adopted by the *Saeima* after approval in the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers.

The OCMA has taken an active part in a series of podcasts of the portal *Latvijas Vēstnesis* about different issues related to the field of migration, as well as has regularly published information on social networks about the issues of visas and residence permits.

In 2021 provision of information available on the website of the OCMA in “the easy language” has been commenced, in order to make it more available to a broader range of customers, because critical attitude has been received from different public groups about the complexity of migration conditions and difficulties to receive clear information.³⁴

Economic migration

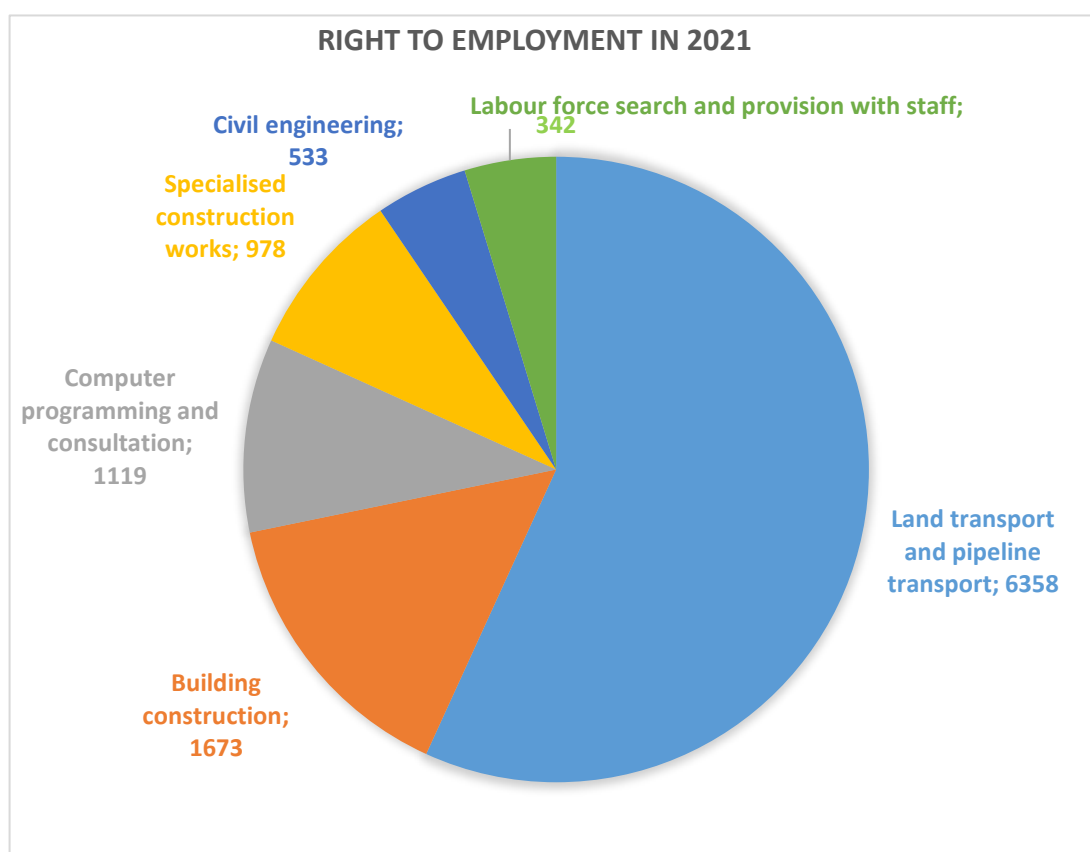


Figure 3-1

³⁴ Source: OCMA

The total number of employment rights granted to third-country nationals in 2021 (both on the basis of a visa (2657) and a temporary residence permit) has increased by 34% (12,199 - in 2020 and 16,400 - in 2021). The majority of third-country nationals work in the field of land transport and pipeline transport (6358), building construction (1673), computer programming and consulting (1119), specialized construction works (978), and civil engineering (533).³⁵ Other popular professions are also truck drivers and drivers of towing vehicles. Most third-country nationals employed are nationals of Ukraine, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Russia and India.

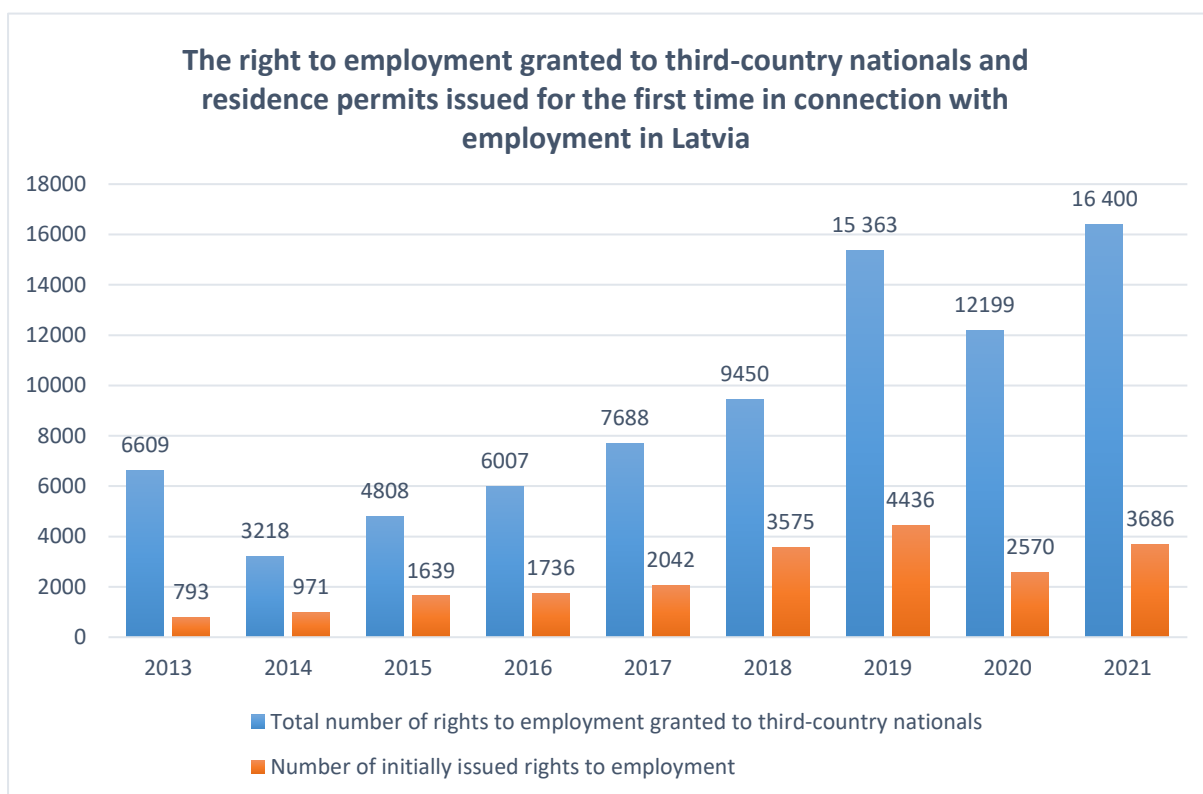


Figure 3-2.

The number of initial residence permits issued to third-country nationals for employment has increased: In 2020 - 2570; 2021 - 3686.

³⁵ Data source: OCMA.

In order to satisfy the need for a foreign labour force, the need for entry of a person in Latvia for fulfilment of obligations of merchants was confirmed by the Latvian Investment and Development Agency or the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, in accordance with criteria determined in the Cabinet Regulation “Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection”³⁶, imposing an obligation on the employer to confirm that compliance with epidemiological conditions will be ensured.

On 6 July 2021 the Amendments to the Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection were adopted³⁷, extending the validity period of the issue or registration of a permanent residence permit decision for third-country investors³⁸, not including the time period from 12 March 2020 to 31 December 2021 in the validity period thereof.

Research and discussions on the development of economic migration in Latvia

The recovery of the Latvian economy from the crisis caused by Covid 19 was observed in the summer of 2021, however, *Līva Zorgenfreija*, the Chief Economist of Swedbank in Latvia, emphasized that “the basic issue of Latvia is structural non-compliance of skills of job seekers with the demand on the labour market and the decreasing number of inhabitants in the age capable for work. In order to settle it, further investigations in the automatization and digitalization, qualification increase and requalification of employees will be required, corresponding to the requirements of the labour market. However, I doubt if that will be enough in Latvia - most probably a part of the long-term solution is also immigration, which should be considered also today”.³⁹

On 21-22 October 2021 the conference “Digital Migration: Work. Future. Community” was held. The discussion was held during the event on what changes should be made in the regulatory

³⁶Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 28 September 2021 No 662 ["Epidemiological safety measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 infection"](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.191A, 4.10.2021 - [entered into force 11.10.2021]

³⁷Law on [Amendments to the Law on the Management of the Spread of Covid-19 Infection](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 139, 22.07.2021 - [entered into force 23.07.2021]

³⁸In accordance with Section 23, Paragraph one, Clause 28, 29, 30 or 31 of the Immigration Law.

³⁹The economy will grow, as will labour shortages. – Available: https://ir.lv/2021/08/27/ekonomika-augs-tapat-ka-darbaspeka-trukums/?utm_source=email+marketing+Mailigen&utm_campaign=lr+Svar%C4%ABg%C4%81kais+30.09.2021.&utm_medium=email

enactments of Latvia and Europe with regard to the international remote work. There was a discourse on how to arrange such work and lifestyle from the part of legal acts.

“Migration historically has been an integral part of the European experience. Highly qualified migrants reduce inequality and studies show that the countries with more open immigration policy has on average higher gross domestic product, lower unemployment level, lower expenses of governments and more educated labour force. The countries that have implemented or plan to implement such regulation show that such solution promotes entry of high-qualification immigrants. Latvia is a safe country in the European Union with wonderful nature and quite low living expenses. From here it is easy to go to any other country in Europe. Digital nomad visas would enable Latvia to attract highly qualified labour force that mostly works in the field of IT,” emphasized M. Golubeva during her speech to the participants of the event.⁴⁰

Studies and discussions on migration

Since 10 August 2021 the A. Lukashenko regime implements a hybrid attack, which results in rapid growth of the number of irregular crossing of the state border between the Republic of Latvia - the Republic of Belarus. As a result of that, discussions and study were performed on also on the events on the borders of Lithuania and Poland with Belarus. Director of the public opinion research centre SKDS *Arnis Kaktiņš* provided an opinion that the migration issue is potentially dangerous, because the society will criticize the ability of the government to cope with even bigger number of irregular migrants.

The Minister of the Interior *Marija Golubeva* considers that “irregular migrants are being used as a weapon in the hybrid war. In terms, they are forwarded towards our border and the border of Lithuania, without thinking either about themselves or our capacity to practically receive them. It is performed with an obvious purpose to overload our system, to make it less capable and destabilize our countries also in terms of domestic policy.”

⁴⁰ Minister of the Interior M. Golubeva: "Nomad visas will allow Latvia to attract new talents" – Available: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/iekšlietu-ministre-m-golubeva-nomadu-vizas-laus-latvijai-piesaistit-jaunus-talantus>.

On 23 August 2021 the Prime Ministers of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland were concerned about the situation on the border of Lithuania, Latvia and Poland with Belarus: “We understand that the Alexander Lukashenko regime has planned and systematically organized the crisis. Destabilization of the situation in the neighbouring countries by using immigrants is an obvious breach of international law, and that is to be considered as a hybrid attack to Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, and thus also to the whole European Union. We have to use this situation in the European Union in order to review the approach to protection of our borders. We are strictly confident that the protection of the external borders of Europe is not a duty only of certain Member States, but also a common responsibility of the EU. Therefore, proper political attention should be paid to that on the EU level and sufficient funding should be granted.”

The newspaper “*Diena*” published the analysing series of articles in the beginning of 2022 regarding the benefits of persons close to the Belarusian regime as well as tourism companies from the implemented hybrid attack.

The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Latvia has issued a study report “Weaponising Immigration on the EU-Belarus Border: Perception of immigrants and immigration in Latvian society” in the beginning of 2022. Results of the study show that there is a moderately unfavourable opinion about immigration in Latvian society. Since the outbreak of the immigration crisis on the EU-Belarus border in August 2021, anti-immigrant sentiment has increased alongside immigration as a political issue. Results of the study show that exposure of strategic narratives to immigration crisis increase the support to stricter border control and unequal attitude towards immigrants. The humanitarian perspective of this immigration crisis rather strengthened than weakened the anti-immigration mood in the Latvian society. There are differences between respondents on the basis of their ethnic origin. Ethnic Latvians use to adapt to the pro-Latvian and pro-EU perspective with regard to irregular immigration from Belarus. The representatives of Russian speaking ethnical minorities demonstrate more complicated opinion, sometimes demonstrating a critical opinion against the authoritarian leader of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko.

Since Russia started its invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, some Latvian news media have prepared articles on both, the situation in Ukraine as well as other EU Member States, including Latvia, which is hosting Ukrainian war refugees.

Students and scientists

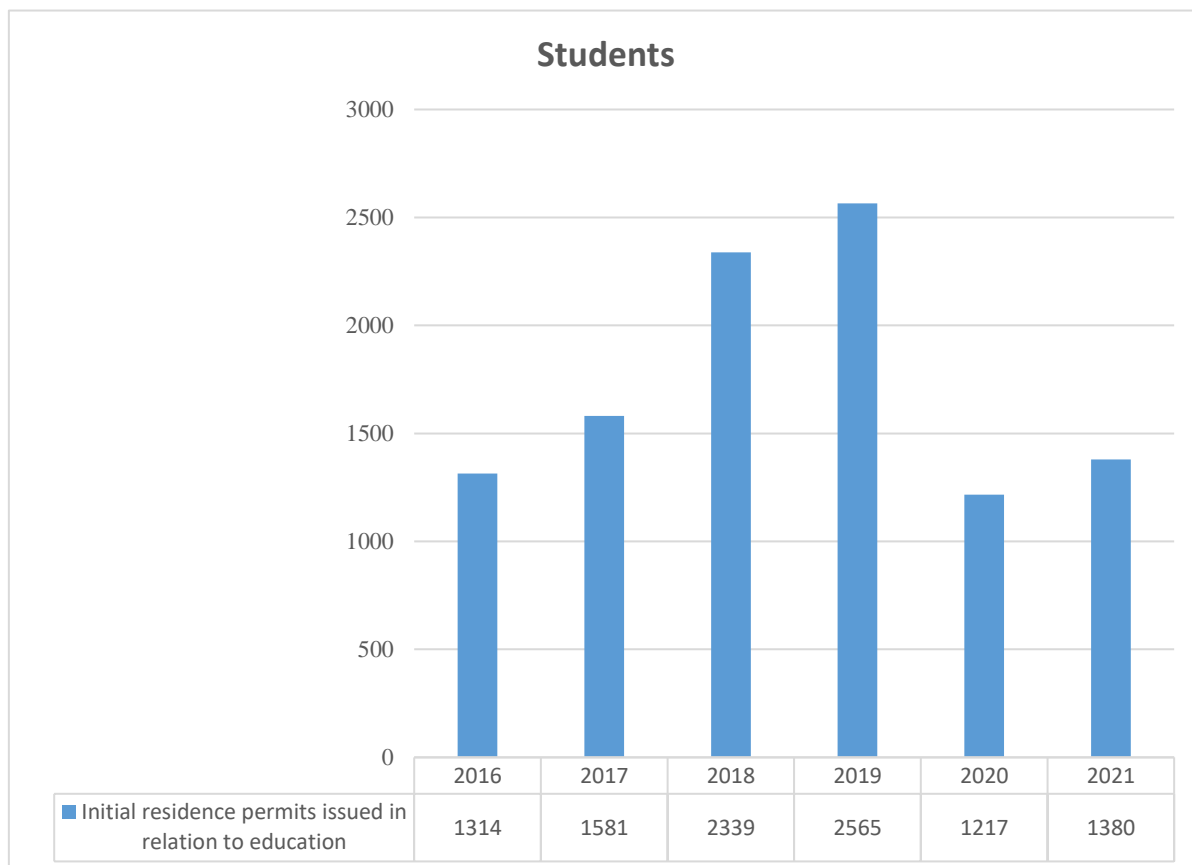


Figure 3-3.

In connection with education, 1380 initial residence permits were issued in 2021 (1217 in 2020), which is a slight increase compared to the previous year.

On 5 April 2022 Cabinet Regulation No. 223 "Amendments to the Cabinet Regulation No. 68 of 24 January 2012 "Procedures for Granting Scholarships to Foreigners""⁴¹ were adopted, the purpose of which is to provide civilians of Ukraine with the right to receive state support as a study scholarships for the time period from 01.03.2022 - 30.06.2022 or a research scholarship for the time period from 01.03.2022 - 31.08.2022, equally with the inhabitants of Latvia, which shall be paid as

⁴¹Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 5 April 2022 No 223 "Amendments to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 24 January 2012 No 68 "Procedure for Granting Scholarships to Foreigners" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 69, 07.04.2022 - [entered into force 08.04.2022]

of entry into force of this Regulation, in order a civilian of Ukraine could continue to implement the studies of the higher education as well as academic or scientific activity in Latvia, which was terminated in Ukraine, when the Russian Federation launched war activities against Ukraine and civilians of Ukraine went to Latvia as refugees.⁴²

Students of all study levels, enrolled by the Latvian state or private higher education institutions, including colleges, will be able to receive a scholarship in the amount of 140 euro from the day of enrolment until the end of semester on 30 June 2022. Recognition of the previous education documents of the Ukrainian students and enrolment of students for the relevant study programme in English or Latvian will remain under the competence of the universities themselves. In solidarity with the academic community of Ukraine, Latvian scientific institutions in the Register of Scientific Institutions may establish employment relations with Ukrainian researchers or offer internships at their institution. If a scientific institution offers internship to Ukrainian researchers (without remuneration), the state will provide a research scholarship for scientific and academic work of 900 euros per month until 31 August 2022.

Family reunification

In 2021, the number of initial residence permits issued to third-country nationals in connection with family reunification increased and was 2143 (1435 in 2020)

⁴²Annotation to the draft legislation "Amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 24 January 2012 No 68 "Procedure for Granting Scholarships to Foreigners"" - Available: <https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/d707fe7d-8e75-447f-9cb2-3f220be2a5d7>.

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

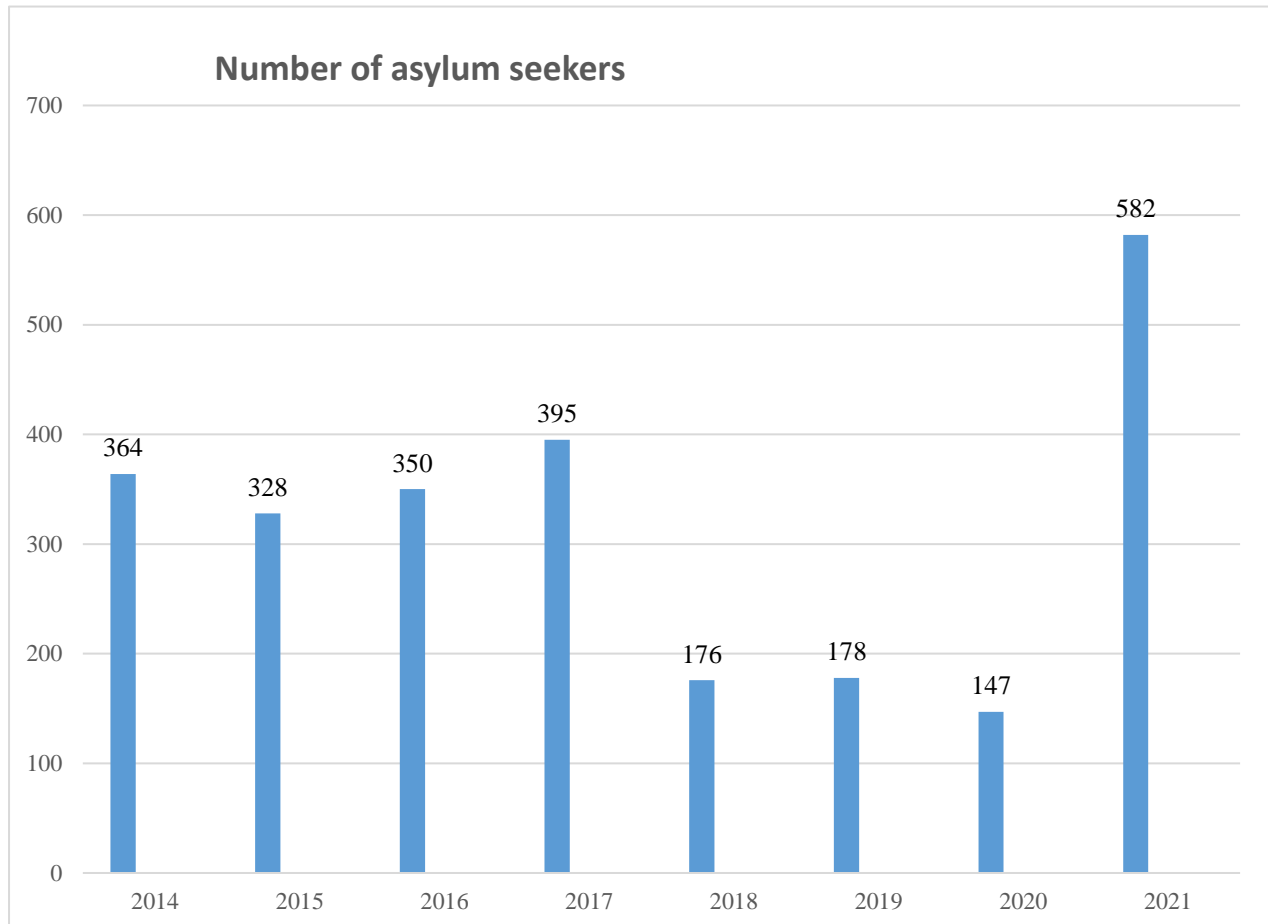


Figure 4-1

Compared to 2020, the number of asylum seekers in 2021 has increased by four times -582 (147 in 2020) and the dominant countries of origin of asylum seekers have changed - most asylum seekers have come from Iraq - 347 (3 - in 2020), Afghanistan - 71 (8 - in 2020) and Belarus - 55 (44 - in 2020).⁴³

⁴³Data source: OCMA.

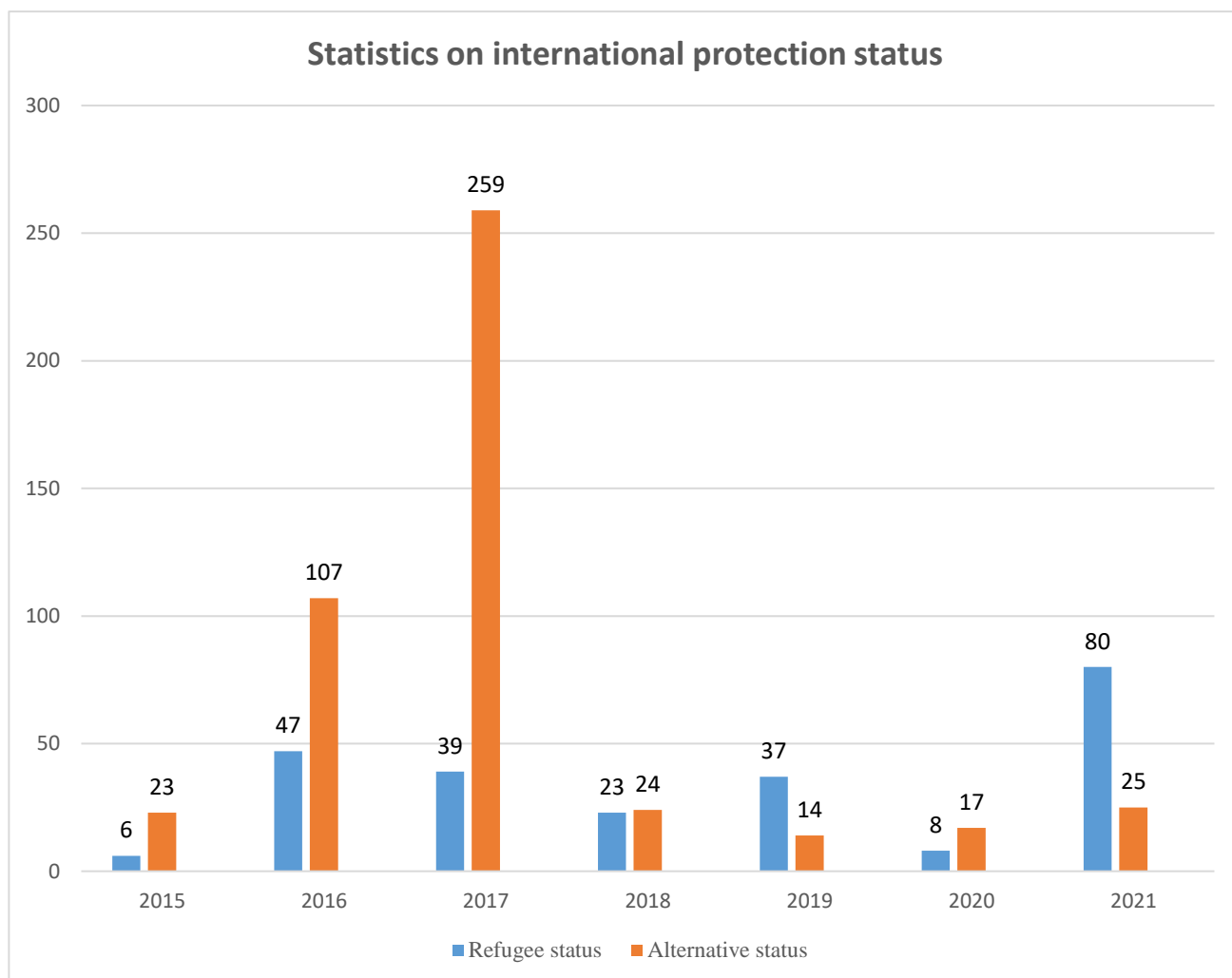


Figure 4-2

In 2021, 105 persons received international protection in Latvia. Refugee status has been granted to 80 persons, alternative status to 25 persons.

In 2021, 33 asylum seekers were transferred to Latvia within the framework of the Dublin regulation.

Upon implementing the project of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund for 2014-2020 “Improvement and development of information systems and related processes supporting migration and asylum”:

- “Improvement and development works of the Unified Migration Information System software” - provides support and consultations to users during the use of workload accounts during the daily work;
- “Digitalization of personal files of asylum seekers and residence permits” - the work continues on the digitalization of personal files of residence permits;
- “Equipment of archive premises” - in 2021 the first stage has been completed and 42 shelves were installed by the end of December, which is approximately a half of the planned volume of shelves. Further installation works will continue in 2022.
- “Acquisition of computer equipment for territorial offices of the OCMA” - all computers were delivered for use of the territorial offices.
- “Development of informative materials (info graphs) on the issues of migration and asylum” – [Info graphs](#) are published on the website of OCMA in Latvian, English and Russian⁴⁴.
- The digital informative tools is developed, which includes four main categories of residence permits - “First-time residence permit”, “Repeated residence permit”, “Requesting of the status of the permanent inhabitant of the European Union in the European Union” and “Registration of residence permit”.⁴⁵ Currently the digital tool: vissparmigraciju.pmlp.gov.lv⁴⁶

On 28 February 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a Plan in the event of a mass influx of people from Ukraine to Latvia.⁴⁷ The plan is developed in accordance with the task specified in Sub-clause 1.2 of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of 8 February 2022 (Protocol No. 6, § 1) The aim of the Plan is to identify measures and resources to be implemented by public authorities, municipalities and businesses to ensure coordinated and immediate action to

⁴⁴Info graphs: How to apply for asylum in Latvia?, Process after applying for asylum; Process after examining an asylum application - Available: <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/asylum-seeking>

⁴⁵ Digital tool includes at the same time information about residence permits and their acquisition possibilities, in accordance with individually selected criteria and situation. The tool is based on the principle of consecutive steps, where the interested person selects the necessary type of residence permit in the first step. Further on, depending on the selected type in the first step, the information follows on the nationality, documents to be submitted, information on the payment possibilities for the residence permit, submission and receipt. Each step menu contains additional information about the selected step. This information shall, in any case, remain general and may be of a non-standard nature where exceptions may be applied. Nor does it include the emergency arrangements currently established for Ukrainian citizens. The tool represents standard occurrences.

The digital information tool is expected to be found on the home page of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

⁴⁶ Source: OCMA.

⁴⁷ Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 131 of 28 February 2022 "Plan in the event of a mass influx of people from Ukraine to Latvia" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 43, 02.03.2022. - [entered into force 28.02.2022. out of force on 29.04.2022.]

receive and host ten thousand persons who could arrive en masse from Ukraine. The Plan is necessary because of the unprovoked, large-scale Russian military aggression against Ukraine, which was launched on 24 February 2022. The Action Plan applies to persons who have arrived en masse from Ukraine and are seeking asylum in Latvia or applying for a visa on humanitarian grounds. The Plan foresees that up to 10 000 people from Ukraine could arrive in Latvia.⁴⁸

On March 3, 2022, the *Saeima* supported the Ukrainian Civilian Support Law⁴⁹, which provides support for Ukrainian refugees during the Russian invasion, as well as general support for Ukrainian society. Ukrainian civilians within the meaning of the Law are Ukrainian citizens and members of their families, as well as persons who have received a permanent residence permit in Ukraine, stateless status or status of international protection, and their family members. The Law provides for temporary protection of Ukrainian civilians in the Republic of Latvia within the meaning of the Asylum Law. In the context of the ongoing armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, it was necessary to determine the actions of the relevant authorities (the Consular Department of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, the State Border Guard and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in providing support to Ukrainian civilians and Ukrainian society.

A number of Cabinet regulations were issued on the basis of the Ukrainian Civilians Support Law:

- Cabinet Regulation No. 172 "On the information necessary to ensure the provision of aid to Ukrainian civilians"⁵⁰, which determines the information necessary to ensure the provision of aid to Ukrainian civilians, as well as the amount of information, the procedures for gathering and using it and the time limits for storage.
- Cabinet Regulation No. 168, "Regulations regarding the provision of accommodation and catering services for Ukrainian civilians"⁵¹, which prescribe the procedures for providing accommodation and catering services to Ukrainian civilians, the amount of aid and the procedures for covering costs.

⁴⁸ The Cabinet of Ministers approves a plan in case of a mass influx of people from Ukraine to Latvia. - Available at: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/ministru-kabinets-apstiprina-planu-gadījumam-ja-latvija-masveida-ieradīsies-cilveki-no-ukrainas-0>.

⁴⁹ Law on support for Ukrainian civilians. - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 45A, 04.03.2022. - [entered into force 05.03.2022.]

⁵⁰ Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 15 March 2022 No172 "Regulations on Information Necessary to Ensure the Provision of Support to the Civilian Population of Ukraine" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 53A, 16.03.2022. - [entered into force 17.03.2022.]

⁵¹ Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 12 March 2022 No 168 "Regulations on Provision of Accommodation and Catering Services to Civilians of Ukraine" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 50B, 13.03.2022. - [entered into force 14.03.2022.]

On 29 April 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Action Plan for Supporting Ukrainian Civilians in the Republic of Latvia⁵², which provides for coordinated and immediate action by state institutions, municipalities and businesses to host, accommodate and provide social support to up to 40 000 Ukrainian civilians fleeing the war. A new plan was drawn up in the light of the continued arrival of Ukrainian civilians in Latvia in the framework of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Ministry of the Interior prepared, in cooperation with other ministries, the planned follow-up to the continued influx of refugees into Latvia, including action and support for Ukrainian civilians after the period of support to be provided, taking into account the reception of refugees and support capacity of the State and local authorities involved in the provision.

In order to ensure the provision of support to the civilian population in Ukraine, the measures included in the Action Plan are structured in twelve sections. Just as before, Ukrainian civilians will be guaranteed the right to reside in the Republic of Latvia, the right to employment, the volume of support within the limits set by the Law on Support of Civilians in Ukraine, as well as the right to education. The protection of personal and property rights and interests of minors of Ukrainian civilians entering the Republic of Latvia without parental accompaniment will also be ensured.

The amount of possible support per Ukrainian civilian is based on the principle that the number of services and support provided does not exceed the amount of support available to the Latvian population.

Accommodation for persons in need for up to 90 days is provided on a priority basis, with referrals to voluntary host households, including reimbursement to households of 100 euros for the first person and 50 euros for each additional person, up to a maximum of 300 euros per month per dwelling per household application.

It also provides for the possibility of concluding rental agreements with private persons for the transfer of residential premises for the use of Ukrainian civilians at a rent not exceeding 400 euros per month per dwelling, including all payments related to the use of the residential premises (utilities). The relevant amendments to the legislation are planned to be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers.

⁵² Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 302 of 29 April 2022 "On the Plan of Measures for the Provision of Support to the Civilian Population of Ukraine in the Republic of Latvia" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 83B, 29.04.2022. - [entered into force 29.04.2022.]

Finally, persons may be directed to accommodation in municipal accommodation or tourist hostels, with accommodation costs of up to 15 euros per person per day.

However, meals or groceries for up to 30 days will be provided up to a maximum of 10 euros per person per day, except for those accommodated in voluntary host households.

The plan also provides for preventive measures in the areas of state security, border security, prevention of trafficking in human beings, public order and security, as well as protection of the rights and freedoms of the Ukrainian civilian population.⁵³

A single website has been set up to support Ukrainian civilians, which summarizes information on the types of support for Ukrainian civilians, as well as those who wish to support them in Latvian, Ukrainian, Russian and English - <https://www.ukraine-latvia.com/>.

Measures to implement the Common European Asylum System

On 7 December 2021, the Cabinet approved the information report prepared by the Ministry of the Interior regarding the establishment of a coordinating body in the field of the coordination of the socio-economic inclusion of persons in need of international protection⁵⁴. The proposal contained in the report defines the Society Integration Foundation as the national coordinating body. In order to effectively implement the tasks specified in the Action Plan for the relocation and reception of persons in need of international protection in Latvia, it is necessary to identify one institution which would ensure coordination and coherence of the process of socio-economic inclusion of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. The report was drawn up on the basis of Resolution 7.8.5/2021-DOC-1196-1767 of the Prime Minister of 6 July 2021, pursuant to which the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Finance, was tasked with developing and submitting to the Cabinet an information report regarding the establishment of a coordinating body for the socio-economic inclusion of persons in

⁵³Annotation to the Order "Plan of measures for the provision of support to the civilian population of Ukraine in the Republic of Latvia" - Available: <https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/be3aeb7e-2fd4-421e-a47f-8ee02ce236c5>.

⁵⁴ Information report of the Ministry of the Interior on the establishment of a coordinating body in the field of socio-economic inclusion of persons in need of international protection. – Available at: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/150852a3-f92f-4f48-8689-d22b85b0713b

need of international protection, in the area of coordination, assessing the establishment of the Society Integration Foundation as the responsible authority for the coordination of socio-economic inclusion of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection and the activities and tasks necessary to implement this solution, including the necessary legislative amendments, as well as information on the necessary funding.

In September 2021, the Operating Plan⁵⁵ was signed between the Ministry of the Interior and the European Asylum Support Office on support for the provision of the OCMA asylum procedure in relation to a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers developed due to the situation on the border between Latvia and Belarus. Duration of the Operating plan: 31 December 2021, extended until February 2022 (possibility of extension). Interpreters provided by the European Union Agency for Asylum shall be available from 19 April 2022. The availability of translation services for the effective conduct of the asylum procedure, which includes interpretation in interviews, presentation of the asylum seeker by decision of the institution, and provision of State-paid legal assistance, as well as the provision of the rights of asylum seekers at the time of reception.

On 17 August 2021, amendments to the “Regulations Regarding the Register of Asylum Seekers”⁵⁶ were approved, which provide for significant improvements to the Register of Asylum Seekers (hereinafter referred to as “the Register”), in order to ensure effective support for the asylum procedure by switching to the conduct and processing of file documents in the electronic environment, as well as to determine the extended amount of information accrued by functionality in the Register, thus covering all phases of the asylum procedure⁵⁷.

The changes made to the OCMA and the SBG lead to a reduction in the administrative burden, since the need to transfer documents and evidence in asylum cases will be significantly reduced. The online entry of information makes it possible to speed up the asylum procedure, since

⁵⁵ A plan of measures between the European Asylum Support Office and Latvia. Available from: https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Operating_Plan_EASO_Latvia_0.pdf

⁵⁶ Cabinet Regulation No. 553 of 17 August 2021, Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 456 of 12 July 2016, Regulations on the Register of Asylum Seekers. - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 159, 19.08.2021. – [entered into force on 20.08.2021.]

⁵⁷ Annotation to the Cabinet Regulation Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 456 of 12 July 2016, “Regulations Regarding the Register of Asylum Seekers”. – Available at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Ftap.mk.gov.lv%2Fdoc%2F2021_08%2FIEMAnot_080721_456.1776.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

information on the fact of the request for asylum and the decisions taken in the case is immediately entered in the Register and a system notice is sent to the authorities involved in the asylum procedure in order to enable them to immediately undertake the necessary further procedural action in accordance with their competence. Such amendments have been implemented in accordance with the task specified in Sub-clauses 198.2 and 198.3 of the Cabinet Order No. 210 of 7 May 2019 on the Government Action Plan for the Implementation of the Planned Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers headed by *Krišjānis Kariņš*, to establish a system of entry of foreigners in accordance with the interests of Latvia, balanced and controlled, ensuring the necessary conditions, changes to the regulatory enactments related to the entry and residence of foreigners in Latvia, as well as improvement of the regulatory framework and implementation of the European Union fund projects, in order to ensure that the same information regarding the foreigner is not repeatedly included and updated manually in the various State information systems and that the updating of foreigner data is centralized, as well as taking into account the European Union development and development of the Register in the framework of the draft programme “Improvement and Development of Information Systems and Related Processes in Support of Migration and Asylum Procedures” of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2014-2020, with a view to establishing a single data processing process in the electronic environment in the asylum procedure, amendments were made to the “Regulations Regarding the Register of Asylum Seekers”.⁵⁸

On 10 August 2021, amendments were approved to Cabinet Order No. 312 of 4 July 2012 "On the Action Plan for Coordinated Action of Institutions in Relation to the Possible Mass Arrival of Asylum Seekers in Latvia from Crisis Affected Countries"⁵⁹. To date, the measures set out in the Action Plan were intended to be implemented if the number of asylum seekers in the short term (in 1-5 days) exceeds the long-term accommodation capacity of the SBG and the OCMA and the number of irregular border crossing persons would reach 500-3000 people, as well as the presence of 3000-20000 irregular border crossing persons in the country at the same time (in 5-10 days).

⁵⁸ Annotation to the Cabinet Regulation Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 456 of 12 July 2016" Regulations Regarding the Register of Asylum Seekers". Available at: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Ftap.mk.gov.lv%2Fdoc%2F2021_08%2FIEMAnot_080721_456.1776.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

⁵⁹ Cabinet of Ministers Order No 519 of 10 August 2021 "[Amendments to Cabinet of Ministers Order No 312 of 4 July 2012 "On the Action Plan for Coordinated Action of Institutions in Relation to the Possible Mass Arrival of Asylum Seekers in Latvia from Crisis Affected Countries"](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 154, 12.08.2021. - [entered into force 10.08.2021.]

Following the adoption of the amendments, the Minister of the Interior has obtained a mandate to start the implementation of the Action Plan, even if the number of asylum seekers has not yet been reached within 5-10 days. The amendments were encouraged, because of the situation on the border of Lithuania-Belarus, as well as the data provided by the SBG and the Lithuanian border guards on the large number of irregular border crossings showed that hybrid attacks are being implemented with the support of the Belarusian authorities, which constitutes a direct threat to national security and the European Union's external borders.

In 2021, OCMA experts participated in support activities organized by the European Asylum Support Office for EU Member States facing disproportionate pressure on their asylum systems. An employee of the OCMA's Asylum Affairs Division participated in an EPAB support measure in Malta from 1 August until 11 September 2021. The main task of the expert was the registration of asylum seekers. With the presence of two OCMA experts, Latvia has secured participation in the support measure in Lithuania from 9 August until 15 October 2021. The main task of the experts was the work with specially protected persons at the Centre for the registration of foreigners in Pabrade, Lithuania.⁶⁰

In 2021, the project "Information Center for Newcomers" established by the Society "Safe House Shelter"⁶¹ provided consultations to 133 asylum seekers, 35 refugees and 23 persons with alternative status.

Reception of applicants for international protection

On 17 June 2021, amendments were adopted to the Asylum Law⁶², which facilitates the employment of asylum seekers, the receipt of health and educational services. Amendments to the Asylum Law envisage that the status of asylum seeker and the right to reside in Latvia during the asylum procedure is certified by an asylum seeker's identity document or foreigner's identity card.

⁶⁰ Source: OCMA

⁶¹ The project implementation period is from 2 January 2018 to 30 June 2020. The project is implemented with the support of the AMIF. The task of the project is to ensure the establishment and operation of a national coordination structure to provide support to third-country nationals, including persons who have been granted international protection and who have received the right to reside in the territory of Latvia. The aim of the project is to increase participation in public processes and to promote the inclusion of these individuals in Latvian society by providing information tailored to the needs of third-country nationals on their rights and obligations in various fields of life.

⁶² Law "[Amendments to the Asylum Law](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 118, 19.06.2021. – [entered into force on 28.06.2021.]

The amendments to the Asylum Law are designed to improve the procedures for ensuring the enforcement of the rights provided for in the Asylum Law during the asylum procedure, resulting from Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.

On 17 June 2021, amendments were adopted to the Law on the Register of Natural Persons⁶³, which provides that information on asylum seekers will be included in the Register of Natural Persons. This will ensure that the data included and updated will be available to all authorities involved in the provision of rights for asylum seekers, which will result in a faster service of asylum seekers in the institutions. The inclusion of information on asylum seekers⁶⁴ in the Register of Natural Persons provides for a more effective assurance of the rights for asylum seekers, since the authorities concerned have centralized access to personal data. This results in a total reduction of the administrative burden, since one institution - included and updated data - is immediately available to all institutions, which will result in a faster service of the asylum seeker in the next institution.⁶⁵

On 17 June 2021, amendments were adopted to the Personal Identification Documents Law, which provides for the introduction of an foreigners identity card or an eID card. A third-country national identity card will be issued to a third-country national included in the Register of Natural Persons and will also be received by an asylum seeker from the moment when the conditions referred to in the Immigration Law have entered in order to grant the right to employment to the asylum seeker. The foreigner's identity card or eID card will enable the third-country national, including asylum seekers, to use a wide range of services provided by the State, including the use of e-services of public administration, to use an e-address, to identify electronically and to sign documents.

⁶³ Law "Amendments to the Law on the Register of Natural Persons". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 118, 19.06.2021. – [entered into force on 28.06.2021.]

⁶⁴ The Register of Natural Persons regarding a foreigner who is an asylum seeker in the Republic of Latvia shall include information regarding the personal identity number, which is generated automatically after registration in the Register of Natural Persons, given name, surname, birth, nationality and the type thereof, information regarding the personal identification code, which is entered in the identity document, information regarding the personal identification document.

⁶⁵ Annotation of the draft law "Amendment to the Asylum Law". Available at: <http://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/SaeimaLIVS13.nsf/0/7604631054688FC7C22586EA0049031F?OpenDocument#B>

On 2 September 2021, amendments were adopted to the Immigration Law⁶⁶, which provide that the asylum seeker is entitled to employment if he or she has not received a decision of the OCMA on the granting or refusing to grant refugee or alternative status within three months of the application for the granting of refugee or alternative status, and this has not occurred because of his or her fault. The right to employment shall remain until the entry into force and the final decision on the granting or refusal to grant refugee or alternative status has become undisputed. The amendments to the Immigration Law are designed to shorten the 6-month period previously specified by the Immigration Law, when the asylum seeker is entitled to employment, to a 3-month period, and to enable asylum seekers to earn additional income, promote their individual growth and help them not to lose their qualifications. The above-mentioned regulatory requirements have been updated, with a view to the complex situation in Belarus in 2020, from which asylum seekers, including high-skilled workers, arrived in Latvia. The public discussed⁶⁷ this possibility by reducing the initial six-month waiting period to three months.

On 12 October 2021, amendments were adopted to Cabinet Regulation No. 133 of 21 February 2012, Regulations Regarding the Issuance of State Fees on the Issuance of Identity Documents⁶⁸, which determine that the identity card of a third-country national shall be issued within a period of two working days, and asylum seekers are exempt from the State fee for the issuance of the referred to document, taking into account the special situation of asylum seekers and the needs during the asylum procedure, ensure that the foreigner's identity card is issued free of charge to the asylum seeker.

On 2 November 2021, the Cabinet Regulation No. 727, Regulations Regarding the Personal Document of an Asylum seeker⁶⁹, which determine the form of the person document of the asylum seeker and the procedures for issuing the referred to document, were adopted. The referred to

⁶⁶ Law "[Amendments to the Immigration Law](#)".- *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.176A, 02.09.2021. – [entered into force on 27.09.2021.]

⁶⁷ Asylum seekers from Belarus are asking for the opportunity to work; Latvia is not rushing to review immigration norms. – Available at: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/patveruma-mekletaji-no-baltkrievijas-ludz-iespeju-stradat-latvija-nesteidz-parskatit-imigracijas-normas.a380954/>

⁶⁸ Cabinet Regulation No. 686 of 12 October 2021 "[Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 133 of 21 February 2012, Regulations Regarding State Fees on the Issuance of Identity Documents](#)". *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 200, 15.10.2021. - [entered into force on 16.10.2021.]

⁶⁹ Cabinet Regulation No. 727 of 2 November 2021 "[Regulations Regarding the Personal Document of an Asylum seeker](#)". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 214, 04.11.2021. – [entered into force on 05.11.2021.]

Regulations provide that, as so far, the State Border Guard shall issue a personal document of the asylum seeker within three days from the time of receipt of the asylum application, and it shall be valid until the day when the administrative process regarding the application of the asylum seeker has been completed, while the foreigner's personal identity document will be issued by the OCMA in cases if the asylum seeker wishes to be employed and the OCMA determines that the conditions referred to in the Immigration Law have entered into force in order to grant the asylum seeker the right to employment without restrictions.⁷⁰



In September 2021, the “Asylum Seeker's Guide”⁷¹ was published on the website of the OCMA, which makes it possible to read on the conduct of the asylum procedure, the rights and obligations of the asylum seeker, and on:

- accommodation of the asylum seeker;
- household organization of the asylum seeker center;
- educational opportunities for minors' asylum seekers;
- the right to receive medical and legal services;
- available support for social workers and a social mentor and their key tasks and other important issues.

⁷⁰ The annotation of the draft Cabinet regulations on the “Terms of the Personal Document of the Asylum seeker”. – Available from: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/327382-patveruma-mekletaja-personas-dokumenta-noteikumi>

⁷¹ Asylum Seeker's Guide. - <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/asylum-seeking>

- The guideline is prepared in 12 languages - in Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Latvian, Pashto, Russian, Tigrinya, Kurdish, Georgian, Azerbaijani.⁷²

In 2021, a Covid-19 quarantine regime was introduced in *Mucenieki*, in May and September at the Asylum Seekers' Accommodation Centre (hereinafter - the Centre), during which asylum seekers were unable to leave the Centre, as well as third-party visits were limited.

In early 2022, *Alūksne* Municipal Council took a decision during the emergency meeting to transfer for a time period of four years to the Provision State Agency for use without a consideration a part from the municipal property - the building, auxiliary building of the former boarding-school and part of the land plot in the area of 0.66 ha. The building of *Liepna* Rural Territory Boarding-School will be transformed into the asylum seekers accommodation branch. It is intended to establish a branch of an asylum seeker accommodation center with a capacity of up to 250 persons in the boarding school building of the *Liepna* civil parish. Its operation will be administered by the OCMA. It is planned that until the end of 2022 the building will be adapted to the needs of the branch of the asylum seekers accommodation center, the necessary technical improvements and improvement works will be performed. For this purpose, funding of around 700 thousand euro from European Union funds will be used.

Relocation and Resettlement

On 10 September 2021, internal regulations of the Ministry of Interior No. 1 – 10/11 “Procedures for cooperation between the institutions subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior involved in the Asylum Procedure and the procedures for the implementation of the relocation and resettlement of persons” (hereinafter - the internal regulations of the Ministry of the Interior) entered into force. Internal regulations prescribe the procedures by which the OCMA, the SBG, the State Security Service and the State Police cooperate within the framework of the asylum procedure and after granting international protection status to a person, as well as the procedures for the

⁷² Useful information in 12 languages for asylum seekers in Latvia - Available: <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/noderiga-informacija-12-valodas-patveruma-mekletajiem-latvija>

implementation of the relocation and resettlement to the Republic of Latvia from a European Union Member State or a country, which is not a European Union Member State, the European Economic Area State or the Swiss Confederation, within the framework of the established relocation mechanisms, in response to the exceptional influx to the European Union's external borders. In accordance with the internal provisions of the Ministry of the Interior, the exchange of information between the authorities involved in the asylum procedure shall take place electronically, using the electronic mail addresses indicated in the list of contact details of the institutions, except where the exchange of information must be ensured through the Asylum Seekers Register or the information must be provided in the field of special proceedings, in accordance with the procedures specified in regulatory enactments.

Latvia has been involved in supporting the exodus of Afghan citizens with whom cooperation has taken place during previous governments in Afghanistan. By the end of 2021, dozens of Afghans were already provided assistance. An asylum is provided within the framework of existing legislation.

MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

In 2021, 16⁷³ unaccompanied minors in Latvia applied for asylum in Latvia. Less than five unaccompanied minors in Latvia did not apply for asylum in Latvia.

On 8 April 2021, amendments to the Education Law⁷⁴ were approved, which stipulates that a minor third-country national or stateless person who does not have a legitimate basis to reside in the Republic of Latvia has the right to acquire basic education during the period specified for voluntary departure or during the period for which removal has been deferred, as well as during his or her detention.

From 1 January 2021, the amount of the guardian's allowance for the maintenance of a child under guardianship has been increased⁷⁵:

- for a child under the age of seven, 215.00 euros per month;
- for a child from the age of seven, 258.00 euros per month.

This benefit applies to unaccompanied minor asylum seekers living with their guardians outside the asylum accommodation center.

The Ministry of Education and Science has prepared an information report entitled "Information report on the actual situation regarding the provision of education for minors asylum seekers" (hereinafter - information report), which has been examined in the Cabinet on 14 December 2021⁷⁶. The information report has been developed in order to inform the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the actual situation regarding a substantially increased number of minors'

⁷³Source: OCMA.

⁷⁴ Law "Amendments to the Law on Education". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 75, 20.04.2021. – [entered into force on 04.05.2021.]

⁷⁵ Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 20 April 2021 No. 256 "Amendment to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1643 "Procedure for Granting and Paying Allowance for Maintenance of a Child under Guardianship"". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 77, 22.04.2021. - [entered into force 01.07.2021.]

⁷⁶ Protocol No 80 of the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of 14 December 2021 - Available: <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2021/246.18>

asylum seekers, who need to be ensured with the acquisition of education in State and local government established educational institutions implementing the pre-primary, primary or general secondary education programme in the official language, as well as to provide proposals for further provision of funding, the Cabinet shall make a decision on further action.

In the case where an application regarding the granting of refugee or alternative status is submitted by a parent with minor children, the information regarding all asylum seekers referred to in the application shall be enclosed in the application registered in the Register of Asylum Seekers (children together with the parent in one application).⁷⁷

In 2021, the SBG officials participated in the “Sexual Violence Against Child. How to recognize and act” training organised by the establishment “Center Dardedze”, training “Protection of the Rights of the Child” organised by the college of the State Police and training “Fundamental Rights” (e-training) organized by the college of the State Border Guard.

⁷⁷ Source: SBG

INTEGRATION

Integration policy in Latvia falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Ministry of the Interior, the Society Integration Foundation and non-governmental organizations are also involved in the implementation of this policy.

At the meeting of the Cabinet on 5 February 2021, approved the policy planning document submitted by the Ministry of Culture in the field of civil society and democracy policy “Guidelines for the development of a cohesive and civil society for the years 2021-2027”⁷⁸. In order to ensure that the aims and objectives set out in the Guidelines are met, the Plan for the Development of a Cohesive and Civilian Active Society for 2021-2023⁷⁹ (“the Plan”) has been approved. The guidelines and the action lines of the Plan are interlinked by defining inclusive participation as a general principle of their implementation, as well as by putting forward rolling priorities applicable to all measures of the plan: national identity, Latvian language, trust, solidarity and cooperation.

Both the Guidelines and the Plan focus on the achievement and engagement of all groups of society, but in Action 3 – Integration, measures are included to include third-country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection (refugees, people with alternative status and asylum seekers) in Latvian society. The following measures are envisaged:

- Establishment of a national coordination system to provide support for the participation of immigrants who have received the right to reside in the territory of Latvia;
- Development of the use of the Latvian language in the public room, including a diverse approach to learning the Latvian language;

⁷⁸ Cabinet Order No. 72 of 5 February 2021 No. 72” [On the Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Active Civil Society for the 2021-2027](#)”. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 28, 10.02.2021. – [entered into force on 05.02.2021.]

⁷⁹ Cabinet Order No. 32 of 18 January 2022 No. 32 ” On the Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Active Civil Society for the 2021-2027”. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 15, 21.01.2022. – [entered into force on 18.01.2022.]

- Involvement of third-country nationals in the public life of Latvia, including support for the participation of vulnerable persons (women, children, elderly) and beneficiaries of international protection;
- Integration of third-country nationals into Latvian society, involving the media in this process;
- Intercultural communication training for professionals;
- Early integration support measures for beneficiaries of international protection (integration courses, Latvian language courses, provision of services for rare language interpreters, provision of counselling and intercultural communication training for specialists);
- Support measures for beneficiaries of international protection (refugees and persons granted subsidiary status);
- Setting up a one-stop shop, promoting the integration of new entrants into the local community, providing a uniform and high-quality basket of services.

Representatives of ministries and other State institutions participated in the preparation of the development plan for a cohesive and civil society for the years 2021-2023, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations – the association “Latvian Civic Alliance” and the association “Public Policy Centre PROVIDUS”. In holding a discussion on Action 3 “Integration” of the Plan, it also involved non-governmental organizations representing the interests of third-country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection, the association “I want to help refugees” and the association “Latvian Human Rights Centre”. Third-country nationals who expressed their views on the measures to be included in the Plan also took part in the discussion. In 2021, the Ministry of Culture also organised a discussion cycle on activities carried out under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. These discussions included representatives of non-governmental organizations providing different services to third-country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection to third-country nationals and non-governmental organizations representing the interests of beneficiaries of international protection, as well as representatives of the target group themselves.

Promoting integration for socio-economic participation

Practical measures for the integration of third-country nationals in 2021 have been implemented by non-governmental organizations with AMIF funding.

In order for third-country nationals to have access to information about their rights and obligations, the Information Center for Newcomers of the Society "Shelter "Safe House"" continues to work in several Latvian cities.⁸⁰

Website <http://www.integration.lv/> updated information relating to the integration of third-country nationals in Latvia and services available to third-country nationals.⁸¹ Here, information is published in English and Russian on restrictions and indications related to the epidemiological situation caused by Covid-19, as well as available support resources for Ukrainian civilians.

The Society Integration Foundation (hereinafter referred to as the SIF) continued to implement the project "Promoting diversity" co-financed by the European Social Fund, which provides for the provision of a social worker and a social mentor's service to asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status. In 2021, the service was provided by the Latvian Red Cross. The service is available to the person for 15 months (3 months to gain status and 12 months after obtaining status). According to SIF data, in 2021, 183 new clients received the service of a social worker and social mentor, 75 women and 108 men; out of 183 clients, 68 had children. Since 2016, 1226 people have received the service of a social worker and a social mentor.

The SIF has signed a cooperation agreement with the foundation "Caritas Latvija", which provides services of social workers and social mentors to asylum seekers and persons with refugee or alternative status in Latvia as of 1 February 2022. "Caritas Latvija" was able to offer the largest number of necessary qualifications to provide three teams of social mentors whose work will be monitored and coordinated by professional social workers.

⁸⁰ In 2021, the project "Information Centre for Newcomers", provided by Society „Shelter „Safe House“”. - Available: <https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/informacijas-centrs-iebraucejiem-ii>

⁸¹The site is administered by the Society "Shelter "Safe House "" within the project "Information Center for Newcomers". The project is implemented with the support of the AMIF. Source: Ministry of Culture.

In 2021, in order to promote the socio-economic participation of third-country nationals, measures were implemented for the development of their social skills, learning Latvian language and start-up of employment or entrepreneurship.

The Society " Shelter "Safe House ""⁸² organized integration training courses for asylum seekers, as well as refugees and persons granted alternative status. Latvian language courses were also provided. Given the epidemiological situation in the country, the training was provided remotely.

As part of the "Involvement of third-country nationals in the public life of Latvia, including support for the participation of vulnerable persons (women, children, elderly people) and international protection persons", two projects were implemented in 2021. They are carried out by the association "Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art" ⁸³ and the association "Cooperation Platform". The aim of the activity is to ensure the implementation of the integration programmes that contribute to the inclusion of the target group in society. Integration courses were completed in 2021 by 203 third-country nationals and 149 beneficiaries of international protection status.

"Development of Latvian language use in the public room, including a diverse approach to learning Latvian language," three projects are being implemented in 2021. They are implemented by the Innovation Support Centre, the Education Development Centre and the Latvian Language Agency. Overall, the courses were completed by 711 third-country nationals and 58 beneficiaries of international protection status.

In the beginning of 2021, the Latvian Language Agency has launched the project "Learning the Latvian language in order to facilitate the integration of third-country nationals into the labour market 3" (No. PMIF/6/2020/3/01), which aims to ensure modern and diverse learning of the Latvian language to third-country nationals for future education, day-to-day communication and labour market needs. Language courses were organised not only in Riga, but also in regions (upon request). At the end of the course, 100 individuals were given the opportunity to carry out the national language proficiency test for free. 90% passed the test of the State's language proficiency.

⁸²Within the framework of the activity "Support measures for persons under international protection (refugees and persons granted alternative status)" the project "Support measures for persons under international protection II" was completed in 2020, and the implementation of a new project "Support measures for persons under international protection III" was started.

⁸³ Project implementation period: April 26, 2021 - September 30, 2022.

Starting in January 2021, the Latvian language courses were remote.⁸⁴ In 2021, the courses were completed by nearly 188 participants⁸⁵. Support for teachers (seminars, counselling, exchange of experience), in whose school are learning or will learn new arrivals. The information material is prepared by the Latvian Language Agency on electronic means of learning the language - Teach and learn the language - everything within one click⁸⁶ (also available in English and Russian).⁸⁷

Integration in labour market

In 2021, 70 persons with refugee or alternative status were registered in the State Employment Agency (hereinafter - SEA) (unemployment or job seeker status granted), several of them were re-registered. Overall, since the SEA project was launched in January 2016, 255 (women – 90, men – 165) persons with refugee or alternative status have been registered in the SEA.

During the emergency situation, the SEA continues to provide consultations remotely via e-mail, telephone and in the remote video conferencing. Persons with refugee or alternative status have mainly been involved in the acquisition of the Latvian language.

Four introductory lectures were organized for 21 asylum seekers in total in 2021 in Latvia. The lectures took place in Russian, English and Spanish.

Two individual consultations for asylum seekers from Belarus were held in 2021. Consultations for asylum seekers on job-finding opportunities at the Asylum Seekers Centre in *Mucenieki* took place at the request of a person.

16 persons were involved in the Latvian language courses of the SEA in 2021. The Latvian language was acquired at the A1 and A2 state language proficiency level.

Two persons were involved in the “Latvian-language mentor for employed refugees and persons with alternative status” event in 2021, which focuses on adaptation to the working environment and the development of professional vocabulary.

⁸⁴ Adults arriving in Latvia from Belarus, India, Russia, China, Moldova, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and other countries participated in online activities.

⁸⁵ Latvian Language Agency has started the implementation of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund project. - Available: <https://valoda.lv/projekti/starpkulturu-projekti/patveruma-migracijas-un-integracijas-fonda-projekts-latviesu-valodas-apguve-lai-sekmetu-treso-valstu-pilsonu-ieklausanos-darba-tirgu-iii/>.

⁸⁶ Available: <https://maciunmacies.valoda.lv/maci/reemigrantiem-un-imigrantiem>

⁸⁷ To make it easier to learn the language! Available: <https://valoda.lv/lai-vieglak-apgut-valodu/>.

In 2021, 17 persons were recruited, of which two were women. Three persons settled into work as programmers, two persons as couriers, while one person found a job in professions such as baker, contact welder, boulder, worker, servicer, stock breeder, an office administrator, warehouse employee, information entry operator, manufacturing plant operator, customer service specialist and an operator of wood-processing equipment. Since the beginning of the SEA project in 2016, 88 persons (15 women and 73 men) have been recruited through the SEA, several of them repeatedly. In addition, the SEA recruited one person who did not register in the SEA as an unemployed person or job seeker.

The most common mentioned reasons why people with refugee or alternative status are refusing job offers are: work is too heavy; cannot be combined with parenting; work is too far away from home; the remuneration of EUR 600-700 Neto is too low.

In 2021, the SEA held a campaign of seasonal jobs for the second year. Vacancies were available in a wide variety of agricultural, fishery and forestry sectors. Already in 2020, the SEA agreed with several rural holdings that they are prepared to offer work for people with refugee or alternative status, as well as their families, but no client took advantage of this option. A similar situation occurred in 2021 – the SEA informed both customers about the possibility of going outside Riga and starting seasonal work in the framework of the campaign and non-governmental organizations about this possibility, but no customer responded/was willing to work, despite the fact that employers offered dormitories and accommodation houses. The reluctance to go outside Riga was the main reason for the refusal of seasonal jobs.

According to the observations of SEA, customers who are proactive are not afraid of new challenges, adapt to Latvia's work culture and challenges, are able to achieve recognized results and employers are prepared to raise wages and enable growth.

Within the project “Migrant Talent garden”⁸⁸, which was implemented by Society “Shelter “Safe house””, support and knowledge of national laws, as well as the conditions for setting up their own business have been provided. Starting from April 2021, a 10-lecture cycle was organized in the framework of the project, which worked as a selection to address both arrivals and locals first. The

⁸⁸The project “Migrantu dārzs” is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism The project is co-funded by the Ministry of Culture.

lectures included business, accounting basics, financial literacy, how to address first clients. Representatives of the Latvian Investment and Development Agency participated as special guests, sharing state aid tools for businessmen. The lecture records are available on the website of the Society “Shelter “Safe house””⁸⁹.

In 2021, Society “Shelter “Safe house”” in cooperation with partners from the “*Social-educational initiatives centre Plus*” and the Adult Educational Centre “BITE” (Lithuania) and “IGITEGO” (Sweden), implemented NORDPLUS project “Art coaching as a support tool for integration” * (WIMTAC) on the inclusion of migrant women in the labour market, using the coaching of art. Within the project, four lessons were organized for the target group of third-country nationals speaking Russian:

- A “Vision of future”, in which participants outlined the direction of their preferred future careers through creative tasks and questions;
- Within “Gratifying work”, participants, using drawing technique and answering questions of coach, focused on their achievements and highlighted their strengths which will contribute to build a successful career in the future by working with gratitude and satisfaction;
- Within “SMART”, participants trained to set clearly defined, measurable, realistic and achievable targets that are customer-corresponding and limited in a specific time dimension. Such practices will help to avoid the consequences of setting wrong targets, resulting them not being achieved, abandoned halfway, creating frustration and a sense of powerlessness. Women also worked creatively during the session, placing their thoughts and feelings on paper by pencil and chalk;
- participants practiced visualizing their career-related desires, achievable results, anticipating obstacles and seeking solutions eliminate them.⁹⁰

Since 1st of November 2021 „ Shelter “Safe house”” together with a partner “FEMXA FORMACION” from Spain initiated to implement project “*WIN – Women in Need*”⁹¹. The project looks for solutions to ensure that immigrant women enter the labour market as soon as possible

⁸⁹ <https://www.patverums-dm.lv/en/migrant-talent-garden>

⁹⁰ Art coaching as a support tool for integration. - Available at: <https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/makslas-koucings-ka-atbalsta-riks-integracijai>.

⁹¹ project Nr.2021-1-LV01-KA210-VET-000032847, co-financed by the European Union Programme.

and as easily as possible. It is therefore planned to develop a mobile tool for a vulnerable group of people, such as immigrant women, to learn different types of information and to raise the level of knowledge of project participants in working with different digital tools.⁹²

Basic services

On 16 December 2021, amendments were adopted to the Law on Management of the Consequences of Covid-19 Infection⁹³, which provides a lump sum of €500 for each child to families with alternative status received, while granting a one-off allowance of €200 to persons with an alternative status and disability or retirement age reached.⁹⁴ The amendments were adopted to eliminate unequal treatment and to provide support to persons and families with alternative status.

On 29th of January 2022, the Law on Measures for reduction of extreme Energy Prices⁹⁵, which provides for support measures for certain population groups, entered into force. For the period from 1st of January 2022 to 30 April 2022, the State shall pay the aid of EUR 50 per month for each child to a person who, during the support period, is: the parent, guardian, foster family of the child or the head of a long-term social care and social rehabilitation institution, if the child has been granted refugee or alternative status during the period of support and the support of EUR 50 per month for the child has not been disbursed on another basis.

Non-discrimination

The Latvian Centre for Human Rights, in cooperation with the association *Make Room Europe* and the Participation Platform, launched the project “On the Way to a More Tolerant Society” in

⁹² WIN – Women in Need. – Available: <https://patverums-dm.lv/en/win---women-in-need>

⁹³ Law “Amendments to the Law on Overcoming the Covid-19 Infection Consequences”. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 244B, 17.12.2021. – [entered into force on 18.12.2021.]

⁹⁴ If the status of alternative person has been granted to the person from 1 March to 7 April 2021, the person will be eligible for the assistance.

⁹⁵ Law on Measures for reduction of extreme Energy Prices. - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 20A, 28.01.2022. – [entered into force on 29.01.2022.]

early 2021.^{96,97} The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of civil society to recognize the forms of intolerance and discrimination in order to respond effectively to them and to provide adequate assistance to victims. Within the project, the following were organized:

- “Discrimination, hate crime/hate speech: what can I do?”, the seminar was attended by foreign citizens living in Latvia, foreign students, people with refugee status or alternative status;
- “Towards a more tolerant society”⁹⁸, non-governmental organizations⁹⁹ participated in the training program. The training program will continue in 2022.

In 2021, the Latvian Centre for Human Rights implemented the project “Together against Disinformation and hate speech”, which was co-financed under the Public Integration Program of the Education, Culture and Sport Department of the Riga City Council. The aim of the project was to reduce the manifestations of intolerance and to promote the formation of a cohesive society, to raise young people's awareness of the negative effects of disinformation and hate speech by developing their critical thinking and mediating. In September and November 2021, 5 training seminars were organized for Riga pupils. 121 pupils participated in the workshops in total. Seminars for pupils were held both on-site and online.

An interactive online workshop for teachers was held on 25 and 26 October 2021. For two days, educators have deepened their understanding of issues ranging from stereotypes and prejudices, intolerance, hate speech, disinformation and freedom of expression. Educators have embraced a variety of techniques that can be used to discuss these issues with pupils to mitigate the manifestations of intolerance and hate speech.¹⁰⁰

The European Commission program “Rights, Equality and Citizenship” project “Prevention and Combating Intolerance in Latvia (CALDER)”^{101, 102} implemented in cooperation with the Law

⁹⁶ Project “On the Way to a More Tolerant Society: awareness, education, support and cooperation” – Available: <https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/en/projects/project-on-the-way-to-more-tolerant-society-awareness-515/>

⁹⁷ The project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and the Norwegian grant program “Active Population Fund”.

⁹⁸ The “On the Way to a More Tolerant Society” training programme is designed as a dedicated educational, methodical and support resource for promoting NGO leniency, so that each organisation can strengthen its knowledge and skills in the implementation of various activities and projects.

⁹⁹ Project “On the Way to a More Tolerant Society: awareness, education, support and cooperation” - Available: <https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/lv/projects/projekts-cela-to-indulgent-public-informesan-514/>

¹⁰⁰ Project “Together against disinformation and hate speech” has been implemented. - Available: <https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/lv/news/ir-istenots-project-set-anti-disinfectant-and-n-551/>

¹⁰¹ Prevention and Combating Intolerance in Latvia (CALDER) - Available: <https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/projekts/neiecietibas-noversanai-un-apwarrior-latvey-calder>

¹⁰² The duration of the project shall be 24 months.

Faculty of the University of Latvia, the Foundation for Public Integration, the Court Administration, the State Police and the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Latvia. The aim of the project is to prevent and eliminate racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and their expressions, particularly hate crimes and hate speech. The project sub-objectives are to ensure effective cooperation between national and law enforcement bodies, with a view to effectively tackling hate crimes and hate speech related to racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance, and to applying a more effective legal framework for hate crimes and hate speech with a view to ensuring better protection for victims of hate crimes. In 2021. During the project, it is planned to raise an expertise of 64 judges, lawyers, prosecutors, state and local government police officers in the identification of hate speech and hate crimes, effective investigation and enforcement of law, as well as in cooperation with project partners, the current legal framework will be assessed and legislative changes will be initiated, if necessary, in line with international law practice.

Promoting integration at local level

At the end of 2021, the Association "Shelter "Safe House"" organized the "Open to the World" ¹⁰³ workshop cycle - lectures included themes on intercultural communication, the emergence and breaking of stereotypes, international law in the context of migration, norms of human rights, identity concepts and the impact of globalization on cultural interaction. More than 120 people from all Latvia listened to the workshop cycle of the Society "Shelter "Safe House"". The workshops focused on social workers, educators, librarians, representatives of non-governmental organizations and other specialists. Within lectures, it was possible to meet third-country nationals who successfully integrated into Latvia.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ The activities of the Information Centre for arrivals under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund shall be provided and developed by the NGO "Safe Home". The Centre shall be co-financed by the European Union. The Grant Agreement No. PMIF/12/2020/3/01 /

¹⁰⁴ From 15 October to 16 December, the Society continues to organise the 'Open to the World' workshop cycle. - Available: <https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/informacijas-centrs-iebraucejiem-ii>

EMN National Report for study: [Integration policies and measures for migrant women from third countries](#)



In 2021, EMN Latvia developed a report on the integration of third-country nationals – women in Latvia to provide information to EMN study on the integration of migrant women in the European Union (hereinafter - EU). The EMN study will be published in 2022.

This study focuses on the integration of migrant women in key areas covered by the EU Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion in 2021-2027¹⁰⁵, including education and training, employment and skills, health and housing as a basis for integration into society. In the

study the term “integration” is used in the context of integration and inclusion policies and measures addressed to migrant women.

Main goals of the study:

- to define existing integration policies in EU Member States specifically targeting women;
- to provide examples of good practice and experience gained by EU Member States regarding measures for the integration of female migrants at national and regional and local level;
- provide an overview of specific policy areas or measures designed to eliminate the negative impact of Covid-19 to migrant women integration.

¹⁰⁵ European Commission, 'EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027', COM(2020) 758 final, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/?action=media.download&uuid=CDFE0088-C151-66D5-846F7C422DE2A423>, last accessed on 9 July 2021.

CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALIZATION

In comparison with the previous year, in 2020, the number of persons admitted to Latvian citizenship through naturalization has decreased by almost half- 419 (in 2020-725).¹⁰⁶ As in 2020, the largest part of individuals who have become citizens is former non-citizens of Latvia - 83%. 69 persons who have acquired Latvian citizenship are third-country nationals. The OCMA in cooperation with the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior implements the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020 national program project “Improvement and development of information systems and related processes supporting naturalization”¹⁰⁷ which aims are to increase the quality of the naturalization process. In 2021:

- Work on Citizenship Acquisition and Loss Information System (CALI) development continues;
- Video surveillance equipment were installed at 4 OCMA territorial division rooms where naturalization tests are carried out;
- An [electronic tool](#) is developed with self-check of language skills and knowledge needed for acquiring Latvian citizenship and two videos created to be inserted into the electronic tool;
- The Naturalization Information Campaign “ACT & RECEIVE!”¹⁰⁸, consisting of three videos (LV, RUS, ENG), audio promotion (LV, RUS), three infographics (LV, RUS, ENG), [brochure](#) (EN, RUS, ENG), naturalization and booklet (LV, RUS, ENG) on the electronic tool, social networks records, press releases, sociological survey of Latvian non-citizen, stateless person and third-country nationals with valid permanent residence permit for at least 5 years, attitude towards obtaining Latvian citizenship, as well as interviews on TV and radio;¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Data source: OCMA

¹⁰⁷ Project implementation time: 09.04.2019. - 30.06.2022.

¹⁰⁸ Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs has developed free self-check e-tool for citizenship applicants. – Available: <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/article/office-citizenship-and-migration-affairs-has-developed-free-self-check-e-tool-citizenship-applicants>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/naturalisation>

BORDER CONTROL, VISAS AND SCHENGEN MANAGEMENT

Management of external borders

On 3 September 2021, the amendments to the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia entered into force¹¹¹, in order to ensure fulfilment of functions of the SBG. Amendments to the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia determine cases and criteria, when a patrol lane and a border surveillance lane may be established at the external border, as well as clarify the determination of the national border lane along water bodies. At the same time, the Law provides for the Cabinet to adjust a number of issues related to the State border. The amendments were prepared in order to comply with the recommendations of the audit report No 2.4.1-11/2019 of the State Audit Office of Republic of Latvia on 8th of January 2020 “Have the State budget funds for the construction and maintenance of the infrastructure of the Republic of Latvia been used legally in achieving the stated objectives and results?”¹¹².

On 12 November 2021 Law on Construction of the External Land Border was adopted¹¹³. The purpose of the law is to ensure the rapid and efficient construction of the infrastructure necessary for the protection of the external land border by establishing a special legal framework. This law will determine the division of responsibilities between the Ministry of the Interior, other ministries, state institutions and capital companies in the preparation, design, construction and supervision of the construction of the border. The law will provide a higher priority for the coordination of decisions related to the construction of the border in all public administration institutions and wider involvement and cooperation of public institutions. The justification for drafting the Law is a rapid

¹¹¹Law [on Amendments to the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 160A, 20.08.2021 - [entered into force on 03.09.2021]

¹¹²Audit report No. 2.4.1-11/2019 of the Republic of Latvia on 8 January 2020 entitled “Are the State budget resources for the construction and maintenance of the border zone infrastructure of the Republic of Latvia used legally in achieving the objectives and results?”. – Available from: <https://www.lrvk.gov.lv/lv/revizijas/revizijas/noslegtas-revizijas/vai-valsts-budzeta-lidzekli-latvijas-republikas-robezas-joslas-infrastrukturabuvniecibai-un-uzturesanai-ir-izlietoti-likumigi-sasniedzot-izvirzitos-merkus-un-rezultatus>.

¹¹³ [Law on Construction of the External Land Border](#) - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 221A, 13.11.2021 - [entered into force on 14.11.2021]

increase of cases of irregular crossings the State border of the Republic of Latvia. In the neighbourhood, the Republic of Lithuania and Poland also recorded a large number of irregular crossings of the European Union border from the Republic of Belarus¹¹⁴.

- On 7 September 2021 Cabinet Regulation No. 614 on “Program “Growth and employment”, the specific objective of which 2.1.2 is “Ensure the introduction of innovative technological solutions in the control of the external borders”, was approved. The rules developed for implementing this goal in order to improve control of Latvia's external border and to introduce innovative technological solutions under its control, providing an opportunity to respond promptly and in real time to modern threats such as hybrid warfare, organized crime (e.g. smuggling), irregular immigration and other violations. The development of the project, which could last until 31st of December 2023, provides €15.5 million of funding, including €13.2 million from the European Regional Development Fund and €2.3 million in private funding.¹¹⁵

Since 29th of May 2021, the enhanced border surveillance regime has been introduced on the border of Latvia – Belarus, which allowed a rapid and efficient increase of the necessary personnel resources, using the resources of regional SBG, as well as re-deploying the resources of the State Border Guard from other SBG departments, if necessary. At the same time, since 12th of July 2021, personnel and technical resources of the National Guard have been involved in strengthening border surveillance activities. The reinforced border surveillance regime was introduced as the number of irregular crossings of the State border of the Republic of Latvia – the Republic of Belarus – increased rapidly as a result of the hybrid attacks carried out by the A. Lukashenko regime.

In accordance with Paragraph 1 of the Cabinet Order No. 518 “Regarding the Declaration of Emergency Situation”,¹¹⁶ adopted on 10th of August 2021, the emergency situation was declared in *Ludza* municipality, *Krāslava* municipality, *Augšdaugava* municipality and *Daugavpils* city from 11

¹¹⁴ Abstract to the draft legislation “External land border infrastructure construction law”. - Available at: <http://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/SaeimaLIVS13.nsf/0/811CCAEB1B582DB3C225878700346C93?OpenDocument#B>.

¹¹⁵ Innovative technologies will be used to strengthen controls at the country's external borders. – Available: <https://lvportals.lv/skaidrojumi/329229-ar-inovativam-tehnologijam-stiprinas-kontroli-uz-valsts-arejas-robezas-2021>.

¹¹⁶ Cabinet of Ministers Order No.518 of 10 August 2021 "[Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation](#)" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.152A, 10.08.2021 - [entered into force 10.08.2021]

August 2021 to 10 February 2022. In order to ensure compliance with the conditions of the emergency situation and to minimize the threat of hybrid attack, SGB, in cooperation with the National Armed Forces and the State Police, shall take deterrence measures to prevent third-country nationals from irregular border crossing. Technical means of the National Armed Forces and State Police are being used (vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, surveillance equipment, etc.). Border surveillance activities shall also involve representatives of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX). The emergency situation intends that applications for international protection may be lodged outside the territory in which the state of emergency has been declared. The right to international protection for persons travelling in an emergency situation from the Republic of Belarus and who need the relevant assistance is guaranteed on the basis of the human rights conventions binding on the Republic of Latvia, including the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951 and its Protocol of 31 January 1967 on the Status of Refugees, the European Convention on Human Rights of 4 November 1950 as an additional interpretation of the European Court of Human Rights.

On 1 February 2022, the Cabinet supported the extension of the emergency situation in the border with Belarus¹¹⁷, as the migration situation on the border remains tense. The emergency situation has been extended until 10th of May 2022 in the municipalities of *Ludza*, *Krāslava*, *Augšdaugava*, as well as in *Daugavpils*.

On 1 February 2022, the Cabinet approved the provisions "Regulations for the placement and maintenance of the National Border lanes, patrolling lanes and Border Label Monitoring lanes"¹¹⁸, which define the State border lanes determined both along the external State border and along the internal State borders, the organization of the patrol lane and the maintenance of the border marks and the maintenance of the surveillance lane requirements. This will ensure effective performance of SGB functions, as well as the rapid and efficient construction of the country's external border infrastructure on the State border of the Republic of Latvia with the Republic of

¹¹⁷ Cabinet of Ministers Order No 45 of 1 February 2022 "Amendment to Cabinet of Ministers Order No 518 of 10 August 2021 Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.24, 03.02.2022. - [entered into force 01.02.2022.]

¹¹⁸ Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 1 February 2022 No 79 "Regulations on the Establishment and Maintenance of the State Border Zone of the Republic of Latvia, the Patrol Zone and the Border Marker Surveillance Zone" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 24, 03.02.2022 - [entered into force 04.02.2022.]

Belarus and the Russian Federation.¹¹⁹ These Regulations shall also comply with the recommendations contained in the State Audit Office Report of 8th of January 2020 regarding the placement and maintenance of the State border lane, ensuring the economical use of State budget resources in conformity with regulatory enactments. Part of the State Audit Office recommendations were already fulfilled by the requirements of the Law “Amendments to the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia”, which entered into force on 3 September 2021.¹²⁰

The creation of the Latvian ETIAS State Unit and workplaces was completed in 2021 (3 positions in the national unit). The National Unit regularly participated in the meetings of eu-LISA/COM on the development and enforcement of ETIAS/EES projects. From December 2021 to January 2022, SBG officials (16 border guards) participated in theoretical training of the ETIAS system. The transitional period of the ETIAS system is expected to be April/May 2023 and the date of entry into service is 15th of May 2023.¹²¹

In relation to the decision taken by the Republic of Belarus on 24th of May 2021 on the need for diplomats of the Republic of Latvia to leave the Republic of Belarus, a SBG liaison officer returned to Latvia. In November 2021, this liaison officer started performing functions of SGB liaison officer in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. The permanent location of SGB liaison officer is Ukraine. The purpose of the liaison officer activities is to strengthen the control of the external border of the European Union and to promote effective management of migration flows in line with the requirements of the Schengen *acquis*. SGB liaison officers facilitate cross-border cooperation and the expansion of professional contacts between law enforcement agencies of EU Member States and third countries, thus reducing irregular cross-border activities and combating irregular migration to EU Member States.

In 2021, the State Border Guard College developed an upgrade program “Entry/Exit System” (e-Training) (hereinafter - Program) qualification-raising program. The program is based on e-teaching course for the Entry/Exit System developed by the European Border and Coast Guard

¹¹⁹ Annotation to the draft Cabinet of Ministers Regulation "Regulations on the Establishment and Maintenance of the State Border Lane, Patrol Lane and Border Marker Surveillance Lane of the Republic of Latvia" - Available: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/attachments/legal_acts/document_versions/8a4ba61f-21b1-491b-bc0e-2babad30724d/download.

¹²⁰ Requirements for the establishment and maintenance of the national border, patrol and surveillance lanes set out. - Available: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/nosaka-valsts-robezās-patrulesanas-un-robezīmju-uzraudzības-joslu-iekartosanas-un-uzturesanas-prasības>.

¹²¹ Source: SBG

Agency (FRONTEX). The program is intended for SBG officials who will be involved in the use of the entry/exit system (i.e. border checks and immigration controls). In 2021, 49 officials of SBG participated in the Program. The program is planned to be continued in 2022.

The procedures for border crossings and border checks were generally significantly affected by the national emergency situations declared due to limiting the spread of Covid-19 infection (09.11.2020-2020.06.04 .2021 and from 11.10.2021.), as well as the national legal arrangements and the applicable travel restrictions after the end of the emergency.

Cooperation with third countries in the field of border control

No new bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements with third countries in the field of combating irregular migration and external border control have been concluded in 2021 by SBG. During the period mentioned, cooperation was carried out on the basis of the cooperation agreements concluded previously and within the framework of the mutual cooperation plans. In 2021, work on the conclusion of a new inter-institutional cooperation protocol was continued with the Ukrainian Border Guard.

In 2021, a SBG liaison officer continued to perform his duties in Georgia. On the basis of bilateral cooperation plans, SBG shall implement cooperation with the State Border Guard Service of the Republic of Moldova, the Border Police of the Georgian Ministry of Interior, the Migration Department and the Patrol Police, as well as the Ukrainian Border Guard Service.

Schengen Governance

On 23 September 2021, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Law on the Functioning of the Schengen Information System¹²², which streamlined the Schengen Information System, extending the possibility of announcing additional categories of persons and objects in international

¹²² Law on Amendments to the Law on the Operation of the Schengen Information System - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 193, 06.10.2021. - [entered into force 28.12.2021.]

search. In the face of increasing migration in Member States, effective exchange of information between Member States is needed to address challenges such as migration management, integrated border management of Member States' external borders, the fight against terrorism and cross-border crime. Amendments to the Law also provide the use of the Schengen Information System for the return of irregular staying third-country nationals. Consequently, an effective exchange of information between Member States is necessary to ensure a sustainable response to these problems.¹²³¹²⁴

On the basis of requests from the European Commission, in 2021 SBG actively offered its experts for Schengen evaluation visits. In general, the European Commission has approved the participation of three SBG experts, two of whom have participated in the 2021 Schengen assessment visits to Cyprus (external (maritime) borders) and Greece (external (air) borders). The participation of one expert of SBG was not realised due to COVID-19.

In 2021, the annual vulnerability assessment carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) was successfully implemented in Latvia as part of the European Union quality control mechanism (in addition to the Schengen evaluation mechanism) for the proper functioning of the Schengen area and in order to ensure continued preparedness at both Union and national level to respond to problems at external borders.

¹²³ Annotation to the draft law "Amendments to the Law on the Schengen Information System" - Available: <http://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/SaeimaLIVS13.nsf/0/40716E1463DC8B8DC22586310024419A?OpenDocument#B>.

¹²⁴ Amendments to the Law are designed to implement Regulation (EU) 2018/1862 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the establishment, operation and use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) in police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters and amending and repealing Council Decision 2007/533/JHA and repealing Regulation (EC) No. 1986/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Decision 2010/261/EU, Regulation (EU) 2010/261/ES¹²⁴ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the use of the Schengen Information System for the return of illegally¹²⁴ staying third-country nationals and Regulation (EU) 2018/1861 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the establishment of the Schengen Information System (SIS) the establishment, operation and use of border checks and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement and amending and repealing Regulation (EC) No. 1987/2006.

VISA POLICY

In 2021, the total number of issued visas has decreased by 53%, reaching 16 903 (in 2020 - 36,339); the number of issued long-term visas has also decreased. Of the visas issued, 16,189 were Schengen visas and 714 were long-term (D) visas.¹²⁵

Table 8-1.

Total number of issued visas by type, 2020-2021.¹²⁶

	2020	2021
Schengen visas	30 389	16 189
Long-term (D) visas	5 950	714
Total	36 339	16 903

As a result of the complexity of diplomatic relations, due to expulsion of Latvian diplomats from Belarus in May 2021, the Latvian Embassy in Minsk (Belarus) ceased to perform consular functions (issuance of visas). The issuance of visas in Belarus continues by the Latvian consulate in Vitebsk, as well as by the German Embassy in Minsk.

Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers 15 June 2021 No 369 "Amendments to Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers from 9 June 2020 No 360 "Epidemiological safety measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 infection" ¹²⁷ determined that the missions of the Republic of Latvia to foreign states accepted long-term visa applications. The amendments were made as the situation in relation to the spread of Covid-19 infection improved and separate measures were taken to reduce travel restrictions. The amendments were in force from 16th June 2021 to 11th October 2021. The

Data source: OCMA.

Data source: OCMA.

¹²⁷ Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers from 15th June 2021 No 369 "Amendments to Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers from 9 June 2020 No 360 "Epidemiological safety measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 infection" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 114A, 15.06.2021. - [entered into force 16.06.2021. [expired 11.10.2021.]

amendments provided an opportunity for employers to satisfy the demand for labour, as well as for other categories of immigrants to visit the Republic of Latvia.

At the end of 2021, the project of the Internal Security Fund for 2014-2020 program "Use and development of the National Visa Information System (NVIS) (Phase 2)" has been completed. The results of project:

1. Solution developed within the framework of the existing technical specification to ensure interoperability between the NVIS and the Entry and Exit Information System;

2) Reduced corruption risks in the visa issuance process;

3) employees of the SBG, OCMA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who are involved in the visa process, have been trained.

4) five OCMA IT specialists have been trained for information systems management, maintenance and/or development issues.

The aim of project was to improve the quality of the information technology used in the visa processing process and to provide the system users an appropriate working environment and the necessary training and consultations on topical issues of the EU visa application processing procedure.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS SMUGGLING

In July 2021, irregular migrants began crossing external border of the European Union from Belarus. Belarus contributed to the influx of irregular third-country nationals into Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, thereby attempting to weaken security of the European Union external border and the capacity of the asylum system. In order to ensure national security, an emergency situation was announced during which the possibility of crossing the EU border from Belarus was limited. First, on 2nd August, the emergency situation was announced in Lithuania, where border guards were given the task of directing persons wishing to cross the green border to border crossing points and diplomatic missions where they could lodge asylum applications. On 10th August, the emergency was announced in Latvia, in the administrative territory bordering Belarus. Persons attempting to cross the border were returned to Belarus. During the emergency, asylum applications were accepted in the territory of Latvia, which was located outside the area affected by the emergency. Poland announced an emergency on 2nd September, giving more rights to the border guards to fend off irregular border crossings.

A new term was introduced in the Schengen Borders Code: instrumentalisation.

Instrumentalisation

A situation where a third country instigates irregular migratory flows into the Union by actively encouraging or facilitating the movement of third-country nationals to the external borders, onto or from within its territory and then onwards to those external borders, where such actions are indicative of an intention of a third country to destabilise the Union or a Member State, where the nature of such actions is liable to put at risk essential State functions, including its territorial integrity, the maintenance of law and order or the safeguard of its national security.

In 2021, 455 third-country nationals were detained for irregular crossing of the “green” border (23 in 2020). The main groups of detainees were citizens of Iraq, Afghanistan, Belarus and Russia. Most persons were detained on the Latvian-Belarusian border.¹²⁸

THE SBG refused an entrance to Latvia for 861 persons, 35% more than in 2020 (638 persons). Most frequently, in 2021, the entry was refused to citizens of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan who were unable to produce a valid entry visa, residence permit, travel documents, as well as where information provided by third-country nationals showed a genuine threat of irregular entry and residence.

In 2021, 4045 persons were prevented from border crossing irregularly by SBG.

The visas of the Schengen States were revoked to 91 third-country nationals (163 in 2020). The reduction in the flow of travellers is explained by impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

Prevention of abuse of legal migration routes

In 2021, the number of illegally employed third-country nationals detained by SGB officials decreased by 78%, with a total of 27 persons (124 in 2020).¹²⁹

On 18th March 2021 Regulation of Cabinet No. 170, “Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 846 of 10th October 2006, “Regulations Regarding Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Appointment in Study Programs””¹³⁰, were adopted in order to facilitate more responsible recruitment of foreign students, supplementing the rules for the reception of higher education and colleges with a provision regarding the performance and storage of interviews with foreigners. The previous regulatory framework for universities in work with foreign students, particularly in attracting and selecting students, established a high degree of autonomy for the institution, but at the same time it created significant risks, including the reputation of Latvia higher education and a high administrative burden for state administration institutions, if universities and colleges did not make careful selection of candidates from third countries. In order to prevent people with low pre-education level or those who cannot enter their country of origin or home state universities, it is

¹²⁸ Source: SBG.

¹²⁹ Source: SBG.

¹³⁰ Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 18 March 2021 No 170 "Amendments to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 10 October 2006 No 846 "Regulations Regarding Requirements, Criteria and Procedure for Admission to Study Programmes". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 56, 22.03.2021. - [entered into force 23.03.2021.]

necessary to ascertain the motivation of the potential student and the ability to study in the selected study program by conducting an in-depth interview with each candidate.

Amendments to the Immigration Law and Cabinet regulations¹³¹ were prepared in order to comply with the following tasks given by the Cabinet of Ministers in 18th August 2020¹³²:

- drafting amendments to laws and regulations to require higher education institutions to report in a timely manner the withdrawal of third-country students from higher education institutions, as well as the absence of students from lectures without a justifiable reason;
- drafting amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulations on Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes.

On 2 September 2021, amendments to the Immigration Law¹³³ were adopted which oblige an accredited educational institution to inform the SBG in writing immediately, but no later than within three working days, that a third-country national who has obtained a temporary residence permit for the purpose of study or training:

- 1) has dropped out or has been dismissed from the list of students;
- 2) has been absent from learning or study process for 14 consecutive days without a valid reason and cannot be contacted.

The purpose of the amendments is to prevent the misuse of studying as the grounds to enter and stay in Latvia (European Union) and to increase the ability of the competent authorities to prevent irregular stay of persons in the Republic of Latvia and other countries of the Schengen Agreement.

¹³¹ Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 18 March 2021 No 170 "Amendments to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 10 October 2006 No 846 "Regulations Regarding Requirements, Criteria and Procedure for Admission to Study Programmes".

¹³² In accordance with point 49 § 8 of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of 18 August 2020.

¹³³ Law on Amendments to the Immigration Law - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.176A, 02.09.2021. - [entered into force 27.09.2021.]

EMN national report for study: [Detention and alternatives to detention in asylum and return procedures](#)

The National Report for the study “Detention and Alternative Measures to Detention in Asylum and Return Procedures” provides an overview of the legislation and practice in the Republic of Latvia on the application of detention and alternative measures to detention. The report discusses the principles, challenges and advantages of alternative measures to detention, as well as the criteria in the Immigration Law and the Asylum Law that should be taken into account by responsible officials when deciding whether to detain a person. The study was carried out in cooperation with the State Border Guard. A synthesis of the study is available [here](#).

Forged travel documents

In 2021, 24 third-country nationals were detected in Latvia using 32 forged travel documents, and 73 forged border crossing stamps were detected in the passports of 29 persons.

Cooperation with Frontex

Latvian representatives took part in the following joint operations organized by FRONTEX in Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Hungary, Spain, Romania, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Georgia and Lithuania. (388 officials in total, including 26 State Police officers):

- Joint operations at external land and air borders, return operations, rapid reaction border tasks (RBI Lithuania / Flexible Operational Activities Land / Albania Land / Serbia Land/ Montenegro Land / Focal Points Land / Coordination Points Air / Focal Points Air / Focal Points Operational Activities at Air BCPs / FRONTEX Situation Centre) – 115 experts;
- Joint operations at the external maritime borders (Indalo / Themis / Poseidon / Minerva / Coordination Points Sea / Canary Islands) – 273 experts.

Frontex border guards were working on the border between Latvia and Belarus.

In 2021, SBG officers participated in the Entry/Exit System e-learning organized by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) (59 SBG officers trained).

PREVENTING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

12 persons have been identified as suspects in criminal proceedings for human trafficking in 2021 and one person has been convicted.¹³⁴ Two third-country nationals have been recognized as victims of trafficking in human beings.

The Ministry of the Interior has prepared an overview of the situation of human trafficking and the fight against human trafficking in Latvia in 2021.¹³⁵ The overview concludes that trends observed in previous years continued: more frequent labour exploitation cases, greater impact of digital technologies on victim recruitment and organization of human trafficking. In recent years, there has been a trend towards more and more third-country nationals being identified as victims, for example from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and India. However, this trend stopped in 2021, and mainly cases of exploitation of Latvian nationals were detected domestically. This may be due to the



restrictions related to COVID-19. In 2020, the number of victims was higher among those who arrived in Latvia before the pandemic started, but lower in 2021. This means that, as the pandemic becomes less widespread, the proportion of third-country nationals among identified victims could rise again.¹³⁶

¹³⁴Source: Ministry of the Interior.

¹³⁵Overview on preventing and combating of human trafficking in Latvia - Available at: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/parskats-par-cilveku-tirdzniecibas-noversanu-un-apkarosanu-latvija>

¹³⁶Overview on preventing and combating of human trafficking in Latvia - Available at: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/parskats-par-cilveku-tirdzniecibas-noversanu-un-apkarosanu-latvija>.

On 9 June 2021, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) held a remote international conference on Competence building, assistance provision and prevention of trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation (CAPE). The conference was the closing event of the project "Capacity Building, Assistance and Improvement of Criminal Procedures on Labour Exploitation Cases in the Baltic Sea Region", coordinated by the CBSS and the Latvian Ministry of the Interior as the lead partner in this project. The participants of the conference discussed the need to review the framework for preventing human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation. Participants stressed the need to promote the involvement of victims of human trafficking and to work closely with employers and trade unions. Measures taken so far also need to be carefully evaluated to make sure they are working.¹³⁷

In June 2021, State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior *Dimitrijs Trofimovs* signed a Joint Statement of Commitment to work against human trafficking for labour exploitation in the Baltic Sea Region¹³⁸, thus confirming the willingness of the Ministry of the Interior to continue working to strengthen Latvia's capacity to prevent human trafficking. The Commitment foresees that Member States will implement a number of measures to strengthen the capacity and capability of various institutions to prevent human trafficking, identify victims and prosecute perpetrators. Likewise, the Commitment provides to improve legal acts, supervision and practical cooperation with employers, as well as to ensure appropriate protection and support for the victims of trafficking in human beings. Latvia is joined in the Joint Statement by nine other Baltic Sea countries - Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden.¹³⁹

On 28 September 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a new Plan for Combatting of Human Trafficking 2021-2023¹⁴⁰ aimed at ensuring a continuous and coherent national policy to prevent trafficking in human beings.

¹³⁷ Assessment of progress in preventing trafficking for labour exploitation - Available: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/verte-sasniegto-cilveku-tirdzniecibas-darbaspeka-ekspluatacijas-nolukos-noversana>.

¹³⁸ The text of the joint statement is available here: <https://cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/joint-statement.pdf>.

¹³⁹ The Ministry of the Interior signs the Joint Statement of Commitment to work against human trafficking for labour exploitation. - Available at: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/iekslietu-ministrija-paraksta-kopigo-pazinojumu-par-apnemsanos-stradat-pret-cilveku-tirdzniecibu-darbaspeka-ekspluatacijas-noluka>.

¹⁴⁰ Cabinet Regulation No. 690 of 28 September 2021 "[Regarding Plan on Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings for 2021-2023](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 190, 01.10.2021 – [entered into force on 28.09.2021]

The Plan sets out 4 lines of action:

1. prevention, which includes training and education programmes, awareness-raising campaigns, public and private sector policies, protection measures for people who have experienced trafficking in human beings, national programmes aimed at tackling the root causes of trafficking;
2. protection, which includes the legal framework for the protection and rights of victims, the provision of social services and case management, accommodation, medical services, mental health services, information, legal services, training and education programmes, clothing and food, translation services, education, self-care and self-help skills, employment support, reintegration into society;
3. prosecution of perpetrators, which involves obtaining and investigating information, prosecuting and holding accountable those involved in trafficking offences, strengthening legislation and institutional action. This dimension can be strengthened by improving anti-trafficking procedures, training and education, and the anti-trafficking regulatory framework;
4. partnerships involving the private sector, the public and local sectors, leadership, diversity, credibility building, person-centred sustainability, effective communication.¹⁴¹

From October 2021, the Society “Shelter “Safe House”” started implementing a new project “Various Preventive Measures to Reduce Labour Exploitation”. The aim of the project is to draw public attention to the prevalence of labour exploitation as a form of human trafficking in Latvia. The project includes a study on “Human Trafficking in Employment and Labour Services”.¹⁴² The topicality of the study is related to the guarantee of human rights and fundamental freedoms in employment relations. The EU's borderless system and more favourable economic conditions are attracting more foreign workers. In turn, the weak knowledge of foreigners about the Latvian legal framework, their social, cultural and economic considerations make this group of persons an

¹⁴¹ Several institutions are responsible for the implementation of the measures included in the Plan - the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Latvia, the Financial Intelligence Service, the State Inspectorate for the Protection of Children's Rights, the State Revenue Service, the State Labour Inspectorate, the Republic of Latvia Ombudsman's Office, the State Police, the State Border Guard.

¹⁴²“Human trafficking for employment and labour services” - Available: https://patverums-dm.lv/svs/uploads/files/phm_petijums_2022.docx.

increased risk group of victims of human trafficking in terms of labour exploitation. The study has developed various proposals for changes to the regulatory framework.¹⁴³

On 21 February 2022, the Council of Europe Group of Experts against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) published its third evaluation report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in Latvia.¹⁴⁴ The GRETA Recommendations Summary¹⁴⁵ lists the recommendations made to Latvia, which include, for example, the right to information, legal aid and free legal assistance, psychological assistance, compensation and other areas related to the prevention of trafficking in human beings and support of the victims.

Training and awareness raising

In 2021, the Ombudsman concluded the project “Effective Implementation of the Surveillance and Expulsion Procedure (Phase 1)”. The aim of the project was to ensure that the procedures for monitoring expelled persons comply with Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008.¹⁴⁶ The project's immediate objective is to develop a mechanism for monitoring the forced removal of foreigners in line with EU standards and requirements.

In the course of the project guidelines¹⁴⁷ were developed and the observer of forced return questionnaire was improved to better identify victims of trafficking, also training material was prepared¹⁴⁸.¹⁴⁹ Several training sessions were organised during the project. The last training exercise of the project took place in February 2021. The target group of this training was employees of

¹⁴³ Various preventive measures to reduce labour exploitation - Available: <https://patverums-dm.lv/lv/dazadi-prevenences-pasakumi-darba-ekspluatacijas-mazinasanai>.

¹⁴⁴ EVALUATION REPORT LATVIA GRETA(2022)02 Third evaluation round Access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking in human beings. - Available: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/media/8068/download>.

¹⁴⁵ Summary of recommendations made to Latvia in the third round of the Council of Europe GRETA evaluation, in Latvian. – Available: <https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/media/8071/download>.

¹⁴⁶ Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals - Official Journal of the European Union | L 348/98, 24.12.2008

¹⁴⁷ Guidelines on the Implementation of the Mechanism for the Supervision of Persons subject to Enforced Return 2021 - Available: https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/uploads/content/vadlinijas_makets_final_1614344118.pdf.

¹⁴⁸ Training material "Ensuring the rights of unaccompanied minors in removal proceedings" 2021 - Available: https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/uploads/content/nepilngadi_gie_makets_final_1614336140.pdf.

¹⁴⁹ Project "Effective implementation of the surveillance and expulsion process (Phase 1)". - Available at: <https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/lv/pages/petijumi-un-publikacijas/projekti/pmif>.

Orphan's and Custody Courts, and the issue of ensuring children's rights in removal proceedings was addressed in depth during the training. The project has improved the monitoring procedure for forced return procedures by identifying additional questions that will help the monitor to identify potential victims of trafficking and, in cooperation with the authorities responsible for the prevention of trafficking in human beings, to ensure the protection of the rights of these victims. The project has strengthened inter-institutional cooperation to identify victims of trafficking in human beings before removal and to ensure the protection of their rights, including against re-victimisation and exposure to traffickers.

In May 2021, the EMN Latvian Contact Point participated in the organisation of an online training seminar "Recognition of Victims of Human Trafficking and Reporting Actions in Case of Recognition of a Victim of Human Trafficking" for the staff of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. The seminar provided information on trafficking in human beings and the identification of potential victims of trafficking in human beings and practical recommendations for multidisciplinary cooperation in the fight against trafficking in human beings and the best way to report a victim of trafficking in human beings.

Coordination and cooperation of key actors

In October 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between Riga Airport, the national airline airBaltic, the Ministry of the Interior, the Society "Shelter "Safe House"" and the society "Centrs MARTA" on active cooperation in preventing human trafficking. In the framework of the Memorandum of Cooperation, a seminar of the Memorandum partners was held in 2021, and the Ministry of the Interior prepared information materials on the profile and characteristics of a victim of trafficking in human beings. The Memorandum of Cooperation aims to strengthen cooperation to facilitate the early identification of cases of trafficking in human beings at the airport, during flights or at airport border crossing points.

Identification of victims of trafficking in human beings

New project "ELECT THB" (Strengthening Law Enforcement Cooperation and Training to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings) launched in September 2021¹⁵⁰. The project's lead partner is Finland and cooperation partners are Estonia and Latvia. In the course of the project a specific training programme will be developed and training will be provided for the State Police, the SBG, the State Labour Inspectorate, prosecutors, judges and other professionals. Two main themes will be addressed - identification of victims of trafficking in human beings for sexual and labour exploitation.¹⁵¹ The aim of the project is to strengthen law enforcement cooperation and provide training in the prevention of trafficking in human beings.

[EMN study on recognition, identification and protection of third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings](#)¹⁵²

The [national report](#)¹⁵³ prepared for the EMN study provides information on the actions taken in Latvia to detect, identify and protect victims of trafficking in human beings.

Latvia is the country of origin, destination and transit of victims of trafficking in human beings and the country where trafficking in human beings takes place.¹⁵⁴ Until 2019, Latvia was the country of origin of victims of trafficking in human beings - Latvian citizens were victims of trafficking either abroad or in Latvia. Latvia remains the country of origin of victims of trafficking in human beings, however, as of 2019, Latvian authorities are increasingly faced with cases where third-country nationals are recognised as victims of trafficking in human beings. Victims of trafficking in human

¹⁵⁰ELECT THB. Enhanced Law Enforcement Cooperation and Training on Trafficking in Human Beings. - Available: https://heuni.fi/-/elect_thb

¹⁵¹ Source: Ministry of the Interior.

¹⁵² Third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings: detection, identification and protection. Available: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/whats-new/publications/third-country-national-victims-trafficking-human-beings-detection-identification-and-protection_en

¹⁵³ EMN National Report: Recognition, identification and protection of third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings - Available: <https://www.emn.lv/en/detection-identification-and-protection-of-third-country-national-victims-of-trafficking-in-human-beings/>

¹⁵⁴ 48 victims of human trafficking identified in Latvia in 2020 - Available: <https://lvportals.lv/skaidrojumi/324837-latvija-2020-gada-identificeti-48-cilveku-tirdzniecibas-upuri-2021>.

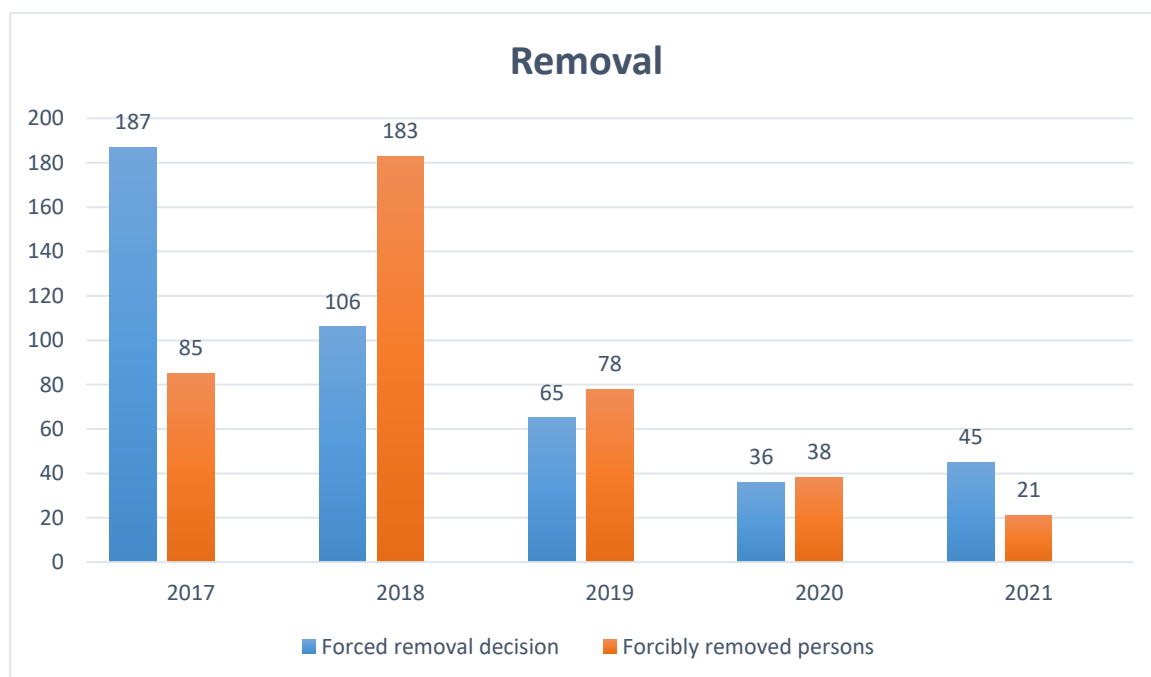
beings in Latvia are most often victims of labour exploitation. In most cases, Tajik, Uzbek and Indian nationals are subjected to labour exploitation. The highest number of identified victims of trafficking in human beings was in 2020 - 31 persons.

As the exposure of third-country nationals to trafficking in human beings has been observed in Latvia since approximately 2019 and the issue has been raised relatively recently, it is still necessary to improve the existing coordination procedure between the responsible institutions by developing a legal framework and cooperation procedure.

As an example of good practice, representatives of NGOs providing support to victims of trafficking in of human beings point to the fact that the national programme allows authorised NGOs to develop tailor-made rehabilitation plans for victims of trafficking in of human beings, which include personalised opportunities for vocational training and job search. An individualised plan allows providing help to meet the specific needs of the client, contributing to their full rehabilitation.

RETURN AND READMISSION

In 2021, the number of persons who left Latvia voluntarily decreased slightly - 742 (in 2020 - 870). In most cases, they were nationals of Ukraine and Uzbekistan.¹⁵⁵ 97 persons received assistance for voluntary return. In 2021, the number of forcibly removed persons continued to decrease, reaching 21 (in 2020 - 38¹⁵⁶). The largest numbers of forcibly removed third-country nationals were from Vietnam and Russia.



During the emergency situation on Latvia's border with Belarus, the International Organisation for Migration actively implemented a voluntary return programme for foreigners

¹⁵⁵ Source: OCMA.

admitted to the Republic of Latvia on humanitarian grounds. Information campaign to inform foreigners about the possibility of migrating to their home country, distribution of handouts. All foreigners who expressed a wish to leave voluntarily were referred to the International Organisation for Migration to organise their departure.

On 2 November 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers approved Regulation No 728 "Regulations on the temporary holding facility and specially equipped vehicle of the State Border Guard"¹⁵⁷. Provisions of the earlier regulation that no longer meet modern requirements have been deleted and provisions that clarify the furnishing requirements in line with international standards, such as the minimum space requirement, have now been included. The Regulations lay down the procedure for the placement and detention of a person in, removal from and release from the temporary holding room of the SBG, as well as the requirements for the furnishing and equipment of the temporary holding room and the specially equipped vehicle used for the transfer of detained persons. These rules improve the conditions of accommodation of persons temporarily detained and the furnishing and equipment requirements for the premises concerned.

Strengthening cooperation with third countries of origin and transit on removal and readmission management

On 29 October 2021, the Protocol between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Armenia on the implementation of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Armenia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation entered into force.¹⁵⁸

In the second half of 2021, the number of third-country nationals who irregularly crossed the state border between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Latvia increased significantly. Most were Iraqi citizens without valid travel documents (passports, ID cards). As part of the return

¹⁵⁷Cabinet Regulation No. 728 of 2 November 2021 "[Regulations Regarding the Temporary Holding Premises of the State Border Guard and a Specially Equipped Vehicle](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 214, 04.11.2021. - [entered into force on 05.11.2021.]

¹⁵⁸ [Cabinet Regulation of 26 October 2021 No. 708 On the protocol between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Armenia on the implementation of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Armenia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation](#)- *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 209, 28.10.2021. - [entered into force 29.10.2021.]

procedure, the State Border Guard in cooperation with the Embassy of Iraq in Warsaw carried out extensive work on identification of persons, resulting in two identification missions of the Embassy of Iraq in Latvia (7 December 2021 and 24 February 2022), during which 36 return certificates were successfully issued.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Source: SBG.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

On 14 April 2021, the Latvian Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines 2021-2027¹⁶⁰ were approved, noting that Latvia's development cooperation policy shall, as far as possible, be implemented in coordination with security, migration and trade policies. Synergies are sought with these policies, as well as with external economic and environmental policy instruments. The intention of the Guidelines is to facilitate coordinated action by those involved in the implementation of Latvia's development cooperation policy, consistent with the stated objectives, priorities and principles of good practice.

On 18 May 2021, the Latvian Development Cooperation Policy Plan 2021-2023 was approved¹⁶¹. It is designed to facilitate the implementation of Latvia's development cooperation priorities. The Plan includes concrete measures to contribute to the Latvian Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines 2021-2027. The following measures are set out in the 2014-2020 Development Cooperation Policy of Latvia: "to promote sustainable development and poverty eradication, the rule of law and good governance in developing countries, in particular in Latvia's priority partner countries, contributing to the implementation of Agenda 2030", by implementing development cooperation in the areas of rule of law promotion, public administration development and capacity building, entrepreneurship development, gender equality, promotion of democratic participation and civil society development, education, climate change and environmental protection. The Plan thus strengthens Latvia's role as a bilateral donor and pursues Latvia's foreign policy interests. The aim of the Plan is to set out concrete measures to contribute to the

¹⁶⁰ Cabinet Order No. 245 of 14 April 2021 "[On Development Cooperation Policy for 2021-2027](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 73, 16.04.2021. – [entered into force on 14.04.2021.]

¹⁶¹ Cabinet Order of 18 May 2021 No. 337 "[On Development Cooperation Policy Plan 2021-2023](#)" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 98, 24.05.2021. - [entered into force 18.05.2021.]

achievement of the objective of Latvia's development cooperation policy as set out in the Latvian Development Cooperation Policy Framework 2021-2027 - to contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030 in developing countries, in particular in Latvia's priority partner countries, promoting sustainable development and poverty eradication, the rule of law and good governance.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

EU - European Union

EMN - European Migration Network

IOM - International Organization for Migration

OCMA - Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

SBG - State Border Guard

AMIF - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund