



Office of Citizenship and
Migration Affairs
Republic of Latvia

EMN

European Migration Network



LATVIA

THE INTEGRATION OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Riga, 2022

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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1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The study focuses on the integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market.

As stated in the EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 “The EU’s work on integration and inclusion is underpinned by a shared set of principles and values, which should also guide the work of EU Member States when they design, implement or review their strategies for integration.”¹ Research has shown that labour market integration is one of the key elements of migrant integration and successful participation in society. For many migrants, building a new life entails the important aspect of finding appropriate work in the host country, because it is related to their economic independence, health and overall wellbeing.²

In the EU, access to the labour market is a shared competence, regulated for different groups under various legislative acts. For applicants of international protection access to the labour market is regulated under Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU).³ The idea of allowing access to the labour market for the applicants of international protection is connected with the aim of promoting the self-sufficiency of applicants even whilst their applications are being processed. This contributes also to having better prospects for eventual integration of those who will ultimately be granted protection.⁴

Hence, access to the labour market with an aim to increase applicants' self-reliance and possible integration prospects is regulated in EU Member States by the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) currently in force. However, in terms of practical implementation, EU Member States have considerable flexibility in deciding whether to allow this access once the nine months deadline set as a maximum in the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) is reached, directly after the application is lodged, or sometime in between. Although almost all EU Member States give applicants access to the labour market during the asylum procedure, the period after which access to employment is granted, varies considerably from one Member State to another.⁵

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, COM(2020) 758 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0758&from=EN>, last accessed on 28 July 2022.

² Dustmann, C., Fasani, F., Frattini, T., Minale, L., Schönberg, U., Sunde, U., and Trigari, A. ‘On the economics and politics of refugee migration’ (2017), *Economic Policy*, 32, p. 497. de Vroome, T., and van Tubergen, F. ‘The employment experience of refugees in the Netherlands’ (2010), 44, p. 376. Ager, A., and Strang, A. ‘Understanding integration: A conceptual framework’ (2008), *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21, p.166.

³ 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 (recast) OJ L 180, 29.6.2013, p. 96–116.

⁴ Recital 23 in the Directive 2013/33/EU.

⁵ Please see the results of relevant past ad hoc queries on that topic:

European Migration Network, ‘Ad-Hoc Query on Residence permit and labour market needs’. Requested by COM on 11 December 2020. Link: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2021-02/202075_residence_permit_and_labour_market_needs_en.pdf

European Migration Network, ‘Ad-Hoc Query on access of international protection applicants to the labour market’, Requested by LU EMN NCP on 19th July 2016. Link: <https://ec.europa.eu/home->

EU Member States experienced an unprecedented influx of incoming applicants for international protection in the period of 2014-2016,⁶ which, in addition to immense pressure on the asylum systems, also led to changes in the integration programmes and activities offered to applicants for international protection. According to the results of a study carried out by the European Migration Network (EMN) in 2018,⁷ one of the main areas where the changes were detected was access to the labour market, with the study reporting on different measures taken after 2015 to improve such access for applicants of international protection. For example, Belgium reduced the waiting period between the lodging of the application for international protection and access to the labour market from six to four months, while Latvia reduced this period from nine to six months. In Germany, the Integration Act of 6 August 2016 foresaw the creation of 100 000 work opportunities for applicants for international protection to bridge the long waiting period of several months between the lodging of a claim and the decision on the status. Austria and Sweden focussed on better matching of qualifications with employment and, alongside Belgium, introduced measures for a swifter recognition of applicants' qualifications. Belgium offered an alternative to the recognition of a diploma to the applicants for international protection. Namely, they introduced a trajectory which could include, depending on the profession / field of study, participation in a limited number of courses on a related master discipline, attending one or more seminars, practical training sessions, or authoring a paper. With the aim of better matching applicants' qualifications with available jobs, Sweden introduced a fast-track scheme. Finally, Finland piloted a prepaid debit card, to which the employer could transfer the salary, to overcome the obstacle posed by the fact that applicants for international protection were not allowed to open a bank account. Although, the above-mentioned study brought out several changes EU Member States carried out in the period of 2014-2016, an in-depth study for the more recent years is needed to examine further the laws, policies and practices (measures) of the EMN Member States and Observer Countries and developments when it comes to the integration in the labour market of applicants for international protection.

As noted above, the first point of divergence between the EU Member States is *when* labour market access is granted. Further issues relate to variations in the laws, policies and measures which guarantee that this access, when granted, is *effective*.

[affairs/system/files/2020-](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/2016.1091b_lu_access_of_international_protection_applicants_to_the_labour_market.pdf)

[09/2016.1091b_lu_access_of_international_protection_applicants_to_the_labour_market.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/2016.1091b_lu_access_of_international_protection_applicants_to_the_labour_market.pdf)

European Migration Network, 'Ad-Hoc Query on access to the labour market for asylum seekers', Requested by AT EMN NCP on 23rd January 2015. Compilation produced on 3rd June 2015. Link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/654_emn_ahq_access_to_the_labour_market_for_asylum_seekers_wider_dissemination.pdf)

[09/654_emn_ahq_access_to_the_labour_market_for_asylum_seekers_wider_dissemination.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/654_emn_ahq_access_to_the_labour_market_for_asylum_seekers_wider_dissemination.pdf)

European Migration Network, 'Ad-Hoc Query on the rules of access to labour market for asylum seekers'.

Requested by FR EMN NCP on 25th October 2010. Compilation produced on 10th December 2010. Link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/269_emn_ad-](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/269_emn_ad-hoc_query_rules_of_access_to_labour_market_for_asylum_seekers_25oct2010_wider_disseminat_en.pdf)

[hoc_query_rules_of_access_to_labour_market_for_asylum_seekers_25oct2010_wider_disseminat_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/269_emn_ad-hoc_query_rules_of_access_to_labour_market_for_asylum_seekers_25oct2010_wider_disseminat_en.pdf)

⁶ Overall figures of Eurostat show a total of 431 095 first time asylum applicants in 2013 and 626 960 in 2014 in the European Union. In 2015 and 2016 more than 1.2 million first time applicants for international protection were registered.

⁷ European Migration Network, 'Changing Influx of Asylum Seekers 2014-2016', 2018,

[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/00_eu_changing_influx_study_synthesis_final_en.pdf)

[09/00_eu_changing_influx_study_synthesis_final_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/00_eu_changing_influx_study_synthesis_final_en.pdf), last accessed on 28 July 2022.

Under the expression 'effective access', there are several questions that need to be looked at. As the practical implementation of access to the labour market is under national laws, questions arise about whether EMN Member States and Observer countries,⁸ for example, use labour market tests, and what kind of impact they have in practice. Another basis for divergence comes from the rights that applicants in different EU Member States are entitled to when accessing the labour market and whether they are guaranteed equal treatment with nationals of the Member State or similar to as other third-country nationals who are working in the European Union (EU) (for example under the Single Permit Directive⁹ or the Seasonal Workers Directive).¹⁰ Another issue which allows divergences between the EMN Member States and would need to be explored further, is whether applicants for international protection are excluded from some specific labour market sectors and, if so, if this is limited in time (for example in some cases for certain seasonal sectors). Another question would be on the rights of the applicants in different EU Member States as regards the length of employment permits and hence, contract duration, equal treatment for freedom of association and affiliation, education and vocational training, the recognition of professional qualifications (including formal qualifications that cannot be documented) and diplomas and social security.

Access to the labour market for the applicants of international protection would need to be in full compliance with labour market standards (such as a minimum wage, working conditions), which should also help to avoid distortions in the labour market. Research suggests that differences between EU Member States' rules on access to the labour market may also create incentives for secondary movements of asylum seekers.¹¹

While several EU Member States do not apply any specific restrictions¹² with regard to the applicants' access to the labour market but as integration measures vary, it is important to have an up-to-date and clearer overview of the ways the integration

⁸ The EMN National Contact Points (EMN NCPs) coordinate the EMN activities at national level in all EU Member States (except Denmark) and the EMN observers, namely Norway, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. For more information, please see: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-members_en, last accessed 14 July 2022.

⁹ Directive 2011/98/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State OJ L 343, 23.12.2011, p. 1–9.

¹⁰ Directive 2014/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers OJ L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 375–390.

¹¹ European Migration Network, 'EMN Policy brief on migrant's movements through the Mediterranean, 2016, <https://emnbelgium.be/publication/migrants-movements-through-mediterranean-emn-policy-brief-update>. See also: Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs, 'Advisory report: Increasing onward migration of asylum seekers in the EU', 2019, <https://www.adviescommissievoorvreemdelingenzaken.nl/publicaties/publicaties/2019/11/05/increasing-onward-migration-of-asylum-seekers-in-the-eu>, European Parliament, 'Secondary movements of asylum-seekers in the EU asylum system', 2017, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/608728/EPRS_BRI\(2017\)608728_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/608728/EPRS_BRI(2017)608728_EN.pdf), Brekke J.P., Brochmann G., 'Stuck in Transit: Secondary Migration of Asylum Seekers in Europe, National Differences, and the Dublin Regulation', (2015), *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 28 (2), p. 145.

¹² Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) COM(2016) 465 final 2016/0222 (COD) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016PC0465&from=EN>

to the labour market is currently provided and facilitated by the EMN Member States and Observer Countries.

In a study carried out by the EMN and published in 2019, which explored the labour market integration of third-country nationals in the EU Member States, the following most common obstacles were identified:¹³

- The accreditation of job qualifications/assessment of skills of those arriving from outside the EU;
- Tackling discrimination within recruitment processes and;
- Managing varying levels of language skills in integration measures.

These difficulties were found to be more pronounced when dealing with migrant women or vulnerable groups.¹⁴ It is likely that similar difficulties can come into play when it comes to ensuring effective access to the labour market for applicants of international protection.

The integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market is a topic that has also emerged in the context of discussions on the 2016 Reception Conditions Directive Recast proposal¹⁵ as one where laws and practices differ from one EU Member State to another. In a briefing¹⁶ by the European Parliamentary Research Service (labour market integration of asylum-seekers and refugees) it was brought out that although national asylum rules have become more harmonised when it comes to access to the labour market to the applicants of international protection since 2013, differences in the approach to granting access persist across the EU¹⁷.

Against this backdrop, the study aims to research and compare EMN Member States and Observer countries' laws, policies and practices (measures) regarding the labour market integration of applicants for international protection in the period January 2017-June 2022.

¹³ European Migration Network, 'EMN Study on Labour Market Integration of Third-Country Nationals in EU Member States', 2019, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/emn-study-labour-market-integration-third-country-nationals-eu-member-states-2019-02-14_en, last accessed on 04 August 2022.

¹⁴ This is also confirmed by other studies for example European Commission and Joint Research Centre, 'Gaps in the EU Labour Market Participation Rates: an intersectional assessment of the role of gender and migrant status', 2020, [https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121425; EMN Study on Integration of Migrant Women in the EU: Policies and Measures \(to be published in June 2022\)](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121425; EMN Study on Integration of Migrant Women in the EU: Policies and Measures (to be published in June 2022))

¹⁵ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) COM(2016) 465 final 2016/0222 (COD) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016PC0465&from=EN> (Reception Conditions Directive Recast).

¹⁶ European Parliament, 'Briefing on the labour market integration of asylum-seekers and refugees', 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690651/EPRS_BRI%282021%29690651_EN.pdf, last accessed on 04 August 2022.

¹⁷ European Migration Network: 'Ad-Hoc Query on Residence permits, borders and working conditions - Gaps in information', Requested by COM on 11 December 2020, https://www.emn.lt/uploads/Products/product_1833/202076_residence_permits_borders_and_working_conditions_gaps_in_information.pdf; 'Ad-Hoc Query on residence permits and labour market needs' from 11 December 2020 (not published); Ad-Hoc Query on Labour market integration policies aimed at third-country nationals - update', Requested by Adolfo Sommarribas on 10 May 2020, https://www.emnetherlands.nl/sites/default/files/2020-10/%5bWIDER%20COMPILATION%5d%20labour_market_integration_policies_aimed_at_third-country_nationals_-_update.pdf; 'Ad-Hoc Query 2019.5 on Right to work for asylum seekers', Requested by Simon Woollaccott on 16 January 2019, <https://www.emnetherlands.nl/sites/default/files/2019-09/2019%205%20Right%20to%20work%20for%20asylum%20seekers.pdf>.

2. STUDY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the study is to inform the target audience (e.g. practitioners, policy officers, decision makers at both EU and national level, including the European Commission and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), academic researchers, civil society organisations and the general public) on the labour market access of applicants for international protection, identifying existing laws, policies and measures regarding the labour market integration of applicants, good practices and challenges in the period of January 2017- June 2022.

The study's main objectives are:

- To map current national legal and policy frameworks in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries as regards providing access to the labour market for international protection applicants.¹⁸
- To map current national measures¹⁹ in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries as regards supporting effective access to the labour market for international protection applicants, and potential obstacles that hinder access.
- To identify the key actors, including where relevant on the local and regional level in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries, responsible/involved in the design and implementation of support measures aimed at facilitating the labour market integration of international protection applicants.
- To provide examples of good practices and challenges from EMN Member States and Observer Countries on the measures adopted at national level, but also, where applicable, at the regional or local levels, to facilitate access to the labour market for applicants of international protection.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study addresses third country nationals that have applied for international protection in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries and would benefit from the access to the labour market in the meaning of Article 15 of the Directive Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) currently in force in the EU or in the meaning of any other equivalent national act that regulates access to the labour market for the international protection applicants.

The reporting period for this study ranges from 2017 to 2022, depending on the area of analysis (i.e. data, policies, laws, measures):

- Data: 2017–June 2022
- Policies/laws: As of August/September/October 2022
- Measures: As of August/September/October 2022

This period covers years after the high migration flows seen in 2015-2016 and after the Reception Conditions Directive Recast proposal by the European Commission. In addition, this period will give an overview of the most recent changes in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries' laws, policies and practices as regards facilitating access to the labour market.

This study will present and compare laws, policies and measures for labour market integration for applicants of international protection in EMN Member and Observer

¹⁸ Taking into account what is foreseen in the Article 15 of the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU).

¹⁹ EMN definition of 'measures' includes systematic initiatives (multi-year / long term), projects (ad-hoc) and legislative (structural) measures that are used to implement the integration policies (including those funded by governments but implemented by NGOs on behalf of the governments).

Countries, discuss relevant evidence on the ways integration to the labour market is provided and draw good practices and challenges.

4. Methodology

This study is based on national reports prepared by the EMN National Contact Points (NCPs).

The identification of a measure as a “good practice” in the context of this study will draw inspiration from the European Website on Integration, where a good practice is defined as a measure that is “effective, efficient, sustainable and/or transferable, and that reliably lead[s] to a desired result”. The selection of the measure should be made by an expert working in the field (e.g. policy-maker; service provider; civil society organisation; migrant organisations) or based on studies or evaluations.²⁰

In the context of this study the terms ‘laws, policies and measures’ are defined as follows:

- ‘Laws’ regulate the legislative framework providing the access to the labour market of the applicants for international protection.
- ‘Policies’ refer to targeted integration strategies and action plans but also broader policy instruments relevant to the integration in the labour market.
- ‘Measures’ refer to systematic initiatives (multi-year / long term), projects (ad-hoc) and legislative (structural) measures that are used to implement the (labour market) integration policies (This includes for example loans that are granted to applicants of international protection for starting a business. This includes also those measures funded by governments but implemented by NGOs on behalf of the governments).

5. EU LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

According to article 78 the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU (EUTF)²¹ the EU shall develop a common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection with a view to offering appropriate status to any third-country national requiring international protection and ensuring compliance with the principle of *non-refoulement*. This policy must be in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 and the Protocol of 31 January 1967 relating to the status of refugees, and other relevant treaties. According to the second paragraph of the same article, the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall adopt measures for a common European asylum system comprising standards concerning the conditions for the reception of applicants for asylum or subsidiary protection. With this aim in mind and in order to promote the self-sufficiency of applicants and to limit wide discrepancies between EU Member States, the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU)²² provides for rules on the applicants’ access to the labour market. According to article 2 of the Reception Conditions Directive EU Member States shall decide the conditions for granting access to the labour market for the applicant, in accordance with their national law, while ensuring that applicants have effective access to the labour market.

²⁰ European Commission, ‘European Website on Integration – What are ‘good practices?’’, 2014, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/page/what-are-good-practices_en , last accessed 04 August 2022.

²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN>

²² 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 (recast) OJ L 180, 29.6.2013

According to article 15 in the current Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) EU Member States shall ensure that applicants have access to the labour market no later than nine months from the date when the application for international protection was lodged, if a first instance decision by the competent authority has not been taken and the delay cannot be attributed to the applicant.

According to the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) article 15(2), EU Member States shall decide the conditions for granting access to the labour market for the applicant, in accordance with their national law, while ensuring that applicants have *effective access* to the labour market. When it comes to ensuring access to the labour market to the applicants of international protection, for reasons of labour market policies, EU Member States may give priority to EU citizens and nationals of State parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EAA), and to legally resident third-country nationals. According to Article 15(3) of the same Directive access to the labour market for applicants of international protection shall not be withdrawn during appeals procedures, where an appeal against a negative decision in a regular procedure has suspensive effect, until such time as a negative decision on the appeal is notified.

In the Reception Condition Directive Recast proposal COM(2016) 465 final, the European Commission has proposed to further reduce the time-limit for access to the labour market from no later than nine months to no later than six months from the lodging of the application. In the same proposal, EU Member States were also encouraged to grant access to the labour market no later than three months from the lodging of the application where the application is likely to be well-founded.

Other relevant policy instruments include:

- The Pact on Migration and Asylum,²³ that was proposed by the European Commission on 23 September 2020, but which also includes proposals by the Commission from 2016. With the Pact, the Commission is proposing a fresh start on migration, bringing together policy in the areas of migration, asylum, integration and border management. From 2016, among others a proposal for the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) was kept, which regulates the access to the labour market.
- EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027²⁴ promotes an integrated approach to migrants' inclusion and aims to create close synergies with existing and upcoming EU strategies to foster equality and social cohesion to ensure everyone is fully included and participates in European societies.
- EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025,²⁵ which was published on 18 September 2020 by the European Commission to step up action against racism in the EU.

6. PRIMARY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE STUDY

The study seeks to address four primary questions:

- What does the available data /research tell about the situation of international protection applicants in the labour markets of EMN Member States and Observer Countries?

²³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, COM/2020/609 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0609>.

²⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, COM/2020/758 final, [EUR-Lex - 52020DC0758 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0758).

²⁵ European Commission, EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025, [EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0758), last accessed on 04 August 2022.

- To what extent are international protection applicants specifically addressed in national integration policies with regard to labour market integration in EMN Member States and Observer Countries (e.g. strategies, action plans and government programmes)?
- How is access to employment and self-employment for applicants of international protection regulated in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries?
- To what extent /and what kind of targeted labour market integration measures are available in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries, specifically addressing applicants of international protection, and what has been identified as good practices/challenges in this area?

7. RELEVANT SOURCES AND LITERATURE

1.1 EMN STUDIES AND INFORMS

- European Migration Network and OECD, 'Skills mobility partnerships: exploring innovative approaches to labour migration', Inform, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2022-03/2022_March_Joint_EMN-OECD_Inform_Skills_Mobility_Partnerships.EN_.pdf
- European Migration Network, 'Labour market integration of third-country nationals in EU Member States' Synthesis report, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2019-02/00_eu_labour_market_integration_final_en.pdf
- European Migration Network, 'Social benefits and rights for beneficiaries of international protection', Inform, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/00_eu_social_benefits_inform_en.pdf
- European Migration Network, 'Changing Influx of Asylum Seekers 2014-2016', Synthesis Report, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/00_eu_changing_influx_study_synthesis_final_en.pdf
- European Migration Network, 'Integration of beneficiaries of international/humanitarian protection into the labour market: policies and good practices', Synthesis Report, 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2016-09/emn-studies-00_integration_of_beneficiaries_of_international_protection_eu_2015_en_final.pdf

AHQs:

- Ad-Hoc Query on Residence permit and labour market needs. Requested by COM on 11 December 2020. Link: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2021-02/202075_residence_permit_and_labour_market_needs_en.pdf
- Ad-Hoc Query on access of international protection applicants to the labour market Requested by LU EMN NCP on 19th July 2016. Link: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/2016.1091b_lu_access_of_international_protection_applicants_to_the_labour_market.pdf
- Ad-Hoc Query on access to the labour market for asylum seekers Requested by AT EMN NCP on 23rd January 2015. Compilation produced on 3rd June 2015. Link: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/654_emn_ahq_access_to_the_labour_market_for_asylum_seekers_wider_dissemination.pdf
- Ad-Hoc Query on The rules of access to labour market for asylum seekers Requested by FR EMN NCP on 25th October 2010. Compilation produced on 10th December 2010. Link: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/269_emn_ad-hoc_query_rules_of_access_to_labour_market_for_asylum_seekers_25oct2010_wider_dissemination.pdf

8. AVAILABLE STATISTICS

- Eurostat - Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data (rounded) (migr_asyappctza)

- National statistics, applications/grants/refusals of the applications to access the labour market/self-employment as well as the employment rates of applicants for international protection, if available (see Q3)

9. definitions

The following key terms are used in the common template. The definitions are taken from the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary,²⁶ unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

- **Access to procedures for recognition of qualifications:** In the EU migration context, conditions and requirements governing the admission to procedures for recognition of professional diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications for third-country nationals (legally resident third-country nationals, beneficiaries of international protection) in EU Member States in accordance with the relevant national procedures.
- **Access to employment (also referred to in the study as labour market):** In the EU migration context, authorization of third-country nationals (legally resident migrants, beneficiaries and applicants for international protection to engage in employed or self-employed activities in EU Member States subject to the rules generally applicable to the profession and public service, as well as employment and working conditions.
- **Applicant for international protection:** A third-country national or a stateless person who has made an application for international protection in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken.
- **Integration:** In the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of EU Member States.
- **Integration indicators:** Benchmarks used to measure the integration of migrants in specific policy areas, such as employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.

²⁶ EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary_en, last accessed on 04 August 2022.

The integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market

1.2 NATIONAL CONTRIBUTION FROM LATVIA*²⁷

Disclaimer: The following information has been provided primarily for the purpose of contributing to this EMN Study. The EMN NCP has provided information that is, to the best of its knowledge, up-to-date, objective and reliable within the context and confines of this study. The information may thus not provide a complete description and may not represent the entirety of the official policy of the EMN NCPs' Member State.

Top-line factsheet

In Latvia since 2014 the asylum seekers have the right to employment, however, these rights are quite limited, because initially the employment could be commenced only after nine months from the moment, when an application on granting a refugee or subsidiary protection was submitted (hereinafter - the application for asylum). In 2017 this time period was reduced to six months and in 2021 - to three months. Thus, the legislator clearly indicates that the asylum seekers should be provide with an opportunity to integrate, including in the labour market, sooner than it was possible previously.

For the purpose of study of employment needs, data²⁸ on asylum seekers, who have submitted the application for asylum from 1 January 2017 to 30 June 2022, were analysed. Those are 1385 persons in the age from 14 years. Clear trend is to be observed that 70% out of these applications for asylum have been submitted by men and 30% - by women. The biggest group of age - 60% consists of persons in the age from 18 to 34 years, it is followed by persons from 35 to 64 years - 34%. Although [the Labour Law](#)²⁹ in Latvia provides a possibility to employ persons already from 13 years (with exceptions and on conditions), however, the asylum seekers up to the age of 18 years so far have not showed any interest to work, but they continue or complete the general education at school. It is confirmed also by the data provided by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs that since November 2021 no person in the age up to 18 years have not requested the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs to grant a foreigner's personal identity card with the right to employment. It should be also emphasized that the ratio of the person, who turn with an application to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs for an identity card, is 77% men and 23% women.

The regulatory enactment existing in Latvia³⁰ stipulates that right to employment without limitation shall be granted to a foreigner, who has received the personal identity document of the asylum seeker and has not received the decision of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

²⁷ Replace highlighted text with your **Member State** name here.

²⁸ Data analysed from Eurostat, Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data, online data code: MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA/default/table?lang=en

²⁹ The Labour Law, entered into force on 01.06.2022, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/26019-darba-likums>

³⁰ Immigration Law. Entered into force on 1.05.2003 <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/68522-imigracijas-likums>

regarding granting a refugee or subsidiary protection or refusal to grant it within a time period of three months afterwards, when the application on granting a refugee or subsidiary protection has been submitted, and it has not occurred due to his or her fault.

In order to receive the right to employment, a person shall turn with an application (a request to receive a foreigner's personal identity card) to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, which, in turn, shall provide a written reply regarding the fact whether the person is entitled to receive a foreigner's personal identity card.

Having received a foreigner's personal identity card, the asylum seeker has the right to employment without restrictions, which means, that the person can be a self-employed person as well as an employee.

The State Employment Agency, as well as the social worker and social mentor provide the necessary support for commencement of work. It is established that the biggest issue appears during this period of time - opening of the bank account. Bank, in particular after the introduced sanctions against Russia since February 2022, are very prudential in opening of bank accounts of the customers, who are third-country nationals. In the view of banks, asylum seekers are third-country nationals, therefore, sometimes the safety risk check requires both, time as well as additional funds. This issue has been ascertained and the involved authorities - the Society Integration Foundation, the Ministry of the Interior, Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, Caritas Latvia and representatives of banks - try to solve it through negotiations.

The Society Integration Foundation and social services providers mention weekly online meetings and focus group meetings with the asylum seekers as the good practice.

Section 1: Integration of applicants for international protection - data and debates

Q1. Please provide an overview of the main trends (number of applications for international protection, age, sex, citizenship) in international protection applicants in your country in the period January 2017-June 2022 as extracted from Eurostat and included in the statistical Annex.

***Eurostat data*³¹ on the asylum seekers show that from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2021 1170 asylum seekers, in the age from or equal to 14 years, have stayed in Latvia. Those were 215 persons the first half a year of 2022. A uniform trend is to be observed during the whole period - 70 % of the asylum seekers are men and 30 % - women.**

Split by age indicate on the fact that the biggest group of age - 50% consists of persons in the age from 18 to 34 years, which is followed by the group of

³¹ Eurostat, Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data, online data code: MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA/default/table?lang=en

age from 35 to 64 years - almost 34%; 6% are asylum seekers in the age from 14 to 18 years and the smallest group is above 64 years - 0.4%.³²

When analysing the nationality of the asylum seekers, it should be concluded that the biggest number of persons come from Iraq - 22%. It should be indicated that this number has not developed in proportion for years, but it was rather affected by the inflow of the nationals of Iraq in 2020 and 2021. The nationals of Russia are the second biggest group - 11%; Belarus - 8%; Afghanistan - 5%, Azerbaijan - 5% etc.

Persons, with regard to whom the decision on granting a refugee or subsidiary protection has not been made within a time period of three months after submission of the application on asylum, have the right to employment. Until September 2021 the rights of the asylum seeker to employment were confirmed to the asylum seekers by a foreigner's personal identity card or a foreigner's eID (the document confirming the right of the asylum seekers to employment without limitation), issued by the State Border Guard. Since September 2021 the right to employment is confirmed by a foreigner's personal identity card issued by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. From November 2021 to 1 August 2022, 127 persons showed the wish to receive a foreigner's personal identity card, confirming the right of the person to employment without restrictions. Taking into account the fact that 215 asylum seekers (14 years old and older) stayed in Latvia during the first six months of 2022, it can be concluded that half of the asylum seekers show obvious wish to be employed. However, it should be added that taking of the foreigner's ID automatically does not mean that the person is employed. Information is not collected on how many persons find the job.

It can be surely argued that the persons until the age of 18 years, who constitute 6% of asylum seekers, who are at least 14 years old, are not or practically are not employed. It is proved by the data on asylum seekers, who have received the foreigner's card since December 2021.

³² Data analysed from Eurostat, Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data, online data code: MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA/default/table?lang=en

Q2. Is the labour market situation³³ of international protection applicants monitored with official data (gathered by the authorities and reliable)? If so, please provide an overview in terms of indicators that are used in your country, focus on specific groups, data collection intervals etc.

Currently the information about employment of asylum seekers is not collected.

At the moment of development of the study the data of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs is available about the number of asylums seekers, who have submitted the application since November 2021 regarding the fact that they wish to receive a foreigner's identity card.³⁴

When analysing the data available at the disposal of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, it can be concluded that 127 asylum seekers have applied for the foreigner's ID from November 2021 to 31 August 2022. 98 out of these applicants are men and 29 are women - the ratio is 77% vs 23%.³⁵ Women apply less for a foreigner's eID than men, considering that the ratio between men and women is 70 vs 30. 77 persons are in the age between 18 and 34, which is 60%; 50 persons are in the age between 35 to 60, which is 40%. Like it was mentioned already before, the children up to the age of 18 years do not use right to employment, because they continue studies in the general education institutions. 40 asylum seekers out of 127 received foreigner's eID, which correspond to 31%, however, a big proportion of asylum seekers in October 2022 were still in the processing process for foreigner's ID.

Are statistics available on applications/grants/refusals of the applications to access the labour market/self-employment as well as the employment rates of applicants for international protection? Yes/No

No. Such information is not collected.

If yes, then please provide the totals per year in the period 2017-2022.

Q3. What are the main public and policy debates regarding applicants for international protection's labour market integration (e.g. time frame for access, opportunities and challenges)?

The main discussions as well as the biggest changes in relation to employment of asylum seekers and integration in the labour market were held in 2021. The party "Attistibai/Par" (Development/For) represented

³³ For example: participation rates/unemployment rates of applicants for international protection.

³⁴ Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

³⁵ Source: The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

by the minister of interior of that time Marija Golubeva, submitted amendments to the *Saeima*, in order to change the norm in the Immigration Law, that would give an opportunity for asylum seekers to start the employment after 3 months from the day, when the application for asylum was submitted. Before that those were 6 months.³⁶ Such activity was related to the fact that mass repressions started after the elections held in Belarus, as a result of which many persons from Belarus applied for asylum in Latvia. Sooner commencement of employment for these persons would promote more rapid integration and economic stability.

Section 2: Integration policies in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries

This part of the study describes the Member State's organisational approach towards labour-market integration policy and analyses how applicants of international protection are addressed in national labour market integration policies for third-country nationals.

Q4. Does your state have a specific policy/ strategy to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals? Yes/No^{37 38}

No.

- a. if yes, does it encompass applicants of international protection? Yes/No
 - i. if yes, please provide a brief outline of the strategy / policy in place in your country to integrate applicants of international protection into the labour market.
 - ii. if no, please answer question 5b below

No.

On 5 February 2021 the Development Guidelines "The Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021-2027" were adopted, where attention is paid to integration of asylum seekers, however, the guidelines on integration of asylum seekers consider more in the perspective of cross-culture and language integration, as well as integration measures are driven towards asylum seeker are linked with integration of third-country nationals.³⁹

- b. if no, how is the labour market integration of applicants for international protection addressed? Is there a mainstreaming labour market integration approach applicable? Yes/No

³⁶ Website of the Party Movement For, <https://kustibapar.lv/2021/01/14/patveruma-mekletaji-baltkrievija/>

³⁷ Please note that measures aimed at supporting labour market integration of applicants are discussed in section 4.

³⁸ Please note that regional/local level strategies/policies should be reported only if national is not available.

³⁹ Cabinet Regulation No. 72 "The Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021-2027", adopted on 5 February 2021, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/320841-par-saliedetas-un-pilsoniski-aktivas-sabiedribas-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam>

Yes.

Since 2016, within the framework of the project of the Society Integration Foundation "Promoting Diversity", socially economical support as well as practical assistance in solving of various daily issues is regularly provided to asylum seekers and persons with a refugee or subsidiary protection in Latvia.⁴⁰ This function is performed by social workers and social mentors.

Mentors create understanding of persons about the life in Latvia, helping to acquire daily necessary skills in the situations of real life, promoting development of new skills, provision of the place of residence, clothing and search for employment opportunities.

From 2016 to 2018 this service was provided by the non-governmental organization "Shelter "Safe Home""⁴¹, from 2018 to 2021 - the Latvian Red Cross⁴² and since 2022 - the foundation Caritas.⁴³

i. if no, please provide a reason, if available, and describe briefly how international protection applicants are treated in practice with regard to labour market integration.

NA

Q5. Have there been any major changes in the strategy/policy to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals within the temporal scope of the study (January 2017 – June 2022)? Yes/No

a. If yes, please explain briefly the content, including what was the driver and objective for these changes?

Yes.

In February 2017, in order to support interaction of an asylum seekers, maintenance of work skills and a possibility to supplement financial means for provision of daily needs, the law "Amendments to the Immigration Law"⁴⁴ decreased the previously determined period of nine months to six months, after the occurrence of which, if the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs has not taken a decision regarding his or her application on granting of a refugee or subsidiary protection and it was not due to the fault of the asylum seeker, the asylum seeker shall

⁴⁰ Society Integration Foundation, <https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/kas-paveikts-2020-gada-dazadibas-veicinasana>

⁴¹ Shelter "Safe Home" <https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/atbalsta-pasakumi-starptautiskas-aizsardzibas-personam>

⁴² Latvian Red Cross, <https://www.redcross.lv/darbibas-jomas/socialais-atbalsts/sociala-darbinieka-un-sociala-mentora-pakalpojumu-nodrosinasana-patveruma-mekletajiem-un-personam-ar-begla-vai-alternativo-statusu-2018/>

⁴³ Latvian portal, <https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/337270-sabiedribas-integracijas-fonds-uzsak-sadarbibu-ar-caritas-latvija-atbalsta-sniegsanai-patveruma-mekletajiem-un-begliem-2022>

⁴⁴ Law "Amendments to the Immigration Law" - *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 36, 16.02.2017. - [came into force on 02.03.2017]

be granted with the right to engage in an unlimited employment measures.

In 2021, the party "Attīstībai/Par" (Development/For) represented by the minister of interior of that time Marija Golubeva, submitted amendments to the *Saeima*, in order to change the norm in the Immigration Law, that would give an opportunity for asylum seekers to start the employment after 3 months from the day, when the application for asylum was submitted. Before that those were 6 months. The party substantiated such a step with the fact that "Currently the asylum seekers, who wish to work and maintain themselves, can do it only after six months, which is a very long period of time," says the submitter of the proposal Dace Rukšāne-Šcipčinska (AP!). "There is no reason, why we cannot reduce the waiting time for three months - that would be more human."⁴⁵ Mostly events, which affected such decision, were asylum seekers from Belarus after the election of the president in 2020, when political repressions were directed towards many persons.

On 17 June 2021 amendments to the Asylum Law were adopted,⁴⁶ facilitating the employment of asylum seekers, receipt of health and education services. Amendments to the Asylum Law provide that the status and rights of the asylum seeker to stay in the territory of the Republic of Latvia during the asylum procedure is confirmed by the personal identity document of the asylum seeker or a foreigner's personal identity card. Amendments to the Asylum Law were developed in order to improve the procedure, according to which the fulfilment of rights provided for in the Asylum Law is ensured for the asylum seeker during the asylum procedure, arising 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 to the Law on the Register of Natural Persons were adopted,⁴⁷ providing that further on the information on asylum seekers will be included in the Register of Natural Persons. It will ensure that the included and updated data will be available to all institutions, which were involved in the provision of rights provided for asylum seekers, as a result of which servicing of asylum seekers will be faster. When including the information on the asylum seekers⁴⁸ in the Register of Natural Persons, the more effective provision of rights provided for asylum seekers is ensured, because the involved institutions have centralized access to personal data. Therefore, in general the administrative burden would be reduced, because the data included and updated by one institution are available at once to all institutions, as a

⁴⁵ Website of the Party Movement For, <https://kustibapar.lv/2021/01/14/patveruma-mekletaji-baltkrievija/>

⁴⁶ Law "[Amendments to the Asylum Law](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 118, 19.06.2021 – [entered into force 28.06.2021]

⁴⁷ Law "[Amendments to the Law on the Register of Natural Persons](#)". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 118, 19.06.2021 – [entered into force 28.06.2021]

⁴⁸ Information on the personal identity number, which is generated automatically after registration in the Register of Natural Persons, name, surname, birth, nationality and type thereof, information on the personal identity number, which is recorded in the personal identity document, information on the personal identity document, shall be included in the Register of Natural Persons about the foreigner, who is an asylum seeker in the Republic of Latvia.

result of which the servicing of the asylum seeker by another institution will be faster.⁴⁹ Inclusion of the information of asylum seekers in the Register of Natural Persons would ensure allocation of the personal identity number to the asylum seeker. Non-existence of the personal identity number during the asylum procedure created significant obstacles for lawful employment of the asylum seeker.⁵⁰

On 17 June 2021 amendments to the Personal Identification Documents Law were adopted, which plans to introduce the foreigner's personal identification card or eID card. A foreigner's personal identification card will be issued for a foreigner included in the Register of Natural Persons, and also the asylum seeker will be able to receive it as of the moment, when provisions referred to in the Immigration Law have set in, in order to grant the right of the asylum seeker to employment. A foreigner's identification card or eID card will provide a possibility for the foreigner, including the asylum seekers to use a broad range of services provided by the state, including to use the public administration e-services, to use e-address, to perform electronic identification and sign documents.

On 2 September 2021 amendments to the Immigration Law were adopted⁵¹, which provide that the asylum seeker shall have the right to employment, if he or she has not received the decision of the OCMA regarding granting a refugee or subsidiary protection or a refusal to grant it within a time period of three months after the application on granting a refugee or subsidiary protectionus has been submitted and it has not occurred due to his or her fault. The right to employment shall remain until the day, when the final decision regarding granting of a refugee or subsidiary protection or refusal to grant it has come into force and become indisputable. Amendments to the Immigration Law are developed in order to reduce the time period of 6 months previously determined in the Immigration Law, when the asylum seeker has the right to employment to the time period of 3 months and give a possibility for asylum seekers to earn additional income, promote their individual growth and help not to lose qualification. The need of the above-mentioned regulation became topical in 2022, when the situation in Belarus became more difficult, from where asylum seekers arrived to Latvia, including highly-qualified employees. Discussions were held in public⁵² on the possibility to ensure this by reducing the initial waiting period of six months to three months.

On 12 October 2021 amendments to the Cabinet Regulation No. 133 "Regulations Regarding the State Duty for the Issuance of Personal Identification Documents" of 21 February 2012 were adopted⁵³, which

⁴⁹ Annotation of the draft law "Amendment to the Asylum Law". Available: <http://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/SaeimaLIVS13.nsf/0/7604631054688FC7C22586EA0049031F?OpenDocument#B>.

⁵⁰ <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/robs-likumos-nelauj-patveruma-mekletajam-latvija-sakt-stradat.a335738/>

⁵¹ Law "[Amendments to the Immigration Law](#)".- *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No.176A, 02.09.2021 - [entered into force 27.09.2021]

⁵² Asylum seekers from Belarus ask for the possibility to work; Latvia does not hurry up to review the immigration norms. - Available: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/patveruma-mekletaji-no-baltkrievijas-ludz-iespeju-stradat-latvija-nesteidz-parskatit-imigracijas-normas.a380954/> .

⁵³ Cabinet Regulation No. 686 "[Amendments to the Cabinet Regulations No. 133 "Regulations Regarding the State Duty for the Issuance of Personal Identification Documents" of 21 February 2012](#)" of 12 October 2021. *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 200, 15.10.2021 - [entered into force on 16.10.2021]

stipulate that the foreigner's personal identification card shall be issued within two working days and asylum seekers shall be exempted from payment of the State fee for issue of the above-mentioned document, considering the special situation and needs of asylum seekers during the asylum procedure.

On 2 November 2021 the Cabinet Regulation No. 727 "Regulations Regarding the Personal Identification Document of the Asylum Seeker" were adopted⁵⁴, which stipulate the form and procedure for personal identification document of the asylum seeker, according to which the SBG shall issue the above-mentioned document. The above-mentioned Regulation provides that the same as before the SBG shall issue to the asylum seeker a personal identification document of the asylum seeker within three days from the day of receipt of the application for asylum, and it shall be valid until the day, when the administrative proceeding about the application of the asylum seeker has been completed, while a foreigner's personal identification card shall be issued by the OCMA in cases, if the asylum seeker wishes to be employed and the OCMA establishes that the provisions referred to in the Immigration Law have occurred in order to grant to the asylum seeker the right to employment without limitations.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Cabinet Regulation No. 727 "[Regulations Regarding the Personal Identification Document of the Asylum Seeker](#)". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 214, 04.11.2021 – [entered into force on 05.11.2021]

⁵⁵ Annotation of the draft Cabinet Regulation "Regulations Regarding the Personal Identification Document of the Asylum Seeker". – Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/327382-patveruma-mekletaja-personas-dokumenta-noteikumi>.

Q6. Are specific governance structures in place to support the labour market integration of international protection applicants? If yes, please provide an organigram or overview of the institutional framework for developing and implementing relevant strategy/policies/measures on the labour market integration of applicants for international protection.

a. describe the key stakeholders and their role (government departments, public authorities, trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, others?)

b. indicate the responsibilities of the different key actors, noting whether their role is specific to international protection applicants or more general.

Include national / regional /local structures where relevant.

(a)

Taking into account the comparatively small number of asylum seekers in Latvia, a separate structure, engaged in the integration of receivers of international protection on the labour market, is not established.

Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs shall: 1) ensure activity of the accommodation centre of asylum seekers; 2) ensure issuance of the foreigner's personal identification cards of asylum seekers, confirming their right to employment without limitations

The State Employment Agency shall: consult on the services of the SEA, situation on the labour market, vacant positions, education possibilities etc.

The Society Integration Foundation shall: provide asylum seekers with the service of the social worker and social mentor.

The Latvian Language Agency shall: ensure modern and multiform acquisition of Latvian language for third-country nationals;

Non-governmental organizations, such as "Shelter "Safe Home"", Latvian Red Cross, as well as Caritas Latvia provided services of mentors and social workers since 2016 in different stages

(b)

The Society Integration Foundation is the most important in this procedure, coordinating the social-economical inclusion of asylum seekers, refugees and persons with subsidiary protection, as well as non-governmental organizations, which perform the services of the social worker and mentor on behalf of the Society Integration Foundation and by using the granted funding.

Section 3: Accessing the labour market (employment and self-employment)

This part of the study describes how applicants of international protection can access the Member States' and Observer Countries' labour markets as well as enter self-employment.

Section 3.1. Procedures for accessing the labour market

■ Please describe the procedure required to enter the labour market/self-employment for an applicant for international protection in your state.

> Does your state regulate differently access to employment or self-employment?

No

> Please provide in your response an overview of the applicable legal framework and make a clear distinction between what is prescribed in laws, policy documents and practice.

The rights of the asylum seekers to employment are determined in the Immigration Law. Asylum seekers receive the right to employment without limitations, without proposing additional regulation for employees and self-employed persons.

In accordance with the Immigration Law,⁵⁶ a foreigner may be granted the right to employment without restrictions, who has received a personal identification document of the asylum seeker and has not received a decision of the Office regarding granting a refugee or subsidiary protection or refusal to grant it within three months after the application has been submitted regarding granting a refugee or subsidiary protection, and it has not occurred due to his or her fault.

The time period of three months from submission of the application for asylum is determined with a purpose to give the right to the person to have access to labour market as soon as possible. It is also to be substantiated with the fact that it has been decided during this period of time whether the application of the asylum seeker has been reviewed in Latvia, which means that the person will stay in Latvia during the asylum procedure and in case of acquisition of the status a possibility would have been granted to him or her already to commence social-economical inclusion, in particular case - in the labour market.

Although the Immigration Law provides that the right to employment without restrictions shall be granted to the asylum seeker after 3 months from the day of submission of the application for asylum, however, in order to use his or her rights, the asylum seeker needs to turn to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs in order to receive a foreigner's personal identification card with a notice: asylum seeker with the right to employment without restrictions.

In order to have access to labour market, all asylum seekers require a valid foreigner's personal identity card with a notice: asylum seeker with the right to employment without restrictions.

Section 3.1.1. Employment (If the access is regulated differently for employment and self-employment)

■ What is the minimum period from lodging an application for international protection after which an applicant has access to the labour market?⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Section 9, Paragraph five, Clause 23 of the Immigration Law

⁵⁷ According to the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) article 15(1) Member States shall ensure that applicants have access to the labour market no later than 9 months from the date when the application for international protection was lodged if a first instance decision by the competent authority has not been taken and the delay cannot be attributed to the applicant.

- Please describe the reasoning related to the minimum period of accessing the labour market and conditions of access to the labour market/self-employment.
- Is the right to access the labour market automatic after a specified period? Yes/No
- What kind of documents are necessary in order to access the labour market?⁵⁸
- Is a work permit or another type of administrative application/decision necessary for accessing the labour market? Yes/No.
 - › if yes, please specify:
 - › who is required to submit the application, the applicant/employer/jointly by both?
 - › which authority is responsible for granting access to the labour market?
 - › what are the criteria for obtaining the work permit?
 - › what is the average duration of the procedure to grant access to the labour market? If applicable, please also add any official time limits according to law/policy.

Section 3.1.2. Self-employment (if the access is regulated differently for employment and self-employment)

- Is self-employment of international protection applicants permitted in your state? Yes/No
 - › if yes:
 - › what is the minimum period from lodging an international protection application after which an applicant has access to self-employment?
 - › which authority is responsible for granting access to self-employment?

Section 3.2. Conditions and limitations in accessing the labour market

Please provide a reference to the legal base (where relevant, linking it to what is described in Q8, if applicable, and make a clear distinction between what is prescribed in laws, policy guidance and practice).

- If applicable, please describe the period of validity and conditions of the authorisation to access the labour market/self-employment.

The right of the asylum seeker to employment shall remain until the day, when the final decision regarding granting of a refugee or subsidiary protection or refusal to grant it has come into force and become indisputable. At the same time, the asylum seeker should have at his or her disposal a valid foreigner's personal identification card with a notice: right to employment without restriction.

⁵⁸ According to Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU) article 6, Member States shall ensure applicants have a document that proves they are applicant.

- Is the authorisation limited to certain employment sectors or occupations? In other words, are applicants for international protection excluded from some labour market sectors or from certain occupations? Yes/No.

If yes, from which ones?

When employing the asylum seekers, the same as refugees and persons acquiring the subsidiary protection, the Cabinet Regulation No.733 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language" and Section 6 of the Official Language Law should be taken into account.

That means that in the private sector persons may be employed without a certificate on the knowledge of official language, if their activity does not affect public interest (public safety, health, morality, health protection, protection of rights of consumers and labour law, safety at the place of work, public administrative supervision).

- Is employment restricted to a single employer?

No, asylum seekers have the right to employment without restrictions.

- If applicable, please describe the conditions and procedures of the renewal of the authorisation to access the labour market. Are they the same for all employment sectors and occupations?

Personal Identification Documents Law stipulates that a foreigner's personal identification document shall be issued to asylum seekers for one year.⁵⁹ In case if the asylum procedure is not completed within the above-mentioned time period, after expiry of the validity period of the foreigner's personal identification document the asylum seeker shall have the right to repeatedly turn to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, in order to receive a new foreigner's personal identification card.⁶⁰ This procedure shall refer to all employment sectors.

- Does your Member State give priority to EU and EEA citizens (Art. 15/2 clause 2 of the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU)) and to other legally resident third-country nationals in accessing the labour market? Yes/No
 - > if yes, please specify how priority is given in law/policy and in practice (labour market test, minimum share of employment by EU/EEA nationals, occupations lists etc.)?

No. Asylum seekers, who have the right to employment, have the same rights on the labour market as other acquirers of the refugee and subsidiary protection.

⁵⁹ Personal Identification Documents Law <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/243484-personu-apliecinosu-dokumentu-likums>

⁶⁰ In accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 134 "Regulations Regarding Personal Identification Documents", Paragraph 58.¹

- Are there any other limitations in place, either in law or in specific measures relating to applicants of international protection for accessing labour market / self-employment?

No. Asylum seekers have the right to employment without restrictions.

1.2.1.1 Section 4: Support measures to enhance labour market integration and self-employment

This part of the study looks at examples of labour market integration measures targeting applicants of international protection.

Please indicate (where applicable) in the table below the main policy or legislative measures,⁶¹ and their rationale and aims, that make up your policy / strategy (according to answer to Q5 above) to support the labour market integration/self-employment of applicants for international protection, by integration area. Please focus on measures that specifically aim at facilitating labour market access for the international protection applicants.

Area/component	Overview of the main measures Please describe the rationale, scope and aim under each area.	Stakeholders Please describe the stakeholders involved, where applicable at state, regional and local level (public authorities, trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, others?)	Target group Please indicate whether the measures address applicants for international protection in general or particular categories of applicants for international protection (e.g. women or minors of working age)?
1. Language acquisition	The asylum seeker may start acquisition of the language, upon arrival to Latvia. Latvian language courses are implemented by using the funding of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Implementer of language courses is the service provider, who has acquired the right and funding for implementation of these courses during	The Latvian Language Agency, the union "Shelter "Safe Home"" and other service providers, which have concluded the contract with the Society Integration Foundation.	Asylum seekers

⁶¹ Please make sure legislative and policy actions are distinguished from each other.

Area/component	Overview of the main measures Please describe the rationale, scope and aim under each area.	Stakeholders Please describe the stakeholders involved, where applicable at state, regional and local level (public authorities, trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, others?)	Target group Please indicate whether the measures address applicants for international protection in general or particular categories of applicants for international protection (e.g. women or minors of working age)?
	the relevant period. For example, during the time period from 2014 to 2020, the State Language Agency implemented the project "Initial acquisition of language for asylum seekers", withing the framework of which the asylum seekers could acquire Latvian language for 120 hours, in order it would be more easily to integrate on the labour market after acquisition of the status.		
2. Vocational education and training (including reskilling schemes)	-	-	-
3. Civic integration courses	For the first three months - intensive integration courses provide information on the state, geography, culture as well as practical information on public transport, climate, traditions, education system, social services, employment possibilities etc., introductory course on the labour market	Service providers - association "Shelter "Safe Home" until 2018, Latvian Red Cross until 2021, association Caritas Latvia from 2022	Asylum seekers

Area/component	Overview of the main measures Please describe the rationale, scope and aim under each area.	Stakeholders Please describe the stakeholders involved, where applicable at state, regional and local level (public authorities, trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, others?)	Target group Please indicate whether the measures address applicants for international protection in general or particular categories of applicants for international protection (e.g. women or minors of working age)?
<p>4. Support for recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications including those formal qualifications that cannot be documented (lost or destroyed in the context of existing procedures for recognition of foreign qualifications) Please note in the overview column if the procedure is a general one or specific to international protection applicants.</p>	<p>Expert-examination of education documents issued abroad as well as documents confirming academic degrees acquired abroad is performed for refugees and persons with subsidiary protection by the Academic Information Centre. The Education Law⁶² does not stipulate that such expert-examination is performed also for asylum seekers.</p>	<p>Academic Information Centre</p>	<p>For an adult person, who has been granted a refugee or subsidiary protection or for whom the temporary status of protection has been determined, in accordance with provisions of the Asylum Law or other regulatory enactments</p>
<p>5. Skill assessments to validate prior (non-accredited) learning and experience</p>	<p>Employees of the activity "Integration of refugees and persons with subsidiary protection on the Latvian labour market" of the State Employment Agency, when consulting on services of the SEA,</p>	<p>State Employment Agency</p>	<p>Available information show that assessment of skills is performed for persons, who have acquired the status of international protection. Information on assessment of skills for</p>

⁶² Education Law. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/50759>

Area/component	Overview of the main measures Please describe the rationale, scope and aim under each area.	Stakeholders Please describe the stakeholders involved, where applicable at state, regional and local level (public authorities, trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, others?)	Target group Please indicate whether the measures address applicants for international protection in general or particular categories of applicants for international protection (e.g. women or minors of working age)?
	situation on the labour market, vacant job positions, possibilities of education etc. Assessment of skills for refugees and persons with subsidiary protection is performed according to the same standards as for any other customer of the SEA.		asylum seekers is not available.
6. Information and counselling (labour market orientation, tailored advice, other)	Support of the social worker or social mentor is provided for each asylum seeker. Asylum seekers, who have the right to employment in Latvia, have the right to consultation with the State Employment Agency (hereinafter - SEA). Activities "Integration of refugees and persons with subsidiary protection on the Latvian labour market" implemented by the SEA help the asylum seekers to integrate in the Latvian labour market. Specialists of the NVA consult on the services of the SEA, situation on the labour market, vacant positions, education possibilities etc.	Service providers - NGO "Shelter "Safe Home" until 2018, Latvian Red Cross until 2021, association Caritas Latvia from 2022. SEA	Asylum seekers who have applied for asylum three months ago

Area/component	Overview of the main measures Please describe the rationale, scope and aim under each area.	Stakeholders Please describe the stakeholders involved, where applicable at state, regional and local level (public authorities, trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, others?)	Target group Please indicate whether the measures address applicants for international protection in general or particular categories of applicants for international protection (e.g. women or minors of working age)?
7. Incentive measures for employers (e.g. tax reductions, labour matching services, recruitment support)	NA	NA	NA
8. Support for self-employment (for example preferential taxation and social security contributions, administrative support with establishing a company etc, business plan development, other). Please note in the overview column if the support differs from the regular support to self-employment available to national population, EU citizens or other third-country nationals.	Explains the issues of conclusion of contracts, as well as tax issues	State Employment Agency	Asylum seekers who have applied for asylum three months ago
9. Indirect support (e.g. childcare, transport)	Baby-sitting groups, kindergartens are organized for children in the pre-school age, also public transport is	Asylum accommodation centre/ Office of Citizenship	Asylum seekers

Area/component	Overview of the main measures Please describe the rationale, scope and aim under each area.	Stakeholders Please describe the stakeholders involved, where applicable at state, regional and local level (public authorities, trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, others?)	Target group Please indicate whether the measures address applicants for international protection in general or particular categories of applicants for international protection (e.g. women or minors of working age)?
	provided - 5 trips per week	and Migration Affairs	

1.2.1.2 Section 5: Good practices and challenges

■ What integration support programmes, projects, legislative or other practical initiatives are available that specifically facilitate effective access to the labour market for applicants of international protection and have been identified by experts as a “good practice” in accordance with the definition provided in paragraph 3 “Scope of the study”? Please provide up to three examples (see the templates below and please adjust accordingly).



Measure 1	
Overview	
Name	Help of the social worker and social mentor
Type	<i>Programme and systematic measures (multi-year / long term)</i>
Area	Other
Access	Asylum seekers and receivers of international protection
Target group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tailor-made labour market integration measure (only applicants for international protection) <input type="checkbox"/> Mainstream labour market integration measure (for all) If the measures is for all, please describe how applicants for international protection benefit
Cover age	<i>National</i> <i>If “other”, please add further information here</i>
Link	https://lv-lv.facebook.com/CaritasLatvija/
Source and justification	Measures
Description	
<p>M1.Q1. Please describe how third-country nationals can access the measure, notably:</p> <p>a) <i>Elaborate in brief on the conditions and process of accessing the measure for applicants for international protection</i></p> <p><i>Each asylum seeker has access to the support of social workers and social mentor at the asylum seekers accommodation centre or outside it.</i></p>	

b) *Is the measure voluntary or compulsory? Is it provided free of charge?*

The service is provided voluntary and free of charge

c) *If applicable, indicate if the measure is different from the regular support available to national population, EU citizens or third country nationals?*

The service is available for asylum seekers and persons acquiring the status of international protection

d) *Are there any reasons for to be excluded/to lose access to the measure? If so, which ones?*

Provision of the service of social worker and social mentor is terminated, if during receipt of the service the asylum seeker, refugee or person with subsidiary protection *departs from Latvia.*

M1.Q2. Please describe briefly the context in which the measure has started:

a) *When was the measure introduced and what was/is its duration?*

The service is available since 2016. It is provided by service providers selected during the market research process.

The asylum seeker may receive the service of a social worker and social mentor for 3 months from the day of arrival to Latvia or until the time, when a refugee or subsidiary protection is granted. After acquisition of a refugee or subsidiary protection the right to receive the service of the social worker and social mentor maintains for additional 12 months.

b) *What was the need/purpose to start/implement such measure (e.g. labour market needs in the Member State, need for integration, changes in integration policies)?*

Motivation of the asylum seeker to cooperate.

c) *When is the measure provided (e.g. upon arrival, upon arrival until (please add till when), no determined time limitation)?*

Starting as of the third day from submission of an application for asylum.

d) *Key activities*

Social worker:

- **Performs settlement of social issues of the customer in cooperation with the customer, ensuring management of the social case;**
- **Develops an individual plan for socio-economical inclusion for each customer and coordinates its execution;**
- **Assesses and determines the complexity level of the customer's social case according to the determined criteria for assessment;**
- **Uses relevant methods for work with the customer individually or in a group, or for work with the family, in order to identify the social issue and determine the appropriate type of the social service;**
- **Analyses the social issue of the customer and helps to find alternative possibilities for solution of issues;**

- **Represents interests of the customer and rights in other institutions;**
- **Ensures creation of the social support network of the customer, works with the family in order to find solutions for mutual relations, interaction, social role and issues of care;**
- **Creates cooperation with other social service receivers, employment, education and health care institutions and other institutions, which are involved in the settlement of social issue of the customer, in order to obtain comprehensive feedback on the identification/settlement statistics/ trends of the social issue of the customer, including dynamics.**

Social mentor:

- **Provides practical support to the customer for execution of the plan for socio-economical inclusion;**
- **Provides support for integration and social-economical inclusion of the customer, creating understanding on life in public, helping to acquire the needs necessary for daily life in the environment of real society, initiating to develop new skills, as well as provides support for settlement of daily situations;**
- **Helps the customer to identify and assess the needs, collects information, attracts and recommends the necessary resources, respecting the self-determination of the customer;**
- **Provide support to the customer in communication with other natural and legal persons;**
- **Provides support to the customer in settlement of daily situations, using his or her knowledge as resources, and resources available in the environment;**
- **Gathers information on the situation and provides possible solution, when cooperating with the customer or family of the customer;**
- **Helps the customer to reach the place, where he/she studies (will commence studies), works (will commence employment relations) or receives services (will commence to receive services);**
- **Performs the tasks determined in the action plan, providing the service to the asylum seekers, who have received the decision on granting a refugee or subsidiary protection**

M1.Q3. Please briefly describe the implementation modalities, notably:

a) *By whom is it implemented (agency, government institution, NGOs, private sector etc.), and what are the coordination structures?*

From 2016 the Society Integration Foundation ⁶³ within the framework of the project "Promotion of variety" constantly provides the asylum seekers and persons with a refugee or subsidiary protection *staying in Latvia with the social-economical support, as well as practical support for settlement of different issues important on the daily basis.*

Funding for provision of support is granted from the European Social Fund and is provided until the end of 2022.

⁶³ Society Integration Foundation Law, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/26310-sabiedribas-integracijas-fondaliks>

From 1 February 2022 the service is provided by the foundation "Caritas Latvija". Before that the service was provided by the Latvian Red Cross and association "Shelter "Safe Home"".

b) *If applicable, are there any reimbursement (totally or partially)/cost sharing possibilities?*

NA

c) *How and by whom is it promoted?*

The measure is implemented with the support of the Society Integration Foundation, which attracts the social service provider, which is currently Caritas Latvia. Caritas Latvia provides the service at the asylum seekers' accommodation centre "Mucenieki", which is currently the only asylum seekers' accommodation centre in Latvia. Information on the service is placed at the asylum seekers' accommodation centre. Employees of the centre motivate the asylum seekers to use the service.

M1.Q4. Please briefly describe the impact of the measure and notably:

a) *Did it meet the anticipated objectives? YES/NO/Partly*

Yes. Social worker and social mentor provides:

- **Psycho-emotional support to all customers,**
- **assistance in settlement of various formalities with the state and municipal institutions,**
- **assistance in finding and equipment of a dwelling and opening of bank accounts, supply of warm clothing.**

b) *What are the main outcomes*

Persons receive social support, as well as their rights, possibilities to work, visit a doctor and receive other services are explained to them. Besides, they help to find a job, but unfortunately there is no numeric result, because the social service provider does not collect such data.

c) *Monitoring and evaluation of impact (please describe the evaluation tools and methodology, if possible specify what indicators have been adopted and how those were measured)*

Each week the remote discussions take place on the topical events with the representatives of the Society Integration Foundation, as well as each week the representative of the Society Integration Foundation visits the accommodation centre in presence, in order to make sure whether all documentation is correctly arranged. Besides, the social service provider submits a public report on the results twice a year.

d) *Challenges during implementation and remedies applied*

The biggest issue, specified by the social service providers during the interviews, is opening of the bank account, which is followed by the lack of motivation of the asylum seekers, as well as language barrier and sometimes negative attitude from employers.

e) *Likelihood of continuation of the measure. If discontinued, please explain why*

It is planned to continue the service.

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Measure 2	
Overview	
Name	<i>Informative lectures and individual consultations for asylum seekers on the employment possibilities in Latvia</i>
Type	<i>Programme and systematic measures (multi-year / long term)</i>
Area	Incentive measures for employers (e.g. tax reductions, labour matching services, recruitment support)
Access	Asylum seekers (lectures and consultations) Refugees and persons with subsidiary protection (assistance to learn Latvian language, renew the skills necessary for work, find a job)
Target group	<input type="checkbox"/> Tailor-made labour market integration measure (only applicants for international protection) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mainstream labour market integration measure (for all) If the measures is for all, please describe how applicants for international protection benefit
Coverage	<i>Choose an item.</i> <i>If "other", please add further information here</i>
Link	https://www.nva.gov.lv/lv/projekts/projekts-beglu-un-alternativo-statusu-ieguvuso-personu-integracija-latvijas-darba-tirgu
Source and justification	State Employment Agency
Description	
<p>M2.Q1. Please describe how third-country nationals can access the measure, notably:</p> <p>a) <i>Elaborate in brief on the conditions and process of accessing the measure for applicants for international protection</i></p> <p><i>Each asylum seeker, refugee and person with subsidiary protection may apply for the service to the State Employment Agency</i></p> <p>b) <i>Is the measure voluntary or compulsory? Is it provided free of charge?</i></p>	

Voluntary and free of charge service

c) *If applicable, indicate if the measure is different from the regular support available to national population, EU citizens or third country nationals?*

NA

d) *Are there any reasons for to be excluded/to lose access to the measure? If so, which ones?*

No

M2.Q2. Please describe briefly the context in which the measure has started:

e) *When was the measure introduced and what was/is its duration?*

Starting from the beginning of 2016

f) *What was the need/purpose to start/implement such measure (e.g. labour market needs in the Member State, need for integration, changes in integration policies)?*

The purpose of the project is to promote fixing up of refugees and persons with subsidiary protection for a permanent work and inclusion in society.

g) *When is the measure provided (e.g. upon arrival, upon arrival until (please add till when), no determined time limitation)?*

Currently lectures are organized remotely.

One lecture upon arrival and later there are no limit for individual consultations.

h) *Key activities*

- **Informative lectures for asylum seekers on the employment possibilities in Latvia;**
- **Individual consultations for asylum seekers on the employment possibilities in Latvia;**
- **Issue of informative materials for asylum seekers, refugees and persons with subsidiary protection in understandable language about the services provided by the SEA**
- **Support to refugees and persons with subsidiary protection, who have registered with the SEA as unemployed persons or job seekers, in resumption of skills necessary for labour market and finding a job.**

M2.Q3. Please briefly describe the implementation modalities, notably:

i) *By whom is it implemented (agency, government institution, NGOs, private sector etc.), and what are the coordination structures?*

State Employment Agency

j) *If applicable, are there any reimbursement (totally or partially)/cost sharing possibilities?*

NA

k) *How and by whom is it promoted?*

In the form of lectures and individual consultations.

One lecture upon arrival and no limitation on number of individual consultations.

Provided by the State Employment Agency.

M2.Q4. Please briefly describe the impact of the measure and notably:

l) *Did it meet the anticipated objectives? YES/NO/Partly*

Partly.

m) *What are the main outcomes*

Information is provided to the person about potential employers and the possibility to contact with them.

n) *Monitoring and evaluation of impact (please describe the evaluation tools and methodology, if possible specify what indicators have been adopted and how those were measured)*

Statistics on the provided individual consultations for asylum seekers is not collected. Statistics is available on lectures, which were given to the inhabitants of the accommodation centre. However, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemics, such group consultations in presence were not organized anymore, while there is no statistics on remote lectures in 2020-2022.

o) *Challenges during implementation and remedies applied*

1) Language barrier. Customers command Latvian, English or Russian language in comparatively poor level, in order to successfully find a job. Lack of knowledge of language limits also their possibility to socialize and find a job or commence the self-employment;

2) Attitude of employers. These could be prejudice against few ethnic or religious groups and simply concerns about additional complications, which quite often arise, when employing person, who do not know good information on the local culture and life. Besides, employers sometimes are not sufficiently informed on whether these persons have the right to employment in Latvia, mostly directly in relation to asylum seekers;

3) in certain cases, lack of motivation to learn the official language as much as possible and look for a permanent work, as well as improper expectations with reality of the labour market;

4) asylum seekers have difficulties to open bank accounts in Latvia.

p) *Likelihood of continuation of the measure. If discontinued, please explain why*

The State Employment Agency continues to provide the measure.

Q20. Are there any specific protocols, synergies between agencies/institutions to support labour market integration of international protection applicants that have been identified as good practices?

The service provider, ensuring the support of the social worker and social mentor for asylum seekers submits a report to the Society Integration Foundation each month, which includes the number of services persons, number of mentors and social workers, as well as provides information on the assessment of each asylum seeker. This information is necessary in order to assess what intensity of social services is required for each asylum seeker. It should be taken into account that these reports include all events, related to socio-economical inclusion of asylum seekers, including integration in the labour market.

Representative of the Society Integration Foundation performs verification of documentation in presence each month at the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre.

The following measures can be identified as a good practice:

- **Weekly online meetings of the representatives of the Society Integration Foundation and social workers and social mentors, where the topical issues and possible solutions are discussed. Such meetings help to settle the issues.**
- **Twice a year focus group interviews are performed with asylum seekers, where the problem issues are defined and solutions sought.**
- **Twice a year the service provider - currently it is Caritas Latvia, which provides the services of social workers and mentors, submits a report on accomplishments.**
- **Monthly report of less scope for the serviced customers and support provided.**

Q21. What kind of challenges have been identified in your country when it comes to access to the labour market by applicants for international protection? Please provide a distinction⁶⁴ between legislative challenges and challenges in practice and specify how those challenges have been identified.

In accordance with the information of the service provider, the biggest challenge is opening of the bank account for asylum seekers. After the time, when the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs issues a foreigner's personal identification document to the asylum seeker, confirming the fact that the asylum seeker can work without restrictions, the person turns to the potential employer. Although the Labour Law⁶⁵ permits the employer to pay the labour payment in cash, however a practice has been established in Latvia that the employer makes the labour payment via non-cash payment, therefore, employers ask asylum seekers to open bank account.

⁶⁴ Where applicable

⁶⁵ Section 70 of the Labour Law

The information is collected about the issue and the Ministry of the Interior together with the representatives of the Association of Banks and Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs organized a meeting, where they discussed the potential solutions. The representative of banks indicated that each bank has their own security check and practice how to perform it, besides, after introduction of sanctions against Russia, many banks perform checks more carefully and more often refuse third-country nationals.

Caritas Latvia indicates that since 2002, when they started to provide the services of a mentor and social workers, only few asylum seekers had a possibility to open bank accounts. Since August 2022, according to Caritas Latvia, no asylum seeker has been able to open a bank account. In all these cases the social mentor provides support to asylum seekers.

The lack of motivation for the asylum seekers to learn language has been mentioned as the second challenge, because, according to the opinion of many asylum seekers, Latvia is not their final destination country, where they would like to settle down. Therefore, efforts, means and time spent for training of these asylum seekers and provision of social services are uselessly spent.

Besides, it is also indicated that there are cases, when the asylum seeker, in particular from Azerbaijan and other countries where Russian language is dominant, are ready to start employment at once, rather than wait for three months from the day of submission of the application. However, there are also cases, when the asylum seeker receives a foreigner's personal identification card, but does not want to work. Mostly these asylum seekers consider that, upon receiving a foreigner's identification card, they show their motivation to stay and integrate, although it actually does not affect the process of review of the application of the asylum seeker, performed by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

While, the State Employment Agency (providing consultations to the asylum seekers on the search of job) indicates on the following challenges:

- 1) **Language barrier.** Customers command Latvian, English or Russian language in comparatively poor level, in order to successfully find a job. Lack of knowledge of language limits also their possibility to socialize and find a job or commence the self-employment by themselves;
- 2) **Attitude of employers.** These could be prejudice against few ethnic or religious groups and simply concerns about additional complications, which quite often arise, when employing person, who do not know good information on the local culture and life, which are self-evident for local inhabitants. Besides, employers sometimes are not sufficiently informed on whether these persons have the right to employment in Latvia, mostly directly in relation to asylum seekers;

- 3) In certain cases, lack of motivation to learn the official language as much as possible and look for a permanent work, as well as improper expectations with reality of the labour market;**
- 4) Asylum seekers have difficulties to open bank accounts in Latvia.**

Having examined the information provided by Caritas Latvia, the Society Integration Foundation, as well as the representatives of the State Employment Agency about difficulties for asylum seekers to find a job, it can be concluded that opening of bank account, lack of motivation to find a job, as well as language barrier and dislike of employers to additionally invest time, in order to correctly arrange the legal employment relations, are the common challenges, mentioned by representatives of all institutions to be interviewed.

1.2.1.3 Section 6: Conclusions

This part of the study compiles the main findings from sections 1-5.

Q22. Please synthesise the findings of your national report by drawing conclusions from your responses:

- a) What are the main trends with regard to the situation of international protection applicants in the context of labour market integration and what are the main debates regarding their labour market integration identified in your country (Section 1)?

Based on data, the proportion of men and women among asylum seekers since 2017 in Latvia is 70% vs 30% accordingly.⁶⁶ When analysing the data provided by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, it follows that men request to grant a foreigner's card more often, giving the right for the asylum seeker for employment - those are 77% versus 23% (women).⁶⁷ Although the Labour Law in Latvia permits to employ persons from the age of 13 years (with restrictions), however, the asylum seekers until the age of 18 years in all cases choose to continue the secondary education at school. While, the majority of current asylum seekers as well as the persons, who have turned to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs with a request to grant a foreigner's personal identification card, are persons in the age between 18 and 34 years - 60%; persons in the age between 35 and 64 years - 38% and persons older than 64 years constitute less than 2%.⁶⁸ Data on the nationality of the persons, who turn to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs with a request to issue a foreigner's identification card, are not collected, however, when looking at the nationality of all asylum seekers, the biggest number of persons come from Iraq - 22%, it is followed by the nationals of Russia - 11% ; Belarus - 8%; Afghanistan - 5%, Azerbaijan - 5%.⁶⁹

The main discussions as well as the biggest changes in relation to employment of asylum seekers and integration in the labour market were held in 2021. One of the coalition parties of that time - *Attīstībai/ Par* (Development/For) submitted amendments to the Immigration Law to the *Saeima*, which provided a possibility to reduce a time period for a permit to employment from 6 to 3 months after submission of the application of the asylum seeker in order to sooner to commence employment. That was related to the increase of the number of applications for asylum by nationals of Belarus in 2020 and 2021, when many opponents of the opposition and Lukashenko regime moved to Latvia to ask for asylum. Due to the fact that these persons can find a job quite easily and soon, the decision was made to facilitate the provisions for commencement of employment for all asylum seekers.

⁶⁶ Eurostat, Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data, online data code: MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA/default/table?lang=en

⁶⁷ Data of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

⁶⁸ Data of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

⁶⁹ Eurostat, Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data, online data code: MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA/default/table?lang=en

b) If at all and to what extent are international protection applicants specifically addressed in national integration policies with regard labour market integration (Section 2)? What are the key characteristics of the national integration policies for promoting labour market participation for the applicants of international protection (Section 2) and how is the access to employment and self-employment for applicants of international protection regulated/supported (Section 3)

Latvia does not have any separate policy or strategy, which is directly driven towards integration of asylum seekers on the labour market. The meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers approved on 4 February 2021 the policy planning document in the field of civil society and democracy policy "Guidelines for the development of a cohesive and civically active society for 2021-2027"⁷⁰. They are developed, taking into account the overall goal of cohesive public policy - that is a national, joint, open and civically active society, the basis of existence of which is democratic values and human rights determined by the Constitution, Latvian language and Latvian culture space. The following directions of the activities were determined: national identity and belonging, culture of democracy and inclusive citizenship, integration. The guidelines emphasize a comprehensive principle - inclusive participation and marks the following cross priorities: national identity, Latvian language, trust, solidarity, cooperation. The direction of the integration activity includes measures promoting integration of migrants, which includes acquisition of Latvian language and basic knowledge of the Latvian history.⁷¹

Measures included in the guidelines are driven towards integration of third-country nationals, without distributing asylum seekers as a separate group of persons.

Every asylum seeker shall be entitled three months after the day of submission of the application for asylum to turn to the Office and receive a foreigner's eID, confirming that the asylum seeker has the right to employment without restrictions. In Latvia the Immigration Law stipulates that an asylum seeker has the right to employment without restrictions, which means that no restrictions are made to be employed in any particular sector or field. Besides, the asylum seeker is not attracted to any particular employer. The asylum seeker has the right to work as a self-employed person, besides there is no separate regulation provided for self-employed persons.

⁷⁰Guidelines for the development of a cohesive and civically active society for 2021-2027. - Available: <http://tap.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40490048&mode=mk&date=2021-02-04>.

⁷¹ Approved Guidelines for the development of a cohesive and civically active society for 2021-2027. - Available: <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/apstiprina-saliedetas-un-pilsoniski-aktivas-sabiedribas-attistibas-pamatnostadnes-2021-2027-qadam>.

c) To what extent are targeted measures to support labour market participation available in your country, specifically addressing applicants for international protection (Section 4) and what has been identified as challenges as well as good practice in this area (Section 5)?

Please describe.

Immediately after the asylum seekers arrives to the accommodation centre, the assistance of the social worker and social mentor is offered to him or her (usually it takes place in three days after arrival). The social worker and social mentor are the persons, who collect information on the needs of the asylum seeker, as well as explain what are the possibilities to be employed after the period of three months.

At the same time, learning of Latvian language and integration courses take place, where the asylum seeker is being told about Latvia, culture, society and other topical issues. The State Employment Agency provides consultations on the search of job, as well as other kind of issues, such as entry into contracts and tax specifics. Services of interpreter are provided to asylum seekers in cases, when asylum seekers need to receive some service. These measures promote the integration process of the asylum seeker, including on the labour market, however, there are several issues that the service providers indicate on.

The major issue mostly pointed out by the social support providers is the difficulty to open bank account. Although the Labour Law enables the employer to pay in cash to the asylum seeker, however a practice has been established in Latvia that employers mostly chose to pay via non-cash payments. Asylum seekers have difficulties in banks to open accounts, which is related to increased assessment requirements since the Russian aggression in Ukraine in February 2022. Banks often treat asylum seekers as all other third-country nationals; therefore, they perform additional checks and prudential measures from the part of banks. Another issue is reduced capacity of banks, because since the Covid-19 crisis time, the customer service in presence is reduced.

Besides, the lack of motivation of asylum seekers is mentioned as a challenge. Many consider that when receiving the foreigner's ID, giving the right to them for employment, will positively affect the asylum review procedure, however, it does not have any impact on making of the decision. Additional challenges include language barrier and sceptical, sometimes discriminating view of asylum seekers by employers.

The good practice includes weekly online meetings of the Society Integration Foundation with providers of social services, where the current issues are discussed, and focus group interviews, which help to better understand the issues and needs of asylum seekers.

[Annex: Eurostat statistics](#)

Eurostat Data for each EU Member State will be extracted centrally by the Service Provider and an Excel-Sheet prepared for each country and shared with the NCPs.

The Statistical Annex consists of the following:

Annex 1.1: Eurostat data asylum and first time asylum applicants
[[MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA](#)]