Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
Republic of Latvia

EMN European Migration Network LATVIA

ASYLUM AND MIGRATION OVERVIEW IN LATVIA REFERENCE YEAR 2025

Riga, May 2026

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 is also used to provide the general public with information on these topics. The Network is composed of the European Commission and the contact points designated by the Member States. Each contact point establishes a national migration network.

The contact point prepares studies, whose topics have been set in the respective annual action program. The topics of studies are related to the migration of third-country nationals.

The Latvian Contact Point of the European Migration Network is the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

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SUMMARY

Legal migration

In 2025, 14,301[1] first-time residence permits were issued, which is 58% more than in 2024. 5,994 first-time temporary residence permits were issued to Ukrainian civilians who received temporary protection in Latvia.

As of 15 July 2025, Latvia discontinued issuing visas in non-biometric passports, as well as ceased accepting residence permit applications from Russian citizens who do not possess a biometric passport.[2]

International protection and asylum

Compared with 2024, the number of asylum seekers in 2025 increased 1.6 times – in 2025, 1,288 persons applied for asylum (801 in 2024).

Temporary protection

On 3 December 2025, Amendments to the Law on Support for Ukrainian Civilians were adopted. The state support for Ukrainian civilians in Latvia is reduced by approximately 40% (from the EUR 65 million planned for 2025 to just under EUR 40 million).

Minors and other vulnerable groups

In 2025, the number of unaccompanied minors in Latvia increased significantly reaching 170; all of them applied for asylum.

Integration

In 2025, immigrants from third countries could learn the Latvian language, find out about living in Latvia, take integration courses and receive help in finding a job and support from a social mentor. State and non-governmental organisations provided integration and Latvian language courses for asylum seekers and third-country nationals, including the Ukrainian civilians.

Citizenship and naturalisation

In 2025, 724 persons were granted the Latvian citizenship by means of naturalisation.[3] The majority of those who received the Latvian citizenship were non-citizens of Latvia (434). In 2025, the number of third-country nationals who were granted the Latvian citizenship by means of naturalisation increased to 280 persons (in 2024 – 155).[4]

1 Data source: OCMA.
2 Latvia will henceforth no longer recognise non-biometric passports of citizens of the Russian Federation. – Available on: https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/latvija-turpmak-neatzis-krievijas-federacijas-pilsona-pases-bez-biometrijas-datiem
3 Data source: OCMA.
4 Data source: OCMA.

Border control, visas and Schengen management

On 1 September 2025, amendments to the Immigration Law entered into force, providing that a foreigner – a national of any country other than a Member State of the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Economic Area, the Swiss Confederation or the Federative Republic of Brazil, who does not hold a visa or residence permit issued by the Republic of Latvia – shall electronically submit the required information[5] in the information system for the prevention of threats to the State 48 hours before entering the Republic of Latvia (www.eta.gov.lv).

Irregular migration

In September 2025, the agreement "On Amendments to the Agreement on Good Practice of Attracting Foreign Students and Delivering Studies of 22 September 2022" was signed[6], laying down five stricter obligations for higher education institutions.

Trafficking in human beings

On 26 August 2025, the Cabinet approved the Human Trafficking Prevention Plan for 2025–2027[7], which provides for the implementation of the international recommendations addressed to Latvia, as well as ensures the transposition of the requirements of the European Union Directive (EU) 2024/1712 into the legal framework of Latvia.

In criminal proceedings for organising trafficking in human beings, three persons have been classified as suspects. 11 third-country nationals have been recognised as victims of trafficking in human beings.

Return and readmission

In 2025, the number of forcibly removed persons decreased to 75, whilst 2206 persons voluntarily returned to their country of origin.

In 2024, the State Border Guard joined the EU Reintegration Programme (EURP) and, in relation to the SBG's involvement in the EURP and to regulate the SBG's internal procedure on the use of the programme, an internal normative act of the SBG was issued – the SBG Order No. 23.1-8.4/608 "On Commencing the Use of the European Union Reintegration Programme" of 16 April 2025.

5 information on the purpose of travelling (entry), the planned duration and the place of stay, the travel route, contact details, elected offices held by that person or a relative thereof, candidacy in elections, current or former status as a State or local government official, service in the armed forces, special services, the border guard, customs, or the interior, justice or foreign service (including the diplomatic service).

6 Agreement on Good Practice of Attracting Foreign Students and Delivering Studies, consolidated version: 08.09.2025. – Available on: https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/30134/download?attachment

7 Cabinet Order No. 534 "On the Human Trafficking Prevention Plan for 2025–2027" of 26 August 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 165. – 28.08.2025. – [entered into force on 26.08.2025]

INTRODUCTION

The Asylum and Migration Overview in Latvia (hereinafter, the Overview) provides information on the most significant changes in migration and asylum policy and the respective law in Latvia in the period of time from 1 January to 31 December 2025 and at the beginning of 2026. The Overview includes information from migration policy makers and implementers, as well as published research studies and media analysis.

The Overview is based on the specification developed by the European Commission and National Contact Points of the European Migration Network (hereinafter, the EMN), which enables the collection of uniform and comparable information on the EU Member States and the EMN Observer Countries[8]. After its completion, the Asylum and Migration Overview in 2025 in the EU and EMN Observer Countries will be available on the website of the EMN Latvian Contact Point: www.emn.lv.

The information required for the preparation of the Overview was received from the Ministry of the Interior, the State Border Guard (hereinafter, the SBG), the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health, the Riga Office of the International Organization for Migration (hereinafter, the IOM), the Society Integration Foundation (hereinafter, the SIF), and the OCMA.

To reflect the views prevailing in the society and to explore the debates in the political environment, the authors drew on articles, opinions, and assessments published on various news and public policy websites, as well as information available on the websites of other public institutions. All sources and publications used in the Overview are listed in the list of sources and publications.

The Overview uses data compiled by the national data providers and Eurostat – The Statistical Office of the European Union. Data has been agreed with migration and asylum experts. All terms used in this paper are in line with the definitions included in the EMN Glossary of Asylum and Migration Terms[9].

8 Norway, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania.
9 Available on: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary_en

OVERVIEW OF CHANGES IN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY

OVERVIEW OF CHANGES IN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY

General changes in the area of migration

Data on the entry and residence of third-country nationals in Latvia support two parallel trends: controlled legal migration (labour, studies) and irregular border crossing attempts caused by hybrid warfare. The upward trend in the number of temporary residence permits continues and is mostly related to employment and studies. The main countries of origin of guest workers are Tajikistan, India, and Ukraine. Since 2021, Latvia has faced increased pressure from irregular migration at the border with Belarus. In 2024 and 2025, the State Border Guard recorded dozens, and sometimes even hundreds, of attempts to irregularly cross the "green" border every day. These individuals mainly came from countries in the Middle East and Africa and used Belarus as a transit country to reach the EU. The increase in migration is reflected in the growing share of foreign labour in the service sector and in the society as a whole. In 2025, more focus was placed on seeking solutions to improve the control of immigration processes.

On 11 March 2025, the Ministry of the Interior organised an in-person meeting of the heads of all institutions involved in controlling the entry, employment and residence conditions of third-country nationals[10] to discuss the current situation and solutions for improving the supervision of regular migration. During the meeting, the heads of the institutions agreed on additional measures to improve the supervision of the entry and residence of third-country nationals in the Republic of Latvia.

As a result of the aforementioned meeting, on 16 December 2025, the Government supported the informative report prepared by the Ministry of the Interior with proposals on improving the legal framework governing the residence of third-country nationals[11]. The proposals included in the report covered education, employment, taxation, and immigration control. The Government indicates that, in order to prevent situations in which the currently applicable rules on the entry of third-country nationals into Latvia are misused, in particular what concerns studies and employment, it is necessary to substantially improve the legal framework in this area.[12] The informative report aims to assess the possibility of restricting the admission of third-country nationals to work in elementary occupations; provides that all first-year students from third countries, who study at higher education institutions, must make a financial security deposit which, in the event of cancellation of their visa or residence permit, will cover the return costs of third-country nationals; what concerns students from third countries, it envisages to review the number of English language testing institutions whose examinations are considered equivalent to the state English language examination; what concerns third-country students, it plans to change the current procedure and no longer give higher

10 Representatives from the State Border Guard, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, the State Security Service, the State Police, the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Revenue Service, the State Employment Agency, the State Labour Inspectorate, the Food and Veterinary Service, the State Education Development Agency, and the Riga Municipal Police attended the meeting.

11 Informative report "On improving the legal framework for the residence of third-country nationals in Latvia". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/707e492f-8bfd-4dc1-801f-3a6b85abd733

12 The Government supports the proposals of the Ministry of the Interior to improve the legal framework governing the residence of third-country nationals. – Available on: https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/valdiba-atbalsta-iekslietu-ministrijas-priekslikumus-treso-valstu-pilsonu-uzturesanas-regulejuma-pilnveidei

education institutions a possibility to invite, alongside bachelor's and master's level students, their family members – it envisages that the right to invite family members will be retained only for doctoral students.

In response to several critical reports and growing public concern about the state's inability to fully control migration processes, at its sitting of 27 November 2025, the Saeima decided, pursuant to Article 150 of the Rules of Procedure of the Saeima, to establish a Parliamentary Inquiry Committee on problems in immigration framework at the national and European Union level and in the work of executive institutions that cause the mass entry and residence of third-country nationals in the Republic of Latvia[13]. This committee was to operate for six months.

13 Notification of the Saeima "On the establishment of the Saeima Parliamentary Inquiry Committee on problems in immigration framework at the national and European Union level and in the work of executive institutions that cause the mass entry and residence of third-country nationals in the Republic of Latvia". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 230, 28.11.2025.

LEGAL MIGRATION

LEGAL MIGRATION

The total number of first-time residence permits issued in 2025 increased by 58% compared to the previous year – 14,301 residence permits were issued[14] (9,024 in 2024). 5,994[15] first-time temporary residence permits were issued to Ukrainian civilians who received temporary protection in Latvia.

In 2025 and 2026, changes were made to Latvia's migration policy and the legal framework. In order to strengthen the national security, reduce dishonest practices in student migration, transpose the EU law and to promote the integration of third-country nationals, several important amendments to the Immigration Law have been adopted, and the respective Cabinet Regulations have also been supplemented. These legal acts establish stricter requirements for both third-country nationals and their inviters: legal entities and natural persons. The objective of the amendments is to ensure more effective supervision of migration processes, reduce the risks of malicious conduct and strengthen the reputation of Latvia as a lawful and secure state.

On 25 March 2025, Cabinet Regulation No. 197 "Regulations Regarding Emergency Travel Document" was adopted[16], laying down the specimen and the content of the temporary travel document, the procedure and conditions for its issuance, as well as its validity periods. The Cabinet Regulation aims to transpose the provisions of Directive (EU) 2019/997 establishing an EU Emergency Travel Document and repealing Decision 96/409/CFSP, and Commission Delegated Directive (EU) 2024/1986 of 6 May 2024 amending Council Directive (EU) 2019/997 as regards the machine-readable zone of the EU Emergency Travel Document[17] laying down rules on the content and form of the temporary travel document, the issuance procedure, conditions, periods of validity, the amount of the state fee, the payment procedure, and the exemptions and reductions of the state fee for the issuance of temporary travel documents.

Pursuant to Paragraph 13 of Cabinet Regulation No. 141 "Procedures for the Recognition of Foreigners' Travel Documents"[18] of 4 March 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs adopted Decision No. 1690 on the non-recognition in the Republic of Latvia of non-biometric passports of citizens of the Russian Federation. As of 15 July 2025, Latvia discontinued issuing visas in non-biometric passports, as well as ceased accepting residence permit applications from Russian citizens who do not possess a biometric passport.[19] Russia issues biometric and non-biometric passports. Passports without biometric data issued by Russia do not comply with the recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and pose various security risks. Passports without biometric data do not contain electronic data media; thus, it is not possible to compare the personal data of passport holders with the data in the chip, and these passports are easy to forge. The decision aims to prevent the said security risks.

On 18 March 2025, the Cabinet approved Regulation No. 176 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 157 of 8 March 2022 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official

14 Data source: OCMA. Initial data on residence permits collected by *Eurostat* – to be adjusted at a later date.
15 Data source: OCMA.
16 Cabinet Regulation No. 197 "Regulations Regarding Emergency Travel Document". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 63, 31.03.2025. – [entered into force on 09.12.2025]
17 Pursuant to Council Directive (EU) 2019/997 of 18 June 2019 establishing the EU Emergency Travel Document and repealing Decision 96/409/CFSP, Article 19(1), and Article 2(1) of Commission Delegated Directive (EU) 2024/1986 of 6 May 2024 amending Council Directive (EU) 2019/997 as regards the machine-readable zone of the EU Emergency Travel Document.
18 Cabinet Regulation No. 141 "Procedures for the Recognition of Travel Documents of Foreigners" of 4 March 2021. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 46. – 08.03.2021. – [entered into force on 09.03.2021]
19 Latvia will henceforth no longer recognise non-biometric passports of citizens of the Russian Federation. – Available on: https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/latvija-turpmak-neatzis-krievijas-federacijas-pilsona-pases-bez-biometrijas-datiem

Language""[20], which establishes the procedures for testing the proficiency of the official language for citizens of the Russian Federation who, in order to receive the status of a long-term resident of the European Union, must demonstrate that their state language proficiency matches at least A2 level.

On 2 October 2025, the Saeima adopted amendments to the Immigration Law[21], which set out that residence permits shall not be issued to third-country nationals if they have been convicted for criminal offences carrying a criminal penalty under the Latvian law. The amendments aim to develop an accountability-based immigration policy, reducing threats to the internal and external security and sovereignty of the Latvian state, as well as the aggression and the influence exerted by the Russian Federation and its allies. The new regulation applies to all third-country nationals. In its 2024 public report, the State Security Service indicated that the most frequent reason for initiating criminal proceedings in 2024 was the so-called hate speech in support of the Russian aggression and interests. This is also one of the most frequent reasons for initiating criminal proceedings in the previous years. The largest number of foreign nationals criminally convicted in Latvia are citizens of the Russian Federation. In 2022, there were 92 persons; in 2023, 74 persons; in 2024, 59 persons. The report claims that some of those acting as mouthpieces for the interests of the Russian Federation are foreign nationals holding residence permits.[22]

On 26 March 2026, the Saeima adopted an amendment to the Immigration Law[23], which lays down additional circumstances that may serve as grounds for the cancellation of temporary residence permits, thereby strengthening the national security, law-abiding conduct of foreign nationals, and social cohesion. The amendments stipulate that a temporary residence permit of a foreign national shall be cancelled if, within one calendar year, that individual has committed three administrative offences against public order, public administration, road traffic rules, or the protection of children's rights.[24]

On 6 May 2026, Amendments to the Immigration Law were adopted[25], transposing Directive (EU) 2024/1233 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 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[26]. In addition, it is envisaged to:

- delete Section 23, Paragraph one, Clause 31 of the Immigration Law, which allows to receive a temporary residence permit if a foreign national purchases zero-interest government securities designated for a special purpose at the nominal value of EUR 250,000 and pays EUR 38,000 into the state budget pursuant to the regulatory enactments governing the issue of government securities;
- conclude a delegation agreement with an external service provider for the acceptance of documents required for applying for a residence permit and for verifying the authenticity of documents attached to an application for a long-stay visa or a residence permit;

20 Cabinet Regulation No. 176 of 18 March 2025 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 157 of 8 March 2022 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language"". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 57, 21.03.2025. – [entered into force on 22.03.2025]

21 Law "Amendments to the Immigration Law". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 198, 14.10.2025. – [entered into force on 28.10.2025]

22 Annotation to the draft law "Amendments to the Immigration Law". – Available on: https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/0/E100E8B09965485CC2258C7C001DD55F?OpenDocument

23 Law "Amendment to the Immigration Law". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 72, 15.04.2026. – [entered into force on 29.04.2026]

24 Annotation to the draft law "Amendment to the Immigration Law". – Available on: https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/0/1B61F336839C2D39C2258D2C004D9821?OpenDocument

25 Law "Amendments to the Immigration Law". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 85, 06.05.2026. – [entered into force on 20.05.2026.]

26 Directive (EU) 2024/1233 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 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 (recast). – PE/93/2023/REV/1 Official Journal L, 2024/1233, 30.4.2024.

- establish a procedure for remedying deficiencies in the documents required for applying for a residence permit, setting a 14-day time limit for the person concerned; this deadline may be extended at the request of the applicant or his or her sponsor. If the deficiencies are not remedied, the OCMA would take a decision refusing the issuance or registration of the residence permit;
- stipulate that documents required for requesting a residence permit may be submitted to the OCMA only by persons who are lawfully residing in the Republic of Latvia, excluding from this category persons who have received a departure order, but wish to submit documents to apply for a residence permit during the period, when they are permitted to remain in the country pending departure. The 90-day restriction on submitting documents for a minor child born in Latvia has been abolished, as receiving a child's travel document often takes longer. The restriction preventing individuals who have received a residence permit for studies from submitting documents to apply for a residence permit on another ground has been abolished. To supplement Section 32, Paragraph three of the Immigration Law with a provision allowing the Head of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs to permit a person, for important personal reasons, to submit documents to apply for a residence permit to the OCMA;
- a third-country national (including a national of Belarus and Russia) has the right to request a temporary residence permit for a period of up to five years if guardianship or trusteeship has been established for him or her or he is a guardian or trustee of a Latvian national or non-citizen of Latvia. The parent of a minor Latvian national or non-citizen of Latvia has the right to request a temporary residence permit if the minor Latvian national or non-citizen of Latvia does not have another guardian in the Republic of Latvia who exercises daily actual guardianship, or if he or she is able to prove regular personal relations and direct contact with the minor Latvian national or non-citizen of Latvia;
- third-country national residing in the Republic of Latvia in connection with education or studies are not entitled to request a permanent residence permit during the validity period of this residence permit;
- set out in Section 35 of the Immigration Law that a temporary residence permit shall not be annulled if a third-country national has received a temporary residence permit for the purposes of employment and the total period of unemployment during the validity of the temporary residence permit does not exceed three months or, if the third-country national has resided in the Republic of Latvia for more than two years with a temporary residence permit issued for the purposes of the employment and the total period of unemployment during the validity of the temporary residence permit does not exceed six months, and the third-country national has notified the OCMA of the termination of the employment relationship. If the foreign national has been employed under especially exploitative working conditions, the periods of unemployment may be extended by three months.[27]

In February 2026, the OCMA developed a convenient and functional electronic tool (hereinafter, the e-tool) for third-country nationals lawfully residing in the territory of the Republic of Latvia. This tool will make it possible to quickly and conveniently receive information on the process of applying for and receiving a short-stay Schengen visa and a national long-stay visa.

27 Annotation to the draft law "Amendments to the Immigration Law". – Available on: https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/0/755EA9F769245E90C2258D61004D726B?OpenDocument

The visa e-tool is available on the OCMA website www.pmlp.gov.lv in the section "Visas, invitations and sponsorships" – "Receiving a visa at the Office"[28]. It serves as a single point of detailed information on applying for a Schengen short-stay visa and a national long-stay visa, the process for submitting the necessary documents, payment conditions and receipt of the visa, as well as on the amount of the state fee and the payment procedure.

The e-tool was developed to enable customers to familiarise themselves, in a modern and convenient way, with a large volume of information on applying for long-stay and short-stay visas. This information was already available on the OCMA website, but until now it had not been compiled in one place in a convenient and user-friendly manner. It is available both in Latvian and English: https://vizucelvedis.pmlp.gov.lv/.[29]

In autumn 2025, the large-scale pilot project APTITUDE was launched[30] (Advanced Project for Trusted Identity Technologies and Unified Digital Ecosystem), which will help in creating a unified, secure, and user-friendly digital identity ecosystem for all European residents. APTITUDE aims to prepare solutions for the introduction of the European Digital Identity Wallet (EDIM) by the end of 2026, ensuring that residents are able to manage their digital identity securely and conveniently throughout the European Union.

Digital identity will become a reliable everyday assistant to residents, simplifying and accelerating various processes. It will replace some physical documents, ensuring full control over personal data pursuant to the General Data Protection Regulation and the highest privacy standards.

The pilot project will focus on four key areas in which the EDIM will provide practical and readily usable benefits:

- Digital travel credentials – identity verification and passport data for travelling.
- Tickets and check-in – digital boarding passes, hotel check-in and the public transport.
- Vehicle registration – digital ownership and lease certificates.
- Payments and banking services – secure customer identification and digital payments.

APTITUDE will carry out extensive functional testing to assess the usability, interoperability and scalability across the EU, while promoting standardisation and strengthening cooperation between the public and private sectors. This initiative is a significant step towards the full-scale implementation of EDIM, which will strengthen trust in the digital environment and make everyday life easier for millions of residents across Europe.

APTITUDE builds on the experience of previous pilot projects (NOBID, DC4EU, POTENTIAL, EWC), expanding on it and ensuring a smooth transition to the implementation of EDIM. The pilot project brings together 117 public and private sector partners from 12 European countries[31].[32]

28 The development of the visa e-tool was financed under the project "Use and Development of the National Visa Information System (NVIS)" in the framework of the 2021–2027 programme of the Financial Support Instrument for Border Management and Visa Policy.

29 The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs has developed a digital guide on the visa application process. – Available on: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/pilsonibas-un-migracijas-lietu-parvalde-izstradajusi-digitalu-celvedi-vizu-sanemsanas-procesam

30 Lead partner – the Ministry of Finance; Latvian partners: the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development, the State Digital Development Agency, JSC "SEB banka".

31 France – the project coordinator, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and Hungary.

32 The APTITUDE project – a step closer to a secure and convenient digital identity across Europe. – Available on: https://www.varam.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/aptitude-projekts-solis-tuvak-drosai-un-ertai-digitalajai-identitatei-visa-eiropa

Economic migration

Rights to employment in 2025

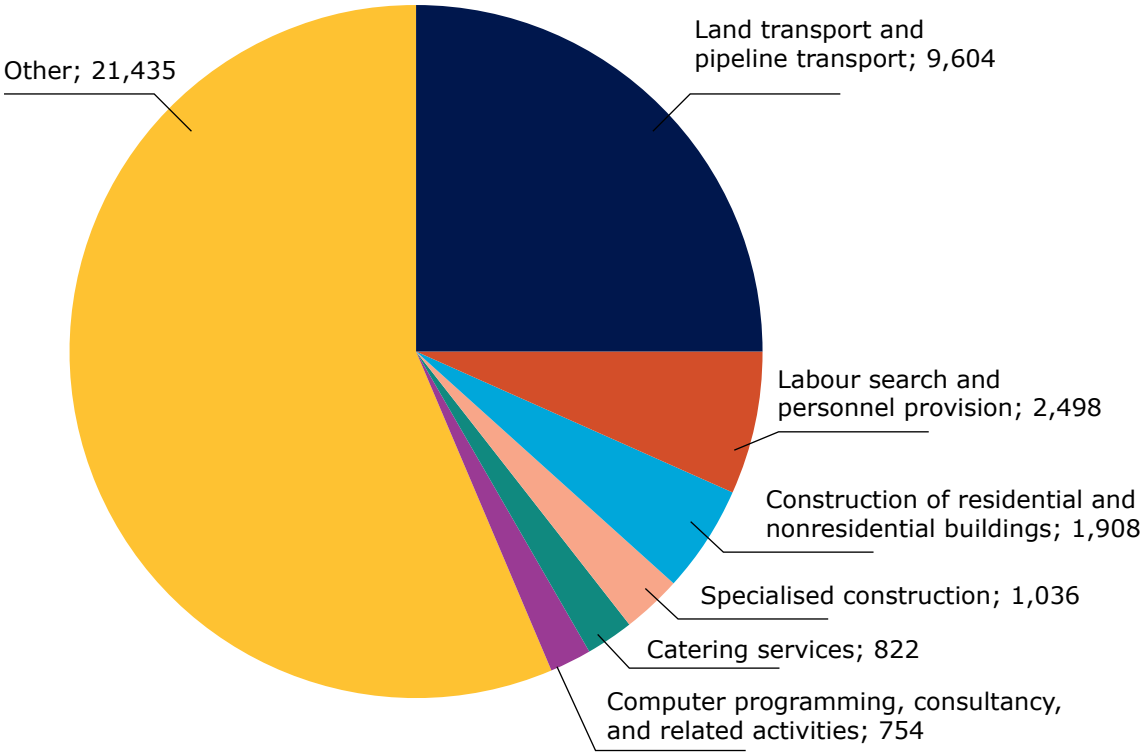

Figure 1-1

The total number of third-country nationals who were granted the right to employment in 2025 increased by 15.6% (22,917 in 2025; 19,825 in 2024). Most third-country nationals work in land transport and pipeline transport (9,604), in labour search and personnel provision (2,498), in construction of residential and non-residential buildings (1,908), in computer programming, consultancy, and related activities (1,581), in specialised construction (1,036), and in catering services (822). In 2025, the right to employment was most frequently granted to nationals of Uzbekistan (7,265), India (3,034), and Belarus (2,845).[33]

33 Data source: OCMA.

Number of third-country nationals who were granted the right of employment and the number of first-time residence permits issued for employment purposes in Latvia

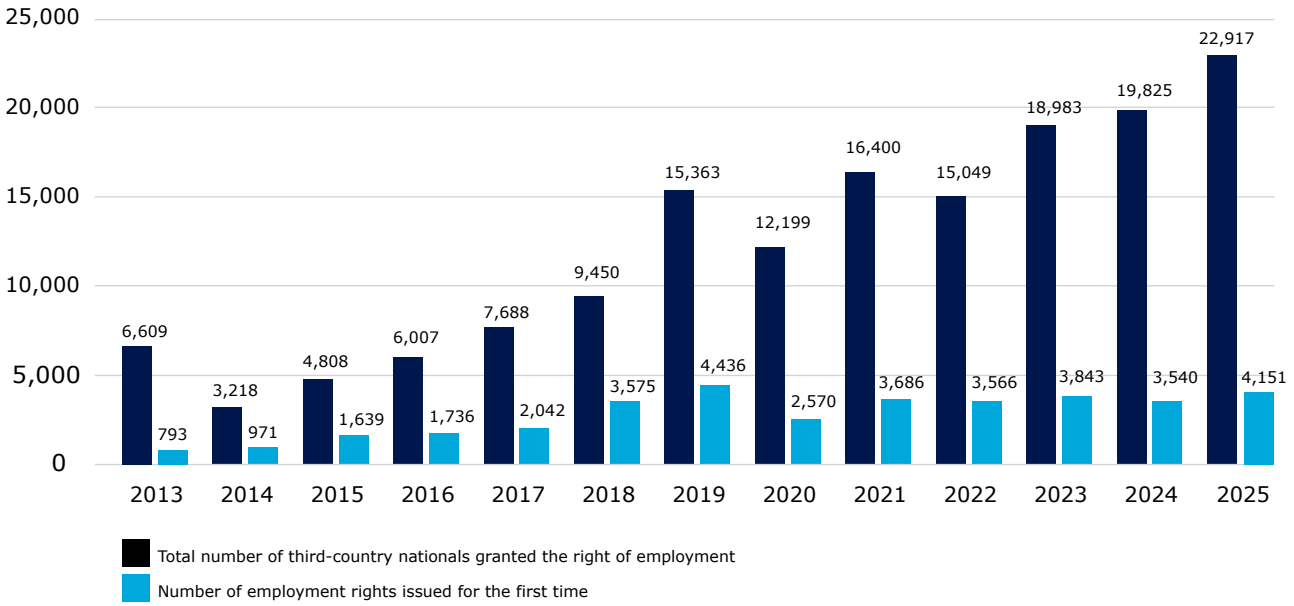

Figure 1-2.

The number of first-time residence permits issued to third-country nationals for employment purposes has increased: 3,540 in 2024 and 4,151 in 2025.[34]

On 6 May 2025, Cabinet Regulation No. 277 "Procedures for Ensuring the Provision of Priority Public Services to Merchants"[35] was adopted: it sets out the sectors, as well as the requirements and criteria for companies that have the right to invite such third-country nationals to work in Latvia, whose employment-related documents are accepted and examined, decisions are taken, and documents are issued within the shortened time limits laid down by the Cabinet. The Regulation sets out that the third-country nationals invited by recipients of priority services may enjoy faster access to visa applications at representation offices abroad, as well as to documents certifying the right of residence (residence permit eID cards) within a shortened time limit – within three working days (instead of 10 working days). The Regulations were drafted to promote exports and attract investments, as well as to ensure a business environment that is conducive to the development of the defence industry, including by attracting foreign labour to meet the needs of the Latvian economy and labour market, by reducing the administrative burden and accelerating administrative coordination processes for economic operators significant to the national economy.[36]

However, on 22 October 2025, during a meeting of the Human Capital Development Council on the employment of third-country nationals in Latvia, both the Ministry of Economics and representatives of several invited associations emphasised that Cabinet Regulation No. 277 should be revised by introducing stricter criteria for including companies that are considered significant to the national economy in the "green corridor" list.

34 Data source: OCMA. Initial data on residence permits collected by *Eurostat* – to be adjusted at a later date.
35 Cabinet Regulation No. 277 "Procedure for Ensuring the Provision of Priority Public Services to Merchants" of 6 May 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 91, 14.05.2025. – [entered into force on 15.05.2025]
36 Annotation to the draft legal act "Procedure for Ensuring the Provision of Priority Public Services to Merchants". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/45da77ff-1fe1-496d-b8b9-1dd853762c96

On 24 February 2026, the Cabinet approved Regulation No. 84 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 277 of 6 May 2025 "Procedure for Ensuring the Provision of Priority Public Services to Merchants""[37], aiming to address the shortcomings identified in the practical application of the regulation following the entry into force of Cabinet Regulation No. 277 of 6 May 2025. In addition, the amendments to the regulation were developed to promote investment, foster the development of exportable and high value-added projects, support the growth of priority sectors and the defence industry, as well as to ensure compliance with the obligations laid down in Regulations (EU) 2024/1252[38] and (EU) 2024/1735[39] of the European Parliament.[40]

Henceforth, merchants whose export volume reaches EUR 10 million (instead of EUR 5 million previously) will be able to qualify for the "green corridor" advantages. As a result, the list of "green corridor" merchants will decrease from 586 to approximately 259 companies, ensuring that the benefits are granted only to merchants making the greatest contribution to the national economy. The OCMA's time limit for examining the documents of third-country nationals has been reduced from 30 to 10 working days.[41]

Studies and discussions on migration

In 2025, discussions continued on the growing number of third-country nationals in Latvia, including the misuse of legal entry channels by foreign students.

In March 2025, a meeting of the Saeima Committee on Citizenship, Migration and Social Cohesion took place. During this meeting, it was concluded that there were two gaps in the control of the residence of third-country nationals in Latvia: first, it was not entirely clear how many third-country nationals actually leave the country once the grounds for residing in Latvia cease to exist; second, there was insufficient oversight of higher education institutions admitting foreign students. The Chair of the Committee, Gunārs Kūtris from the Union of Greens and Farmers, predicted that this issue would have to be discussed again as early as the autumn.

The number of foreign students in the higher education institutions of Latvia is again increasing; however, most of these students do not graduate, which have given rise to the question of where they end up – an issue that has also been noticed by the Members of the Parliament. "Today, in the committee, we especially focussed on students, as we feel that in this area there is a gap in the control system, insufficient control on the part of the state, and, in fact, it seems to me that no one is exercising any control at all," said Kūtris.

He indicated that there were suspicious higher education institutions that were interested only in collecting tuition fees from students rather than actually educating them.[42]

37 Cabinet Regulation No. 84 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 277 of 6 May 2025 "Procedure for Ensuring the Provision of Priority Public Services to Merchants"" of 24 February 2026. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 40, 26.02.2026. – [entered into force on 27.02.2026]

38 Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (Text with EEA relevance), PE/78/2023/REV/1. – Official Journal L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024.

39 Regulation (EU) 2024/1735 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on establishing a framework of measures for strengthening Europe's net-zero technology manufacturing ecosystem and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 (Text with EEA relevance), PE/45/2024/REV/1. – Official Journal L, 2024/1735, 28.6.2024.

40 Annotation to the draft legal act "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 277 of 6 May 2025 "Procedure for Ensuring the Provision of Priority Public Services to Merchants"". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/12519ea4-6cbe-4639-b9df-150ed657a5f0

41 The range of beneficiaries of the "green corridor" benefits has been narrowed: twice the export volume will be required. – Available on: https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/ekonomika/24.02.2026-sasaurina-zala-koridora-prieksrocibu-sanemeju-loku-vajadzes-divreiz-lielaku-eksporta-apjomu.a636154/

42 Member of the Parliament highlight migration issues – foreign students and insufficient control of removed persons. – Available on: https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/19.03.2025-deputati-norada-uz-problemam-migracija-arvalstu-studenti-un-nepietiekama-izraidito-kontrole.a592193/

On 31 March 2025, the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with higher education institutions of Latvia, presented the next steps and the necessary legislative changes required to improve the process of attracting foreign students and to ensure more effective supervision.

The average drop-out rate among foreign students in Latvia in the 2023/2024 academic year was 37%, whereas in 2022/2023 it was 31%, which is similar to the drop-out rate among foreign students in Germany. Due to the security situation and the drop-out rate of foreign students, attention must be paid to improving the overall regulatory framework to ensure more responsibility among those inviting students to the Latvian education institutions, as well as to attract genuinely interested students to study in the Latvian higher education institutions and other educational establishments.

Representatives of higher education institutions and the Ministry acknowledged that it was necessary to improve the recording of data on foreign students and the interoperability of various registers, as it was essential that all interested parties could receive reliable and up-to-date data on foreign students and accurately track their progress at a particular higher education institution in Latvia, including in cases where they change these institutions. It is also important to ensure systematic data exchange between state institutions and higher education institutions in order to track the employment of foreign students both during their studies and after graduation.

The Ministry of Education and Science has developed an action plan to improve the situation in this sector, and it undertakes to implement this plan in cooperation with other sectors (interior, foreign affairs, and security) and in consultation with higher education institutions:

1. lay down stricter academic requirements for the admission of foreign students;
2. restrict the right of higher education institutions to admit foreign students if there is a high visa refusal rate;
3. pay more attention to the matter of foreign students during the accreditation of higher education institutions;
4. hold rectors administratively liable if they fail to report students who have been exmatriculated;
5. review the possibility of inviting students to short-cycle, secondary vocational, non-formal education, and professional development programmes;
6. develop a national higher education internationalisation strategy.[43]

At the meeting of the parliamentary inquiry committee on 3 March 2026, representatives of higher education institutions were heard on third-country students studying there. During the meeting and in the context of assessing the immigration framework, representatives of higher education institutions promised to attract more students from the European countries and the member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), rather than students from third countries. Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU) was singled out by the participating Members of the Parliament as a good example of internationalisation. The total number of foreign students at RSU reaches nearly 3,200, of whom approximately 480 are from third countries, while students from OECD countries account for around 90%. The "top" countries are said to be Sweden, Germany, Norway, Finland, Italy, Portugal, as well as India.

43 Action plan on improving the attraction of foreign students. – Available on: https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/374504-ricibas-plans-arvalstu-studentu-piesaistes-uzlabosanai-2025

RSU places great emphasis on motivation interviews with foreign students, which is also the stage at which the student's English language skills are assessed. If there are doubts about these skills, the interview is sent to RSU language lecturers, who assess whether the student's English meets B2 level.[44]

Several discussions have taken place about Ukrainians in Latvia. "Municipalities do not know how to integrate such large number of Ukrainian civilians into the Latvian society in the long term. They do not see themselves as makers of the integration policy, but expect it to be developed at the national level," *Dārta Pelse*, the lead researcher on migration and integration issues at "Providus", explained to the Member of the Saeima.[45]

Furthermore, researchers from "Providus" have also noted that the new Immigration Law will come into conflict with another law – the Law on Support for Ukrainian Civilians. It lays down that after five years of residing in Latvia Ukrainians who have learned the language and are working could be eligible for permanent residence. However, the new Immigration Law does not provide for such possibility for persons with a temporary protection status. As a result, it is possible that Ukrainians meet all the requirements, but legally are unable to receive a permanent residence permit. This means that the next year, when five years would have passed since some of the Ukrainian civilians began residing in Latvia, some of them would have theoretically fulfilled the requirements necessary to receive a permanent residence permit, namely continuous residence in Latvia, as well as language proficiency. And if this draft Immigration Law were adopted in its current wording, it would in practice prevent individuals from receiving the right of permanent residence in the long term.[46] The Ministry of the Interior is preparing to address this problem by making relevant amendments in the Law on Support for Ukrainian Civilians, which are to be sent to other ministries for their approval shortly.

Migration issues also remained topical at the beginning of 2026. The Employers' Confederation of Latvia (hereinafter, the LDDK) stated that Latvia needed a targeted migration policy that was appropriate for the economy, developed as a single national-level framework and covering four interrelated directions: personnel recruitment, the attraction and retention of foreign students, security and integration matters, as well as capital and business migration. Such approach must be based on regular assessment of the labour market needs across sectors and regions and must provide solutions both for attracting highly qualified specialists and for occupations requiring practical skills where local resources are no longer able to meet the demand. LDDK indicated that migration policy was currently fragmented, and this hindered both the development of the labour market and the attraction of investments.

LDDK emphasised that fast, transparent and clear labour recruitment processes, as well as strict measures in cases of violations were needed. Targeted work must continue to substantially accelerate and simplify the process of issuing work and residence permits, as the labour force needed in the labour market is required exactly at the moment when the demand arises, and not after the completion of a lengthy bureaucratic process. An effective migration policy must be based on the principle that the state is able to promptly take entry decisions, while ensuring a clear, transparent and functioning supervision system on the ground. Security aspects must be strict and integrated, not an obstacle at the entry stage, but a continuous control mechanism after arrival.

44 Higher education institutions promise to reduce the share of students from third countries. – Available on: https://leta.lv/home/important/227CF7CC-7478-4102-AAD7-DB86C86AB5CB/

45 Attitudes do not change, but benefits decrease: how Latvia is adapting to the long-term presence of Ukrainians. – Available on: https://lasi.lv/latvija-pasaule/sabiedriba/attieksme-nemainas-pabalsti-mazinas-ka-latvija-pielagojas-ilgtermina-ukrainu-klatbutnei.34432

46 In the draft Immigration Law, which has been considered by the Saeima for years, a favourable status for the Ukrainians fleeing the war has been overlooked. – Available on: https://tv3.lv/zinas/latvija/neka-personiga/toposaja-imigracijas-likuma-ko-jau-gadiem-skata-saeima-piemirsts-ieklaut-ipasas-labvelibas-statusu-no-kara-begosajiem-ukrainiem/

Such approach would allow to meet the needs of the national economy and to protect the public security interests, while preserving the state's ability to act flexibly and responsibly.[47]

EMN national report for the study "Sustainable labour market integration of third-country nationals: skills matching policies and instruments"[48]

More than a half of the European companies consider the shortage of skills to be an urgent problem whose resolution cannot be postponed, as companies cannot find workers with the appropriate qualifications and skills to fill vacancies. It is expected that the shortage of workers with appropriate skills will become even more acute in the future; thus, the question "How can the skills of migrants already living and working in the European Union be used effectively?" is becoming ever more pressing.

This issue has not been a national policy priority in Latvia, although it has been discussed more extensively since the arrival of Ukrainian civilians. As a result, a relatively large number of third-country nationals entered the labour market over a certain period. However, according to experts, the causes of skills mismatch for all types of migrants in Latvia are essentially the same: the main ones are the lack of official language skills, limited access to information about the labour market, employers' concerns and the related need to practically assess the migrants' ability to work in the local environment, as well as the complexity and length of procedures for the recognition of qualifications received abroad. After the collection of expert opinions, it was reported that the greatest difficulties continue to be the Latvian language learning, the procedure for the recognition of professional qualifications, and mismatches between employers' requirements and migrants' practical skills and readiness. At the same time, good practice examples were also highlighted, such as the Latvian language courses available to migrants and measures implemented by the State Employment Agency to promote employment and cooperation with employers.

47 LDDK calls for the development of a comprehensive human capital development strategy. – Available on: https://www.leta.lv/news/all/0167C1A2-5155-45A9-A391-C4558C065FBB/

48 EMN national report for the study "Sustainable labour market integration of third-country nationals: skills matching policies and instruments. – Available on: https://www.emn.lv/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/EMN-study-Fostering-labour-market-integration_common-template_LV_final.pdf

Students and scientists

Students

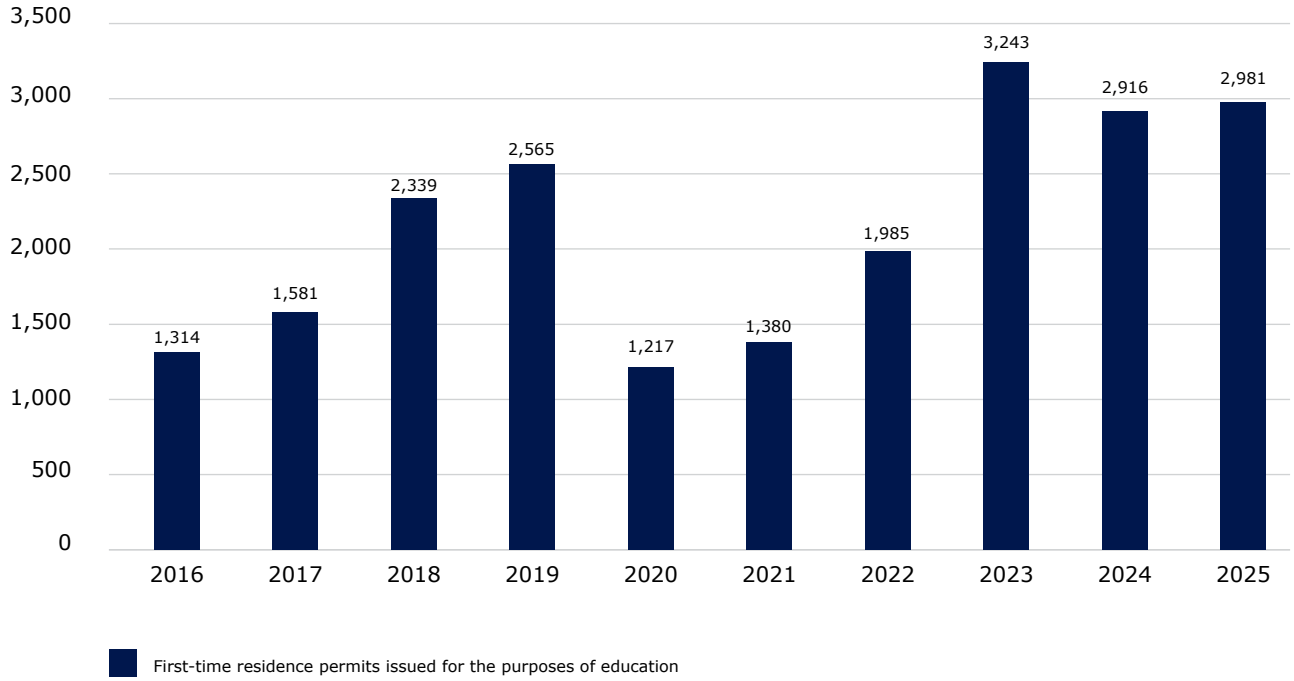

Figure 1-3.

For the purposes of education, 2,981[49] first-time residence permits were issued in 2025 (2,916 in 2024)[50], which is a slight increase compared to the previous year.

The Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies conducted an extensive study on the lives and educational experiences of foreign students and graduates in Latvia "Integration of International Students and Employment Opportunities in Latvia"[51]. The study identified the main factors that influenced their decision to remain in Latvia after completing their studies or to move to another country. The results included specific recommendations to higher education institutions, employers and policymakers to promote the integration and long-term retention of international students in Latvia.

The study concluded that the integration barriers faced by third-country graduates in Latvia's labour market are structural and systemic, driven by policy fragmentation and the lack of a uniform approach. Latvia needs to change its approach from passive education export to targeted attraction of foreign talents. The higher education offer must become an instrument of the country's economic transformation, focusing on attracting students to study programmes that are in line with Latvia's strategic priorities and smart specialisation areas.[52]

49 OCMA. Initial data on residence permits collected by *Eurostat* – to be adjusted at a later date.
50 Data source: *Eurostat*.
51 "Integration of International Students and Employment Opportunities in Latvia". – Available on: https://biceps.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/treso_valstu_studentu_nodarbinatiba_2025.pdf
52 Summary of the study "Integration of International Students and Employment Opportunities in Latvia". – Available on: https://biceps.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/applv_petijuma_parskats.pdf

Family reunification

In 2025, the number of first-time residence permits issued to third-country nationals for family reunification purposes decreased to 1,367 (1,672 in 2024).[53]

As a result of problems identified by the supervisory authorities what concerns the compliance of foreign students with residence requirements, on 16 December 2025 the Government supported the informative report prepared by the Ministry of the Interior with proposals for improving the legal framework governing the residence of third-country nationals[54]. Informative report with proposals for improving the legal framework governing the residence of third-country nationals provides for discontinuing the possibility available to students in bachelor's and master's programmes to enter together with their family members, thereby reducing the number of persons applying for residence permits without indicating the true purpose of entry (when the true purpose of entry is to secure residence opportunities for themselves and their family, rather than to study).

EMN national report for the study: Family reunification of third-country nationals in the EU: state of play after 20 years of implementation of the Family Reunification Directive [55]

The legal basis for the admission of third-country nationals for the purpose of family reunification is laid down in the Immigration Law[56] and the Asylum Law[57], as well as the related subordinated Cabinet Regulations.

In Latvia, the same conditions for residence permits apply to third-country nationals both in family reunification cases and cases when a new family is created. Persons who have received the international protection may reunite with family members if such family already existed in the country of origin and the family members are abroad. For the purposes of family reunification in Latvia, a third-country national may receive either a temporary residence permit or a permanent residence permit.

Correct preparation of the necessary documents has been the main challenge in exercising the right to family reunification in Latvia. What concerns family members' access to education, employment, and professional training, the lack of knowledge of the Latvian language creates a significant obstacle. The following examples of good practice should be highlighted: the changes made to normative acts that resulted in unrestricted access to the labour market for all family members of employed third-country nationals, and the establishment of a One-Stop Agency that provides tailored consultations and practical support to all third-country nationals legally residing in Latvia. The EMN study "Family reunification of third-country nationals in the EU: state of play after 20 years of implementation of the Family Reunification Directive", which summarises the experience of EMN Member States,[58] is available here.

53 OCMA. Initial data on residence permits collected by *Eurostat* – to be adjusted at a later date.
54 Informative report "On improving the legal framework for the residence of third-country nationals in Latvia". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/707e492f-8bfd-4dc1-801f-3a6b85abd733
55 EMN national report for study: Family reunification of third-country nationals in the European Union: situation 20 years after the introduction of the Family Reunification Directive. – Available on: https://www.emn.lv/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Treso-valstu-valstspiederigo-gimenes-atkalapvienosanas-ES-20-gadi-pec-Gimenes-atkalapvienosanas-direktivas-ieviesanas_2025.pdf
56 Immigration Law. – Ziņotājs, No. 169, 20.11.2002. – [entered into force on 01.05.2003]
57 Asylum Law. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 2, 05.01.2016. – [entered into force on 19.01.2016]
58 Family reunification of third-country nationals in the EU: state of play after 20 years of implementation of the Family Reunification Directive. – Available on: https://www.emn.lv/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2024_EMN_study_TCN_family_reunification_law_and_practice.pdf

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Number of asylum seekers

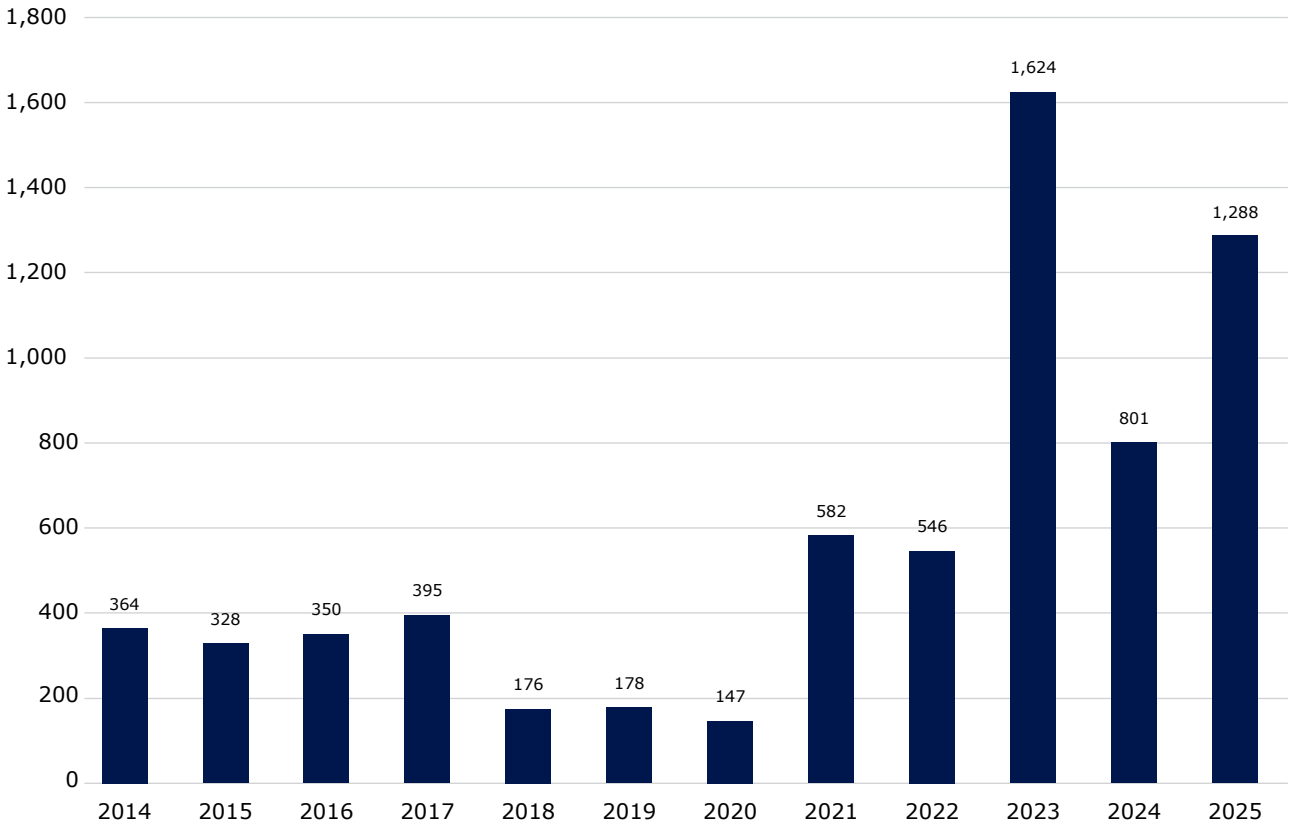

Figure 2-1.

Compared with 2024, the number of asylum seekers in 2025 increased 1.6 times reaching 1,288 (801 in 2024), and the predominant countries of their origin changed, with most asylum seekers arriving from Somalia – 238 (33 in 2024), Afghanistan – 142 (149 in 2024), Ethiopia – 114 (fewer than five in 2024), Morocco – 89 (10 in 2024), Tajikistan – 84 (163 in 2024), Sudan – 78 (fewer than five in 2024), Algeria – 73 (fewer than five in 2024), Egypt – 67 (0 in 2024), Eritrea – 56 (0 in 2024).[59]

59 Data source: OCMA.

Statistics on the international protection status

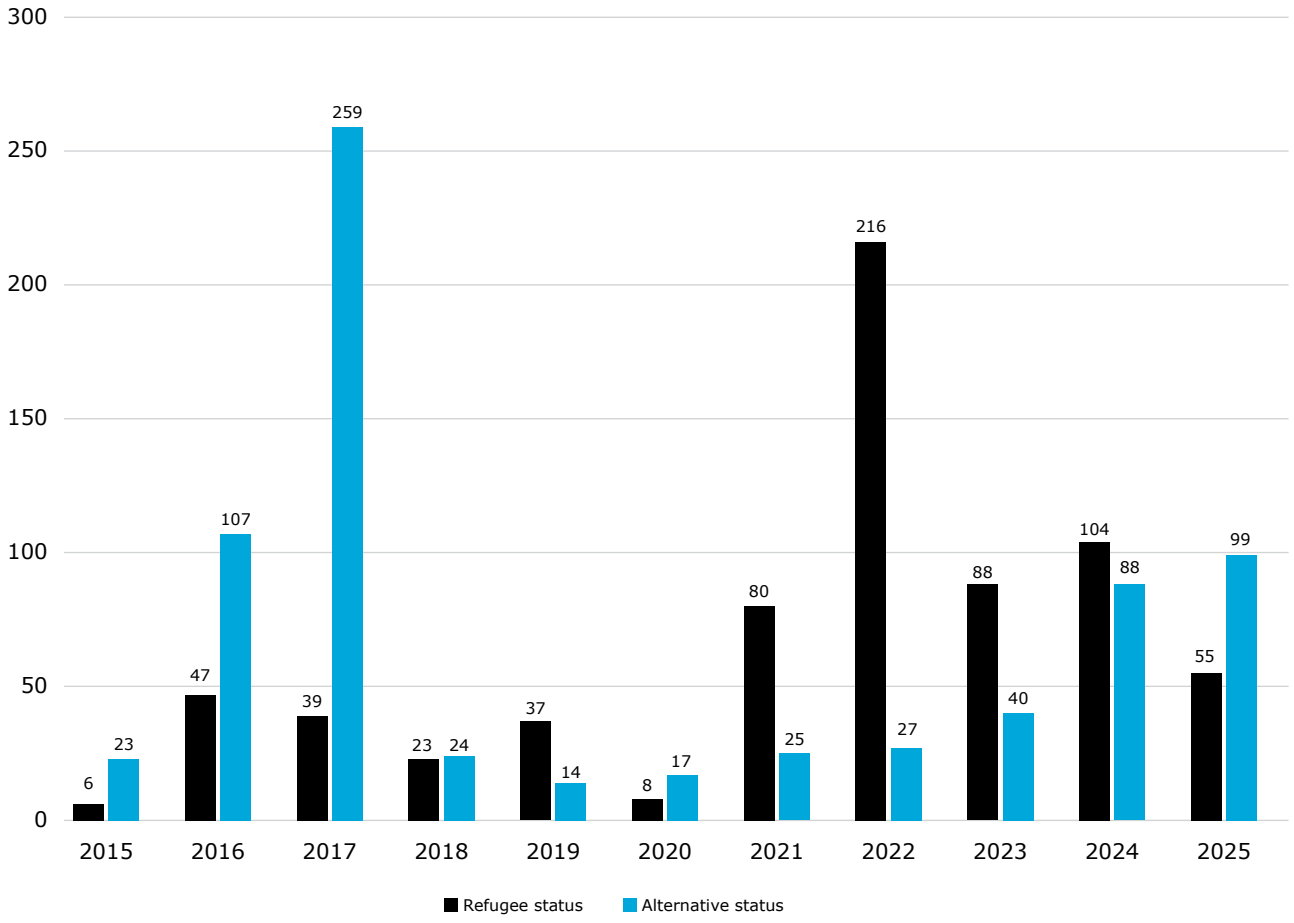

Figure 2-2.

In 2025, 154 persons received international protection in Latvia. Refugee status was granted to 55 persons, alternative status – to 99 persons. 109 asylum seekers were transferred to Latvia in 2025 in the framework of the Dublin mechanism.[60]

At the beginning of 2025, the Human Rights Centre launched the project "Provision of legal aid to asylum seekers and individuals with international protection and capacity-building measures in Latvia", which includes several activities aimed at protecting the rights of asylum seekers, individuals with a refugee status, individuals with an alternative status, individuals with a temporary protection status and stateless persons. The project is funded by the UNHCR[61].

In the framework of the project, two events were organised:

- On 17 December 2025, a webinar for legal aid providers took place, it focussed on current issues that are related to the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum. The webinar was attended by 49 participants. During the event, the following topics were examined:
- the background information on the development of the new framework;
- a comparison of the current law with the new law;
- the new pre-entry stage, which includes screening and the border procedure;

60 Data source: OCMA

61 Provision of legal aid to asylum seekers and individuals with international protection and capacity-building measures in Latvia. – Available on: https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/lv/projects/juridiskas-palidzibas-sniegsana-patveruma-mekletaj-689/

- new developments affecting the asylum procedure.[62]
    - On 14 November 2025, the annual seminar for legal aid providers on asylum law, organised by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights, took place. A total of 25 participants attended the seminar, including 18 legal aid providers and 2 representatives of the Court Administration. In the first part of the seminar, an overview was provided on the current developments and trends in protecting the asylum rights in Lithuania and Estonia that allowed the participants to compare the situation in the Baltic States. In the second part of the seminar, discussions were held on the specific aspects of evidence in cases that involved more vulnerable asylum seekers.[63]

In October 2025, the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the SBG and the OCMA, implemented the Border Management and Visa Policy Financial Support Instrument (Pact on Migration and Asylum) 2021–2027 framework period project No. IC/MPP/RPVP/2025/1 "Modernisation of the technological platform of the Biometric Data Processing System and procurement of EURODAC equipment". The project aimed to adapt the technological platform of the Biometric Data Processing System (hereinafter, the BDAS) to the requirements arising from the changes and innovations in the new Eurodac Regulation (EU) 2024/1358. The project aims to adapt the technological platform of the Biometric Data Processing System to the requirements arising from the changes and innovations in the new Eurodac Regulation (EU) 2024/1358.

Project activities:

Adaptation of the BDAS technological platform to the requirements of the Eurodac Regulation:

adaptation and supplementation of the BDAS technological platform;

- security tests;
- training.

Improvement of the central access point solution for Eurodac.

Procurement and integration of end-user equipment:

- procurement of end devices;
- integration of end devices.

Expected outputs of the project:

- adaptation and supplementation of the BDAS with the functionality necessary for the operation of the information system, and the CT tests have been completed;
- security testing of the BDAS solution has been carried out;
- training videos have been prepared, and system users have been trained;
- the CPP solution has been supplemented by including a possibility to create Eurodac data requests;
- end devices have been purchased;
- equipment integration has been completed.[64]

62 A webinar on the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum took place. – Available on: https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/lv/news/notika-vebinars-par-eiropas-savienibas-migracijas--707/

63 A seminar for legal aid providers on asylum law took place. - Available on: https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/lv/news/notika-seminars-juridiskas-palidzibas-sniedzejiem--706/

64 European Union Financial Support Instrument for Border Management and Visa Policy (Migration and Asylum Pact) 2021–2027 project No. IC/MPP/RPVP/2025/1 "Modernisation of the technological platform of the biometric data processing system and procurement of EURODAC equipment". – Available on: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/projekts/es-finansiala-atbalsta-instrumenta-robezu-parvaldibai-un-vizu-politikai-migracijas-un-patveruma-pakts-2021-2027gadam-projekts-nr-icmpprpvp20251-biometrijas-datu-apstrades-sistemas-tehnologiskas-platformas-modernizacija-un-eurodac-iekartu-iegade

On 22 December 2025, the Council of the European Union approved, by a written procedure, a decision establishing the first solidarity reserve for 2026, which forms part of the process of implementing the solidarity mechanism of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact. The solidarity mechanism requires the involvement of EU Member States in the joint management of the migration situation by providing support to those EU countries that face higher migration pressure. In addition to the Council of the European Union decision establishing the first solidarity reserve, a separate declaration was added at the request of Latvia, setting out Latvia's situation, the security context, and the limitations of the national capacity. The declaration confirms Latvia's position and provides a justification for applying the exception.

Latvia plans to make its contribution to the solidarity mechanism by choosing the third type of solidarity contribution – alternative support measures or other forms of support that reduce the migration burden in the main countries of arrival, for example by providing expert knowledge or technical support. Latvia will not participate in the relocation of persons.[65]

At the beginning of 2026, the OCMA launched a significant European Union project, "Implementation of Migration and Asylum Pact procedures in the area of asylum"; it aims to improve the infrastructure and process management of the national asylum system. The project is being implemented in cooperation with the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior and the State Border Guard.[66]

The main objective of the project is to ensure full compliance of the Latvian asylum procedures with the requirements of the new Migration and Asylum Pact, which requires a more effective and more uniform approach throughout the European Union. To achieve this, the Asylum Seekers Register and the related information systems will be modernised, thereby creating a technological basis for faster processing of data and more accurate recording of processes. In addition to these technological improvements, the project includes extensive methodological work that involves the development of specific manuals and information materials incorporating all latest provisions of international legal acts.

A significant part of the project is devoted to strengthening the human resource capacity by organising an extensive training for both the OCMA staff and the employees of other involved institutions. A particular focus will be placed on crisis management skills and action algorithms in cases when a mass influx of asylum seekers occurs. Such preventive preparedness measures will ensure the ability of the public administration to maintain stability and effectiveness even during periods of higher workload and atypical situations, while protecting both the interests of society and the fundamental rights of individuals.[67]

65 The Council of the European Union approves the initial agreement on the solidarity mechanism of the Migration and Asylum Pact in writing; Latvia abstains from the vote. – Available on: https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/es-padome-rakstiski-apstiprina-sakotnejo-vienosanos-par-migracijas-un-patveruma-pakta-solidaritates-mehanismu-latvija-balsojuma-atturas

66 Implementation of Migration and Asylum Pact procedures in the area of asylum. – Available on: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/projekts/migracijas-un-patveruma-pakta-proceduru-ieviesana-patveruma-joma

67 The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs will modernise the asylum system in accordance with the new standards of the European Union. – Available on: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/pilsonibas-un-migracijas-lietu-parvalde-modernizes-patveruma-sistemu-atbilstosi-eiropas-savienibas-jaunajiem-standartiem

Accommodation of applicants for international protection

At the beginning of 2026, the OCMA launched the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2021–2027 programme project No. PMLP/PMIF/2025/1 "Support measures for receiving and accommodation persons in need of international protection in Latvia (Phase 2)". It aims to improve reception and accommodation standards for persons in need of international and temporary protection in Latvia.

The main activities of the project are:

- Support measures for persons in need of international or temporary protection (including material, medical and psychological assistance);
- Procurement of equipment and vehicles for asylum seeker accommodation centres (hereinafter, the ASAC);
- Training for employees on issues related to the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers;
- Ensuring the operation of the ASAC in Liepna;
- Strengthening the capacity of the OCMA by hiring additional staff for the accommodation of asylum seekers and the asylum procedure.

The target groups of the project are: asylum seekers; Ukrainian civilians who, when crossing Latvia in transit, need to receive short-term accommodation and minimum material assistance; OCMA employees who conduct the asylum procedure and provide accommodation to asylum seekers.[68]

68 Support measures for receiving and accommodating persons in need of international protection in Latvia (Phase 2). – Available on: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/projekts/atbalsta-pasakumi-personu-kuram-nepieciesama-starptautiska-aizsardziba-uznemsanai-un-izmitinasanai-latvija-2posms

TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND SUPPORT MEASURES TO PERSONS FLEEING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND SUPPORT MEASURES TO PERSONS FLEEING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

At the beginning of 2026, there were 26,407[69] Ukrainian citizens who had received the temporary protection status.

In 2025, 5,695 Ukrainian civilians received support from the SEA (3,140 of whom were women and 2,555 men); 2,517 Ukrainian civilians received the unemployed status, while 50 received the job-seeker status.

In 2025, 1,406 Ukrainian civilians participated in active employment and preventive measures. Ukrainian civilians were the most active in using the following opportunities: non-formal education (375 participations), learn Latvian (329 participations), receive career counselling (635 participations), work in the summer employment programme for school pupils (72 participations), as well as other active employment measures.

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In 2025, 1,535 Ukrainian civilians – unemployed persons and job seekers who had received SEA support – found employment.[70]

The Ministry of Welfare has prepared the report "Employment of Ukrainian civilians in 2022–2025"[71], which includes information and data from various institutions that describe the employment of Ukrainian civilians, SEA support to Ukrainian civilians, and the learning of the Latvian language, as well as data from the State Revenue Service. SEA observations summarised in the report on the most significant challenges that have hindered more effective integration of Ukrainian civilians into the labour market are as follows:

- lack of available and affordable rental flats in Riga and centres of economic development;
- limited availability of vacancies in municipalities and rural areas outside the Riga region;
- limited public transport connections from places of residence in rural areas to municipal centres;
- lack of the official language proficiency in highly qualified professions (for example, teachers, medical practitioners, lawyers, and others), which prevents the Ukrainian civilians from working in their profession and fully realising their potential;
- insufficient number of part-time vacancies, which is particularly relevant, for example, for women with children at the pre-school or primary school age.

69 https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/fizisko-personu-registra-statistika-2026-gada
70 Source: SEA.
71 Report "Employment of Ukrainian civilians in 2022–2025". – Available on: https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/33626/download?attachment

One of the conclusions of the report is that, overall, positive trends can be observed in the integration of Ukrainian civilians in the Latvian labour market that are supported by the growing number of employed and self-employed persons, as well as the increase in the average wage. At the same time, promoting employment in highly qualified professions remains important, as many Ukrainian civilians have higher education. It is also important to improve employment opportunities in regions outside Riga, especially in Latgale, where the number of long-term unemployed persons is the highest. Availability of housing and a range of suitable vacancies in the regions, as well as availability of part-time vacancies are preconditions for the employment, which is particularly relevant for women.[72]

Temporary residence permits issued to Ukrainian civilians

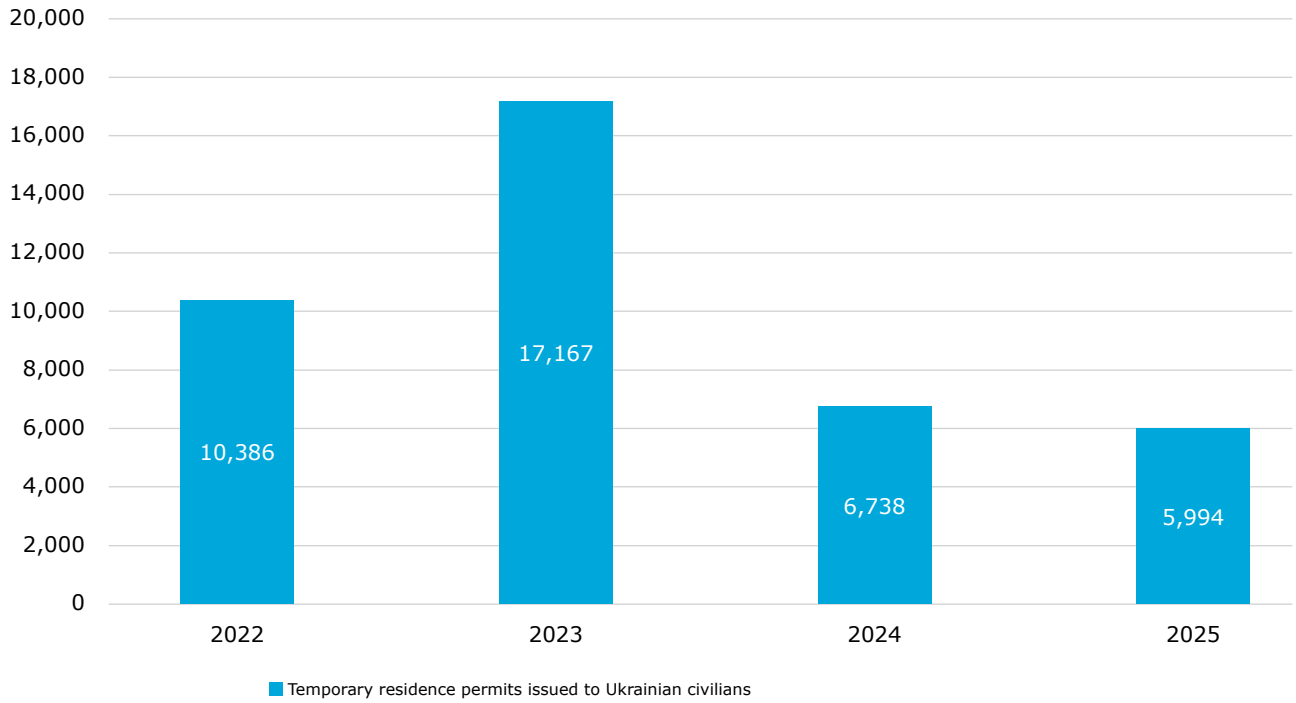

Figure 3-1.

On 1 January 2025, the 2025 Action Plan on providing support to Ukrainian civilians in the Republic of Latvia entered into force[73]. It sets out the support measures available to Ukrainian civilians in 2025 in accordance with the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians and specifies the indicative funding required for their implementation.

According to the decision taken at the Cabinet of Ministers meeting of 26 August 2025 (Minutes No. 33, Paragraph 53, Clause 18)[74], if ministries achieve expenditure reductions by making policy changes and reviewing the provided functions and services, they shall prepare the required statutory amendments, which shall be included in the package of draft laws on the state budget. On 3 December 2025, Amendments to the Law on Support for Ukrainian Civilians were adopted[75]. The state support for Ukrainian civilians in Latvia is reduced by approximately 40% (from the EUR 65 million planned for 2025 to just under EUR 40 million). This means changes both to the benefits and to some

72 Report "Employment of Ukrainian civilians in 2022–2025". – Available on: https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/33626/download?attachment

73 Cabinet Order No. 1109 "On the 2025 Action Plan for the Provision of Assistance to Ukrainian civilians in the Republic of Latvia" of 18 December 2024. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 250, 27.12.2024. – [entered into force on 18.12. 2024]

74 Minutes No. 33 of the Cabinet of Ministers meeting of 26.08.2025. – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/meetings/protocols/fba1296e-4d5c-45f5-8edf-f843782a48fe

75 Law on Amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 244, 18.12.2025. – [entered into force on 01.01.2026]

services, while maintaining support for the most vulnerable groups. The amendments aim to ensure the provision of support to Ukrainian civilians in Latvia in 2026 that is appropriate in the current situation and commensurate to the capacity of the state budget.

Think-tank "Providus" conducted the study "Experience of Latvian municipalities in receiving Ukrainian civilians: from crisis to long-term solutions"[76]. It aimed to assess how local governments were able to adapt to this crisis, what assistance they provided, and what were the main challenges in receiving Ukrainian civilians. The conclusions are important to strengthen Latvia's ability to respond to similar crises in the future.

The study covers the period of time from the beginning of the war on 24 February 2022 until approximately the spring of 2025. On the one hand, it summarises the role of local governments in providing various types of assistance during the crisis, but on the other hand it also provides a basis for assessing how the situation has developed over more than three years, not only what concerns the achievements of local governments, but also more broadly what concerns the approach to integration in Latvia, inter-institutional cooperation, and the tasks to be undertaken in the future. This period has demonstrated that it is high time to move from crisis solutions to a long-term strategy for the integration of individuals who have received international protection in Latvia.[77]

In June 2025, the Centre for Public Policy Providus presented the study "The phenomenon of NGOs established by Ukrainian refugees in Latvia: growth, challenges, and sustainability". Its main objective was to understand the development dynamics of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) established by Ukrainian refugees in Latvia and to identify their success factors, challenges, and sustainability prospects. The self-organisation and civic activity of Ukrainian civilians in Latvia is a noteworthy phenomenon, given that in the previous years the participation of newcomers in the life in Latvia, as in many places across the EU (according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index, MIPEX), has been fragmented and problematic. Having analysed the viability of these organisations, it was concluded that, although they demonstrate determination and adaptability, their sustainability is not guaranteed. At present, dependence on short-term cycles of project funding and uncertainty following the end of crisis grants is the greatest challenge, which results in a constant "struggle for funds". Additional difficulties are caused by the language barrier, the administrative burden, the complexity of reporting, and the risk of burnout among leaders, as well as the possible return of some NGO leaders to Ukraine.[78]

A series of measures were implemented to support Ukrainian civilians in 2025 and early 2026:

1. Legal amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians

Pursuant to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians, as of 5 March 2025 every Ukrainian civilian residing in the Republic of Latvia that has been granted the temporary protection status is required to hold a valid residence permit. In 2025, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs updated information on 18.6 thousand Ukrainian civilians in the Register of Natural Persons, who had lost the temporary protection status in Latvia as they had not applied for a new temporary residence permit within one month of the expiry of their previous visa or residence permit. This number includes both persons whose residence permits expired in the first quarter of 2025 and persons whose

76 Study "Experience of Latvian municipalities in receiving Ukrainian civilians: from crisis to long-term solutions". – Available on: https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Pasvaldibu_kapacitate_petijums.pdf

77 Study "Experience of Latvian municipalities in receiving Ukrainian civilians: from crisis to long-term solutions". – Available on: https://providus.lv/petijumi/petijums-latvijas-pasvaldibu-pieredze-ukrainas-civiliedzivotaju-uznemsana-no-krizes-lidz-ilgtermina-risinajumiem/

78 The phenomenon of NGOs established by Ukrainian refugees in Latvia: growth, challenges, and sustainability. – Available on: https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/UkrainuNVOpetijums_gala_mazaks-compressed.pdf

documents (visa or temporary residence permit) expired in 2022.[79] The requirement for a valid residence permit was justified by the need to determine the actual number of Ukrainian civilians in the country to plan assistance measures for the forthcoming period and to calculate the financial resources required for these measures according to the actual costs.

2. Employment and professional development support

On 3 December 2025, amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians were adopted[80]. They no longer provide for the payment of employment commencement and self-employment commencement benefits to Ukrainian civilians. Both benefits were paid by the State Employment Agency on the basis of a person's application. Each benefit equalled one minimum monthly wage (EUR 500 in 2022, EUR 620 in 2023, EUR 700 in 2024, EUR 740 in 2025) set by the state; and these benefits were also exempt from the personal income tax.

The amendments were made in view of the favourable labour market situation and the relatively low unemployment rate (the registered unemployment rate on 5 January 2026 was 5.0%), as well as the comparatively high employment among Ukrainian civilians (according to the estimates of the Central Statistical Bureau, 54% at the beginning of 2025).

By 1 January 2026, 18,649 Ukrainian civilians had received the employment commencement benefit (10,303 in 2022, 3,715 in 2023, 2,379 in 2024, 2,252 in 2025), whilst the self-employment benefit had been paid to 1,010 persons (79 in 2022, 241 in 2023, 221 in 2024, 469 in 2025).[81]

At the same time, Ukrainian civilians, like the citizens of the Republic of Latvia, will continue to have the right to receive all support services of the SEA that promote employment. SEA employees provide consultations to Ukrainian civilians, help them identify job opportunities and communicate with employers.

During 2025, 5,695 Ukrainian civilians received support from the SEA (3,140 of whom were women and 2,555 were men); 2,517 Ukrainian civilians received the unemployed status, while 50 – the jobseeker status.

In 2025, 1,406 Ukrainian civilians participated in active employment and preventive measures. Ukrainian civilians were the most active in using the following opportunities: non-formal education (375 participations), learn Latvian (329 participations), receive career counselling (635 participations), work in the summer employment programme for school pupils (72 participations), as well as other active employment measures.

In 2025, 181 employers registered 2,027 vacancies for Ukrainian civilians in various areas: lorry driver (210 vacancies), metal structure fitter (160 vacancies), cleaner (162 vacancies), labourer (143 vacancies), packer (manual work) (112 vacancies), and other occupations (1,240 vacancies).

In 2025, 1,535 Ukrainian civilians – unemployed persons and job seekers who had received SEA support – found employment.

3. Latvian language learning support for Ukrainian civilians

Since January 2025, the Society "Shelter "Safe House"" has been implementing a new

79 Information about 18.6 thousand Ukrainian civilians has been updated in the Register of Natural Persons. – Available on: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/fizisko-personu-registra-aktualizetas-zinas-par-186-tukstosiem-ukrainas-civiliedzivotaju

80 Law on Amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 244, 18.12.2025. – [entered into force on 01.01.2026]

81 Source: the State Employment Agency.

project "Latvian language learning sessions for Ukrainian doctors, medical personnel and Ukrainian citizens who work in the medical and first aid sectors in Latvia"[82].

The project aims to provide support to Ukrainian civilians who work in the medical institutions of Latvia and receive services from medical institutions, as well as to improve their Latvian language proficiency, to practically use the language in the process of providing the first aid and to improve well-being in the area of healthcare.

The Latvian language is taught at levels A1, A2, B1, and B2. During the language learning, listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills are improved.[83]

On 28 March 2025, the SIF approved the results of the competition for the programme "Latvian Language Training for Ukrainian civilians". 31 application was approved during the competition, and the total available funding was EUR 3,613,196. The funding will be allocated in the order of submission of the training groups to the integration measures database maintained by the SIF and for as long as the funding remains available under the programme. All project activities must be completed by 15 November 2025.

The programme aims to promote the use of the Latvian language among Ukrainian civilians by providing free Latvian language training courses in all regions of Latvia (from language proficiency level A1) that are tailored to participants' initial language proficiency and last for 120 to 150 academic hours.

Adult Ukrainian civilians, including minor Ukrainian civilians who had completed the secondary education in Ukraine, as well as persons who had reached the age of sixteen and were not registered with an educational institution in Latvia were the target group of this competition.

A training course is considered to have been successfully completed if the participant has been present during at least 85% of the planned training hours. To ensure the effectiveness of the programme, the dossier of this year's project competition stipulates that every person, who participates in the Latvian language training and is learning Latvian at A2 or a higher language proficiency level, must take the state language proficiency test at the National Centre for Education.

On 25 April 2025, the SIF approved the results of the competition for the programme financed from the Latvian state budget: "Latvian Language Training for Ukrainian civilians – children". 18 applications were approved during the competition, and the total available funding was EUR 981,890. The programme aims to promote the use of the Latvian language among Ukrainian civilians – children and young people – by providing them with free language courses in all regions of Latvia.

The programme gives Ukrainian civilians – children aged 5 to 16 and young people aged 16 to 18 who are registered in the Latvian education system – an opportunity to learn Latvian for at least 50, but no more than 120 academic hours. The training is to be organised taking into account the participants' initial language proficiency. The unit cost of one academic hour per participant must not exceed EUR 5.70. The project cost eligibility period runs from the date of conclusion of the contract on the implementation of the project and until 30 November 2025. All project activities must be completed by 15 November 2025.[84]

82 The language courses will take place from 9 January until 30 April 2025. This project was developed with the financial support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an organisation affiliated with the United Nations.

83 Latvian language learning sessions for Ukrainian doctors, medical personnel and Ukrainian citizens who work in the medical and first aid sectors in Latvia. – Available on: https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/latviesu-valodas-apguves-nodarbibas-ukrainas-arstiem-arstniecibas-personam-un-ukrainas-pilsoniem-kuri-strada-medicinas-un-pirmas-palidzibas-joma-latvija

84 The results of the project competition "Latvian Language Training for Ukrainian civilians – children" have been approved. – Available on: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/apstiprinati-projektu-konkursa-latviesu-valodas-macibas-ukrainas-civiliedzivotajiem-berniem-rezultati

To facilitate registration for the Latvian language courses, a new registration platform LearnLatvian was developed. In this platform, the participants will have the opportunity to select a training provider by finding the most convenient and appropriate training centre based on their place of residence, the form of training and the offered course times. The platform will be available on the One-Stop Agency website www.livelatvia.lv upon conclusion of a contract with the approved training provider.[85]

In 2025, 3,690 adults and 1,532 children applied for a free Latvian language course offered by the SIF, and 2,869 adults and 1,358 children completed the course.[86]

On 23 January 2026, the SIF Council approved the dossier of the open competition for service providers under the programme "Latvian Language Training for Ukrainian civilians", with total available funding of EUR 3,180,880.00. Unlike in the previous years, every adult who learns Latvian at level A1 or higher will be required to take the state language proficiency examination at the State Education Development Agency (hereinafter, the VIAA).

The programme aims to promote the use of the Latvian language among Ukrainian civilians – children and adults – by providing free Latvian language courses in all regions of Latvia. For adults, the training will be available from the language proficiency level A1 and, depending on the initial language proficiency, will last for 160 academic hours, while for children it will be between 70 and 160 academic hours. Furthermore, for children up to the age of 10, the training must take place only in person. Participant records will be kept in the integration measures database maintained by the SIF.

Children and adult Ukrainian civilians to whom the OCMA has issued a temporary residence permit granting temporary protection in Latvia are the target group of this competition. To ensure the effectiveness of the programme, the dossier of this year's project competition provides that every participant of a Latvian language course who studies for A1 or a higher language proficiency level will have to take the state language proficiency test at the VIAA. Furthermore, before the training, the service provider will have to conclude a written agreement with each participant (or, if the learner is a minor, with their legal representative).

The training may take place in person, remotely or in a hybrid format, and the beneficiary will have to provide all training materials that may bee needed free of charge. Each group will consist of 8 to 15 learners to ensure high-quality and targeted learning.

The courses will take place at six language proficiency levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2, and will be implemented by relying on the curriculum templates developed by the Latvian Language Agency or the service provider's proprietary curricula.[87]

On 6 March 2026, the SIF Council approved the project applications of 32 organisations and associations under the programme "Latvian Language Training for Ukrainian civilians", with total available funding of EUR 3,180,880.00.[88]

As of 1 January 2026, and within two years of being granted the temporary protection, Ukrainian civilians are required to learn the state language at least at the basic level 2 (A2) to be able to perform professional and job duties. Likewise, within five years of being granted the temporary protection, Ukrainian civilians are required to learn

85 Results of the competition "Latvian Language Training for Ukrainian civilians" have been approved. – Available on: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/apstiprinati-konkursa-latviesu-valodas-macibas-ukrainas-civiliedzivotajiem-rezultati

86 Support is available for the Latvian language courses for Ukrainian civilians. – Available on: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/pieejams-atbalsts-latviesu-valodas-kursiem-ukrainas-civiliedzivotajiem

87 Support is available for the Latvian language courses for Ukrainian civilians. – Available on: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/pieejams-atbalsts-latviesu-valodas-kursiem-ukrainas-civiliedzivotajiem

88 32 organisations will offer Latvian language courses for Ukrainian civilians – children and adults. – Available on: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/32-organizacijas-nodrosinas-latviesu-valodas-kursus-ukrainas-civiliedzivotajiem-berniem-un-pieaugusajiem

the state language to the extent determined by the Cabinet to perform the respective professional and job duties.[89]

4. Social and psychological support

On 1 February 2025, the Society "Shelter "Safe House"" began implementing the project "Educational and Creative Activities as an Assistance for More Successful Integration of Ukrainian Residents"[90]. The project aims to promote active involvement of Ukrainian civilians in the Latvian society by learning new skills and engaging in various interesting activities.

The society will organise various educational and assistance activities. Assistance groups for Ukrainian women are planned to provide them with assistance during a particularly difficult period in their lives. Creative workshops for Ukrainian young people will also be organised, as well as a course on the Latvian labour market is planned in the autumn.

In February 2025, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. The memorandum aims to develop a partnership and implement the Latvian and Ukrainian agreement on long-term assistance and security commitments in the social sector, as well as to continue and develop cooperation between the two countries in the area of social protection. The cooperation also aims to support Ukraine on its path to the EU membership, in particular by promoting the exchange of experience on social reforms.[91]

On 4 April 2025, the SIF approved the results of the competition "Activities of Non-governmental Organisations for Assistance to Ukrainian civilians". 7 applications were approved during the competition, and the total available funding was EUR 234,776. The programme aims to assist the NGOs to continue their activities in Latvia in providing assistance to Ukrainian civilians who are fleeing the Russian military aggression in Ukraine, including financing assistance to Ukrainian civilians at the state border.[92]

On 15 April 2025, the government[93] supported the solution proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science, i.e. to organise day and overnight camps for children and young people to provide psycho-emotional assistance, promote the Latvian language learning and facilitate the integration of children of Ukrainian refugees. This is set out in the order on the reallocation of appropriation prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Funding amounting to EUR 900 thousand will be available until 1 November 2025, and the support programme will be implemented by the State Education Development Agency in cooperation with local authorities. The camps are planned for pupils from grades 1 to 12, and 50% Ukrainian and 50% Latvian pupils will be invited to participate.

The camp curricula for Ukrainian and Latvian young people offer both Latvian language classes and a variety of other activities and creative pursuits that will improve communication and interpersonal skills. At the same time, this allows to promote

89 Law on Amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 244, 18.12.2025. – [entered into force on 01.01.2026]

90 A project supported by Riga City Council on integration activities for Ukrainian civilians in Riga has been launched. – Available on: https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/uzsakts-rigas-domes-atbalstits-projekts--par-ukrainas-civiliedzivotaju-integracijas-aktivitatem-riga/1854

91 A memorandum on cooperation in the social area has been signed between the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. – Available on: https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/parakstits-labklajibas-ministrijas-un-ukrainas-socialas-politikas-ministrijas-memorands-par-sadarbibu-socialaja-joma

92 Results of the competition "Activities of Non-governmental Organisations to Provide Assistance to Ukrainian civilians" have been approved. – Available on: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/apstiprinati-konkursa-nevalstisko-organizaciju-pasakumi-ukrainas-civiliedzivotaju-atbalstam-rezultati

93 Cabinet Order No. 212 of 16 April 2025 "On the Reallocation of Appropriations from the Programme 17.00.00 "Funding for the Implementation of Measures Specified in the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians" of the budgetary position 74 "Financing to Be Reallocated During the Implementation Process of the Annual State Budget". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 77, 22.04.2025. – [entered into force on 16.04.2025]

the social-emotional skills and strengthen the psycho-emotional well-being, which, considering the geopolitical situation, is important for both Ukrainian and Latvian children and young people.[94]

On 22 July 2025, the Cabinet issued an order on amendments to the action plan for the provision of support to Ukrainian civilians in Latvia[95], which sets out that a psychological support course shall be made available in Latvia not only for the officials of the State Border Guard of Ukraine, but also for the officials of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, namely firefighters-rescuers. The State Fire and Rescue Service of Latvia, the State Border Guard, and the Health and Sports Centre of the Ministry of the Interior have managed to allocate 20 places for officials of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine in a psychological support course planned for September 2025.[96]

On 3 December 2025, Amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians were adopted[97]. They stipulate that persons arriving to Latvia for the first time and fleeing the war in Ukraine will continue to require immediate primary support, and provide for accommodation for these persons for up to 60 days and sustenance for up to 30 days (with a daily limit of EUR 5 per person), as well as compensation to households for accommodating such persons for up to 60 days.

To ensure special support to vulnerable groups of Ukrainian civilians, the amendments stipulate that the nine groups of vulnerable persons defined in the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians shall be able to receive accommodation support for up to 180 days[98]. The amendments stipulate that, after the end of the said 180-day accommodation period, the municipality shall verify if the Ukrainian civilian still requires the state-provided accommodation and shall take a decision either to continue it for up to a further 180 days, but no later than by 31 December 2026, or to discontinue the state-provided accommodation if the Ukrainian civilian does not belong to any of the groups in Paragraph 1.2 of this Section[99]. The amendments aim to ensure the provision of support to Ukrainian civilians in Latvia in 2026 that is appropriate in the current situation and commensurate to the capacity of the state budget.[100]

On 3 December 2025, Amendments to the Law on Support for Ukrainian Civilians were adopted[101]. They stipulate that, as of 1 January 2026, Ukrainian civilians will be required to make the patient co-payments and that the compensation for the purchase of medicinal products will be provided to them according to the general procedure. Given that the situation of Ukrainian civilians has now stabilised, the amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians aim to ensure that all residents of Latvia

94 Funding allocated for the camps for Ukrainian and Latvian children this year. – Available on: https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/pieskir-finansejumu-sim-gadam-ukrainas-un-latvijas-bernu-nometnu-organizesanai-0

95 Cabinet Order No. 449 "On the 2025 Action Plan for the Provision of Support to Ukrainian Civilians in the Republic of Latvia" of 22 July 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 141, 25.07.2025. – [entered into force on 22.07.2025]

96 A psychological support course in Latvia will also be available to Ukrainian firefighters and rescuers. – Available on: https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/378725-psihologiska-atbalsta-kurss-latvija-bus-pieejams-ari-ukrainas-ugunsdzesejiem-glabejiem-2025

97 Law on Amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 244, 18.12.2025. – [entered into force on 01.01.2026]

98 Households will also be able to receive compensation for accommodating these groups of persons for up to 180 days.

99 2) is a person with a disability;
3) provides care to the person in Clause 2 of this paragraph;
4) is of retirement age in accordance with the retirement age established in Latvia;
5) is receiving education in Latvia in person at a pre-school, basic education, general secondary education or vocational secondary education institution, or is progressing to studies at the next educational level, is receiving education at a higher education institution, or continues education in Ukraine by means of distance or remote learning at a basic education, general secondary education or vocational secondary education institution;
6) is a woman who has registered her pregnancy;
7) is one of a child's parents or an emergency guardian caring for a child for up to two years of age;
8) provides care and supervision for a pre-school-age child, and the child is unable to attend a pre-school education institution;
9) is a pre-school-age child who is unable to attend a pre-school education institution.

100 Annotation to the draft law "Amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians". – Available on: https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/0/3F3B005435D1CBBFC2258D24001BA76C?OpenDocument

101 Law on Amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 244, 18.12.2025. – [entered into force on 01.01.2026]

have equal access to state-funded healthcare services. There is a need to transition from an emergency support regime to an equitable and sustainable framework for the healthcare system.

On 3 March 2026, Cabinet Regulation No. 109 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 339 of 8 June 2022 "Regulations on the Provision of Primary Support to Ukrainian Civilians"" was adopted[102]. It updates the procedure for organising primary support to persons in accordance with the amendments to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians that entered into force on 1 January 2026. It also takes into account the state budget funding available in 2026 for the accommodation and sustenance of Ukrainian civilians.[103]

5. Educational support to Ukrainian civilians

On 12 August 2025, Cabinet Regulation No. 492, "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 488 of 26 July 2016 "Procedures by which Minor Asylum Seeker shall be Provided with Opportunities for Acquiring Education"", was adopted[104]. It allows to prepare individual education plans in which the learning outcomes set out in the State education standards may be appropriately adapted to the knowledge and skills of learners in the target group, adapting the assessment of the learners' academic performance accordingly. The procedures also lay down conditions for pedagogical support for the implementation of an individual education plans at State and private educational institutions. The amendments aim to continue the inclusion of children of Ukrainian civilians in the Latvian education system in order to ensure their well-being, promote their integration, and address any issues related to their education.

In March 2025, the opening conference of the project "School in the Community", implemented by the VIAA in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, took place at *Ziemeļblāzma* Palace of Culture. The project "School in the Community" aims to develop integrated cooperation between schools and communities by strengthening cooperation between parents, educational institutions and various other institutions. It aims to reduce the risks of social exclusion and early school leaving, while helping the young people to complete basic and secondary education.[105]

In autumn 2025, idea workshops organised in the framework of the ESF+ project "School in the Community" implemented by the VIAA, took place in five regions of Latvia. During these workshops, representatives of municipalities, non-governmental organisations and educational institutions developed concepts for initiative and partnership projects. The workshops aimed to identify solutions for strengthening cooperation between schools and local communities, reducing the risk of social exclusion and early school leaving, and supporting pupils, teachers, and parents in learning the Latvian language.

In the initiatives proposed by participants, particular emphasis was placed on a holistic approach that allows to simultaneously address several issues of importance to the society, including the strengthening of mental health, the reduction of violence, the development of life skills, and the improvement of literacy. Considerable attention was also paid to supporting children from ethnic minority, immigrant and remigrant families.[106]

102 Cabinet Regulation No. 109 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 339 of 8 June 2022 "Regulations on the Provision of Primary Support to Ukrainian Civilians"" of 3 March 2026. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 47, 09.03.2026. – [entered into force on 10.03.2026]

103 Annotation to the draft legal act "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 339 of 8 June 2022 "Regulations on the Provision of Primary Support to Ukrainian Civilians"". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/cee5ca3f-5c3a-4864-b0c2-c93e9ab0a3e3

104 Cabinet Regulation No. 492 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 488 of 26 July 2016 "Procedures by which Minor Asylum Seeker shall be Provided with Opportunities for Acquiring Education"" of 12 August 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 154, 13.08.2025. – [entered into force on 01.09.2025]

105 Opening conference of the project "School in the Community": Together with "School in the Community". – Available on: https://www.viaa.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/projekta-skola-kopiena-atklasanas-konference-kopa-ar-skola-kopiena

106 Local governments and schools are developing new initiatives to reduce social exclusion and to strengthen communities. – Available on: https://www.skola-kopiena.lv/news/details?oid=b2966664-643d-451a-ad51-dfe667ff86f1

At the end of 2025, training for learner mentors completed in five regions of Latvia, resulting in 117 mentors being trained. As of January 2026, mentor support will be available to young people throughout Latvia. The risk group includes young people in situations of social exclusion: children from Ukraine, learners with special needs, and young people who, for various reasons, rarely attend school or do not attend it at all.[107]

On 20 January 2026, Cabinet Regulation No. 18, "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 488 of 26 July 2016 "Procedures by which Minor Asylum Seeker shall be Provided with Opportunities for Acquiring Education"", was adopted[108]. It clarifies the financing conditions that will be applicable from 1 January 2026 until 31 August 2026 to Ukrainian civilians who on 1 September 2025 are registered in the State Education Information System with the sub-status "Ukrainian civilian" for participation in general and vocational education programmes.

In October 2025, the Providus study "Ukrainian civilians in the Latvian education system: practice and challenges" was published[109]. It aimed to identify and analyse the inclusion practices of children of Ukrainian civilians in the Latvian education system, assess how they have integrated into Latvian schools, and develop policy recommendations.

The study is divided into three parts in order to address the main questions on the characterisation of the situation and the legal framework, the resources of local governments and schools in the context of access to education, and the main long-term challenges in Latvia's education integration system.

The compiled data demonstrate that the admission of Ukrainian civilians to the Latvian education system takes place in circumstances when institutions at the state and municipal level are still developing a long-term approach to the inclusion of newcomers. The results of the study indicate that educational integration is possible and partially functional; however, it is fragmented and unevenly implemented, and directly dependent on the initiative of schools, the availability of human resources and the involvement of local governments.

The study concluded that the integration of Ukrainian civilians into the Latvian education system was taking place in a fragmented manner and depended on the initiative of schools. There is a lack of a uniform long-term strategy, stable funding, and human resources. Although schools are the main setting for integration, they also assume an assessment role; however, there is a lack of clear and uniform data collection methods that would make it possible to assess the progress of integration processes.[110]

107 The first 117 mentors of the project "School in the Community" are ready to support young people. – Available on: https://www.skola-kopiena.lv/news/details?oid=307d8ea9-1966-491a-9706-5e124f603e36

108 Cabinet Regulation No. 18 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 488 of 26 July 2016 "Procedures by which Minor Asylum Seeker shall be Provided with Opportunities for Acquiring Education"" of 20 January 2026. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 16, 23.01.2026. – [entered into force on 24.01.2026]

109 Ukrainian civilians in the Latvian education system: practice and challenges. – Available on: https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/UCLVizglitibas-sistema-1-1.pdf

110 Study "Ukrainian civilians in the Latvian education system: practice and challenges". – Available on: https://providus.lv/raksti/petijums-ukrainas-civiliedzivotaji-latvijas-izglitibas-sistema-prakse-un-izaicinajumi/

MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

In 2025, 170 unaccompanied minors were identified in Latvia, and all of them applied for asylum in Latvia. The majority were Somali nationals – 135.[111]

On 15 April 2025, Cabinet Regulation No. 352 "Regulations on the Sample Official Statistics Form in the Area of Operation of the Orphan's and Custody Court and the Procedures for Completing and Submitting the Form"[112] of 20 June 2017 was amended by including the following sections:

- "the number of asylum seekers who, by a decision of the Orphan's and Custody Court, have been accommodated in an asylum seeker accommodation centre";
- "the number of asylum seekers who, by a decision by the Border Guard or a court, are residing in the accommodation centre for detained foreign nationals".

The inclusion of these sections will ensure more accurate data collection and make it possible to receive complete information on the placement of all unaccompanied children in Latvia.

In July 2025, the Ombudsman's Office addressed Prime Minister Evika Siliņa, calling on the government to assess, as soon as possible, how the expenses of local governments incurred in meeting the needs of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers will be reimbursed. The problem lies in the fact that the workload of some orphan's and custody courts has increased significantly, but there is still no clarity as to whether and when the state will allocate additional funding. Ropaži Municipality is currently facing a particular burden. *This problem has remained unresolved for a long time; thus, we call on the Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the Saeima to exercise parliamentary oversight to find a solution without any delay.*[113]

In November 2026, the Ministry of the Interior submitted an informative report for the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers "On the impact of measures to ensure the protection of the rights and interests of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers on municipal budgets"[114], which stipulated that the solution proposed in the protocol decision expanded the ability of local governments to receive compensation as it set out a compensation for the expenses incurred not only in providing support to refugees and persons with alternative status, but also in ensuring the protection of the rights and interests of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers from 1 January 2024 onwards. The protocol decision stipulated that the actual expenses incurred by local governments should be compensated from the state budget programme "Funds for Unforeseen Events" until unaccompanied minor asylum seekers reached the age of 24.[115]

111 Source: OCMA.

112 Cabinet Regulation No. 217 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 352 of 20 June 2017 "Regulations on the Sample Official Statistics Form in the Area of Operation of the Orphan's and Custody Court and the Procedures for Completing and Submitting the Form"" of 8 April 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 74, 15.04.2025. – [entered into force on 16.04.2025]

113 Expenses of local governments incurred in meeting the needs of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers must be reimbursed without any delay. – Available on: https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/news/bez-kavesanas-jakompense-pasvaldibu-izdevumi/

114 Informative report "On the impact of measures to ensure the protection of the rights and interests of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers on municipal budgets". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/meetings/cabinet_ministers/47e44dd2-3576-4640-ae69-5ea79e9436c2

115 Minutes No. 49 of the Cabinet meeting of 25 November 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 231, 01.12.2025.

INTEGRATION

INTEGRATION

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for the integration policy in Latvia. The Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development, the Ministry of the Interior, the SIF, and non-governmental organisations are also involved in the implementation of this policy.

In the framework of the "One-Stop Agency" (hereinafter, the OSA), the content of integration support measures was improved and expanded by introducing structured educational support modules that complement the range of individual consultations and other services provided by the OSA. The changes were implemented at the level of the content, methodology and targeting of the measures, by adapting the support to various target groups (including applicants for international protection) and by relying on individual socio-economic inclusion plans. No changes to regulatory acts or integration policy that are in the remit of the Society Integration Foundation were planned or made at this stage.

The SIF and the OSA act as policy implementers, ensuring the practical implementation of measures approved at national level. What concerns the inclusion of third-country nationals, no separate amendments to regulatory acts were made in 2025; however, in the framework of the implementation of integration measures, informational and advisory support was made available on employment conditions, opportunities for starting a business and the related legal framework in Latvia.

In addition, in 2025 a programme was developed and 16 seminars on intercultural communication and cooperation were carried out for external cooperation partners, covering 35 organisations and more than 200 participants from municipal and state institutions (including social services, educational institutions, libraries, municipal police, higher education institutions, and Riga Airport). The seminars aimed to strengthen specialists' ability to navigate resources effectively, refer clients to the OSA in a timely manner, and to reduce the administrative burden.

In 2025, the OSA continued to provide individual support to third-country nationals (consultations, legal support, translation, and psychological support), as well as to coordinate cooperation between institutions to ensure timely and targeted availability of integration services. The first-phase branches of the OSA are located in Riga, Liepāja, Jelgava, Daugavpils, and Valmiera, providing timely and targeted advisory and practical support to newcomers, including oral and written translations, legal aid, and consultations with a psychologist and psychotherapist to ensure more successful socio-economic inclusion in Latvia. The clients of the OSA are third-country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection who are legally residing in Latvia. The task of the OSA is to promote the inclusion of these newcomers in the society and its cohesive development by employing a unified approach to integration issues. To achieve this objective, the OSA staff cooperate with representatives of state and municipal institutions, non-governmental organisations, higher education institutions, and the business sector. In 2025, the OSA provided individual consultations to 8,662 clients. Most frequently, clients sought information on migration issues (32%), employment (11%), social services and support (8%), everyday matters (16%), healthcare (3%), housing (4%), and education (8%). Other questions accounted for 1%, while the specialised services provided by the OSA – legal aid, psychologists' consultations and Latvian language learning – accounted for 17% of all consultations provided.

Translation services continued to be essential in the integration process – interpretation was provided to 951 clients, written translation to 689 clients, while 86 clients received legal consultations. Demand for psychological support and the Latvian language learning continued to grow, confirming the importance of these services in the everyday life and in the integration process. In addition to individual activities, the OSA organised information days and seminars, where clients learned about living in Latvia, as well as community meetings that promoted mutual understanding between local residents and newcomers. Digital accessibility was also improved by providing remote consultations, which were particularly important in the regions.[116]

As of 1 January 2026, the SIF OSA continues its operations in Latvia as a national-level support centre that provides coordinated, timely and individualised assistance to third-country nationals and the beneficiaries of international protection. The agency aims to facilitate the first steps in Latvia by providing practical, legal, psychological, and informational support in one place to promote successful inclusion in the Latvian society. The project will be implemented over the next 4 years and last until the end of 2029.[117]

On 25 September 2025, the latest report of the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), which analyses immigrant integration policy in the countries of the European Union (EU), was published. MIPEX is an internationally recognised tool developed by the Migration Policy Group (MPG) in cooperation with the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB). By relying on comprehensive indicators, it measures immigrant integration policy in eight main areas: the labour market, education, family reunification, permanent residence rights, access to citizenship, political participation, anti-discrimination, and healthcare. The latest study covers 27 EU Member States over the period from 2020 to the beginning of 2024.

Latvia's performance in the MIPEX[118] index was rated at 36 out of 100 points that classified the country's integration policy as "rather unfavourable". The score is below the EU average in all eight areas analysed. Particularly low scores were recorded in:

- Education (26/100), demonstrating the lack of systematic and organised support for the inclusion of immigrant children in the education system.
- Labour market mobility (33/100), demonstrating the lack of targeted measures to promote the inclusion of newcomers in the labour market according to their qualifications.

The report concluded that support measures in several areas had been implemented on a campaign basis rather than systematically. Since 2020, Latvia's overall score has not significantly changed.[119]

In the project "Migrant Reception in Situations of Uncertainty: Governance and Local-Level Inclusion",[120] a roadmap for the establishment and operation of the Urban Development and Integration Laboratory (PAIL) was developed[121]. The Urban Development and Integration Laboratory (PAIL) is the name proposed by the authors for a framework designed to promote public participation in addressing local development and social integration issues. The development of Latvia's cities, with a few exceptions, must be viewed in the context

116 The contribution of the One-Stop Agency in supporting newcomers in 2025. – Available on: https://livelatvia.lv/lv/vienas-pieturas-agenturas-ieguldijums-jaunpienaceju-atbalsta-2025-gada/
117 The One-Stop Agency for newcomers in Latvia continues its operations. – Available on: https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/latvija-darbu-turpina-vienas-pieturas-agentura-jaunpienacejiem-latvija
118 https://mipex.eu/latvia
119 Migrant Integration Index: 2025 data. – Available on: https://providus.lv/raksti/migrantu-integracijas-indekss-2025-gada-dati/
120 The project is funded by the Latvian Council of Science, grant No. LZP-2023/1-0227.
121 Roadmap for the establishment and operation of the Urban Development and Integration Laboratory (PAIL). – Available on: 10.5281/zenodo.17728461.

of a declining population and an ageing society. PAIL is a framework that enables a local government to develop a deeper understanding of the possibilities to address matters of local development and integration and to implement solutions in a long-term perspective. This roadmap proposes developing PAIL by relying on the quadruple helix model. The quadruple helix is an innovation framework, where public administration, higher education institutions, entrepreneurs, and civil society cooperate.[122]

Promoting integration for socio-economic participation

The Ministry of Culture is the delegated authority of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (hereinafter, the AMIF) 2021–2027 framework period. To achieve the AMIF objectives, the Ministry of Culture regularly organises open project competitions.

The SIF and the OSA paid particular attention to the inclusion of third-country nationals by means of employment and education, including[123]:

- cooperation with higher education institutions (Turība University, RTU, LU, LBTU, DU, ViA, etc.), informing both university staff and international students about VPA services and support opportunities;
- participation in international and inter-institutional events (including the OpenEU event "Migrants and Refugees");
- cooperation with the EU project CeMeWe (Central Baltic mentoring for migrant women seeking employment);
- OSA event "Latgale Entrepreneurs' Breakfast" in Daugavpils, organised in cooperation with the State Revenue Service, highlighting issues related to the employment of newcomers and employers' experience. These measures supported third-country nationals' understanding of employment regulations in Latvia and strengthened cooperation with employers.

On 2 January 2025 and in cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Society "Shelter "Safe House"" began implementing a new project "Multidisciplinary approach in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees". Several activities are planned in the framework of the project, which will promote faster and more successful inclusion of the target group in the Latvian society. Legal consultations are planned for asylum seekers and refugees, including the Ukrainian civilians residing in Latvia. Integration measures are also planned at the asylum seekers accommodation centres in Mucenieki and Liepna, where asylum seekers will be able to participate in various educational and informational activities. At the same time, art therapy sessions for Ukrainian women residing in Latvia will also take place.[124]

The training model successfully implemented in Poland by various international agencies, aimed at strengthening the capacity of local governments to include refugees and newcomers, has now been adapted to the context of the Baltic States. On 12 March 2025, a new interinstitutional initiative, the "Academy for the Integration of Newcomers and Refugees in the Baltic States in 2025–2026", was launched for municipal employees from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme (CoE ICC), the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed this training programme and are implementing it

122 Roadmap for the establishment and operation of the Urban Development and Integration Laboratory (PAIL). – Available on: 10.5281/zenodo.17728461.
123 Source: the Ministry of Culture.
124 Multidisciplinary approach in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. – Available on: https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/multidisciplinara-pieeja-patveruma-mekletaju-un-beglu-integracijas-procesa

in cooperation with the think tank Providus. The training will help municipal employees both in their current work with refugees and in preparing them for possible future challenges. In the course of a year and a half, those learning at the academy will acquire tailored knowledge to support their work in the context of the Baltic States and to improve their skills in such areas as strengthening intercultural competences and communication, building effective partnerships on integration issues, addressing disinformation challenges, responding to the needs of more vulnerable groups of refugees, and combating gender-based violence.[125]

As a part of the activities of the SIF and the OSA, educational support modules for migrants were developed and implemented: a basic module, an international protection module, a family module, a study module and others. The modules include information on Latvia's social and cultural environment, rights, the legal framework, employment, education and socio-economic support, at the same time promoting intercultural competence, independence in everyday situations and a sense of belonging to Latvia. Alongside the educational content, the groups also provided psychological support, which supported steady engagement throughout the year.[126] The developed modules aim to improve the knowledge and skills of third-country nationals to ensure successful socio-economic inclusion in the Latvian society.

Educational support modules were implemented in 7 groups in various regions of Latvia (Riga – 4, Jelgava – 2, Liepāja – 1). Alongside the educational content, the groups also provided psychological support, which supported steady engagement throughout the year.

In addition, in 2025 a programme was developed and 16 seminars on intercultural communication and cooperation were carried out for external cooperation partners, covering 35 organisations and more than 200 participants from municipal and state institutions (including social services, educational institutions, libraries, municipal police, higher education institutions, and Riga Airport). The seminars aimed to strengthen specialists' ability to navigate resources effectively, refer clients to the OSA in a timely manner, and to reduce the administrative burden.[127]

The SIF and the OSA participated in the EU-supported project "Library Bridges" (LIBRI) that aimed to promote the integration of third-country nationals by using libraries as platforms for community cooperation and participation. Likewise, the SIF, as a partner, signed letters of intent with Liepāja Central Scientific Library, Saldus Municipality Library, and Latgale Central Library (Daugavpils). The letters of intent provide for the establishment of local partnerships, staff participation in training and seminars, as well as the development of local integration strategies in 2025 and the implementation of the planned activities by 30 April 2026.[128]

Integration into the labour market

In 2025, 144 persons with refugee or alternative status were registered with the SEA.

During 2025, the SEA continued to provide consultations in person and remotely by email, telephone and video conferencing.

In 2025, 7 persons with a refugee or an alternative status received career consultations, and 18 persons were involved in the following active employment and preventive

125 A regional training programme has been launched to strengthen the integration of refugees and newcomers in municipalities across the Baltic States. – Available on: https://www.unhcr.org/neu/lv/132601-uzsakta-regionala-macibu-programma-lai-stiprinatu-beglu-un-jaunpienaceju-integraciju-baltijas-valstu-pasvaldibas.html

126 Source: MoC.

127 Source: MoC.

128 Source: MoC.

measures: e-career self-assessment tests (2), information days (3), competitiveness improvement measures (3), EURES (the network of European employment services, members and partners) consultations (1), a measure for starting a business or engaging in self-employment (1), individual consultations by a psychologist (1), measures for specific groups of persons (1), training on online course platforms (1), a summer employment measure for pupils (1), official language courses (13).

In 2025, 61 persons with a refugee or an alternative status who had received the SEA support started employment.[129]

In the spring of 2025, the SEA organised regional seminars for employers in Liepāja, Rēzekne, Riga, Valmiera, and Jelgava on the "Employment of Third-Country Nationals in Latvia: Legal and Practical Aspects". Entrepreneurs were informed about the conditions, legal framework and solutions for attracting foreign labour, and employers' questions were answered by experts – representatives of the SEA, the OCMA, the State Labour Inspectorate, and the European Employment Services network (EURES). The seminars were organised in the framework of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF) project "Ensuring the Operation of the EURES Network in Latvia". Participation in the events was free of charge for employers.

Topics of the seminars:

- Issuance of SEA opinions to employers on the employment of third-country nationals;
- EURES support to recruitment from the European Union and European Economic Area countries, including Latvia;
- OCMA work permit issuance process for third-country nationals;
- Rights and obligations of employers and employees, and SLI supervision mechanisms;
- Discussions, exchange of experience, and analysis of practical situations.[130]

To ensure greater support and objectivity in selecting candidates from the local labour market, as of 15 August 2025 all employers who have requested an opinion on a vacancy and on the need to recruit a third-country national may use an opportunity to have interviews with candidates in person (on SEA premises or at the employer's premises) or online.

In addition, we would like inform you that in 2025 the SEA received requests to issue 5,247 opinions (for 38,565 vacancies), and issued 4,408 positive opinions on the recruitment of foreign nationals (for 32,029 unfilled vacancies) and 388 opinions refusing the permission to recruit third-country nationals. At the same time, employers hired 1,066 local candidates that filled the notified guest worker vacancies.[131]

Basic services

Social assistance

At the Ministry of Welfare, an analysis of data from recent years provided by the State Social Insurance Agency (hereinafter, the SSIA) demonstrates that, in recent years, as employer-supported labour recruitment from third countries has steadily increased and as financially intensive demographic support measures have been further developed, an unintended trend has emerged regarding the possibility for third-country nationals who

129 Source: SEA.

130 In Liepāja, Rēzekne, Riga, Valmiera, and Jelgava, the SEA will organise regional seminars for employers on issues related to the employment of foreigners. – Available on: https://www.valka.lv/lv/jaunums/liepaja-rezekne-riga-valmiera-un-jelgava-nva-rikos-regionalos-seminarus-darba-devejiem-par-arvalstnieku-nodarbinasanas-jautajumiem

131 Source: SEA.

have come to Latvia to work for a fixed period to make use of the parental benefits while the rest of the family and the children actually live in a third country.

On 27 November 2025 and as a matter of urgency, the Saeima adopted the final reading of the draft law "Amendments to the Law "On Maternity and Sickness Insurance"" [132], which, *inter alia*, provided for an additional criterion for granting the parental benefit. Thus, as of 1 July 2026, the parental benefit can be granted for a child who has been assigned a personal identification number, whose status in the Register of Natural Persons is active, and who permanently resides in the territory of Latvia. If the child of a person socially insured in Latvia, in respect of whom the parental benefit is granted, lives in another Member State of the European Union, the Swiss Confederation or a Member State of the European Economic Area, the parental benefit for this child shall be granted in accordance with the provisions of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 (hereinafter, Regulation (EU) No 883/2004).

Whether the child permanently resides in Latvia will be verified by the SSIA that will rely on the information at its disposal regarding the child's declared place of residence in Latvia. In case of doubt, the SSIA may ask the recipient of the parental benefit to submit evidence confirming that the child permanently resides in the territory of Latvia (travel documents, registration with a general practitioner, and visitation records). Accordingly, the parental benefit will be granted only if the child has an active status in Register of Natural Persons of Latvia, has been assigned a personal identification number, and permanently resides in Latvia.

Language learning

In 2025, the OSA also developed a new platform "LearnLatvian" to facilitate access to information on free Latvian language courses. It is available on: www.livelatvia.lv. There, newcomers can conveniently find the Latvian language learning location closest to their place of residence. The platform also provides information on paid Latvian language courses, as well as offers a compilation of free online learning materials and recommendations for language learning.[133]

At the end of August 2025, the University of Latvia received a decision of the Higher Education Quality Agency on the licensing of the study programme "Teacher of Latvian as a Foreign Language". The newly created programme aims to expand the opportunities for learning the Latvian language, thereby promoting social integration, and to prepare teachers for work with adult learners. Studies in the newly created programme are free of charge – state-funded places are available, and students also have an opportunity to receive a scholarship of up to EUR 280 per month.[134] In February 2026, 37 students commenced their studies in this programme.[135]

The study programme is intended for those who wish to acquire or improve pedagogical skills in teaching Latvian as a foreign language, with a particular emphasis on supporting the integration processes of foreign nationals and representatives of minorities who wish to learn Latvian.

132 Law on Amendments to the Law "On Maternity and Sickness Insurance". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 233, 03.12.2025. – [entered into force on 01.01.2026]

133 The contribution of the One-Stop Agency in supporting newcomers in 2025. – Available on: https://livelatvia.lv/lv/vienas-pieturas-agenturas-ieguldijums-jaunpienaceju-atbalsta-2025-gada/

134 The new study programme for adults "Teacher of Latvian as a Foreign Language" has been licensed. – Available on: https://valoda.lv/licence-jauno-studiju-programmu-pieaugusajiem-latviesu-valodas-ka-svesvalodas-skolotajs/

135 The Ministry of Education and Science proposes a uniform Latvian language learning system for adults. – Available on: https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/izm-rosina-veidot-vienotu-latviesu-valodas-apguves-sistemu-pieaugusajiem

At the end of 2025, the Latvian Language Agency published the study "Latvian language learning among newcomers: experience and needs" (2025)[136]. The report summarises the results of the study conducted by the Latvian Language Agency in 2024 on the Latvian language learning needs and experiences of newcomers.

Immigrants who have resided in Latvia for no longer than five years and who are neither Latvian nationals nor non-citizens, including refugees, asylum seekers and third-country nationals, are the target group of the study. The data gathered during the study provide an insight into the newcomers' experience of learning Latvian, their motivation to learn, the effectiveness of the learning process, the use of the language in everyday life, and newcomers' future plans in relation to language learning and integration into the society. The study outlines the difficulties encountered by language learners and presents good practice examples.

Respondents offer recommendations for improving the Latvian language learning system and refining the official language policy that are based on their experience. These recommendations are related to the availability of information on Latvian language learning, ensuring the quality of Latvian language courses, the motivation to learn Latvian, and the use of Latvian in everyday life.[137]

The study provides an insight into the current situation and offers recommendations for improving the language policy in organising the study of Latvian as a foreign language for adults and in supporting newcomers (how to promote the learning of Latvian and facilitate comprehensive inclusion of newcomers in the Latvian society).[138]

At the beginning of 2026, the Latvian Language Agency published adult learning programmes for Latvian as a foreign language for language proficiency levels A0–C2. The model education programmes for language proficiency levels A0–C2 have been developed with an emphasis on the practical use of the language in everyday communication and in the performance of professional duties. The language learning content is organised into seven themes, each integrating grammar, text production, orthography, orthoepy, and punctuation. The introduction provides a methodological description of the programme models. The model education programmes are available here: https://maciunmacies.valoda.lv/maci/pieaugusajiem.[139]

The Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter, the MES has prepared a conceptual report on possible solutions to eliminate the fragmentation of institutional responsibility and competences in Latvian language learning for adults. In its conceptual report, the MES proposes to introduce a coordinated, transparent, and quality-based Latvian language learning system for adults.

The conceptual report aims to propose a uniform official language learning system for adults, which would improve the learning quality and ensure more efficient management of data and public funding. During the drafting of the report, consultations were held with the responsible sectoral ministries and institutions, taking into account the growing demand for the Latvian language courses, in particular, among newcomers.

To date, official language learning measures have been implemented in cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and the Society Integration Foundation, as well as the

136 "Latvian language learning among newcomers: experience and needs" (2025). – Available on: https://valoda.lv/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Petijums_Latviesu-valodas-apguve-jauniebrauceju-vidu_2025.pdf

137 A study on the Latvian language learning needs and experiences of newcomers has been published. – Available on: https://valoda.lv/publicets-petijums-par-jauniebrauceju-latviesu-valodas-apguves-vajadzibam-un-pieredzi/

138 "Latvian language learning among newcomers: experience and needs" (2025). – Available on: https://valoda.lv/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Petijums_Latviesu-valodas-apguve-jauniebrauceju-vidu_2025.pdf

139 Adult learning programmes for Latvian as a foreign language for language proficiency levels A0–C2. – Available on: https://valoda.lv/latviesu-valodas-ka-svesvalodas-apguves-programmas-pieaugusajiem-a0-c2-valodas-prasmes-limeniem/

Ministry of Welfare and their subordinate institutions. In addition to activities at the state level, local governments also provide opportunities to learn Latvian. Given the diversity of institutions involved in the implementation of the official language policy, it is necessary to strengthen coordination and cooperation mechanisms in order to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of the institutional action.

The MES proposes integrating a module for receiving and managing the official language learning service into the digital adult skills management platform STARS. The platform will offer:

- a uniform application process for Latvian language training;
- self-assessment options for language proficiency levels (A1–C2);
- collection of data on the progress and results of learning;
- funding traceability, which will reduce the risk of double funding.

The development and maintenance of the official language module on the platform will be ensured by the State Education Development Agency, while the functions that are related to the content of language learning, the improvement of learning quality and methodological support will be in the remit of the Latvian Language Agency.[140]

Non-discrimination

In spring 2025, the Ombudsman of Latvia published the study "On the state of discrimination in Latvia". It aimed to carry out qualitative research and analysis of the state of discrimination in Latvia. The study was developed by SIA "AC Konsultācijas" in cooperation with experts from the Prevention of Discrimination Division of the Ombudsman's Office.

The following tasks were set in order to achieve the objective of the study:

- To analyse the discrimination criteria laid down in the law;
- To analyse statistical data on various vulnerable groups of persons exposed to the risk of discrimination in Latvia;
- To assess the practice of the Ombudsman's Office in the area of discrimination prevention during the period from 2021 until July 2024;
- To analyse studies already conducted in Latvia in the area of discrimination;
- To examine the results of the media study conducted by LETA and to compile the main conclusions on the state of discrimination;
- To examine information on EU equality indices, including Latvia's position in relation to other EU Member States;
- To conduct a survey of discrimination experts using the Delphi method;
- To prepare conclusions on the state of discrimination in Latvia and to develop recommendations for the necessary improvements in the are.[141]

According to the experts involved in the study, clarifying the concept of indirect discrimination is more important than introducing new discrimination criteria into the legal framework, as it will ensure uniform application of the rules, and strengthen the capacity and coordinating role of the Ombudsman's Office. Experts indicated that the issue of age discrimination in various areas should be brought to the fore, especially discrimination against older persons in employment; discrimination in physical and

140 The Ministry of Education and Science proposes a uniform Latvian language learning system for adults. – Available on: https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/izm-rosina-veidot-vienotu-latviesu-valodas-apguves-sistemu-pieaugusajiem

141 State of discrimination in Latvia. – Available on: https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/resource/diskriminacijas-situacija-latvija/

digital accessibility of people with various types of disabilities; as well as discrimination in healthcare based on the social origin and status of patients.[142]

The authors of the study prepared recommendations to bring discrimination to the fore and to examining these issues, to promote the public understanding of discrimination, and to reduce the manifestations of discrimination.[143]

As of the July–August 2025 issue, the Ministry of Welfare[144] regularly publishes a news digest "(NON-)Discrimination Bulletin" on the developments and events that are related to the discrimination and its reduction, and to building of an equal and inclusive society.

Information on respective achievements, decisions and studies can be found in the "(NON-) Discrimination Bulletin" on the Ministry of Welfare's website in the section "Horizontal principle "Equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, and respect for fundamental rights""[145] under "News and updates"[146].

142 Study "State of discrimination in Latvia". – Available on: https://m.juristavards.lv/biblioteka/286984-petijums-diskriminacijas-situacija-latvija/

143 On the state of discrimination in Latvia. – Available on: https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/diskriminacijas_situacija_latvija.pdf

144 In cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and during the 2021–2027 EU funds planning period, the Ministry of Welfare is responsible for coordinating the horizontal principle "Equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, and respect for fundamental rights" – this principle must be upheld at all stages of the planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of EU funds.

145 Horizontal principle "Equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, and respect for the fundamental rights". – Available on: https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/horizontalais-princips-vienlidziba-ieklausana-nediskriminacija-un-pamattiesibu-ieverosana

146 News and updates. – Available on: https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/zinas-un-jaunumi-0

CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALISATION

CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALISATION

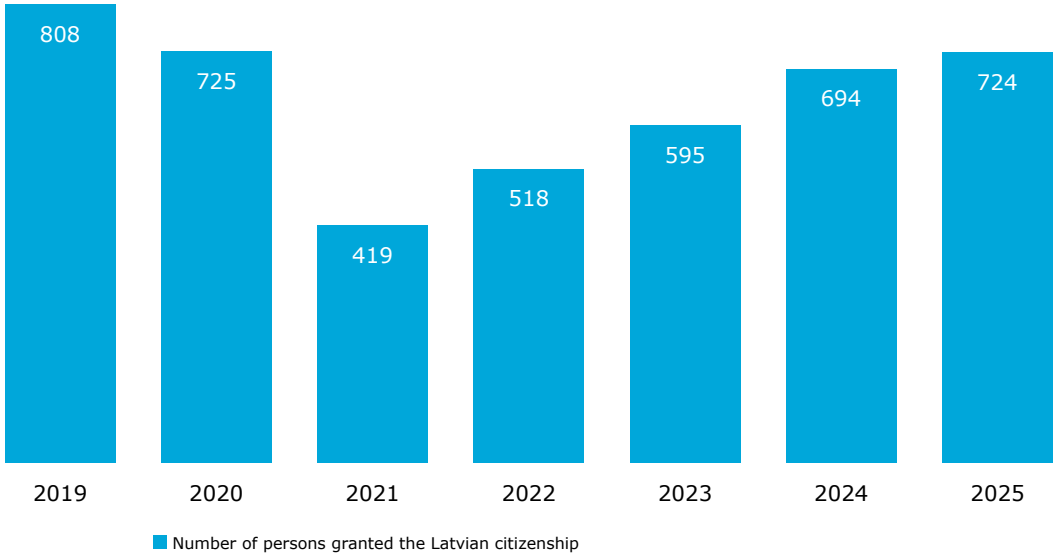

Figure 7-1.

Compared to 2024, the number of persons granted the Latvian citizenship as a result naturalisation had increased – 724 (694 in 2024).[147] Like in 2024, the largest group of persons who received citizenship was the Latvian non-citizens – 434. The number of third-country nationals who received the Latvian citizenship increased to 280 (155 in 2024).

147 Data source: OCMA.

BORDER CONTROL, VISAS AND SCHENGEN MANAGEMENT

BORDER CONTROL, VISAS AND SCHENGEN MANAGEMENT

On 14 January 2025, the Cabinet approved the 2025–2027 Action Plan for Economic Growth and Security Strengthening the Eastern Border Region of Latvia prepared by the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development in cooperation with sectoral ministries, local governments and other stakeholders interested in the development of the Eastern border region[148]. EUR 644.6 million have been allocated to 58 measures, including the funding of EUR 269.6 million from the state budget and EU funds and other foreign funding amounting to EUR 375.0 million.

The plan was drafted taking into account the task entrusted by the Cabinet, as well as the geopolitical situation in the Eastern border region of the EU after the start of the full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine launched by Russia and the socio-economic challenges of the Eastern border region. It includes a series of initiatives in areas essential for sustainable development of this region such as security, economics, and human resources.

Improvements to the infrastructure of the external land border are also planned, including its modernisation and smart solutions to reduce queues at the border at three border crossing points: *Terehova*, *Grebņeva*, and *Pāternieki*.[149]

Management of external borders

On 25 February 2025, Cabinet Regulation No. 123 "Regulations Regarding Restrictions on the Acceptance of Visa Applications and Entry of Third-country Nationals in the Republic of Latvia" was adopted[150]. It aimed to strengthen the national security to mitigate any third-country threats affecting the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, state power or the democratic state system, whilst establishing exceptions for certain categories of persons entering for essential purposes, who may be permitted to enter the Republic of Latvia[151]. The regulations determine which third-country nationals are subject to visa application acceptance and entry into the Republic of Latvia restrictions, as well as the terms of these restrictions.

On 19 March 2025, Cabinet Order No. 166 "On Establishing Requirements for Entry Only with Motor Vehicles at the Border Crossing Points "*Pāternieki*", "*Terehova*" and "*Grebņeva*"" was adopted[152]. It stipulates that, in order to strengthen the border protection system and make border control more effective, as of 19 March 2025, the state border of the Republic of Latvia with the Republic of Belarus may be crossed only at the border crossing point *Pāternieki* and the state border of the Republic of Latvia with the Russian Federation at the border crossing points *Terehova* and *Grebņeva* by entering only with motor vehicles.

148 Cabinet Order No. 32 "On the 2025–2027 Action Plan for Economic Growth and Security Strengthening the Eastern Border Region of Latvia" of 20 January 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 15, 22.01.2025. – [entered into force]

149 The Government approves an action plan for the security and development of the Eastern border region. – Available on: https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/valdiba-apstiprina-ricibas-planu-austrumu-pierobezas-drosibai-un-izaugsmei

150 Cabinet Regulation No. 123 "Regulations Regarding Restrictions on the Acceptance of Visa Applications and Entry of Third-country Nationals in the Republic of Latvia" of 25 February 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 43, 03.03.2025. – [entered into force on 04.03.2025]

151 Annotation to the draft legal act "Regulations on the Restrictions on the Acceptance of Visa Applications and Entry of Third-Country Nationals into the Republic of Latvia". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/c3fef175-b623-4dba-baf0-0b53b0d07684

152 Cabinet Order No. 166 "On Establishing Requirements for Entry Only with Motor Vehicles at the Border Crossing Points "Pāternieki", "Terehova" and "Grebņeva"" of 19 March 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 55B, 19.03.2025. – [entered into force on 19.03.2025]

The decision to restrict the operation of the aforementioned border control points was made taking into account several important aspects of security and public order. One of the main reasons is the risk of hybrid threats and migration crisis, which continue to be maintained by the strategies implemented by Russia and Belarus, aimed at organising migration flows harmful to EU Member States and creating the need for restrictive measures.

Similarly, there are justified concerns that, as in Finland, where an increase in irregular border crossing attempts was observed in a short period before the closure of the Finnish – Russian border, the number of such cases could also increase at the Latvian border, especially with alternative means of transport, such as bicycles or scooters.[153]

On 3 April 2025, the Saeima adopted amendments to the Law on the State Border of the Republic of Latvia[154], stipulating that a pass for the border area[155] will henceforth be issued to CIS citizens only if a written consent is received from the State Security Service. The State Security Service gives written consent if staying in the border area is necessary to uphold fundamental rights and no risks to national security are identified. The amendments also stipulate that the issued and valid fixed-term passes shall remain valid for no longer than two months after the entry into force of the amendments.[156]

Pursuant to Paragraph 13 of Cabinet Regulation No. 141 "Procedures for the Recognition of Travel Documents of Foreigners"[157] of 4 March 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs adopted Decision No. 1690 on the non-recognition in the Republic of Latvia of non-biometric nationals passports of the Russian Federation. Implementation of the decision commenced on 15 July 2025. The above decision did not apply to non-biometric diplomatic and service passports of the Russian Federation. At the same time, it was stipulated that during the six-month transitional period, that is, until 15 January 2026, holders of non-biometric nationals passports of the Russian Federation who had received a long-stay visa or a residence permit of the Republic of Latvia by 15 July 2025 may enter and stay in the Republic of Latvia. However, the transitional period did not apply to holders of non-biometric nationals passports of the Russian Federation who had received a long-stay visa or residence permit from another Member State of the European Union.

On 1 September 2025, amendments to the Immigration Law entered into force[158], providing that a foreign national – a national of any country other than a Member State of the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a member state of the European Economic Area, the Swiss Confederation or the Federative Republic of Brazil, who does not hold a visa or a residence permit issued by the Republic of Latvia – shall electronically submit information on the purpose of travel (entry), the planned duration and place of stay, the travel route, contact information, elected offices held by that person or their relative, candidacy in elections, current or former status as a state or local government official, service in the armed forces, special services, the border guard, customs, or the interior, justice or foreign service (including diplomatic service) in the state threat prevention information system 48 hours before entering the Republic of Latvia (www.eta.gov.lv). The

153 As of 19 March, traffic at the border crossing points Pāternieki, Terehova and Grebņeva will be restricted. – Available on: https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/no-19-marta-ierobezos-kustibu-robezkontroles-punktos-paternieki-terehova-un-grebneva

154 Law on Amendments to the Law on the State Border of the Republic of Latvia. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 76, 17.04.2025. – [entered into force on 18.04.2025]

155 Pursuant to Section 18 of the Law on the State Border of the Republic of Latvia, persons who have reached the age of 15 require a permanent or fixed-term special pass issued by the State Border Guard when they stay in the border area.

156 Annotation to the draft law "Amendments to the Law on the State Border of the Republic of Latvia". – Available on: https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/0/81287360058D1EE1C2258C0D00294206?OpenDocument

157 Cabinet Regulation No. 141 "Procedures for the Recognition of Travel Documents of Foreigners" of 4 March 2021. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 46. – 08.03.2021. – [entered into force on 09.03.2021]

158 Law "Amendments to the Immigration Law". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 76, 17.04.2025. – [entered into force on 01.09.2025]

above obligation does not apply to persons who enjoy immunity and privileges pursuant to the international law binding to Latvia or who are travelling on short trips (including in transit) to perform official functions or to provide technical support to a Latvian or foreign diplomatic or consular representation office or an international organisation.

In view of the growing volume of international passenger traffic and the need to modernise border checks, while strengthening the security and the protection of fundamental rights, 10 new ABC gates were put into operation in the departure sector of Riga International Airport on 29 August 2025. Meanwhile, for more convenient and secure border checks, the two ABC gates located in the non-Schengen departure terminal were moved to the non-Schengen arrivals terminal. At the same time, the minimum age from which a person may use the ABC gates was changed, namely, in the departure sector, the ABC gates could be used for checking an ABC subject who has reached 18 years of age, whereas in the arrival sector the gates could be used for checking an ABC subject who has reached 14 years of age.[159] The new ABC gates implement the European security strategy by strengthening border management and ensuring the protection of fundamental rights and the EU values.

As of 12 October 2025, all border crossing points of Latvia and the internal points started using the Entry/Exit System (hereinafter, the EES)[160]. The EES records the biometric data of third-country nationals (fingerprints and facial images), data from travel documents, and travel dates. Latvia implemented the EES in full. Overall, the implementation of the EES must be completed by 9 April 2026. During the gradual implementation of the EES, Member States developed national implementation plans which, pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2025/1534,[161]allowed the Member States to apply some derogations from the full operational implementation of the EES.

The objective of the EES is to improve security in the Schengen area by ensuring that border guards and law enforcement authorities have access to important information on travellers that helps to prevent security risks.

As of 15 October 2025, the Electronic Queue Reservation System (EQRS) has begun operating at the road border crossing points of Latvia, requiring a mandatory remote registration of all motorised vehicles crossing the land border in the Electronic Queue Reservation System.

On 7 October 2025, Cabinet Order No. 643 "On the Imposition of a Restriction on Crossing the Border between the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Belarus and between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation when Carrying out International Non-scheduled Passenger Transport by Bus" was adopted[162]. According to the order, international non-scheduled passenger transport crossing the Belarusian and Russian borders is prohibited as of 1 November 2025.

On 22 December 2025, Cabinet Order No. 871 "Amendment to Cabinet Order No. 184 of 12 March 2024 "On Notification of a Reinforced Border Security Regime""[163] was approved

159 Source: SBG.

160 Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2017 establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data and refusal of entry data of third-country nationals crossing the external borders of the Member States and determining the conditions for access to the EES for law enforcement purposes, and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement and Regulations (EC) No 767/2008 and (EU) No 1077/2011. – Official Journal L 327/20. – 09.12.2017.

161 Regulation (EU) 2025/1534 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2025 on temporary derogations from certain provisions of Regulations (EU) 2017/2226 and (EU) 2016/399 as regards the gradual start of operations of the Entry/Exit System, PE/17/2025/REV/1. – Official Journal L, 2025/1534, 23.7.2025.

162 Cabinet Order No. 643 "On the Imposition of a Restriction on Crossing the Border between the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Belarus and between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation when Carrying out International Non-scheduled Passenger Transport by Bus" of 7 October 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 195, 09.10.2025. – [entered into force on 07.10.2025]

163 Cabinet Order No. 871 "Amendment to Cabinet Order No. 184 of 12 March 2024 "On Notification of a Reinforced Border Security Regime"" of 22 December 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 248, 29.12.2025. – [entered into force on 22.12.2025. Ceases to have effect on 01.07.2026]

to extend the reinforced border security regime on the Latvia–Belarus border area until 30 June 2026. The amendments provided for the extension of the reinforced border security regime in the respective administrative territories.[164] Pursuant to Section 35.1, Paragraphs one and two, of the Law on the State Border of the Republic of Latvia[165], the Cabinet shall have the right, upon finding a disproportionately high number of cases of illegal crossings of the state border or attempts thereof[166], to declare a reinforced border security regime along the entire border or a part thereof (depending on the intensity of the threat).[167] The Cabinet Order was adopted in view of the war launched by the Russian Federation in Ukraine to mitigate the threat to the internal security of the Republic of Latvia.

On 1 June 2024 and in cooperation with the State Police, the SBG and the OCMA, the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior launched Project No. IC/RPVP/2024/6 "Development of Interoperability Architecture and Requirements", which was completed in December 2025. In the framework of the project, a set of documentation was prepared for the interoperability of the information systems referred to in Regulations (EU) 2019/817[168] and (EU) 2019/818[169] to align with the common European Union interoperability framework in the areas of borders and visas, as well as police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration. An analysis of the common architecture, functionality, supported business processes and limitations of the information systems of the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Police, the SBG, and the OCMA included in the interoperability framework was carried out. The final deliverable of the project is a new interoperability IS concept, which includes the logical, technical and data architecture of the interoperability solution, a list of functionalities, as well as a product map and its implementation plan. In the coming years, this concept will serve as a basis to develop the functionality of the interoperability framework and to ensure the integration of the Latvian institutions into the common EU interoperability framework in the areas of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration, thereby ensuring compliance with the requirements of the interoperability regulations.[170]

On 17 October 2025, the European Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner arrived to Latvia for a working visit. Together with Rihards Kozlovskis, the Minister for the Interior, the Commissioner visited Latvia's eastern border to study the current situation at the border and inspect the progress in infrastructure construction.

While visiting the Latvia–Belarus border, the Commissioner emphasised that Latvia carried out important work in safeguarding not only its own national security, but also the security of the entire European Union. M. Brunner indicated that Belarus and Russia are using migrants as an instrument of political pressure against Europe, and also stressed how important it was to understand Latvia's situation, experience and needs to provide appropriate support in these circumstances. M. Brunner emphasised that

164 Annotation to the draft legal act "Amendment to Cabinet Order No. 184 of 12 March 2024 "On Notification of a Reinforced Border Security Regime"". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/26f19661-419b-4b0d-bd63-6f9fd641de75

165 Law on the State Border of the Republic of Latvia. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 189, 02.12.2009. – [entered into force on 16.12.2009]

166 In July 2025, illegally crossing of the state border was prevented in 2,049 cases; in August 2025 – in 1,222 cases; in September 2025 – in 1,023 cases; in October 2025 – in 975 cases; in November 2025 – in 618 cases (data as of 27 November 2025).

167 Annotation to the draft legal act "Amendment to Cabinet Order No. 184 of 12 March 2024 "On Notification of a Reinforced Border Security Regime"". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/26f19661-419b-4b0d-bd63-6f9fd641de75

168 Regulation (EU) 2019/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of borders and visas and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2016/399, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240, (EU) 2018/1726 and (EU) 2018/1861 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Decisions 2004/512/EC and 2008/633/JHA PE/30/2019/REV/1. – Official Journal L 135, 22.5.2019.

169 Regulation (EU) 2019/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration and amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1726, (EU) 2018/1862 and (EU) 2019/816, PE/31/2019/REV/1. – Official Journal L 135, 22.5.2019.

170 Development of the interoperability architecture and requirements. – Available on: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/projekts/sadarbspejas-arhitekturas-un-prasibu-izveide

the European Commission understood the situation and actively supported the protection of the European Union's external land border.[171]

On 5 May 2026, amendments to the State Border Guard Law were adopted[172] – they update and expand the statutory rights of border guards in performing the functions of the State Border Guard, by establishing the right to use explosives and blasting devices in certain cases. The amendments were drafted taking into account the functions laid down in Section 4 of the State Border Guard Law and, accordingly, the need to establish the right of border guards to use explosives and blasting devices in certain cases to repel an armed or military incursion into the territory of the Republic of Latvia and to prevent or stop high-risk threats what concerns the protection of persons, society and the state more effectively and rapidly.[173]

At the end of 2025, SJSC "State Real Estate" had completed the construction of the fence along the Latvia–Russia border. With the completion of these works, a large and strategically significant phase in the construction of the national external security infrastructure has been concluded. In total, a fence approximately 280 kilometres in length has been built along the Latvia–Russia border, ensuring a continuous barrier in those places where it was technically designed. Considering the changes in the international security environment and the sharp increase in the number of irregular crossings of the state border between the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Belarus, the risks related to the protection and security of the border have intensified. The above directly affects the national security of the Republic of Latvia. To avert threats to the national security of the Republic of Latvia, it is necessary to ensure, within the shortest time possible, the construction of the infrastructure required to guard the external border.[174]

From 20 to 28 May 2025, six officials from the General Inspectorate of the Border Police of the Republic of Moldova visited the Ventspils Unit of the State Border Guard. The visit took place in accordance with the activity plan for the project "Strengthening the capacity of the General Inspectorate of the Border Police of the Republic of Moldova in the area of control of the "green" and "blue" border (LatMoldova)" implemented by the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia, the General Inspectorate of the Border Police of the Republic of Moldova and the State Border Guard College to train the participants of the first inspection group of the Border Police of the Republic of Moldova.

During the training, representatives of the Border Police of the Republic of Moldova acquired specific knowledge and improved their practical skills in carrying out watercraft control (inspection) procedures in a group.

The theoretical knowledge and practical skills acquired during the visit will significantly improve the ability of the personnel of the Border Police of the Republic of Moldova to carry out specific border control tasks, including in high-risk conditions.

171 During a visit to Latvia's external eastern border, Commissioner Brunner discussed the progress in strengthening the border with R. Kozlovskis, the Minister for the Interior. – Available on: https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/ek-komisars-brunners-vizite-uz-latvijas-arejas-austrumu-robezas-ar-iekslietu-ministru-rkozlovski-parruna-paveikto-robezas-stiprinasana

172 Law "Amendments to the State Border Guard Law". – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 84, 05.05.2026. – [entered into force on 19.05.2026]

173 Annotation to the draft law "Amendments to the State Border Guard Law". – Available on: https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS14.nsf/0/EC80A32828F35940C2258D87004CFF82?OpenDocument

174 Annotation to the draft "Law on the Construction of External Land Border Infrastructure". – Available on: https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/SaeimaLIVS13.nsf/0/811CCAEB1B582DB3C225878700346C93?OpenDocument#B

Cooperation with third countries in the area of border control

On 6 November 2025, the "2026–2027 Bilateral Cooperation Plan between the State Border Guard and the General Inspectorate of the Border Police of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Moldova" was signed (6 measures each year). The cooperation plan includes annual meetings of the heads of the parties' institutions, as well as meetings of experts in the following areas:

- exchange of experience in the area of institutional communication, with an emphasis on cooperation with national and international media that strengthens the internal capacity of institutions to inform the public;
- exchange of experience between special operational units in the areas of special interventions, staff selection, and the service structure and organisation;
- exchange of experience in the area of cynology;
- exchange of experience in the area of forensic examination of documents;
- exchange of experience in the area of risk analysis, including the preparation of risk analysis products, information gathering, and cooperation;
- exchange of experience in the area of border checks at airport border control points;
- exchange of experience on the use of advanced technical means for border surveillance and other technologies, including the development of border infrastructure and the procurement and maintenance of technical equipment;
- exchange of experience in the area of international cooperation and project implementation;
- exchange of experience in the area of crime prevention and combating crime between criminal investigation units;
- exchange of experience and practical exercises in the area of unmanned aircrafts.[175]

The cooperation plan aims to facilitate international cooperation to ensure the protection of Latvia's border and the borders of Europe in general.

In 2025, a draft "Agreement between the General Inspectorate of the Border Police of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Moldova and the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia on Cooperation and Information Exchange" was prepared. Article 2 of the Agreement lays down cooperation between the Parties in the following areas: mutual assistance in preventing irregular migration and combating other cross-border threats, assistance during administrative procedures, integrated border management, innovative approaches to the border control, risk analysis, document examination, professional training of staff, training of service dogs and dog handlers, use of aviation and unmanned aircraft, involvement of rapid response units in border control, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including liaison officers, participation in/implementation of international projects/programmes, European integration, including the harmonisation of the legal framework in accordance with European Union norms and standards, exchange of experience in the area of vocational education, training/raising the current level of staff training, exchange of information and experience in combating crime, and exchange of experience in other professional areas of mutual interest. The Agreement is currently being coordinated with the Moldovan side, and its signing is planned in the first quarter of 2026.

In 2025, a draft "Agreement on Cooperation between the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia and the State Migration Service of Ukraine" was prepared. Article

175 Source: SBG.

2 of the Agreement lays down cooperation between the Parties in the following areas: (a) organisation of study visits aimed at improving the professional skills of the Parties' employees depending on the Parties' competences, including in combating irregular migration, conducting border checks, and the control of the entry and residence of foreign nationals, as well as in other areas; mutual exchange of information on regulatory acts in the area of migration, their practical application and implementation; asylum procedures, their practical application and implementation, asylum trends, positions and opinions on countries with high migration risks, and pseudonymised (statistical) data, upon request, in the area of control of foreign nationals; provision of assistance in organising training sessions in the areas of competence of the Parties; mutual exchange of descriptions of travel documents and other documents required for the entry into and residence in the territory of the Parties for the purposes of combating irregular migration. The Agreement is currently being coordinated with the Ukrainian side, and its signing is planned in the first quarter of 2026.

In 2025, a draft "Agreement on Cooperation between the SBG of the Republic of Latvia and the Kyiv Scientific Research Institute of Forensic Expert Examinations of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine" was prepared. The Parties undertake to strengthen, develop and promote joint activities in the areas of research, development, expert examination of documents, and information exchange. Article 3 of the Agreement lays down the following forms of cooperation: implementation of joint scientific projects, exchange of their results, as well as exchange of scientists participating in the implementation of these projects; exchange of scientific, technical and other staff for the purposes of participating in joint scientific conferences, seminars, symposia, exhibitions, and other events; exchange of information on the latest collections and educational, methodological and informational reference publications; exchange of standard training programmes for forensic experts on the forensic examination of all types of documents; exchange of information on *modus operandi* and the latest trends in document forgery. The Agreement is currently being coordinated with the Ukrainian side, and its signing is planned in the first quarter of 2026.

The "2026–2027 Cooperation Plan between the SBG of the Republic of Latvia and the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan" is currently being drafted, and it will include 4 measures in 2026 and 4 measures in 2027 covering cooperation in the following areas: exchange of experience between special task units, promotion of cooperation between the heads of border control points at Riga and Baku airports, development of border infrastructure, cynology, the use of unmanned aircraft, and other areas. The Cooperation Plan is currently coordinated with the Azerbaijani side, and its signing is planned in the first quarter of 2026.[176]

Given the air connection between Latvia and Uzbekistan, the SBG sees considerable potential for further development of practical cooperation in border management and related areas. In this context and in the framework of the project, the SBG is considering the possibility of establishing an SBG liaison officer post in the Republic of Uzbekistan (Tashkent). The officer would be tasked with promoting regional cooperation and strengthening the institutional capacity of Uzbekistan's border security authority in the area of border management. In the framework of the project and in cooperation with the border guard authorities of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Estonia (project partners), the SBG proposes to organise joint training and experience-exchange activities for representatives of the Border Troops of the State Security Service of the Republic of Uzbekistan. These training activities could take place in Uzbekistan, Latvia,

176 Source: SBG.

Lithuania, and Estonia and could be implemented in various areas of border management and migration control. The project also includes a series of thematic training sessions, several study visits to the EU Member States, as well as the procurement of technical equipment for the Uzbek side. Project implementation period: 2 years. The potential project is currently being discussed by the Uzbek side. Implementation of the project could commence in the second half of 2026 after the completion of the coordination procedure with the Uzbek counterparts.

Schengen management

In 2025, the responsible authorities of Latvia continued implementing the recommendations made after the Schengen evaluation of Latvia carried out in 2023.

The objective of these recommendations is to ensure that the shortcomings identified in the evaluation are remedied in a timely and comprehensive manner, strengthening the protection of external borders, the quality of security and cooperation procedures, as well as guaranteeing uniform application of the Schengen *acquis* in all Member States. This improves security in the common Schengen area, mutual trust, and the effective functioning of the system.

The main driving force behind the implementation of the Schengen recommendations is the political and administrative responsibility of a Member State for compliance with the Schengen *acquis*, reinforced by the monitoring carried out by the European Commission, recommendations adopted by the Council, as well as the deadlines set for the implementation and subsequent monitoring mechanisms.

Border management and visa policy

In 2025, the total number of issued visas increased, reaching 32,941 (30,622 in 2024). Of the visas issued, 17,549 were Schengen visas and 15,392 were long-term (D) visas.[177]

On 15 May 2025, cooperation with the external service provider *VFS Global* started in Armenia, and visa applications were sent to the Latvian Embassy in Georgia for examination. Taking into account the European Commission's letter of 1 July 2025, which drew attention to the non-compliance of the mandatory service fee laid down in the cooperation agreement between the external service provider and the Latvian Embassy in Georgia on the processing of visa applications in Armenia with the requirements of Article 17(4)(b) of the Visa Code, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs temporarily suspended the acceptance of visa applications in Armenia as of 9 July 2025. Cooperation will be resumed after a positive decision from the European Commission, and the cooperation agreement between the external service provider *VFS Global* and the Latvian Embassy in Georgia will be revised accordingly.

Failure to comply with the regulation on external service fees under the Visa Code identified as a result of monitoring by the European Commission created the need to revise the cooperation agreement with *VFS Global* and temporarily suspend the acceptance of visa applications in Armenia until compliance was ensured.

177 Data source: OCMA.

Table 8-1.
Total number of visas issued by type, 2024–2025.[178]

	2024	2025
Schengen visas	16,213	17,549
Long-term (D) visas	14,409	15,392
Total	30,622	32,941

On 26 and 27 March 2025, visa training for clerks of the Latvian diplomatic and consular representation offices abroad, where visa applications are accepted, took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The training aimed to provide the clerks involved in handling visas with the knowledge and skills required for their work. During the training, consular clerks improved their skills in accepting and processing visa applications, as well as capturing biometric data. Issues related to the protection of personal data were also examined. The training also included lectures that improved attendants' interpersonal skills in communicating with people of various nationalities, cultures, and temperaments, thereby ensuring more efficient and customer-oriented service at the Latvian representation offices abroad.

Experts from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, State Border Guard, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as instructors from the State Administration School, participated in the training as lecturers. 16 consular clerks from the Latvian representation offices abroad – the local contracted staff, whose job duties include processing uniform Schengen visa applications, participated in the training.[179]

In 2024 and in cooperation with the State Border Guard and the State Police, the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior commenced the implementation of the European Union Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy project "Phase 2 of the Implementation of the Entry/Exit System and ETIAS".

The project aims to implement the solutions necessary for the operation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

The scheduled completion date of the project is 31 March 2026.

Project activities:

- Improvement of the electronic information system (REIS) of the State Border Guard to implement the functionality required for the operation of EES and ETIAS;
- Implementation of the central access point solution with EES and ETIAS, implementation of the ETIAS watchlist solution, implementation of the ETIAS national unit solution;
- Adaptation of SIRENE IS for ETIAS data processing;
- EES information campaign.

Expected outputs of the project:

- REIS has been supplemented with the functionality necessary for the operation of EES and ETIAS.
- The CPP solution has been put into operation, including the possibility of creating EES and ETIAS data requests.

178 Data source: OCMA.
179 Training for consular staff of Latvian diplomatic missions on visa matters, held in Riga. – Available on: https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/riga-norisinas-latvijas-parstavniecibu-arvalstis-lietvezu-macibas-vizu-jautajumos

- The ETIAS watchlist solution has been developed and put into operation.
- The ETIAS national unit solution has been developed and put into operation.
- Training materials for the CPP solution, the ETIAS watchlist solution and the ETIAS national unit solution have been prepared.
- Security testing of the CPP and ETIAS solutions has been carried out.
- SIRENE IS has been adapted to carry out ETIAS processes.
- Posters, stickers and infographics on the EES have been procured and placed at the structural units of the State Border Guard.[180]

On 9 October 2025, the "Agreement between the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia, the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, and the Police and Border Guard Board of the Republic of Estonia on joint restoration of the temporary border control at internal borders" was signed.[181] The Agreement aims to determine the procedure for the involved parties to cooperate and organise mutually coordinated joint measures for the temporary restoration of border control at the internal border to ensure readiness to effectively carry out such measures in accordance with the Schengen Border Code, prevent threats to the public or the internal security in the party states, prevent irregular migration and irregular crossings of the state border. The need to proactively strengthen the internal security and migration control in the Baltic region, while ensuring legally and operationally coordinated readiness for the temporary restoration of border control, led to this Agreement.

180 (No. IC/RPVP/2024/11) Project: Phase 2 of the Implementation of the Entry/Exit System and ETIAS. – Available on: https://www.rs.gov.lv/lv/projekts/nr-icrpvp202411-projekts-iecelosanasizcelosanas-sistemas-un-etias-ieviesanas-2posms

181 Source: SBG.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION

IRREGULAR MIGRATION

In 2025, 340 third-country nationals were detained for irregular crossing of the "green" border (122 in 2024). The detained persons mostly were the nationals of Somalia, Sudan, and Morocco. The majority of detained persons were found on the land border between Latvia and Belarus; however, in 12 cases the Latvian–Russian border was crossed.[182]

The SBG refused entry into Latvia to 2,952 persons – 4% less than in 2024 (3,073 persons). In 2025, entry was most frequently refused to nationals of Russia (783), Moldova (756), Belarus (371), Ukraine (310), and Uzbekistan (161). The changes in these numbers are mainly attributable to additional sanctions introduced in the procedure for the entry of vehicles and the entry bans imposed on individuals.[183]

Information available to the SBG on the number of detected and prevented attempts to irregularly cross the Latvian–Belarusian border indicates that 12,046 cases were identified in 2025[184].[185]

Schengen visas were annulled for 459 third-country nationals (353 in 2024); the increase is attributable to decisions to revoke visas when it was established that misleading information on employment opportunities in Latvia was provided at the time of visa issuance.[186]

Preventing the abuse of legal migration routes

In 2025, SBG officials identified 185 violations related to illegal employment of foreign nationals, while employers were penalised for illegal employment in 54 cases.[187]

In 2025 (until 3 December), 102 unregistered employed foreign nationals (including third-country nationals) were identified during supervisory and control inspections carried out by the State Labour Inspectorate (hereinafter, the SLI) in the area of labour law and labour protection, accounting for 11% of all unregistered employed persons identified during the specified period.

Furthermore, the State Labour Inspectorate, in cooperation with the State Border Guard, carried out 106 joint inspections in 2025 to effectively and purposefully limit and reduce unregistered employment (including that of third-country nationals).[188]

In September 2025, the agreement "On Amendments to the Agreement on Good Practice of Attracting Foreign Students and Delivering Studies of 22 September 2022" was signed[189] and laid down five stricter obligations for higher education institutions:

1. to immediately inform the SBG and the OCMA about third-country students if they have not attended the respective study programme at the higher education institution for 14 consecutive days without a justified reason;
2. the higher education institution has reasonable doubts about the student's intention to continue studies at the respective higher education institution;
3. the higher education institution has other information indicating that the student has

182 Source: SBG.
183 Data source: SBG.
184 as identity is not established, one person may recur in several episodes.
185 Source: SBG.
186 Source: SBG.
187 Data source: SBG.
188 Data source: SLI.
189 Agreement on Good Practice of Attracting Foreign Students and Delivering Studies, consolidated version: 08.09.2025. – Available on: https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/30134/download?attachment

another purpose to stay in Latvia not related to studies;

4. the higher education institution establishes that the student does not comply with the mandatory attendance requirement laid down in the study programme and has exceeded the mandatory attendance percentage threshold;
5. the student does not arrive in Latvia within the specified period or does not commence studies at the higher education institution.

The amendments set out a mandatory requirement for higher education institutions to introduce an internal system to control the attendance of third-country students, imposing the maximum student drop-out rate threshold of 20% (for higher education institutions with at least 50 foreign students). The amendments aim to improve the monitoring of students and prevent irregular entry and residence for study purposes.

From 13 to 17 January 2025, an associate professor of the Border Guard and Immigration Services Department of the State Border Guard College provided training to 18 officials of the Moldovan Border Police in accordance with the professional development programme "Profiling, Interviewing, Identification". The training was held at the General Inspectorate of the Border Police of Moldova.

During the training, Moldovan colleagues had an opportunity to study the best practices of the competent EU authorities in the area of profiling and identifying persons. The conceptual foundations and the development directions were examined, various types of border-crosser profiles were discussed, and the most characteristic behaviour of each profile was analysed. In addition, information was provided on interviewing and identification methods.[190]

Forged travel documents

In 2025, third-country nationals were detained in Latvia for using forged travel documents (83) and forged vehicle documents (144).[191]

On 10 September 2025, employees of the consular service participated in an on-line training organised by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex, whose experts presented and shared experience on the current developments in detecting forged documents.[192]

From 10 to 14 March 2025 and in the framework of an EU co-financed project, instructors of the State Border Guard College provided training for 18 officials of the Moldovan Border Police in accordance with the professional development programme "Document Examination and Detection of Impostors".

During these five days, Moldovan colleagues received theoretical and practical training, covering a wide range of topics: current trends in the detection of forged documents at the external borders of the European Union, routes, indicators, publicly available resources that can be used to verify document authenticity, the ICAO standard for secure documents[193], document typology, production and document personalisation methods, and the detection of impostors during border checks. These training activities were organised and provided in the framework of project No. VRS/RPVP/2023/9 "Continuation of the State Border Guard Liaison Officer Posts in Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and

190 Officials of the State Border Guard provide training to the officials of the Moldovan Border Police on the profiling and identification of persons crossing the border. – Available on: https://www.rs.gov.lv/lv/projekts/valsts-robezsardzes-amatpersonas-nodrosina-moldovas-robezpolicijas-amatpersonu-apmacibas-par-robezskersojoso-personu-profilesanu-un-identificesanu

191 Data source: SBG.

192 Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

193 ICAO – the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Azerbaijan" under the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy for 2021–2027[194].

Cooperation with Frontex

In 2025, during the operational year of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the experts of the State Border Guard and technical equipment were actively involved in Frontex-coordinated joint operations, strengthening the security of the EU external border and management of migration.

During the operational year, the State Border Guard participated in 21 Frontex-coordinated joint operations and provided support to EU Member States and third countries such as Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, France, Spain, Finland, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, and Georgia, and provided 341 experts of the State Border Guard (screening and debriefing experts, fingerprinting and registration experts, border surveillance experts, first- and second-line experts, document in-depth examination experts, information management experts, experts in the detection of crimes in the area of operation of motorised vehicles, and crew members of State Border Guard technical equipment), including 16 dog handlers with service dogs. Furthermore, 3 forced-return escort and support experts participated in return operations.

In 2025, the State Border Guard deployed 4 technical units in Member States: 1 vessel RK-12 "VALPAS" (9 deployment periods on rotational basis), 3 patrol boats (9 deployment periods on rotational basis) and 3 mobile video surveillance systems (12 deployment periods on rotational basis).

The vessel RK-12 "VALPAS" and its crew were involved in the joint operation "Greece 2025" in Crete from 25 March 2025. Until 21 January 2026, it had participated in 66 maritime rescue operations, saving 3,306 lives while ensuring patrolling and surveillance in the coastal region of Greece.

Furthermore, the multifunctional maritime operation "MMO Baltic Sea 2025" of Frontex, the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) was carried out in the Baltic Sea from 11 June to 29 October 2025. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Poland participated this operation with their technical equipment. The State Border Guard deployed its technical equipment to the aforementioned operation – 1 vessel and 2 patrol boats – in order to combat cross-border crime at sea in cooperation with other countries, to promote cooperation during the coast guard activities of law enforcement authorities, and to support search and rescue operations at sea.

At the same time, the State Border Guard, in cooperation with Frontex, coordinated the deployment of Standing Corps experts from the European Border and Coast Guard in the territory of Latvia. In total, 229 European Border and Coast Guard Standing Corps experts from various EU Member States were deployed to the structural units of the State Border Guard in 2025, providing significant support to the State Border Guard in ensuring the border control and strengthening the external border of the European Union. From the second half of 2025, 3 additional mobile video surveillance systems from Frontex were deployed to monitor the external border of Latvia, significantly increasing the border surveillance capacity and response efficiency.[195]

194 The State Border Guard has begun implementing the project on the continuation of the State Border Guard liaison officer posts in Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Azerbaijan. – Available on: https://www.rs.gov.lv/lv/projekts/valsts-robezsardze-uzsak-istenot-projektu-par-valsts-robezsardzes-sakaru-virsnieku-punktu-darbibas-turpinasanu-gruzija-ukraina-moldova-un-azerbaidzana

195 On the participation of the State Border Guard in Frontex-coordinated joint operations in 2025. – Available on: https://www.rs.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/par-valsts-robezsardzes-iesaisti-2025gada-frontex-koordinetajas-kopigajas-operacijas

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

In 2025, 3 persons were classified as suspects in criminal proceedings for organising trafficking in human beings. 11 third-country nationals were recognised as victims of trafficking in human beings.[196]

Number and nationality of identified victims

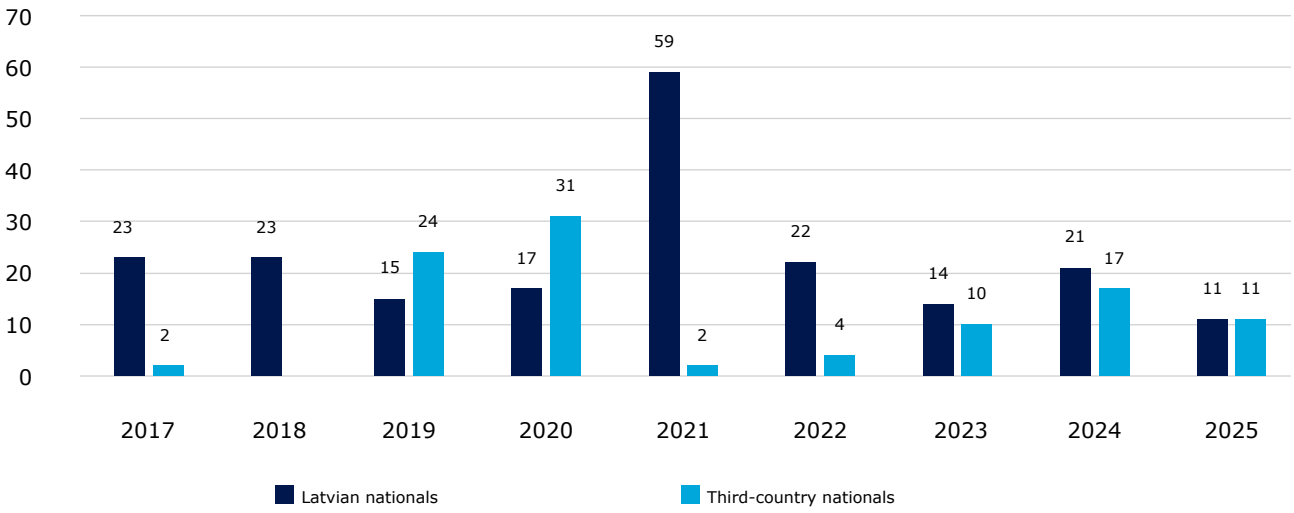

Figure 10-1.

On 28 January 2025, the Cabinet took note of the informative report of the Ministry of the Interior "On the implementation of the Human Trafficking Prevention Plan 2021–2023"[197], which explained the achieved progress, challenges and the way forward in preventing trafficking in human beings.

In total, of 31 measures included in the plan, 22 measures were implemented, four measures were partially implemented and assessed, while five measures were assessed as not implemented. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of the plan has been successful. The plan is divided into four main directions – prevention, to increase public understanding and awareness, emphasising that trafficking in human beings is a social problem; protection, to improve the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings and ensure effective assistance and protection; bringing perpetrators to justice, to intensify efforts to prosecute persons involved in committing offences involving trafficking in human beings; and cooperation, to strengthen collaboration and information exchange with partners in Latvia and abroad, as only coordinated and joint inter-institutional action can help prevent trafficking in human beings.

The most significant achievements in combating trafficking in human beings:

- Successful organisation of information campaigns and educational activities, involving a broader group of the society and specific risk groups;
- Informational materials distributed in several languages, promoting awareness on the risks of trafficking in human beings among various societal groups;
- Law enforcement authorities, social services and NGOs have actively collaborated in identifying victims and providing support;

196 Data source: The Ministry of the Interior.
197 The informative report of the Ministry of the Interior "On the implementation of the Human Trafficking Prevention Plan 2021–2023". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/attachments/legal_acts/document_versions/4e52d3e9-d743-4aaa-a07d-a75b67557da5/download

- A series of training sessions for various specialists, including law enforcement authorities, prosecutors and judges;
- In 2021–2023, 111 victims of trafficking in human beings identified, of whom 95 were Latvian nationals.

However, the main challenges in preventing the trafficking in human beings are related to the lack of consensus on developing a uniform regulatory framework to strengthen the cooperation of first-contact institutions for recognising trafficking in human beings and referring victims for support.

In some cases, it is necessary to extend the social rehabilitation service for victims of trafficking in human beings. The current 180-day service is sometimes insufficient.

To highlight the next steps in preventing trafficking in human beings, the next framework period must focus on implementing the recommendations of the European Council, the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings GRETA, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the US Department of State. Likewise, by July 2026, the requirements set out in Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council[198] are expected to be transposed in the legal framework of Latvia.[199]

On 26 August 2025, the Cabinet approved the Human Trafficking Prevention Plan for 2025–2027[200], which provides for the implementation of the international recommendations addressed to Latvia, as well as ensures the transposition of the requirements of the European Union Directive (EU) 2024/1712 into the legal framework of Latvia. The approved plan aims to strengthen the institutional capacity and ensure an effective approach to preventing trafficking in human beings by taking action against traffickers, improving the identification and referral of potential victims, as well as by providing adequate support to victims. One of the main strategic tasks for the period until 2027 is to officially establish and adopt the National Referral Mechanism.

To achieve this aim, 12 tasks have been established, structured according to the internationally recognised 4P model (*prevention, protection, prosecution, partnership*):

Prevention – promoting awareness among the public and risk groups, especially children in out-of-family care, third-country nationals, and socially vulnerable persons.

Support to victims – early identification of trafficking in human beings, immediate support to victims, training of first-contact institutions, and the development of a victim identification tool.

Bringing perpetrators to justice – strengthening investigations and judicial proceedings, as well as introducing stricter penalties, including a prison sentence for up to 10 years in serious cases.

Policy coordination – a proposal to establish the institution of an independent rapporteur and to create a permanent expert working group for regular inter-institutional cooperation.[201]

The Ministry of Justice has started drafting amendments to the Criminal Law to transpose the new definition of trafficking in human beings introduced by the EU Directive (EU)

198 Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, PE/14/2024/REV/1. – Official Journal L, 2024/1712, 24.6.2024.

199 Progress, challenges and the way forward in preventing trafficking in human beings. – Available on: https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/progress-izaicinajumi-un-turpmakie-uzdevumi-cilveku-tirdzniecibas-noversana.

200 Cabinet Order No. 534 "On the Human Trafficking Prevention Plan for 2025–2027" of 26 August 2025. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 165. – 28.08.2025. – [entered into force on 26.08.2025]

201 Approved 2025–2027 Human Trafficking Prevention Plan. – Available on: https://www.iem.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/apstiprinats-cilveku-tirdzniecibas-noversanas-plans-2025-2027-gadam

2024/1712. The objective of these amendments is to ensure full compliance of the national legislation with the updated EU legal framework on combating trafficking in human beings. The changes will improve the legal clarity and promote more effective investigation, prosecution, and protection of victims.

At the end of 2025, Latvia's Ministry of the Interior invited other stakeholders involved in combating trafficking in human beings to nominate experts to the working group on combating trafficking in human beings. The objective of the group is to ensure regular exchange of information, identification of trends, and a coordinated approach to prevention and training measures.[202]

Latvia's Ministry of the Interior has drafted the "Law on the Identification and Support of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings"[203] that aims to strengthen the fight against trafficking in human beings by establishing a national referral mechanism and laying down the conditions for granting a reflection period to victims of trafficking in human beings and for terminating this period. The draft expands the scope and purpose of the current law "On Residence of a Victim of Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Latvia", while transposing the necessary provisions of the Directive and clarifying the conditions for applying the reflection period, thereby also implementing GRETA recommendations.

Overall, the draft law addresses the following key issues: it designates the national coordinator and its functions; defines the referral mechanism for potential victims of trafficking in human beings and the procedure for its operation; expands the range of persons eligible for the reflection period and clarifies its potential duration.[204]

The draft law has been submitted for public consultation and is expected to be adopted by the summer.

The society "Shelter "Safe House"" released the study "Trafficking in Human Beings and Labour Exploitation in Latvia: Vulnerability of Third-Country Nationals, Recruitment Methods and Institutional Challenges"[205], which analyses currently the most widespread form of trafficking in human beings in Latvia – labour exploitation, to which third-country nationals are particularly vulnerable.

Most victims of the labour exploitation are men from Central and South Asian countries, mainly from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and India. In Latvia, demand for labour is rapidly growing, and the number of employment agencies is increasing. While migrant workers are more vulnerable than the local labour due to various reasons. These factors increase the risk of exploitation. The study demonstrates that third-country nationals often suffer from poverty, lack of language skills and information, insufficient social support, and the lack of understanding of their rights in Latvia. Recruiters exploit these circumstances by giving misleading employment promises, demanding payments for job placement, and maintaining control – more often by threats and manipulation than by physical violence. Many victims fall into fictitious debt, do not receive the promised remuneration, and are discouraged from seeking help.

202 Source: The Ministry of the Interior.
203 Draft "Law on the Identification and Support of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/structuralizer/data/nodes/ed9407fe-8555-4791-a098-3e8f5f0d14c8/preview
204 Annotation to the draft "Law on the Identification and Support of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings". – Available on: https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/annotation/096aa49a-2c96-4098-bdd8-9f2587924832
205 Trafficking in Human Beings and Labour Exploitation in Latvia: Vulnerability of Third-Country Nationals, Recruitment Methods and Institutional Challenges. – Available on: https://www.patverums-dm.lv/svs/uploads/files/sifnvo_petijums.pdf

The authors of the study recommend to:

- introduce an independent rapporteur (an expert who reviews the opinions of NGOs and state institutions on the situation and provides an opinion);
- develop monitoring mechanisms for the employment of third-country nationals;
- apply Section 280 of the Criminal Law more effectively (bring perpetrators of employment-related violations to justice);
- strengthen a proactive victim identification and the protection of rights.[206]

On 6 February 2026, the fourth GRETA report on the measures implemented by Latvia to prevent and detect vulnerabilities to trafficking in human beings was published[207]. The report covers the period from 2021 to 2025, assessing the measures taken by Latvia to prevent vulnerability to trafficking in human beings, identify and support vulnerable victims, and punish the offenders. It pays particular attention to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to commit offences of trafficking in human beings, as well as to the use of technological innovations to prevent trafficking in human beings, protect victims, and bring traffickers to justice. The report also assesses the progress achieved in specific areas that GRETA examined in the previous evaluation rounds.

The report emphasises that children and young people who are in care institutions or transitioning out of them face a higher risk of trafficking in human beings. As a result, GRETA is of the opinion that the authorities should strengthen the support provided to them and its availability in municipalities, include the prevention of trafficking in human beings in the general school curriculum, and ensure training for all relevant professionals.

Women and girls involved in prostitution are also recognised as a high-risk group. GRETA urges to take further measures to eradicate sexual and gender stereotypes, raise awareness on the risks of trafficking in human beings, develop exit programmes for those who wish to leave prostitution, and adopt appropriate legislation to reduce exploitation.

The growing demand for migrant workers, combined with limited inspection resources, has increased the risk of labour exploitation among third-country nationals in Latvia. GRETA is of the opinion that the Latvian authorities should ensure that the State Labour Inspectorate has sufficient staff, resources, and training to enable it to contribute to the prevention and detection of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation.

The report also draws attention to the Roma community, which continues to face barriers in the areas of education, housing and access to the labour market that increases its vulnerability to exploitation. GRETA recommends targeted awareness-raising that is carried out in cooperation with Roma mediators and civil society on the risks of trafficking in human beings, safe migration and workers' rights.

The report also highlights vulnerability among asylum seekers, unaccompanied and separated minors, persons with disabilities and homeless persons, calling for improved training, inclusive services, adequate resources and systematic vulnerability assessments to prevent trafficking in human beings.[208]

206 The study "Trafficking in Human Beings and Labour Exploitation in Latvia: Vulnerability of Third-Country Nationals, Recruitment Methods and Institutional Challenges" is released. – Available on: https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/klaja-nak-petijums-%E2%80%9Ccilveku-tirdznieciba-un-darba-ekspluatacija-latvija-treso-valstu-pilsonu-ievainojamiba-vervesanas-metodes-un-institucionalie-izaicinajumi%E2%80%9D/1903

207 FOURTH EVALUATION ROUND, Measures to prevent and detect vulnerabilities to human trafficking, EVALUATION REPORT, LATVIA, GRETA Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. – Available on: https://rm.coe.int/greta-evaluation-report-on-the-implementation-of-the-council-of-europe/48802a8e5a

208 GRETA publishes its fourth report on Latvia. – Available on: https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/-/greta-publishes-its-fourth-report-on-latvia

Training and awareness raising

On 1 January 2025, the Society "Shelter "Safe House"" began implementing the project "Sustainable Growth: strengthening the operations and the capacity of the Society "Shelter "Safe House""[209].

The project aims to strengthen the capacity of the Society and to promote public awareness on trafficking in human beings, migration, and integration issues. These activities aim to improve inter-institutional cooperation and ensure more effective resolution of these problems in Latvia.

To effectively address the issue of trafficking in human beings, the following activities are planned under the project:

- Strengthening the capacity of the Society – professional training, supervision and improvement of management processes.
- Research and advocacy – research on recruitment processes in trafficking in human beings, discussions, and development of policy initiatives.
- Public awareness and assistance to victims – art therapy sessions, educational materials, informative campaigns, as well as upgrading the Society's website.[210]

Training

Month	Participants	Content and structure	Organisers and funding
January	43 social workers from Riga City Council	Riga City Council. What trafficking in human beings is, its various forms, trends, referral procedures, and handling vulnerable persons.	Riga City Council and the Ministry of the Interior. Annual budget.
March	23 participants: sectoral specialists / advocates	"Social Path" examples. During the meeting, institutions from Italy, Greece, and Serbia shared their experience of integrating the "social approach" into their referral mechanisms. Matīss Malojlo, a representative of the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia, presented an assessment of the state of play in Latvia and shared his conclusions.	The OSCE together with the Ministry of the Interior and expert Matīss Malojlo. Annual budget.

209 Sustainable Growth: strengthening the operations and the capacity of the Society "Shelter "Safe House"". – Available on: https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/ilgtspejiga-izaugsme-biedribas-patverums-drosa-maja-darbibas-un-kapacitates-stiprinasana

210 The project "Sustainable Growth: strengthening the operations and the capacity of the Society "Shelter "Safe House"" has been launched. – Available on: https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/uzsakts-projekts-ilgtspejiga-izaugsme-biedribas-patverums-drosa-maja-darbibas-un-kapacitates-stiprinasana/1855

Month	Participants	Content and structure	Organisers and funding
May	Approximately 15 employees of the Society Integration Foundation (One-Stop Agency for newcomers)	Trends in trafficking in human beings, referral procedures, handling clients, and the analysis of real cases.	One-Stop Agency for newcomers, the Society Integration Foundation together with the Ministry of the Interior. Annual budget.
May	71 participants: judges, prosecutors, and police officers	The training provided in-depth knowledge and practical skills that are necessary to identify and assessing cases of trafficking in human beings. Participants gained an understanding of the nature of this crime and its legal qualification pursuant to Section 154.[1] of the Criminal Law 211, learned to distinguish trafficking in human beings from other criminal offences, and to understand the psychological and social profile of victims. The training covered types of trafficking, methods of committing the crime, and the main types of evidence.	Court Administration (Latvian Judicial Training Centre / Judicial Academy).
June	112 participants from the child protection sector	Trafficking in human beings – risk areas and child vulnerability, trends, identification and referral, inter-institutional cooperation, as well as joint analysis of real cases and situations.	Child Protection Centre together with the Ministry of the Interior. Annual budget.
September	60 participants	Simulation training on the identification of trafficking in human beings in two locations, and cooperation in providing assistance to potential victims.	State Police College, State Labour Inspectorate, Ministry of the Interior. Funding from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

211 Criminal Law. – *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, No. 199/200, 08.07.1998. – [entered into force on 01.04.1999]

Month	Participants	Content and structure	Organisers and funding
October	100 participants	Employment of third-country nationals. Challenges and control issues.	State Labour Inspectorate. Funding from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).
November	80 participants	Training programme for Orphans' and Custody Courts.	Child Protection Centre together with the Ministry of the Interior. Annual budget.
December	13 police officers from the regions	Basic module on trafficking in human beings. Definition of trafficking in human beings, legal framework, indicators, forms, referral, social rehabilitation, etc.	State Police College.

RETURN AND READMISSION

RETURN AND READMISSION

In 2025, the number of persons who voluntarily left Latvia increased to 2206 (1965 in 2024). In most cases, they were the nationals of Uzbekistan, Russia, and Tajikistan.[212] 80[213] persons received voluntary return assistance. In 2025, the number of forcibly removed persons decreased to 75 (103 in 2024[214]). The largest number of forcibly removed third-country nationals were from Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Removal

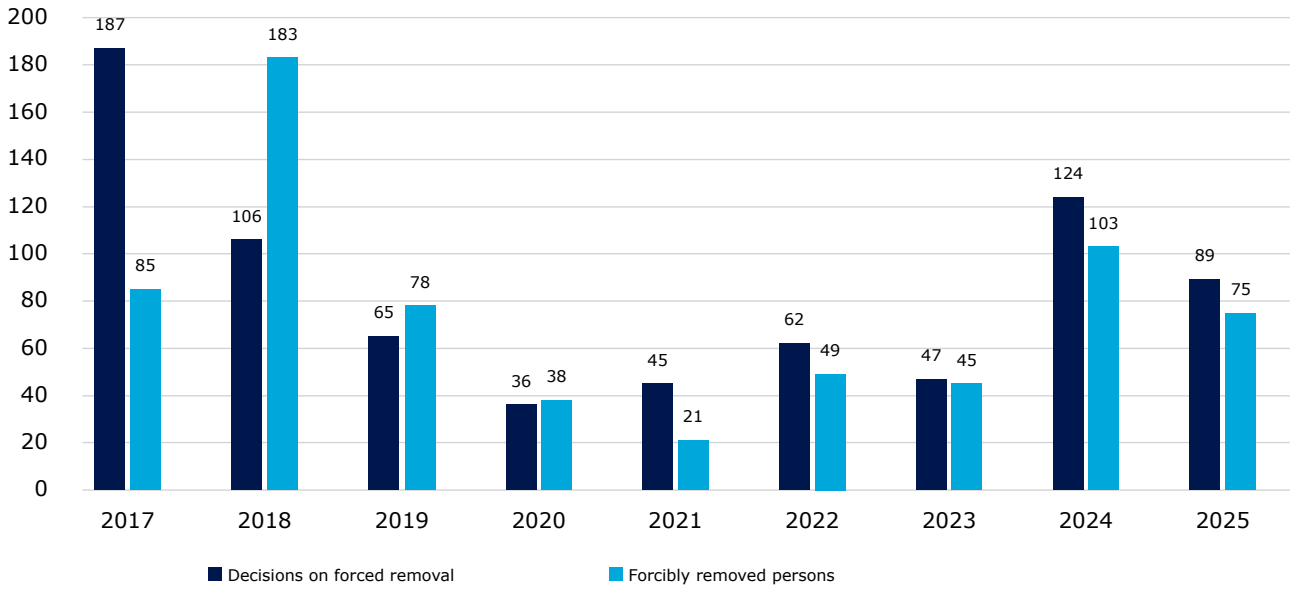

Figure 11-1.

To promote more effective and sustainable return of foreign nationals, at the end of 2024 Latvia's State Border Guard joined the European Union reintegration programme (hereinafter, the EURP). Since the beginning of 2025, the State Border Guard has been actively using the EURP, and by the end of 2025 there were 38 reintegration cases. For the purposes of the State Border Guard's participation in the EURP and in order to regulate the internal procedure for the use of the programme at the State Border Guard, an internal regulatory act of the State Border Guard was issued: State Border Guard Order No. 23.1-8.4/608 "On the commencement of the use of the European Union reintegration programme" of 16 April 2025. At the same time, the State Border Guard proposed amendments to the Immigration Law to lay down that officials have the right to change a decision from forced to voluntary removal if a foreigner applies for one of the available reintegration programmes, including the EURP. At the same time, considering the migration situation that has developed in Latvia, namely, the pressure from Belarus, and the insufficient staffing capacity at the State Border Guard, as well as to promote active participation of foreign nationals in the EURP and to provide return and reintegration counselling to foreign nationals, a Frontex return specialist has been operating in Latvia since July 2025.[215]

212 Data source: OCMA.
213 Data source: IOM Riga office.
214 Source: SBG.
215 Source: SBG.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

In February 2025, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the LATDEV brand of Latvia's development cooperation policy available for use by the implementers of development cooperation projects. The brand was developed to create a single communication approach for Latvia's development cooperation policy, thereby increasing Latvia's visibility and highlighting its contribution to the global development.

The name "LATDEV" is formed from the initial letters of words related to development cooperation, creating a euphonious abbreviation. Name in English: *Latvia's Development Cooperation*.[216]

On 19 March 2025 in Paris, Latvia joined the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as its 33rd member. DAC is the leading international forum for establishing standards and best practices in the area of development cooperation. DAC membership will provide a platform to implement Latvia's political priorities, including provision of support to Ukraine and other EU Eastern Partnership countries at the international level by creating new partnerships and a more effective development cooperation policy system.

Current topics, in which Latvia plans to engage to improve the established standards, include public administration reforms and digitalisation, cooperation to improve the migration policies and border management in partner countries, provision of non-financial support, and support to civilians in conflict areas.

On 20 March 2025, Latvia, already as a full member state, participated in a DAC High Level Meeting, which is the main meeting format for high-ranking officials from DAC member states and partner countries. Countries discussed increasing the funding for development cooperation and providing more effective support considering the current global challenges.[217]

216 Latvia's development cooperation brand LATDEV. – Available on: https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/latvijas-attistibas-sadarbibas-zimols-latdev

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER SOURCES

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ABBREVIATIONS

EMN – the European Migration Network
EU – the European Union
Frontex – the European Border and Coast Guard Agency
IOM – the International Organization for Migration
ICAO – the International Civil Aviation Organization
LLA – the Latvian Language Agency
SEA – the State Employment Agency
ASAC – the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre
AMIF – the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
OCMA – the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
SIF – the Society Integration Foundation
NCE – the National Centre for Education
SBG – the State Border Guard