

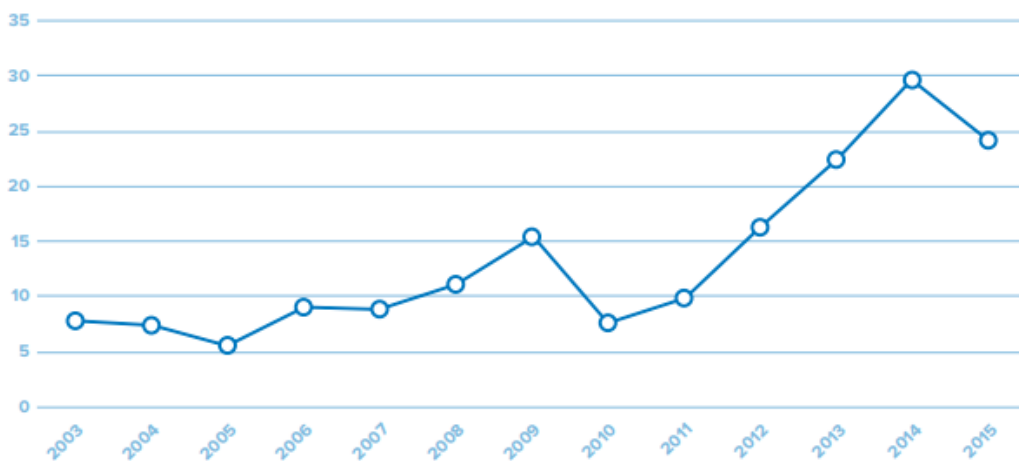
Global trends

These current times could be called an era of migration. In today's world migration is caused, on the one hand, by the large number of (armed) conflicts and (natural) disasters. On the other hand, modern means of transport and new information technologies have broadened our world, making it easier to travel long distances. However, people's freedom of movement is limited due to inequalities and thus not possible for everyone. This applies first and foremost to areas situated in the southern parts of the world. In addition to hundreds of millions of tourists and people who make short journeys because of their work, every day sees the movement of refugees who have very different reasons for leaving home, and whose background, amount of resources needed and readiness for migration vary significantly.

Never before have such a large number of people been forced to leave their homes because of persecution, violence, armed conflicts or violation of human rights. According to the UNHCR, 65.3 million people had to leave their homes in 2015. This figure exceeds that of 2014 by 5.8 million and is the largest ever that has been officially documented throughout history. Ca 2/3 of refugees resettled within their state of residence but 24.5 million left their homes to find a safe place to live outside their own country. This number does not include the 19.2 million people who had to leave because of various natural disasters.

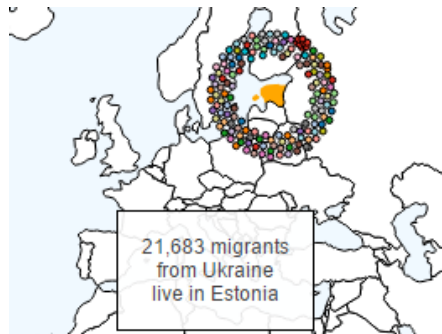


The table below shows Newly displaced persons per minute during 2003 – 2015. As we see, in 2015 ca. 24 people in a minute were forced to migrate (UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7>)



According to the official statistics, in 2015 more than 1.014 million refugees entered the European Union by crossing the Mediterranean Sea, most of them landing in Greece and Italy. 27% of those who arrived are children, 18% women and 55% men. In 2016, the largest amount of refugees continued to arrive from Syria, followed by Afghanistan, Nigeria and Iraq.

In 2015, only 201 400 refugees could turn to their homeland – first of all to Afghanistan (61 400 people), to Sudan(39 500), to Somalia (32 300) and Central African Republic (21 600).



IOM INTERACTIVE MAP

International Organization for Migration – IOM has prepared interactive app on GLOBAL MIGRATION FLOWS, which tracks migrants around the world.

<https://www.iom.int/world-migration>

Trends in Estonia

Estonia has seen a steady influx of foreigners who come here to work and study, or who move here for family and other reasons. Compared to all of them, the amount of people who have been granted international protection is relatively small. For example, in 2015 a total of 8,104 foreigners were granted a temporary residence permit or registered their place of residence in Estonia whereas the number of people who applied for international protection was 231.

In Estonia granting refugee status is regulated by the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens. Estonia has provided the opportunity to apply for and to be granted international protection since 1997 when it acceded to the Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees (1951) and to the supplementing New York Protocol of 1967, and legal basis for proper performance of duties was established.

According to the Police and Border Guard Board, 846 people applied for international protection in Estonia in 1997-2015 (<https://www.politsei.ee/dotAsset/218156.pdf>) . 172 applicants were granted protection, and a residence permit was issued to 34 family members. These figures are among the smallest in the EU.

Table: Decisions on international protection in Estonia, 1997-2015

Decision to terminate proceedings	130
Decision of refusal	58
Decision to grant asylum	88
Decision to grant subsidiary protection	84
Residence permit for family member	34
Application rejected	230

Over the years (1997-2015), Estonia has received the largest number of applications for international protection from the Ukraine (155 applications), Russia (87), Georgia (79), Syria (51), Afghanistan (48) and Iran (40).

In 2016 ca. 100 applications for international protection were submitted in Estonia or on its border, many of which are still being processed. The number of applications submitted on the basis of the European Agenda on Migration will be added to the above-mentioned figure.

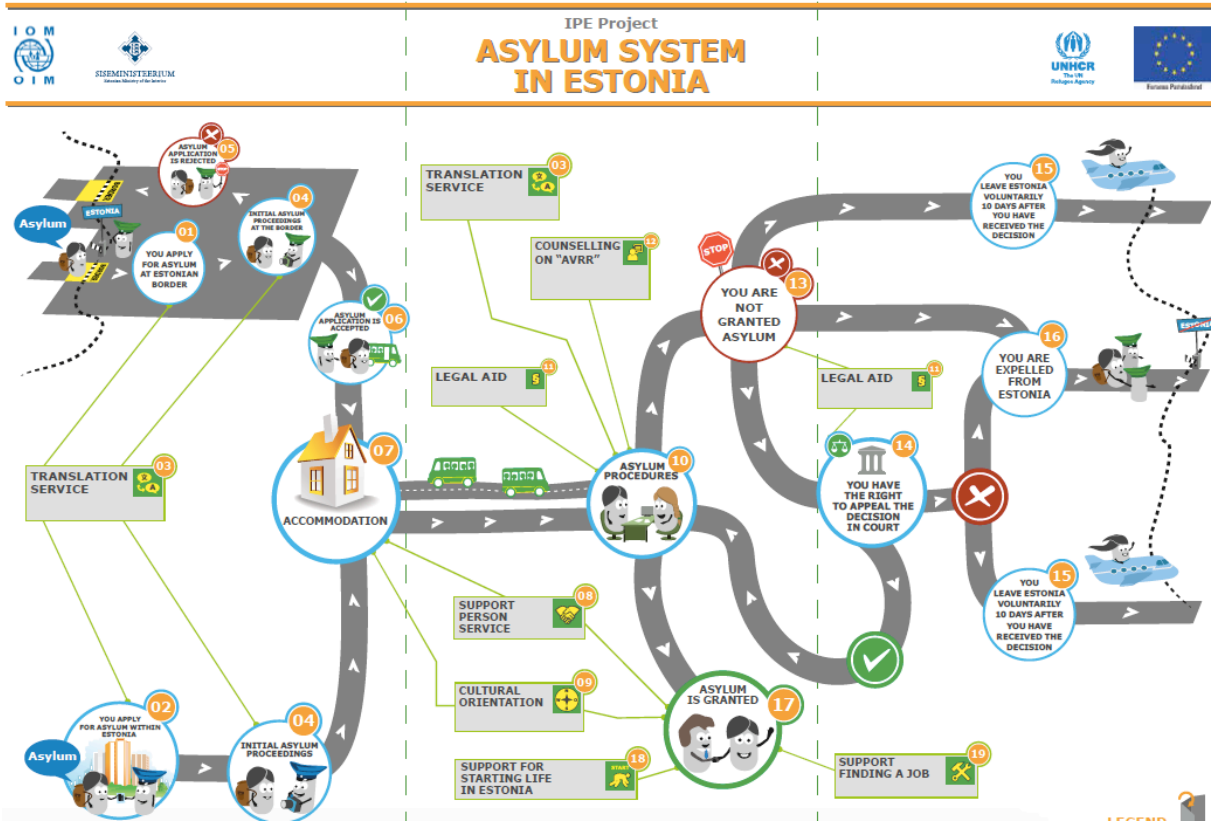


Figure: Asylum system in Estonia: <https://www.politsei.ee/dotAsset/311132.pdf>

Admission of refugees in Estonia

In Estonia, refugee status and the status of a beneficiary of subsidiary protection are granted by the Police and Border Guard Board. Beneficiaries of refugee status will be issued a residence permit for three years and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection will be issued a residence permit for one year, to be extended if necessary.

1. Applicant for international protection (processing of application by the Police and Border Guard Board may take up to six months)

Applicants for international protection will be placed in an accommodation centre while their applications are being processed (in November, 2016 there were two accommodation centres in Estonia: in Vao and Vägeva).

The accommodation centre will provide the following:

- accommodation;
- payment of monetary benefit within the applicable subsistence limit (in 2016, 130 EUR per month for first family member and children and 104 EUR per month for other adult family members);
- supply of essential clothing and other necessities;
- access to medical examinations and necessary health services;
- Estonian language instruction and essential translation services;
- transportation necessary for the performance of procedural acts.

If the application for international protection is satisfied and the applicant is issued a residence permit, terms and conditions listed in Section 2 will apply to him or her.

Employment – forbidden during the first six months but if the decision on the applicant’s application for international protection has not entered into force within six months as of the submission of the application for international protection due to reason’s beyond the applicant’s control (Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens, § 10 1 (1)), the applicant may take employment and engage in business.

2. Beneficiary of international protection (incl. refugees admitted on the basis of the European Agenda on Migration)

- Upon arrival in Estonia, beneficiaries of international protection will be settled in the territories of local governments.
- Local government will provide assistance in finding a place to rent, organisation of compulsory Estonian language instruction with adjustment programme and essential translation services for the period of two years.

Expenses related to the entry into a rental contract of displaced persons will be covered. Expenses on rent and utilities will be covered as needed (based on the person’s income), first and foremost through the subsistence benefit.

Beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to assistance on the same grounds as a permanent resident of Estonia:

- state pension, family support, employment services and employment subsidies, social benefits, health services.

Employment – beneficiary of international protection has the right to take employment in Estonia and is entitled to employment services and employment subsidies on the same grounds as a permanent resident of Estonia. The Unemployment Insurance Fund will draw up an individual action plan for him or her.

Refugees are entitled to health insurance on the same grounds as permanent residents of Estonia. Refugees will not be entitled to health insurance if not employed, studying, or registered as unemployed with the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund.

By November 2016 a total of 77 “quota refugees” had been resettled in and relocated to Estonia on the basis of the **European Agenda on Migration**. They were resettled in Harju, Järva, Tartu, Lääne-Viru, Lääne, Viljandi, Pärnu and Põlva Counties. 15 out of 21 families have come from Syria.

More Information

- Comprehensive background information on the reasons for migration and the refugees’ states of origin can be found at <https://valitsus.ee/et/pagulased>
- Police and Border Guard Board on asylum in Estonia: <https://www.politsei.ee/en/teenused/international-protection/>
- Estonian Refugee Council: <http://www.pagulasabi.ee>
- Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation materials on global education, incl. (climate) refugees: <http://www.ctc.ee/running>

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