

Third-country nationals

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Since 2016 the immigration dynamics in Latvia have increased. In 2016 89 023 foreign citizens were residing in Latvia. In 2020 there were already 98 328 foreign citizens residing in Latvia. Out of 98 328 foreign citizens, 18% were citizens of the European Union or European Economic Area and 82% were third-country nationals.

The dynamics of beneficiaries of international protection residing in Latvia are low. Since 2016 in the Republic of Latvia a total of 1246 persons have been granted the asylum seeker status, 55 persons have been granted a refugee status and 421 persons have been granted the alternative status.

The Ministry of Culture is an institution in Latvia in the area of integration delegated by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) (2014-2020). The goals of the AMIF are:

- to strengthen and develop all aspects of the joint European asylum system, including its external dimension;
- to provide support to lawful migration to the member states under their economic and social needs, for example, needs of the labour market, at the same time ensuring the integrity of the immigration systems of the member states, and facilitate effective integration of the third-country nationals;
- to strengthen fair and effective return strategies in the member states, facilitating the combating of illegal immigration, emphasizing sustainability of return and effective readmission in the countries of origin and transit;
- to strengthen solidarity and sharing of responsibility among the member states, especially with those most affected by the migration and asylum flows, including by carrying out practical cooperation.

Within the framework of the AMIF (2014-2020) several activities are implemented:

“Creation of national level coordination system for third-country nationals”. Within this activity in 2016, the Information Centre for Newcomers (ICI) was established. ICI has five offices – one in the capital city, others in regions. ICI provides free of charge consultations, as well as psychological consultations and interpretation services both orally and in writing.

“Support measures for persons subject to international protection (to refugees and persons who have been granted subsidiary protection)”. The goal of the activity is to promote the integration of persons in need of international protection into society by providing training courses and information tailored to the needs of persons in need of international protection on rights and obligations in various spheres of life. Within the activity the following measures are supported:

- Integration courses (Programme is 20-40 hours long, there are 2 levels of the Programme available);
- Since 2018 – Latvian language courses (Programme is 80-120 hours long);
- Events for intercultural communication, co-operation with the local community, as well as cultural, sports, and recreational events, involving persons in need of international protection as lecturers.

“Development of the Latvian language courses tailored for different groups”. The goal of the activity is to promote the integration of persons who are third-country nationals (TCN) and legally residing in Latvia into the education system and labour market of the Republic of Latvia, as well as to improve the availability of services. Latvian language courses program is at least 120 hours long.

“Integration of third-country nationals by involving mass media”. The goal of this activity was to raise public awareness and promote a constructive dialogue between third-country nationals and society, to improve the quality of the information provided by the media, and to make available the content on social inclusion issues for third-country nationals.

“Introductory programmes for third-country nationals including vulnerable groups”. The goal of the activity is to promote inclusion in Latvian society of persons who are third-country nationals or beneficiaries of international protection and who

legally reside in Latvia. Within the activity following measures are supported:

- Integration courses (Programme is 16-30 hours long);
- Activities for practical use of Latvian language in everyday life and business communication;
- Contemporary culture activities that provide an innovative approach to promoting integration processes.

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