Providus publishes article on Latvia's migration and asylum policy

The think tank Providus published an article on Latvia's migration and asylum policy. The article was compiled as part of the project "Beyond Labels: Reframing migration and forced displacement in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland," funded by the European Union.

Over 2026, migration-related issues have become increasingly prominent in Latvia’s public and political discourse. This has included measures to restrict irregular migration, the establishment of a Parliamentary Investigation Commission (PIK) on immigration, and the adoption of a new Immigration Law in September 2026.

The new Immigration Law introduces changes affecting international protection beneficiaries. It replaces national permanent residence permits (PRPs) with EU long-term resident status. Under the new framework, persons holding temporary protection status, namely Ukrainians, cannot obtain a PRP. A separate draft amendment to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians would provide Ukrainian civilians with the possibility to obtain a PRP. The new law also changes the residence status of persons recognised as refugees: whereas they previously received a PRP upon recognition of refugee status, they will receive a temporary residence permit under the new law.

The article also highlights the scale of asylum compared with broader migration flows. Although the number of asylum applications has increased significantly since 2021, the number of people granted refugee or subsidiary status has remained comparatively low, particularly when viewed against overall migration figures, such as temporary residence permits issued. Persons granted refugee or subsidiary status are described as one of the numerically smallest groups among newcomers. The number of asylum applications examined between 1998-2025 was lower than the number of Ukrainian civilians received by Latvia in 2022.

The article notes that migration narratives are largely associated with crime, misuse of public resources and uncontrolled mass immigration. In this context, data on asylum are presented as showing that, despite the increase in applications since 2021, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection remain a relatively small group within overall migration dynamics.

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While migration control, security and the attraction of highly qualified labour feature prominently in the political discourse, the article notes that there is no clear vision for the long-term integration of newcomers.

Source(s)

- Public Policy Centre Providus | Sabiedriskās politikas centrs Providus (24 September, 2026), Gaisma deg, bet neviena nav mājās: pārdomas par Latvijas migrācijas politiku [The light is on, but no one is home: reflections on Latvia's migration policy], https://providus.lv/raksti/gaisma-deg-bet-neviena-nav-majas-pardomas-par-latvijas-migracijas-politiku/

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