A new initiative, the Academy for the Integration of Newcomers and Refugees in the Baltic States for 2025-2026, has been launched on March 12 to support municipal employees from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The program, developed by UNHCR, the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Programme (CoE ICC), the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the OECD, is implemented in collaboration with the think tank Providus. It aims to enhance the capacity of local government staff in working with refugees and preparing for future challenges.

The initiative responds to the Baltic states' experience in hosting a significant number of Ukrainian refugees since 2022 and the crucial role municipalities play in integration efforts. Training content is tailored to the needs identified by local government staff and focuses on intercultural competencies, communication, partnerships, disinformation, support for vulnerable refugee groups, and gender-based violence prevention.

Experts from participating organizations have emphasized the importance of local-level integration efforts, fostering inclusive communities, and strengthening cooperation between national and local governments, as well as the NGO sector.

The first training session, organized by ODIHR, will take place on March 13-14 at the NGO House, focusing on municipal initiatives for refugee integration.

Source(s)

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (12 March, 2025), Uzsākta reģionālā mācību programma, lai stiprinātu bēgļu un jaunpienācēju integrāciju Baltijas valstu pašvaldībās [Regional training programme launched to strengthen the integration of refugees and newcomers in the municipalities of the Baltic States], https://www.unhcr.org/neu/lv/132601-uzsakta-regionala-macibu-programma-lai-stiprinatu-beglu-un-jaunpienaceju-integraciju-baltijas-valstu-pasvaldibas.html

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