Reception - Latvia

Reception system

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

Latvia is bound by the recast Reception Conditions Directive and has transposed its provisions through the Asylum Law | Patvēruma likums.

National legislation

05/01/2016: Latvia transposes the recast Reception Conditions Directive by the Asylum Law | Patvēruma likums and further amendments.

Competent authority and stakeholders

Authority responsible for reception	The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA) | Pilsonības un migrācijas lietu pārvalde (PMLP)
Other actors involved	

Organisational aspects

Reception of asylum seekers, who are not detained, is managed at the central level and is state-owned. The accommodation centre for asylum seekers is a structural unit of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

Non-governmental organisations and municipalities implementing social projects operate in accommodation centres for asylum seekers under an agreement with the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. They provide health care services,

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state language training and support for the exercise of other rights, as well as assistance with integration. There are two Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers – “Mucenieki” in Ropaži municipality and “Liepna” (since 2023) in Aluksne municipality. Both are under the authority of Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

Allocation of applicants to geographical areas within the territory

Currently Latvia does not apply provisions on allocation of applicants to a geographical area defined in Article 8 of the European Parliament and European Council Regulation 2024/1346 on laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.

Staff and training

Staff in reception centres work for the Asylum Seekers Reception Division of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

Reception phases

The entitlement to material reception conditions begins when an applicant for international protection, lacking sufficient means to ensure appropriate living conditions for their health and well-being during the asylum procedure, is accommodated in the accommodation centre for asylum seekers.

Upon arrival, the applicant must present a valid identity document issued by the State Border Guard. The accommodation centre for asylum seekers staff register the applicant.

An employee of the accommodation centre will assess whether the applicant is a person with special reception needs. If special reception needs are identified, the staff will take the necessary steps to ensure that these needs are addressed throughout the asylum procedure.

If the applicant has not yet undergone a medical examination, the accommodation centre will facilitate the initial medical check-up.

Material reception conditions are provided throughout the duration of the asylum procedure.

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Contingency planning

In 2012 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the Cabinet Order No 312 "Regarding the Declaration of Emergency Situation" to activate the “Action Plan for Co-ordinated Action of Institutions in Relation to Possible Mass Influx of Asylum Seekers in Latvia from the Countries Affected by Crisis". The action plan determines the set of measures to be carried out by responsible authorities if a mass influx of asylum seekers in the State territory is expected or detected, and the authorities are not able to ensure reception of asylum seekers.

Facilities

Overview of different types of reception facilities according to national classification

There is only one type of reception facility available in Latvia: Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers.

Premises at the border

Name of the reception facility	N/a
Access description	N/a
Management	N/a
Type of applicants accommodated	N/a
Number of centres	N/a
Capacity	N/a
Location of the centres within the country	N/a

Initial reception centres

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Name of the reception facility	N/a
Regime	N/a
Management	N/a
Type of applicants accommodated	N/a
Number of centres	N/a
Capacity	N/a
Location of the centres within the country	N/a

Collective accommodation centres

Name of the reception facility	Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers (collective)
Regime	Open. If an applicant wishes to leave the accommodation for more than 24 hours, he/she must inform the staff of the Centre (as outlined in the Internal Rules of Procedure of the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers).
Management	Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers is managed by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.
Type of applicants accommodated	Applicants for international protection, who do not have sufficient resources to ensure living arrangements conforming to his or her health condition and his or her residence during the asylum procedure.
Number of centres	• Mucenieki centre • Liepna centre

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Capacity	• Mucenieki centre: 450 places • Liepna centre: 252 places
Location of the centres within the country	• The Mucenieki centre is located in the Mucenieki region of Ropaži Municipality, 17 kilometres from Riga. • The Liepna centre is located in the rural territory of Liepna, Alūksne Municipality.

Individual accommodation centres (such as private houses, flats, hotels)

Name of the reception facility	N/a
Regime	N/a
Management	N/a
Type of applicants accommodated	N/a
Number of centres	N/a
Capacity	N/a
Location of the centres within the country	N/a

Temporary solutions when housing capacities is temporarily exhausted

Name of the reception facility	N/a
Regime	N/a
Management	N/a
Type of applicants accommodated	N/a
Number of centres	N/a
Capacity	N/a

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Location of the centres within the country	N/a

Reception facilities for applicants with special needs

Minors: Under Section 9 (6) of the Asylum Law, a decision to accommodate an unaccompanied minor at the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers, or to place the minor in a childcare institution or foster family, shall be made by the Orphan's Court in cooperation with the social service, with input from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

An unaccompanied minor is accommodated at the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers or in a childcare institution until appropriate care with a guardian or in a foster family is arranged, or until it is determined that appointing a guardian or placing the minor in a foster family is not suitable for the individual. In evaluating the best interests of the minor, the Orphan's Court shall consider the possibility of family reunification, the welfare and social development of the minor, particularly the minor’s origin, protection, and safety, especially regarding the likelihood that the minor may be a victim of human trafficking. The opinion and interests of the minor, based on their age and maturity, will also be taken into account, in line with the following conditions:

1. An unaccompanied minor shall be accommodated together with adult relatives.
2. Children from the same family shall not be separated, except in cases where doing so is in the best interests of the children.
3. The place of accommodation for an unaccompanied minor shall only be changed if it aligns with the minor’s best interests.

Unaccompanied minors and families: they are accommodated in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers separately from other asylum seekers.

Disabled: Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers in Mucenieki is equipped with stair lift for disabled persons and there are several separate rooms equipped with bed adjustable and handicap accessible bathroom.

Disabled applicants, who cannot care for themselves are placed in the social care and social rehabilitation institution.

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Material reception conditions provided in kind and cash

Definition of material reception conditions

According to Section 1 of the Asylum Law, material reception conditions include housing, food, clothing, and financial support (e.g., daily allowance, vouchers).

All material reception conditions defined in the Asylum Law and provided for the asylum seekers are considered as adequate standard of living.

Material reception conditions provided in kind

Type and purpose	Accommodation, daily expenses allowance, food set, hygiene set, transport for medical services. Clothing is provided in kind by social workers, non-governmental organizations, or volunteers.
Duration and recurrence	For the whole duration of the asylum procedure during the stay of the applicant in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers.

Financial allowances and vouchers

Type and purpose	Applicants accommodated in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers who does not have sufficient resources to ensure living arrangements conforming to his or her health condition, are entitled to receive support and a daily allowance at the amount of 3 EUR. The daily allowance for an applicant under the age of 18 staying in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers will be provided to his/her adult family member or to the legal representative in case of an unaccompanied minor.
Duration and recurrence	For the whole duration of the asylum procedure during the stay of the applicant in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers.

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Calculation and amount	A daily allowance of 3 EUR per day and night is provided for each applicant (regardless of age or family status) accommodated in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers who does not have sufficient resources to ensure living arrangements conforming to his or her health condition.
Applicants granted allowance	All applicants residing in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers during the asylum procedure.
Modalities of provision	Daily allowance is issued for asylum seekers placed in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers in cash each week.

Material reception conditions for vulnerable persons

Unaccompanied minors and children accompanied by responsible adults, the elderly, individuals with medical or psychological needs, victims of trafficking in human beings (THB), persons with gender-related needs, LGBTI individuals, and others (e.g., those with family-related or behavioural challenges) are all entitled to:

- Additional/Specialized Health Care;
- Psycho- and Psycho Social Support.

As it is defined in Article 11 (2) 8) of Asylum Law, an asylum seeker has the right, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the laws and regulations, to receive emergency medical assistance, primary health care, outpatient and inpatient psychiatric assistance in case of serious mental health disorders, and also any medical assistance to minors, non-provision of which may pose a threat to the development and health of the child, from the State funds, taking into account the special reception needs of the asylum seeker.

The Health Care Financing Law mentions specific groups of migrants entitled to receive the mandatory state health insurance, which includes primary, secondary and tertiary health care services in addition for the minimum state paid medical assistance: foreigners with permanent residence permit in Latvia, persons with stateless status granted in Latvia, asylum seekers, refugees or persons to whom the alternative status has been granted, detained persons, and children up to 18 years of age, orphans and children left without parental care before reaching the age of 24, as well as persons who are studying in general education institution,

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vocational basic education or vocational secondary education institutions. The minimum state paid medical assistance includes emergency medical assistance and birth assistance, as well as health care services provided by general practitioners and health care services related to medical treatment of such diseases which have a significant influence on the public health indicators, or which endanger the public health and also the medicinal products and medical devices intended for the outpatient medical treatment.

Section 7 of the Law on Residence of a Victim of Trafficking in Human Beings, states that the social rehabilitation service provider shall ensure a safe asylum and accommodation, first aid, the consultations of a psychologist, a lawyer, a medical practitioner and of other specialists, a possibility to receive emergency medical treatment, as well as a possibility to get involved in training and educational programmes, to the victim of trafficking in human beings, as well as to the minor accompanying the victim,

Rights and obligations during reception

Provision of information and counselling

Modalities of information provision on benefits and obligations related to reception conditions	Applicants are informed of their rights and reception conditions upon arrival at the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers, including: • The benefits granted to them, as well as the obligations they must fulfil in connection with the conditions of admission. • The internal regulations of the accommodation centre. • Fire safety and electrical safety regulations while staying in the accommodation centre.
Provision of legal assistance on the reception conditions available	Applicants have the right to communicate with providers of legal aid, as well as representatives of associations and foundations, at their own expense.

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House rules	House rules are defined in the Internal Rules of Procedure of the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers (Regulation No. 489). The duties of an asylum seeker are the following: • to comply with the requirements of regulatory enactments, as well as to fulfil the legal requirements of the accommodation centre and security guards; • observe silence between 11 pm to 7.00; • turn off lights and electrical appliances when leaving the room or common areas; • regularly clean the room and wash the bed linen provided; • to clean the kitchen after food processing and the laundry room - after its use; • to take care of the cleanliness of common areas; • to participate in the cleaning of the accommodation centre and its surroundings; • to participate in socio-economic inclusion events and state language courses organized in the accommodation centre. The institutions and organizations involved in organizing these events shall coordinate their activities with each other; • to be tolerant and non-discriminatory in communication with the staff and residents of the accommodation centre, to respect other opinions, as well as to understand and master the norms of behaviour and ethical principles; • to take care of your child and 10.2. the safety of the minors referred to in subparagraph and to ensure the constant supervision of these persons; • to comply with the fire safety and electrical safety regulations of the accommodation centre; • to coordinate in a timely manner with the arrival of visitors of the accommodation centre staff; • to report to the employee of the accommodation centre regarding all cases which may cause damage to the accommodation centre or actions directed against the employees or residents of the accommodation centre; • at the end of his stay in the centre, leave the room assigned to him tidy and free it from his

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Freedom of movement within the territory

Assignment of a particular area of residence to applicants	Applicants are allowed to move within the territory of Latvia, unless otherwise decided. If an applicant wishes to leave the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers for more than 24 hours, they must inform the accommodation centre employee. An employee of the accommodation centre shall record the applicant's right to stay outside the centre in the logbook (Regulations 489, Annex 3). Upon arrival or return, a security guard may search the applicant to prevent the entry of unauthorized objects and substances into the accommodation centre.
Reporting obligations	The obligation to report regularly, but not less than once a month at the unit of the State Border Guard, is imposed by the State Border Guard.

Employment and vocational training

Time limit to access the labour market	According to the Section 9 (5) 23) of the Immigration Law, asylum seekers shall be granted the right to employment without restrictions if they have an identification document as asylum seekers and have not received a decision of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs either to grant them international protection or to refuse it within three months after submitting the request, and it has not happened due to his or her fault. The right to employment shall remain until the moment when the final decision to grant the status of a refugee or alternative status or to refuse to grant it has entered into effect and is no longer disputable
Criteria to access the labour market	According to the Section 8 (4) of the Asylum Law if the asylum seeker wishes to be employed and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs establishes that the conditions referred to in the Immigration Law have set in to grant to the asylum seeker the right to employment without restrictions, the identity card of a foreigner shall be issued to him or her.

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Employment support for applicants	Society Integration Foundation mentors provide employment support for applicants, they make necessary arrangements and targeted support.
Adults' access to vocational training	Society Integration Foundation mentors provide employment support for applicants, they make necessary arrangements and targeted support.
Access to tertiary education	A minor child of an asylum seeker and a minor asylum seeker has the right to basic education and secondary education, and also the right to continue the commenced education after attaining the age of majority. Access to higher education is not state guaranteed. It is available only at the expense of asylum seekers.

Healthcare

Medical screening	The first level of medical screening is carried out by medical staff at the State Border Guard premises, as the initial work within the asylum procedure is executed by the State Border Guard officials. If the applicant is not detained and does not have financial means to provide the proper living conditions for himself/herself, he or she will be placed in the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers, where all necessary medical screening will be provided.
Level of healthcare	Applicants are entitled to basic health care, including emergency medical assistance, maternity care, dental care in urgent cases, primary, secondary and tertiary health care, psychiatric assistance, and medical care for minors.
Access to healthcare	Nurse and a doctor services are provided for asylum seekers residing the Accommodation Centres for Asylum Seekers.

Education for minors

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Asylum seekers are provided with opportunities for acquiring education in the official language in a state or local government educational institution.

Children aged 5 and older are provided with the opportunity to acquire basic education. There is no time limit for accessing the education system for minors.

Applicants are also given the chance to complete their general education, even after turning 18, if they have already begun their studies.

The commencement of the acquisition of general secondary education shall be ensured for the asylum seeker within three months (all arrangements shall be made to enrol the minor in education) from the day when an application regarding granting refugee or alternative status is submitted.

Socio-cultural orientation and language learning

Access to socio-cultural orientation	Socio-cultural orientation at the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers is facilitated in collaboration with non-governmental organizations.
Language classes	Language acquisition at the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers is facilitated in collaboration with non-governmental organizations.

Sufficient means

Arrangement of private accommodation

If an asylum seeker has not been detained, he/she has the right to live outside of the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers at the place of residence chosen by themselves, informing the Border Guard and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs in case of changing the place of residence. In this case:

- Asylum seekers have to pay by their own means;
- Will not receive means of support and a daily allowance.

Contribution to reception and healthcare costs

This possibility is not foreseen by Latvian legal acts.

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Sufficient means test

It is not foreseen by Latvian legal acts.

Sanction regimes, reduction or withdrawal of material reception conditions

Circumstances for reducing or withdrawing material reception conditions

In accordance with Article 7 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 449 adopted on 12 July 2016 “Regulations Regarding the Amount of and Procedures for Covering the Subsistence and Daily Allowance of an Asylum Seeker if an asylum seeker has left the Accommodation Centre without the permission of the employee for a period exceeding 48 hours, the employee has the right, in assessing the actual circumstances of absence of the asylum seeker, to adopt a decision to not pay the daily allowance for the period of absence of the asylum seeker.

Possible sanctions and procedure

Under Article 31 of the Internal Rules of Procedure of the Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers, if an applicant aged 18 or older violates the provisions of the Internal Rules, the head of the accommodation centre is entitled to move the applicant to the rooms with reduced level of comfort or prohibit the applicant from using the accommodation centre's equipment in the collective facilities.

Review of the sanction decision

Information currently not available

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