

LATVIJAS UNIVERSITĀTE  
HUMANITĀRO ZINĀTŅU FAKULTĀTE

**STARPTAUTISKĀS AIZSARDZĪBAS SAŅĒMĒJU INTEGRĀCIJA BALTIJAS  
VALSTĪS**

MAGISTRA DARBS

Autore: **Lelde Maija Līce**

Studenta apliecības Nr. 1118067

Darba vadītājs: prof. Dr. habil.oec. Juris Krūmiņš

RĪGA 2020

UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL  
PROTECTION IN THE BALTIC STATES**

MASTER'S THESIS

Author: **Lelde Maija Līce**

Student ID card No. 1118067

Scientific advisor: prof. Dr. habil.oec. Juris Krūmiņš

RIGA 2020



Maģistra darbs sagatavots, izmantojot VPP projekta DemoMig (Nr. VPP-IZM-2018/1-0015) atbalstu.

The master's thesis has been prepared with the support of the VPP project DemoMig (No. VPP-IZM-2018/1-0015).

## ANOTĀCIJA

Maģistra darba “Starptautiskās aizsardzības saņēmēju integrācija Baltijas valstīs” ietvaros tiek analizēts starptautiskās aizsardzības saņēmēju jeb bēgļa un alternatīvā statusa turētāju integrācijas process un mehānismi Baltijas valstīs, izmantojot modificētu trīs dimensiju imigrantu integrācijas analīzes modeli, ko oriģināli ir izstrādājuši Rinuss Penninkss (Rinus Penninx) un Blanka Garsesa-Maskarenjasa (Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas). Dimensijas, kas iekļautas analīzes modelī, ir: legāli-politiskā, sociālekonomiskā, kultūras-reliģiskā.

Darba mērķis ir sniegt pārskatu par šī brīža situāciju starptautiskās aizsardzības saņēmēju integrācijas jomā, esošajiem atbalsta mehānismiem un būtiskākajām problēmām, kā arī veikt salīdzinošo analīzi starp trim Baltijas valstīm, noslēgumā piedāvājot arī iespējamus mehānismu uzlabojumus. Darba ietvaros autore analizēja gan iepriekš veiktus pētījumus, statistikas datus un citu publiski pieejamo informāciju, gan veica oriģinālas intervijas ar valsts institūciju un nevalstisko organizāciju pārstāvjiem no visām trim Baltijas valstīm.

**Atslēgvārdi:** starptautiskās aizsardzības saņēmēji, bēgļi, imigrantu integrācija, bēgļu integrācija.

## ANNOTATION

The master's thesis "Integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States" examines the integration process and available support mechanisms in the Baltic States for beneficiaries of international protection (refugee and subsidiary protection status holders), using a modified three-dimension immigrant integration analysis model, originally developed by Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas. The three dimensions included in the analysis model are: legal-political, socio-economic, and cultural-religious.

The aim of the research is to provide an overview of the current situation in terms of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, the existing support mechanisms and major challenges, and to carry out a comparative analysis between the three Baltic States, and, finally, offering possible improvements to the mechanisms. During the research, the author analyzed previous studies carried out by other researchers, statistical data and other publicly available information, as well as conducted original interviews with representatives of state institutions and non-governmental organizations from all three Baltic States.

**Keywords:** beneficiaries of international protection, refugees, immigrant integration, refugee integration.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Anotācija.....	4
Annotation.....	5
List of abbreviations .....	8
List of the main terms used in thesis.....	9
Introduction.....	11
1.Theoretical background: Immigrant integration and international protection .....	16
1.1 Concept of integration.....	16
1.1.1.Three-dimension analysis model .....	18
1.1.2 Stakeholders included in the analysis .....	19
1.2 International protection.....	21
1.2.1 Asylum seeker.....	21
1.2.2 Refugee status .....	23
1.2.3 Subsidiary protection status .....	24
1.2.4 Process of obtaining international protection in the Baltic States and statistics.....	26
2.Study design.....	33
2.1 Research methods .....	33
2.1.1 Primary and secondary data analysis .....	33
2.1.2 Interviews.....	34
2.2. Data analysis .....	37
3.Data analysis: Integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States..	39
3.1 Legal-political dimension .....	39
3.1.1 International Level .....	39
3.1.2 European Level .....	40
3.1.3 National Level.....	42
3.1.4 Migrant Integration Policy Index .....	49
3.2 Socio-economic dimension.....	51
3.2.1 General support.....	51
3.2.2 Monetary benefits .....	53
3.2.3 Employment.....	56
3.2.4 Housing .....	61
3.2.5 Language.....	63
3.2.6 Health.....	66
3.2.7 Education .....	68

3.2.8 Public opinion and socializing .....	70
3.3 Cultural-religious dimension .....	77
3.3.1 Religion.....	78
3.3.2 Cultural differences.....	79
Conclusions and recommendations.....	86
Acknowledgements.....	92
References.....	93

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**AGIPA** - Act of Granting International Protection of the Republic of Estonia

**AMIF** – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

**BISS** – Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

**CEFR** – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

**CFREU** – Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

**ECHR** – European Convention on Human Rights

**EMN** – European Migration Network

**EMN Estonia** – the Estonian National Contact Point of European Migration Network

**EMN Latvia** – the Latvian National Contact Point of European Migration Network

**EMN Lithuania** – the Lithuanian National Contact Point of European Migration Network

**EU** – European Union

**IOM** – International Organization for Migration

**Member States** – Member States of the European Union

**MIPAS** – Platform for Migration Information and Cooperation of Lithuania

**MIPEX** – Migrant Integration Policy Index

**NGOs** – Non-Governmental Organizations

**OCMA** – the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Republic of Latvia

**PBGB** – Police and Border Guard Board of the Republic of Estonia

**SEA** – State Employment Agency of the Republic of Latvia

**UDHR** – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**UNHCR** – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## LIST OF THE MAIN TERMS USED IN THESIS

For the purpose of this research, the following terms are used. The majority of definitions are taken from the European Migration Network Glossary. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en)

**Adult** - every human aged 18 years and older.

**Alien** - a person who is not a citizen of a given state.

**Asylum** - protection given by a state on its territory, based on the principle of *non-refoulement* and internationally or nationally recognised beneficiary of international protection rights and which is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection in their country of citizenship and/or residence.

**Asylum seeker** – a person who seeks protection from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status or subsidiary protection status under relevant international and national instruments.

**Beneficiary of international protection** - a person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status.

**Child** - every human being below the age of 18 years.

**Integration** – the process of becoming an accepted part of the society.

**International protection** - protection that encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status.

**Non-refoulement** - a core principle of international refugee and human rights law that prohibits states from returning individuals to a country where there is a real risk of being subjected to persecution, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or any other human rights violation.

**Refugee** - a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned before, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.

**Refugee status** – the recognition by a Member State of a third-country national or stateless person as a refugee.

**Stateless person** - person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law.

**Subsidiary protection** - the protection given to an alien who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to their country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person to their country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm and is unable or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.

**Subsidiary protection status** - the recognition by a state of a third-country national or a stateless person as eligible for subsidiary protection.

**Third-country national** - a person who is not a citizen of the EU.

## INTRODUCTION

Every year millions of people are forced to leave their homes and ask for international protection due to persecution, war, natural disasters, human rights violations, and other reasons that make lives not safe in their countries of origin. The peak of the recent refugee arrivals in Europe was in 2015, when more than a million migrants arrived in Europe and sought asylum (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, last updated 2019). In order to help save lives together, the European Commission presented the “European Agenda on Migration” that focuses on challenges regarding irregular migration, asylum, and borders, and intends to equip the EU with tools to better manage the situation in a medium and long term, including migrant relocation plan and quota system (*European Agenda on Migration*, date unknown).

Nevertheless, this is not a new phenomenon, even in the Baltic States. The first asylum seekers were received in the 1990s, after these states had just regained independence. Following the ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention (also known as the Geneva Convention) in 1997, all three Baltic States received their first applicants for asylum. Since then up until 2019 approximately 7886 asylum seekers have applied for asylum in Lithuania. Latvia during this time has received in total 2867 applications for international protection. From 1998 until 2019, Estonia has received a total of approximately 1340 applications for asylum. Numbers of asylum seekers increased significantly following the 2015 migrant arrivals due to EU resettlement and relocation program.

Even though numbers are low compared to other European countries, beneficiaries of international protection are a group of residents in the Baltic States that must integrate in the society. Furthermore, within the last five years, the number of beneficiaries of international protection has grown rapidly. In comparison with other third-country nationals, who have chosen to move to the Baltic States for job, studies, family unification, or other reasons, beneficiaries of international protection in some cases were resettled and did not have any prior social contacts there. Furthermore, in many cases they have gone through very traumatic experiences. That makes integration even more challenging.

In order to compare the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States, integration support granted to beneficiaries of international protection in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia will be revised, and available integration mechanisms for the beneficiaries of international protection examined. Therefore, **the aim of the research** is to examine the

current situation regarding the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States, compare differences between the Baltic States, highlight good practices and main issues, and develop recommendations for how the existing integration mechanisms could be improved in order to advance the integration process. Thus, the **research questions proposed** are:

- 1) What are the existing integration support measures in the Baltic States?
- 2) What are the main problems in terms of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States?
- 3) What are the differences in the integration support for beneficiaries of international protection between the Baltic States?
- 4) How could the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States be improved?

**Research object:** immigrant/refugee integration.

**Research subject:** integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States.

In order to fulfil the aim of the research and find answers to the research questions raised, author acknowledged several **tasks:**

- 1) To develop a theoretical background using scientific articles and books, and describe terminology regarding international protection and concept of integration, specifically focusing on immigrant and refugee integration;
- 2) To describe the process of obtaining international protection in all three Baltic States, as well as examine the available statistical data regarding the applications and positive decisions in relation to seeking asylum;
- 3) To develop a study design that describes the research methods used in the research as well as the way research is conducted (choice of interviewees, data analysis);
- 4) To analyze data regarding legal instruments related to receiving and living under international protection in the Baltic States;
- 5) To examine existing socio-economic support granted by the Baltic States to beneficiaries of international protection;
- 6) To conduct interviews with the main stakeholders of the integration process and analyze their provided information;

7) To draw conclusions regarding the current situation and possible improvements, propose specific recommendations.

**Research is divided in four main parts:** 1) *theoretical background*, in which the author explains terminology related to international protection and describes concept of integration, specifically focusing on immigrant and person under international protection integration in the local communities. Also, the author describes the process of obtaining international protection in the Baltic States and examines statistical data; 2) *study design* that focuses on explaining research methods and more in debt the way research was conducted; 3) *data analysis* that focuses on legal background of international protection in all three Baltic States, including the most important international and national legal documents that are regulating the way international protection is received and support is granted in the states. The author also examines the existing socio-economic support granted by the Baltic States to persons who have received international protection. Furthermore, this part of the thesis focuses on current problems in terms of integration of beneficiaries of international protection; 4) *conclusion*, where the author acknowledges the final results and conclusions of the research, as well as proposes specific recommendations.

**Research methods used** in the research are primary and secondary data analysis, using laws and regulations, scientific articles, reports, books and state institution publicly available data, as well as digital interviews with representatives from state institutions working with asylum cases in respective countries and representatives from NGOs that work in relation to support for beneficiaries of international protection and/or research of the field.

One **result** of the research will be an overview of the current situation regarding the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States, existing integration support granted by the states, and possible developments in the field.

Research **limitations** include the current state of an emergency in force due to the spread of COVID-19. This did not allow author to conduct face-to-face interviews. In addition, the author's lack of knowledge of Lithuanian and Estonian languages limits the access to several information resources. Furthermore, in the part of statistical data analysis the time period under consideration is chosen 2013 – 2018/ 2019 due to the fact that prior 2015 the number of asylum applications in the Baltic States was relatively similar and low. Also, in all areas the latest statistical data were not available yet. Therefore, in some parts the data are also from 2019, but in some - only 2018.

The **topicality of the research** is high as the main values of the EU include human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights. That includes also a support for those who are not that fortunate to be able to enjoy these basic rights (*Goals and values of EU*, date unknown). Furthermore, the main country of origin of persons seeking asylum in Europe in 2019 was still Syria, where the war has been ongoing since 2011 (*Asylum Statistics*, 2020). Turkey's decision to open borders in March 2020 might lead to rising numbers of migrants from Syria and other countries of the region coming to the EU again (the Guardian, 2020). Furthermore, last year Germany started to return persons who have obtained international protection in other countries, including the Baltic States (Rätfelders, 2020). In addition, UNHCR Regional Representation for Northern Europe sees the integration as one of the main regional priorities. As the ultimate goal of international protection is to reach a state where beneficiaries of international protection are able to find a long-term solution to their condition and live a sufficient life in their country of asylum, integration is an essential part of the process (UNHCR, 2016: 10).

Furthermore, it must be mentioned that there is a lack of research conducted about the Baltic States available in English. Research regarding integration of beneficiaries of international protection is available about the Baltic States individually, for example: UNHCR (2014) "Integration of refugees in Lithuania: Participation and Empowerment"; UNHCR (2015) "Integration of refugees in Latvia: Participation and Empowerment"; UNHCR (2016) "Integration of refugees in Estonia: Participation and Empowerment"; master's thesis by Bernatonyte, S. (2016) "The great policy paradox: ambiguous changes in the Lithuanian refugee integration". In 2017, the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences conducted an analysis about the situation of third-country nationals in Latvia, including beneficiaries of international protection, which included situational overviews of other countries, such as Estonia and Germany, but did not include Lithuania.

In addition, it must be mentioned that a transnational project that includes also comparative analysis of integration mechanisms for beneficiaries of international protection in 14 EU countries (including Latvia and Lithuania but not Estonia) is currently operating and issuing reports. This is the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism: "Measuring and Improving Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection" (hereinafter – NIEM).

The research is largely inspired by the previously mentioned research done in 2014, 2015, and 2016 by the UNHCR: Integration of Refugees: Participation and Empowerment, as well as the 2018 Latvian report on the NIEM project.

The author also attended two workshops of the National Research Program entitled “Development of a Sustainable and Cohesive Latvian Society: Solutions to the Challenges of Demography and Migration” (DemoMig) No. VPP-IZM-2018/1-0015 that gave a possibility to develop understanding of the current issues in the fields of demography and migration in Latvia, especially in terms of the attitude of the local community towards immigrants.

The aim of the National Research Program “Development of a Sustainable and Cohesive Latvian Society: Solutions to the Challenges of Demography and Migration” (DemoMig) is to promote the development of human capital and expand the knowledge base on significant challenges in Latvia in demography and migration (VPP DemoMig, 2020).

# **1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

In the chapter of theoretical background, the author describes the concept of integration regarding immigrant/person under international protection integration, as well as explains the essential terminology regarding international protection for the purpose of the research. Furthermore, the theoretical model used for the empirical analysis is acknowledged in this chapter. In addition, the author views the process of obtaining international protection in the Baltic States and examines available statistical data regarding numbers of the international protection receivers and their countries of origin.

## **1.1 Concept of integration**

There is no clear definition of the concept of integration, depending on a context it varies. It can be used in order to discuss regional integration, ethnic minority integration, immigrant and refugee (person under international protection) integration, and others. In this chapter, the author views definitions of integration by several authors in a broader sense as well as specifically related to immigrant and refugee integration.

Broadly looking at the concept, according to Cambridge University Press dictionary integration is “the action or process of successfully joining or mixing with a different group of people.” According to Esser (2004, cited by Garcés-Mascareñas, Penninx, 2016: 13), integration is “an inclusion of individual actors in already existing social systems.” Meaning that integration is inclusion of something or someone new in the existing system or society in case of social integration.

Regarding integration of immigrants, the term refers to a process of settlement in a new place, interaction with the local community and social change that follows the process in order to successfully make a life in a new community. It is believed that the concept of immigrant integration is a part of a complex process of becoming a part of a new society and participating in their daily life (Abdulmajid, 2018: 30). Migration policy institute defines it as “the process of economic mobility and social inclusion for newcomers and their children.” (Migration policy institute, date unknown) Meaning that it is a process when newcomers start a new life in a

community, including all spheres of it – social inclusion, economic sphere, education, health, and others.

Similarly, as with immigrant integration, refugee integration (that can also be viewed as person under international protection integration) is defined as multidimensional and complex process that refers to an integration into economic, social, health and educational contexts (Robila, 2018). UNHCR defines integration as “a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and ongoing process.” According to the UNHCR, it can be viewed from both the perspective of refugee and host community within three interrelated dimensions – legal, economic, and social-cultural (UNHCR, 2013a: 11). From the perspective of the refugee, the integration process requires the adoption of a new lifestyle without losing one’s identity. However, from the host community’s perspective integration is willingness to welcome and accept refugees in the community and readiness for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse society (UNHCR, 2013b: 8-9). Specifically looking at the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, the process of social change and inclusion in the local community might be a high-level challenge as often these persons come from completely different cultures. Their daily life habits differ strongly, as well as the experiences they have had, which are often traumatic.

Nonetheless, for the purpose of this research, the author uses more open and non-normative definition developed by Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas who define the concept of integration in relation to immigrant integration as “the process of becoming an accepted part of the society”. This definition is open in two ways. Compared to normative definitions of integration, it does not specify particular requirements for the acceptance by the local community. The non-normative nature and openness of the definition allows the author to capture the diversity of the stages regarding the integration or acceptance process more broadly (Penninx, Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 14).

In order to examine the process of becoming an integrated or accepted part of the society in case of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States, the author uses a modified three-dimension immigrant integration analysis model developed by Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas (2016: 14).

### **1.1.1. Three-dimension analysis model**

Three dimensions included in the immigrant integration analysis model developed by Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas are: 1) the legal-political; 2) the socio-economic; 3) the cultural-religious. However, explanations of the dimensions are modified by the author of this research as the original model is focused on standard immigrants (people who voluntarily and freely have chosen to move to a respective country) not beneficiaries of international protection (Penninx, Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 14). The author takes the original definitions of the dimensions as acknowledged by Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas but specific tools used for the analysis are mostly chosen by the author of the research.

Legal-political dimension refers to the legal and political rights granted for the immigrants (in case of this research – specifically, beneficiaries of international protection). (Penninx, Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 14) In this dimension, the author of the research focuses on the legal support by the state including laws and regulations that are regulating the way beneficiaries of international protection are settled in the respective countries. Furthermore, international and European legal documents regarding settlement of beneficiaries of international protection ratified by the Baltic States are acknowledged. Also, appropriateness of national laws to the international and European standards is examined. Furthermore, in this dimension, the author considers the results of the Migrant Integration Policy Index (hereinafter – MIPEX) that is suggested as one of the tools for analysis of asylum seeker and refugee integration by the researcher Agnese Lāce in her publication “How to measure asylum seeker and refugee integration?” (Lāce, 2017).

The socio-economic dimension refers to the newcomer social and economic position in the society (Penninx, Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 15). In this dimension, the author considers the support granted by the respective states to the beneficiaries of international protection. Including housing, monetary benefits, integration in schools, as well as other assistance, for example, regarding opportunities to work and support for the inclusion in the labor market. Also, in this dimension the author examines possibilities for social interaction with other beneficiaries of international protection and locals – are there any special events organized, etc., and the overall public attitude towards beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States.

Cultural-religious dimension refers to perceptions and practices of newcomers and the local community (Penninx, Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 15). In this dimension, the author focuses on the

cultural differences between beneficiaries of international protection and local communities of the Baltic States, as well as possibilities to practice cultural and religious traditions by beneficiaries of international protection. In terms of the analysis of cultural differences, the author uses Geert Hofstede's Cultural dimensions analysis comparing cultural dimension results of the Baltic States and two of the most popular countries of origin of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States.

### **1.1.2 Stakeholders included in the analysis**

After discussing the dimensions of the analysis model used in the research, it is important to acknowledge stakeholders involved in the process of collecting data.

There are two main groups included – beneficiaries of international protection and receiving society. The group of beneficiaries of international protection is divided in two sub-groups: 1) individuals; 2) institutions. Nevertheless, the group of receiving society is divided into three sub-groups: 1) individuals; 2) collective/ groups; 3) institutions. (Penninx, Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016: 16-18) Again, the core idea is taken from the Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas model. Nevertheless, the author of this research has made a modification on the side of beneficiaries of international protection. In the original model the group of immigrants is divided in three sub-groups as the receiving society. But the author of the research removed the collective/group sub-group of the beneficiaries side as there are no associations formed by the beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States.

The first sub-group of individuals refers to both individuals of the beneficiaries of international protection and individuals of the local community. In the case of this sub-group, the views of individuals under international protection and public opinion of locals are examined.

The second sub-group of collective/ group level refers to the group of receiving society and focuses specifically on the local NGOs that are working with the beneficiaries of international protection in the respective countries and are, therefore, voluntary groups of people who have come together in order to help the respective group. There is no sub-group of collective/ group level for the beneficiaries of international protection, because as their numbers are relatively small, there are no collective entities formed by the beneficiaries of international protection themselves in the Baltic States.

The third sub-group of institutions refers to both beneficiaries of international protection and receiving society. In case of beneficiaries of international protection, the views of international organizations that work in the field of international protection are examined, mostly the UNHCR. But in the case of the receiving society, the views of national state institutions that are working with questions regarding beneficiaries of international protection are analyzed.

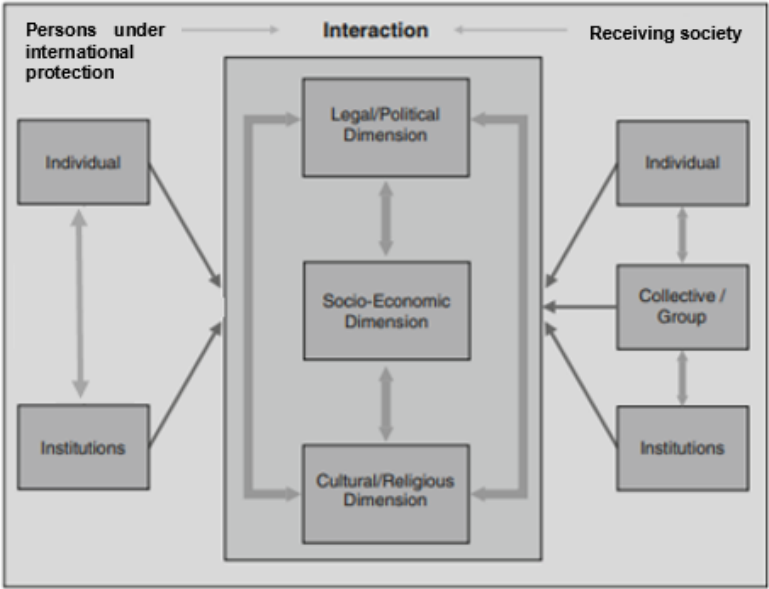


Figure 1. “Three-dimension integration of beneficiaries of international protection analysis model”: Author’s modification of R. Penninx and B. Garcés-Mascareñas three-dimension “Immigrant integration” analysis model.

The finalized analysis model used in the research can be viewed in *Figure 1*. As one can see, there are two sides – beneficiaries of international protection and the receiving society, - including their subgroups of individuals and institutions in case of beneficiaries of international protection, and individual, group/collective, as well as institutions in case of receiving society that are interacting under three pillars or dimensions: 1) legal-political; 2) socio-economic; 3) cultural-religious.

In the next part of the chapter, the author examines the meaning of international protection and related terms such as ‘asylum seeker’, ‘refugee status’, ‘subsidiary protection status’ that are important in order to understand the topic of the study.

## **1.2 International protection**

In a global context, international protection encompasses the actions taken by the international community based on international law in order to protect the fundamental rights of a specific category of persons outside their country of origin, who are lacking a protection of their own countries (*UNHCR Glossary, 2006*). In the EU context, international protection includes both refugee status and subsidiary protection status (*EMN Glossary, date unknown*). A protection related to the international protection is also known as asylum, which is a protection granted by a state on its territory for persons fleeing persecution or serious danger from another state (*UNHCR Glossary, 2006*).

In order to better understand the meaning of a person under international protection, it is important to explain terms related to granting the asylum, starting from an asylum seeker, continuing with a definition of a term ‘refugee status’, as well as ‘subsidiary protection status’. Furthermore, it is significant to present the definitions in three levels: global, EU, and national in terms of the Baltic States as the understanding of a term might slightly vary according to the scale the issue regarding an international protection is viewed.

### **1.2.1 Asylum seeker**

In global understanding, an asylum seeker is an individual who is seeking an international protection/ asylum outside his or her country of origin. In terms of countries who have introduced individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is an individual whose claim has not yet been finalized and the decision whether he or she will be granted asylum hasn’t yet been decided by the country where application has been submitted in (*UNHCR Glossary, 2006*).

In the EU context, an asylum seeker is a third country national or a stateless person who has applied for a protection under the Geneva Convention and its Protocol and whose decision has not yet been made by the country where he or she submitted the application for asylum (*EMN Glossary, date unknown*). In the EU context or any EU member state individually, a third country national is a person who is not a citizen of an EU member state or any other country which is a part of the Schengen zone and enjoys the EU right to free movement as defined by the EU Regulation 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union of 9

March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (hereinafter – Schengen Borders Code). (*EMN Glossary*, date unknown)

According to the Asylum Law of the Republic of Latvia, an asylum seeker is “a third-country national or a stateless person who in accordance with the procedures laid down in this Law [Asylum Law of the Republic of Latvia] has expressed a wish to acquire refugee or alternative status (also known as subsidiary protection status) at the border crossing point before entering the Republic of Latvia or when already in the territory of the Republic of Latvia, until the moment when administrative proceedings regarding his or her application regarding granting refugee or alternative status have ended.” (*Asylum Law*, 2016)

According to the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens of the Republic of Estonia, an asylum seeker is “an alien who has submitted an application for asylum in respect to which the Police and Border Guard Board has not made a decision.” An alien by the law means a third-country national or a stateless person. (*AGIPA*, 2006)

According to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens of the Republic of Lithuania, an asylum seeker or as it is defined in the law asylum applicant is “an alien who has lodged in accordance with the procedure laid down in this Law [Law on the Legal Status of Aliens of the Republic of Lithuania] an application for asylum in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken.” Application for asylum in the law is defined as “a request made in any form by an alien with regard to granting of asylum in the Republic of Lithuania.” Nevertheless, an alien in Lithuania by the law is defined as “any person other than a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania irrespective of whether he is a national of a foreign state or a stateless person.” (*Law on the Legal Status of Aliens*, 2004)

Therefore, in the national context of all three Baltic States, definition of an asylum seeker is combined by both of the previously mentioned definitions of global and EU levels: asylum seeker is a foreign country national (most often third-country national) or a stateless person who has made an application for asylum in one of the states – Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia, - and whose decision has not yet been finalized by the responsible institution.

In case the decision for granting an asylum is positive, the person receives either refugee status or subsidiary protection status, and becomes a person under international protection.

Therefore, beneficiaries of international protection include all people who have received asylum, including both refugee status and subsidiary protection status holders.

### **1.2.2 Refugee status**

Refugee is a person who meets the criteria set in the definition of a refugee by international, regional refugee instruments, the UNCHR's mandate and/or national legislation (*UNCHR Glossary*, 2006). Thus, refugee status is status granted to a refugee. In the EU context, refugee status means the recognition by an EU member state of a third-country national or a stateless person as a refugee. (*EMN Glossary*, date unknown)

In case of the Baltic States, the main documents forming the basis of refugee status determination are the Geneva Convention and its protocol that all three Baltic States have ratified, as well as the national laws regulating the asylum affairs: Asylum Law in case of Latvia, Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens in case of Estonia, and Law on the Legal Status of Aliens in case of Lithuania.

According to the Geneva Convention, refugee is a person who is outside his country of origin and is unable or, due to fears of prosecution, is unwilling to return to his country of nationality or in case of stateless persons his former habitual residence to avail himself of the protection of that country for reasons such as race, religion, political opinion, nationality, membership of a particular social group (*Geneva Convention*, 1951).

According to the Asylum Law of the Republic of Latvia, refugee is a third country national or a stateless person who is located outside his country of origin and faces serious fears of persecution due to his race, political opinion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or religion and is unable or due to such fears unwilling to return to his country of nationality or country of permanent residence in case of stateless persons and enjoy a protection there, as well as there are no conditions applicable under which a refugee status is not granted in the Republic of Latvia (*Asylum Law*, 2016)

According to the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens of the Republic of Estonia, refugee is an alien who is outside his country of origin due to well-founded fears of persecution because of his race, religion, political opinion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, and is unable or, due to such fears, unwilling to return to his country of origin and

enjoy a protection there. In addition to that, to whom no circumstance exists that might preclude recognition as a refugee. (AGIPA, 2006)

According to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens of the Republic of Lithuania, refugee is a person who possess well-founded fears of persecution due to religion, race, political opinion, nationality or membership of a particular social group and thus is outside his country of citizenship or permanent residence, and unable or, due to such fears, unwilling to return to his country of origin for a protection. Unless there are reasons under which a refugee status is not granted according to the Law. (*Law on the Legal Status of Aliens*, 2004)

Therefore, refugee status is a status granted to a person who is outside his country of origin and faces well-grounded fears of persecution due to religion, race, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, and, therefore, is unable or, due to such fears, unwilling to return to his country of citizenship or country of permanent residency in case of stateless persons to avail himself of the protection of that country.

### **1.2.3 Subsidiary protection status**

Globally, according to the UNHCR, subsidiary or complementary protection refers to the legal mechanisms introduced by states for protecting persons in need for international protection who do not fulfil the requirements for a refugee status. (UNHCR, 2008: 3) In the EU context, according to the Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (hereinafter – Recast Qualification Directive), subsidiary protection is a “protection given to a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to their country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person to their country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm.”. (*EMN Glossary*, date unknown)

According to the Asylum Law of the Republic of Latvia subsidiary protection or alternative status as defined by the law is granted to a person who does not comply with the grounds on receiving a refugee status, nevertheless, there are serious grounds on believing that the person

might be exposed to a serious harm in his country of origin and thus is unable or unwilling to return. Serious harm includes death penalty, torture or inhuman, degrading attitude, or health and life threat due to widespread violence in case of an armed conflict (domestic or international). (*Asylum Law*, 2016)

According to the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens of the Republic of Estonia, subsidiary protection is granted to an alien who can not qualify for a refugee status but there are substantial grounds that he or she might experience a serious harm in the country of origin, including death penalty, inhuman and degrading treatment, torture, or threat of life due to an internal or international armed conflict. (*AGIPA*, 2006)

According to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens of the Republic of Lithuania, subsidiary protection is granted to an asylum seeker, who can not return to his country of origin due to well-founded fears of being tortured, subjected to a degrading, cruel and inhuman treatment, fears of death penalty or serious and individual threats to safety, health, freedom, or life caused by violence, internal or international armed conflicts. (*Law on the Legal Status of Aliens*, 2004)

Therefore, subsidiary protection status can be defined as a status granted to a person who is not eligible for refugee status but there are well-grounded fears that his or her life or safety might be threatened at the country of origin due to a death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, or serious and individual threats caused by violence, internal or international armed conflicts.

To summarize, in *Figure 2* it is possible to see that international protection is a pillar of immigration that includes asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. It is so to say a special branch of immigration, because these are cases when people are seeking protection from persecution or other serious harm in their country of origin, and ask for special attention and decision making. In this research focus is specifically on persons of the Stage 2 of international protection pillar as the author is focusing study on the integration of persons who have already received international protection in the Baltic States. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that in some aspects throughout the research asylum seekers are also mentioned as the two groups are closely linked together.

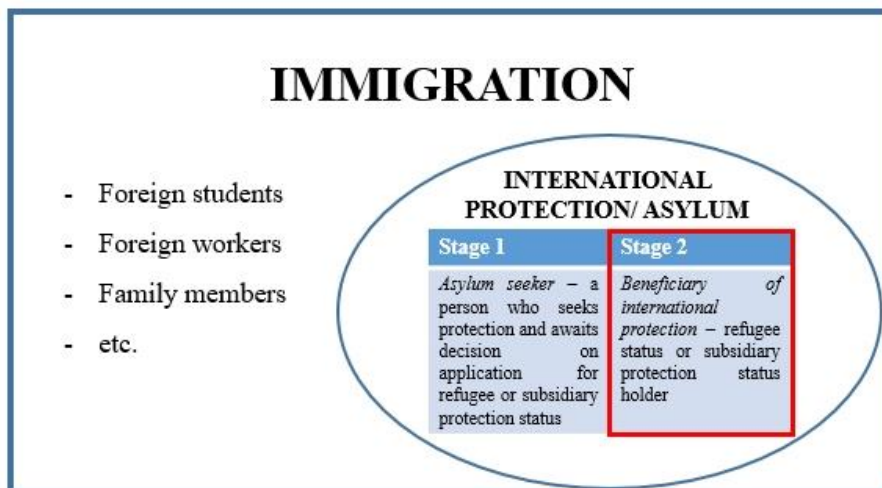


Figure 2. Author’s visualization of relations between immigration and international protection.

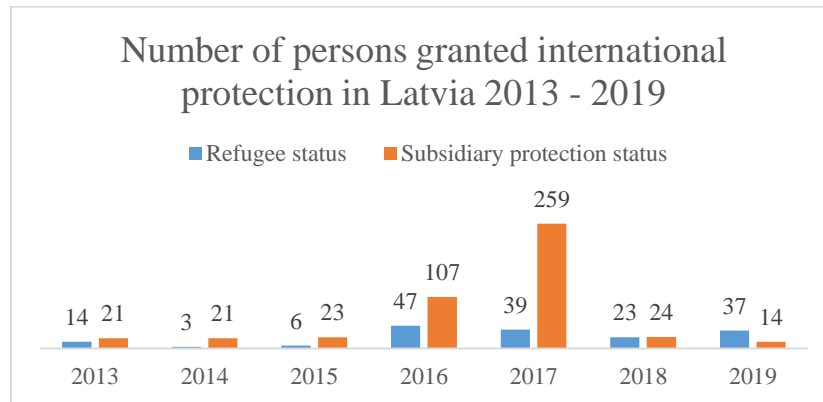
#### 1.2.4 Process of obtaining international protection in the Baltic States and statistics

In case of Latvia, in order to obtain a refugee or subsidiary protection status that would grant an international protection, a person has to express a wish for an asylum at the State Border Guard – either at the border crossing point or inside the territory of the Republic of Latvia. After the application is formally received, the State Border Guard asks few questions in order to find out initial facts why the asylum is necessary that would help the OCMA determine, if there is a valid case for granting international protection. If the asylum seeker has any documents that might be useful in the decision making process, he or she submits them along the application at the State Border Guard. Within 10 working days, the asylum seeker is informed whether OCMA accepts the application or not. If the person does not have a visa or valid residence permit and no one to support with another housing opportunity, he or she is moved to the asylum center “Mucenieki” while the decision making is in progress (OCMA, date unknown (b)).

If the application is accepted, the decision whether a person is entitled for a refugee or subsidiary protection status is made by the Asylum Affairs Division of OCMA normally within three months but if there are valid grounds for increasing this period, it can be extended up to twelve months. Within these months the Asylum Affairs Division also conducts a deeper interview with the asylum seeker (OCMA, date unknown (b)). In average, decision making takes approximately 90 days. In 2016 all asylum applications were processed in less than 6 months. (Lāce, Geks, 2018: 9) A person is introduced with the decision straight away after it is made. If

the decision is positive, he or she is informed about the possibilities to visit OCMA and form the necessary documents – travel document (if necessary) and residence permit. If the asylum seeker is granted a refugee status, he/ she receives permanent residence permit that is valid for 5 years, if a person receives subsidiary protection status – he/ she receives temporary residence permit that is valid for 1 year, with a possibility to renew it afterwards. If the decision is negative, the asylum seeker can appeal it in the Administrative Court. (*Asylum Law*, 2016)

According to the statistics published by OCMA in the period from January 1, 1998, up until December 31, 2019, Latvia has received in total 2867 applications for international protection. From all of the applicants, refugee status has been granted to 217 persons but alternative status to 552 (in 2019 – 37 received refugee status, 14 alternative status). (OCMA, date unknown (a)) The top 3 countries of origin of asylum seekers in Latvia were : in 2015 (rounded, Eurostat 2016): Iraq (85), Ukraine (45), Afghanistan (35); in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017) – Syria (150), Afghanistan (35), Russia (25); in 2017 (Eurostat, 2018) – Syria (140), Vietnam (40), Russia (25); in 2018 (Eurostat, 2019) – Russia (50), Iraq (20), Azerbaijan (15); in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020b) – Azerbaijan (35), Russia (25), India (15).



*Figure 3.* Number of persons granted international protection in Latvia 2013 – 2019. Source: OCMA, date unknown (a).

As shown in the *Figure 3*, the peak in terms of the number of persons who received international protection in Latvia was seen in 2017, when together 298 persons received international protection.

In case of Lithuania, in order to obtain a refugee or subsidiary protection status that would grant an international protection, a person has to express a wish for asylum: at the State Border

Guard Service, either at the border control posts or inside the territory of the Republic of Lithuania; at the Local Branch of the Migration Department inside the territory of Lithuania; or at the Foreigners' Registration Centre that is located in Pabradė, Švenčionys district. In order to get international protection in Lithuania, the application for asylum must be motivated. In the application, asylum seeker has to set out all the facts that would help to understand the necessity for asylum. Furthermore, he or she has to provide the authorities with all the documents (including travel documents), if they have any (Migration Department, date unknown (a)).

First steps after submitting the application for an asylum include initial interview in order to collect data about the asylum seeker and family members that are accompanying him/her, route to Lithuania, as well as grounds for obtaining an asylum. After the initial interview is done, an asylum seeker has to wait for the decision that is made by the Migration Department. If the person has no other place to stay, he or she can stay at the Foreigners' Registration Centre. (Migration Department, date unknown (a))

If the Migration Department sees a possible asylum case, the decision on granting an asylum is taken in 3 months, if necessary this period can be extended up to maximum 3 additional months. Therefore, the maximum time for the decision making is 6 months. If the decision is positive, the asylum seeker is granted either refugee status and a permanent residence permit that is valid for 5 years, or subsidiary protection status and temporary residence permit that is valid for 2 years. If the decision is negative, it can be appealed at the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court within 14 days from the date it has entered in force. (Migration Department, date unknown (a)).

Lithuania compared to its Baltic neighbors has received much more applications for asylum. In the period of 1997 up until 2006 (included) Lithuania received 2446 applications for asylum (Juchno: 2007). In 2007 and 2008 together Lithuania received 1020 asylum applications (EMN Lithuania, 2009). But in the period from 2009 until 2019, Lithuania received approximately 4420 applications for asylum (Eurostat, 2020a). Making it in total approximately 7886 applicants between 1997 and 2019. (EMN Lithuania, date unknown). Top 3 countries of origin of the asylum seekers in Lithuania were (rounded): in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016) – Ukraine (60), Georgia (45), Russia (35); in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017) – Syria (165), Russia (50), Iraq (40); in 2017 (Eurostat, 2018) – Syria (170), Russia (80), Tajikistan (50); in 2018 (Eurostat, 2019) – Tajikistan (120), Russia (50), Iraq (35); in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020b) – Russia (275), Tajikistan (205), Syria (15).

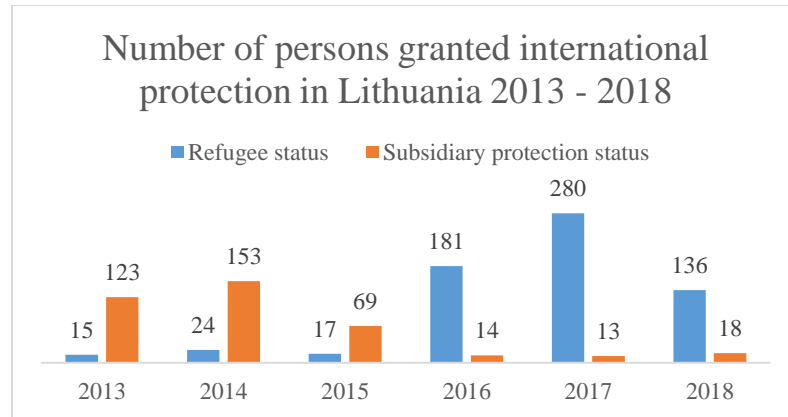


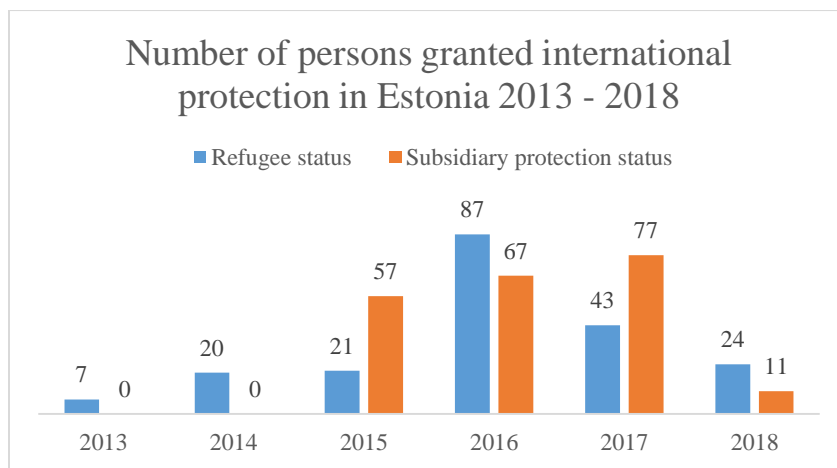
Figure 4. Number of persons granted international protection in Lithuania 2013 – 2018. Source: EMN Lithuania, last updated 2019.

As shown in *Figure 4*, the peak of the number of persons who received international protection in Lithuania was seen in 2017, when together 293 persons received international protection.

In case of Estonia, in order to obtain a refugee or subsidiary protection status that would grant international protection, a person has to express a wish for an asylum at the State Border Guard Service or if a person is already inside the territory of the Republic of Estonia, at the Police and Border Guard Board. Initial procedure includes questioning the asylum seeker about the reasons for application, route to Estonia, also his or her personal belongings, documents are examined. If the initial procedures show grounds for an asylum case and the application is accepted, further asylum procedures and decision making is done by the Police and Border Guard Board within 6 months. Further procedures include at least one interview with the asylum seeker and examination of all the information and documents provided by the asylum seeker. While the asylum case is examined, asylum seeker and his or her family members can stay at the accommodation centre for asylum seekers. If the asylum seeker has enough financial means or a person offering support, he can also live somewhere else after informing the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB, date unknown).

If the decision is positive, asylum seeker receives either a refugee status and residence permit for 3 years, or subsidiary protection status and residence permit for 1 year. Both of them can be renewed after expiration, if necessary. If the decision is negative, a person can appeal it within 10 days at the Administrative Court. (AGIPA, 2006)

According to the Eurostat data, in the period from 1998 until 2006 Estonia received 116 applications for asylum (Juchno, 2007). In 2007, 14 asylum applications were received. (Estonian Public Service Academy, EMN, 2010) However, in the period from 2008 until 2019, Estonia received rounded 1210 first-time asylum applications (Eurostat, 2020a). Making it in total approximately 1340 applications between 1998 and 2019. (EMN Estonia, 2019). Top 3 countries of origin of the asylum seekers in Estonia were (rounded): in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016) – Ukraine (95), Iraq (15), Syria (15); in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017) – Syria (45), Iraq (20), Iran (10); in 2017 (Eurostat, 2018) – Syria (80), Russia (15), Ukraine (10); in 2018 (Eurostat, 2019) – Ukraine (15), Russia (10), Egypt (10); in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020b) – Russia (30), Turkey (20), Ukraine (5).



*Figure 5.* Number of persons granted international protection in Estonia 2013 – 2018. Source: EMN Estonia, 2019.

As shown in *Figure 5*, the peak in terms of number of persons who received international protection in Estonia was seen in 2016, when together 154 persons received international protection.

In the period 2015-2019, the top 3 countries of origin of the asylum seekers in Baltic States were: Syria (780 applicants), Russia (670 applicants), and Ukraine (230 applicants). All figures are rounded. According to the statistical data of all three Baltic States together in the period of 2013 – 2018 in terms of the number of persons who were granted international protection (*Figure 6*), the peak was seen in year 2017, when in total 711 persons received international protection.

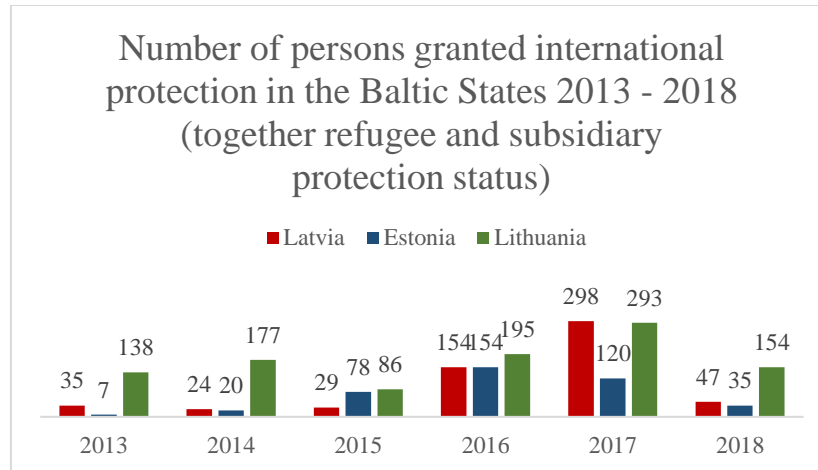


Figure 6. Number of persons granted international protection in the Baltic States 2013 – 2018. Source: author’s modification of data from OCMA, EMN Estonia, EMN Lithuania.

Furthermore, as all three Baltic States are members of the EU, in the process of granting international protection they also follow the Dublin Regulation. The EU Regulation No. 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 26, 2013 also known as the Dublin Regulation, establishes the criteria and mechanisms that determines which EU state is responsible for examining an application for international protection submitted in one of the Member States. For example, according to the Dublin Regulation, before accepting an asylum application, the state has to verify if the asylum seeker does not already have international protection granted in another Member State. Furthermore, it has to be examined whether an asylum seeker or his/her family member hasn’t applied for international protection in another EU state. If so, the Member State where asylum seeker has received an asylum or has applied for it is responsible for examining the application, not the state where a person has applied now. (*Regulation (EU) No 603/2013, 2013*)

Moreover, in order to ensure effective application of Dublin Regulation a fingerprint comparison system *Eurodac* has been introduced. According to Regulation No.603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 26, 2013 on the establishment of *Eurodac* for the purpose of comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of Dublin Regulation, each Member State has to take the fingerprints of every person who is at least 14 years old. And the Member State shall as soon as possible but not later than 72 hours after a person's application is received transmit them together with other application data in the *Eurodac* central system. (*Regulation (EU) No 603/2013, 2013*)

To summarize, all three Baltic States have relatively similar systems of obtaining international protection. First of all, persons who wish to receive international protection must submit a request for asylum at the State Border Guard, either at the border control point or inside the territory of a state (in Lithuania, it is also possible to submit application for asylum at the Migration Department or Foreigners' Registration Centre). Furthermore, application has to be justified. Asylum seekers are also going through an interview about their situation and need for international protection. Duration of the decision making process differs slightly between the Baltic States but standard is approximately 3-6 months. If the decision is negative, it can be appealed in the Administrative Court. Moreover, all three Baltic States issue two types of statuses and kinds of residence permits – refugee status holders receive permanent residence permits, but subsidiary protection status holders receive temporary residence permits, both can be renewed after the date of expiration. Nonetheless, it must be noted that expiration date varies between the Baltic States. In Latvia, refugees receive permanent residence permit for 5 years, but subsidiary protection holders receive temporary residence permit for 1 year. In Estonia, refugees receive permanent residence permit for 3 years, but subsidiary protection holders receive temporary residence permit for 1 year. In Lithuania, refugees receive permanent residence permit for 5 years, but subsidiary protection holders receive temporary residence permit for 2 years.

## 2. STUDY DESIGN

In this chapter, the author explains the way research was conducted, starting with the description of research methods – primary and secondary data analysis, as well as interviews, - that were used. Furthermore, the author describes the way data were collected and respondents for interviews chosen, and, finally, also explains the way data were analyzed.

### 2.1 Research methods

For the purpose of this research, the author chose three main research methods: primary and secondary data analysis, and interviews. In the next part of this chapter, the author describes these research methods, as well as acknowledges data that were used in the analysis and the way interviewees for the interviews were chosen.

#### 2.1.1 Primary and secondary data analysis

*Primary data analysis* is an original analysis of data specifically collected for the research. Primary data might include both quantitative in case of collecting quantitative survey data or other numerical statistical data, as well as qualitative data that are data collected in a textual form (e.g. transcripts of interviews, original analysis of laws and regulations) (Kim, Liu, 2018). For the purpose of this research primary data analyzed were transcripts of interviews conducted by the researcher as well as laws and regulations regarding international protection internationally and in the Baltic States.

*Secondary data analysis* is an analysis of already existing data – previously collected data by other researchers, reports prepared by the state institutions or international organizations, statistical data collected by specific state institutions or larger institutions that are specifically working with collecting statistical data, such as, the Eurostat. For the purpose of this research, author examined previously conducted studies and written articles, especially the ones done by UNHCR regarding integration of refugees in all three Baltic States, yearly migration reports of the Baltic States, public opinion data regarding the public view towards immigrants, especially asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, previously conducted interviews with beneficiaries of international protection and other stakeholders, and other sources.

### **2.1.2 Interviews**

*Interview is* a purposeful conversation between interviewer and interviewee (or respondent) in order to collect data on a particular issue. Person who is asking the questions is the interviewer, but the person answering them is defined as interviewee or respondent. Interviewing techniques are various – starting from face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, e-mail, and other kinds of interviews. Also, interviews might differ in their form by being completely structured, partly structured or even completely unstructured. The whole process of interviewing includes three main stages: 1) determining the interviewees; 2) preparing for the interview (e.g. prepare questions for the interview); 3) conducting the interview (Persaud, 2012).

In case of this research, the author used online interviewing options due to the spread of the COVID-19 and the state of an emergency in force that included mandatory safety measures determined by the government of the author's country of origin. Interviews were conducted either by using video call or telephone call options, or by interviewing interviewees using an e-mail correspondence. The way how each interview was conducted was chosen by the interviewees.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather the latest information about the integration support measures available for the beneficiaries of international protection, learn how these mechanisms work in real-life, and find out the main problems beneficiaries of international protection experience during the integration process.

Form of the interviews was semi-structured, where basic questions were prepared in advance but according to the situation and answers, follow-up questions were added. The basic questions were prepared for each institution/NGO separately with commonalities between similar institutions/NGOs.

Interviewees were chosen according to the needs of study and stakeholders included in the theoretical research model. For the purpose of research, the author acknowledged several groups of respondents that were to be interviewed:

- 1) representatives of state institutions;
- 2) representatives of NGOs;
- 3) beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States;

4) members of the receiving society.

Unfortunately, due to the current circumstances, conducting interviews with beneficiaries of international protection and members of the receiving society was not possible. Therefore, the author interviewed only representatives of the state institutions and NGOs. In case of beneficiaries of international protection, previously conducted publicly available interviews and other studies were used. In case of members of the receiving society, the results of other studies and information gathered from the interviewees were used.

In order to choose representatives of state institutions, the author examined some of the main institutions and specific departments dealing with asylum affairs in general and integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Author tried to choose institutions that may have as different perspectives as possible – e.g. institution that issues residence documents, institution dealing with integration policy and services, institution dealing with human rights issues. In case of Latvia those are: Asylum Affairs Division of the OCMA, Civil and Political Rights Division of the Ombudsman’s Office, Social Integration and Civil Society Development Unit of the Ministry of Culture; in case of Estonia: International Protection Advisers of Estonian Police and Border Guard, Ministry of Social Affairs, Office of the Chancellor of Justice; in case of Lithuania: Asylum Division of Migration Department, Ministry of Social Security and Labor, Human Rights Division of the Seimas Ombudsman’s Office.

After few of the most important state institutions in terms of asylum affairs and integration of beneficiaries of international protection were acknowledged, the author contacted them. Choice of a specific respondent from the institution was not strictly defined as it depends on the institution itself, availability of people and their policy on giving interviews.

In the case of NGOs, the method of choosing interviewees was similar to that of the state institutions. In order to choose representatives of NGOs, the author examined some of the main NGOs dealing with asylum affairs and integration of beneficiaries of international protection with as different a perspective as possible – e.g. the main provider of support services, NGO working with human rights issues, organization working more in the field of research. In case of Latvia those are: “Shelter ‘Safe House’”, Latvian Centre for Human Rights, public policy think-tank PROVIDUS; in case of Estonia: Estonian Human Rights Centre, Estonian Refugee Council,

Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus, in case of Lithuania: Lithuanian Red Cross Society, Lithuanian Human Rights Centre, Diversity Development Group.

After few of the main NGOs in terms of asylum affairs and integration of beneficiaries of international protection were acknowledged, the author contacted them. Choice of a specific respondent from the organization was not strictly defined as it depends on the NGO itself, availability of people and their policy on giving interviews. Except in case of PROVIDUS, where the author contacted specifically senior policy analyst Agnese Lāce as she had published several publications regarding the topic of integration of beneficiaries of international protection in Latvia.

Unfortunately, answers from all of the contacted institutions and NGOs were not received. Out of 18 addressed, answers were received from 13: the Asylum Affairs Division of the OCMA, Civil and Political Rights Division of the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia, Social Integration and Civil Society Development Unit of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, Office of the Chancellor of Justice of the Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania, NGO "Shelter 'Safe House'", Latvian Centre for Human Rights, public policy think-tank PROVIDUS, Estonian Human Rights Centre, NGO Estonian Refugee Council, NGO Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus, Diversity Development Group. Nevertheless, two interviews were not conducted after all due to the high workload of the possible interviewees.

In total, eleven interviews were conducted. Majority of the interviews were conducted in April 2020, except of one that was conducted at the beginning of May 2020. Six of the interviews were conducted using video call option, one interview was conducted using phone call option, but four interviews were conducted using e-mail correspondence option. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, except of one. Due to technical issues one interview was not recorded. Interviews conducted in Latvian were also translated in English.

As mentioned before, original plans included also interviews with the beneficiaries of international protection themselves and members of the receiving society. Nevertheless, the unexpected circumstances beyond the control of the author forced to use secondary sources in order to gain a perspective of these two respective groups.

## 2.2. Data analysis

Data were analyzed personally by the author of the research. Organization of data analysis was followed by the analysis model set out in the theoretical background chapter of the research. Therefore, it is divided in three dimensions – legal-political, socio-economic, and cultural-religious. Under the three main dimensions, there are a few subsections in order to organize data in a manner that is easier to understand for the reader.

In order to acknowledge which information is taken from the interviews, the author cites them using a coding approach. Therefore, if information used in the thesis is gathered, for example, from the interview with a code: INT1, the reference in the text is: (INT1, 2020).

Codes used for the interviews:

INT1: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia;

INT2: Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia;

INT3: Asylum Affairs Division of the OCMA;

INT4: NGO "Shelter "Safe House"";

INT5: Public Policy think tank PROVIDUS (senior policy analyst Agnese Lāce);

INT6: Latvian Centre for Human Rights;

INT7: Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania;

INT8: Office of the Chancellor of Justice of the Republic of Estonia;

INT9: Estonian Centre for Human Rights;

INT10: NGO Estonian Refugee Council;

INT11: NGO Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus.

Transcripts of the interviews are available only for the university exclusively for the purpose of evaluating the master's thesis.

To summarize, in order to examine the available integration support mechanisms and integration process, author analyzed views provided by interviewees of state institutions and NGOs

of the Baltic States working with asylum affairs and integration of beneficiaries of international protection, as well as examined other primary and secondary data available, such as similar researches, migration reports, previously conducted interviews with beneficiaries of international protection and statistical data, especially regarding local community's view towards beneficiaries of international protection. Data were analyzed following the author's modification of the three-dimensional integration analysis model acknowledged in the chapter of theoretical background.

### **3. DATA ANALYSIS: INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN THE BALTIC STATES**

In this chapter, the author analyzes data according to the author's modified three-dimension immigrant integration analysis model originally developed by Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas. Data are analyzed in three dimensions: legal-political, socio-economic, and cultural-religious.

#### **3.1 Legal-political dimension**

In this dimension, the author analyzes the key legal documents determining the legal protection for beneficiaries of international protection in three levels – international, European, and national. Main legal documents acknowledged in the study are examined in two branches under the three-level analysis – international protection law and basic human rights law. Furthermore, the author also views the main policy documents regarding integration of beneficiaries of international protection and examines the results of MIPEX for the Baltic States that looks at specific migrant integration policies.

##### **3.1.1 International Level**

The key legal document in the world that determines refugee status and guidelines for international protection is the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol (hereinafter - Geneva Convention) that all three Baltic States have ratified. Estonia ratified Geneva Convention on April 10, 1997, Lithuania ratified Geneva Convention on April 28, 1997, but Latvia ratified it on July 31, 1997. The Geneva Convention defines the term 'refugee' and sets out their rights and the legal obligations of states that protects them (*Geneva Convention*, 1951).

The main obligations for the states include: they shall apply the provisions of the Geneva Convention to refugees without any discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin; states shall not expel a refugee to the territories, where his/her life or freedom would be at risk due to his race, religion, membership of a particular social group, nationality or political opinion; states shall ensure refugee family unity and give a special protection (guardianship and adoption) to refugees - minors who are unaccompanied; states shall allow refugees to practice their religion and provide freedom to religious education at least at the level of their country of origin; states shall not eliminate other rights granted apart from the Geneva Convention; states shall ensure rights of

association (non-political and non-profit organizations, and trade unions) for refugees; states shall ensure free access to courts for refugees. They should enjoy the same treatment as a national in case of access to courts, including legal assistance, if necessary; states shall accord to refugees the same treatment as to nationals in terms of elementary education. In case of higher-level education, states shall accord at least the same treatment as to other aliens residing in the state; states shall accord the same treatment to refugees as to nationals in case of social security (family, unemployment, sickness allowances, etc.), if a refugee is lawfully staying in the state; states shall issue identity documents (e.g.travel document) for refugees who do not have any; states shall facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees; etc. (*Geneva Convention*, 1951).

The key legal document in the world in terms of basic human rights law and another essential international document that is related to the rights of beneficiaries of international protection is the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights (hereinafter – UDHR). Article 14 states that “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” UDHR also states other basic rights for all humankind, including beneficiaries of international protection, such as: right to life, security, right to education and standard of living adequate to health and well-being, and others. In addition to UDHR, Baltic States are State Parties of the two 1966 Human Rights Covenants – the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These Covenants guarantees basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to everyone within territory of a state that has ratified the Covenant, or is a subject to its jurisdiction that also includes asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection (*UDHR*, 1948).

### **3.1.2 European Level**

All three Baltic States are State Parties of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (hereinafter – ECHR). Lithuania ratified ECHR on June 20, 1995; Estonia ratified it on April 16, 1996; but Latvia ratified ECHR on June 27, 1997 (Council of Europe, 2020).

ECHR and its’ Protocols ensures the basic human rights, some of which are closely linked to international protection, such as: right to life and security; prohibition of torture and degrading treatment or punishment. Also, abolition of death penalty according to Protocol No. 6 and No. 13,

Article 1; right to fair trial, and others. Prohibition of discrimination is also acknowledged in the Article 14 of ECHR and foreseen in Protocol 12, which Latvia and Estonia have signed but not yet ratified, but Lithuania haven't signed yet (*ECHR*, 1950).

Furthermore, as all three Baltic States are members of the EU, asylum acquis or adopted laws in the EU regarding asylum affairs are also applicable there. The aim of asylum acquis for the EU is to establish a Common European Asylum System that includes harmonized rules, procedures as well as conditions regarding asylum issues. In addition to that, in 2000 the EU adopted the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (hereinafter – CFREU). Similarly as ECHR, CFREU ensures the basic human rights such as right to life and security, prohibition of torture and slavery, prohibition of discrimination, etc. Article 18 of CFREU specifically adds the right to asylum according to the Geneva Convention and its protocol. Also, CFREU prohibits expelling persons who might face serious danger in another state. (*CFREU*, 2000)

Other secondary EU laws such as regulations and directives are also applicable in all three Baltic States. The main in this field is the Recast Qualification Directive that sets out the criteria for eligibility to receive international protection (refugee status or subsidiary protection status) in the EU, as well as the content of protection granted. (*Directive 2011/95/EU*, 2011) Other examples include: the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive that covers rights related to residence permits, access to information and employment, housing, and other issues; the 2003 Family Reunification Directive that focuses on the right to family unification; and others. In addition to that, the Council of Europe has adopted several recommendations, guidelines and resolutions regarding integration of beneficiaries of international protection that are relevant to the Baltic States. (UNHCR, 2016: 32-37)

Since 1999, when the development of the Common European Asylum System started, EU has also approved several policy documents for integration of immigrants, including beneficiaries of international protection (*Common European Asylum System*, date unknown). For example: The Hague Programme 2004 - 2009: Strengthening Freedom, Security and Justice in the EU; Common Agenda for Integration 2005: Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the EU; the 2011 European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals; the 2016 European Commission Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. (UNHCR, 2016) Also,

the EU allocated special funds for asylum affairs and integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Currently the main programs are financed under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (hereinafter – AMIF) that is set for the period 2014 – 2020. Large number of programs related to integration of beneficiaries of international protection are also financed under European Social Fund (*AMIF*, date unknown).

### **3.1.3 National Level**

The main national law regulating all fields of life in all three Baltic States is the Constitution. All of the rights granted in the Constitution apply to the persons located in the territory of the respective state, including asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. These rights include: right to freedom of religion; right to fair trial; equality before the law; right to liberty and security; right to form associations; right to basic medical assistance; right to freely choose employment; right to preserve cultural identity; and others. Nevertheless, the most important laws regulating specifically the field of asylum affairs and determining rights and obligations of refugee status/subsidiary protection status holders in the Baltic States are: Asylum Law of the Republic of Latvia; Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens of the Republic of Estonia (hereinafter – AGIPA); Law on Legal Status of Aliens of the Republic of Lithuania. In relation to obtaining citizenship, main laws include the Citizenship Law of the Republic of Latvia, Citizenship Act of the Republic of Estonia, and Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania.

In case of Latvia, Asylum Law ensures the majority of state obligations set out in the Geneva Convention, UDHR and ECHR, CFREU. For example, it prohibits expelling a person who might face serious danger in another country, guarantees access to courts and legal, as well as translator, access in case necessary. In addition to that, family reunification is acknowledged and specifically ensured support for child rights, including special support for unaccompanied minors. Also, access to education is discussed in the Asylum Law and issuance of identity documents. Several administrative acts have been issued in accordance with the Asylum Law in order to regulate specific fields more in dept. Examples: Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 488 “Procedures by which Minor Asylum Seeker shall be Provided with Opportunities for Acquiring Education”, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 409 “Regulations Regarding Application of Asylum Seeker, Refugee, and Person who has been Granted Alternative Status for State Ensured Legal Aid Request” and Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 458 “Regulations Regarding

Personal Document of Asylum Seekers and Procedures for the Issuance Thereof”. (*Asylum Law*, 2016)

In terms of obtaining citizenship, beneficiaries of international protection have to go through a naturalization process as other third-country nationals after living in Latvia at least 5 years with permanent residence permit. According to the Citizenship Law, a person applying for citizenship has to prove that he or she has lived in Latvia for at least the last 5 years, for persons holding a residence permit – last 5 years with a permanent residence permit. Furthermore, a person has to prove that he or she is having a legal income and can pass language test and test proving the knowledge of Constitution and basic cultural/historic facts. It means that if a refugee status holder lived in Latvia for 5 years, learned the language within that time, has a legal income, he or she can apply for the naturalization process and possibly obtain a Latvian citizenship. (*Citizenship Law*, 1998) In case of subsidiary protection status holders, the minimum period of living in Latvia before he or she can start the naturalization process is 10 years. As their status gives them temporary residence permit at first, they first have to obtain the permanent residence permit, which can be received after living 5 years with temporary residence permit, knowing Latvian language at least in the level of A2 (CEFR language levels), having sufficient amount of means for himself and the family.

The main document focusing exclusively on integration of beneficiaries of international protection is the 2015 Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 759 “Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection” (hereinafter – Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 759). Action plan sets out planned developments in the facilities for asylum seekers (e.g. the Refugee Accommodation Centre “Mucenieki”), as well as integration mechanisms and responsible stakeholders for implementing them. (Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 759, 2015) Also, the topic of integration of beneficiaries of international protection is included in the national integration policy documents. In these documents they are most often subsumed under the group of third-country nationals as the main focus in Latvia regarding integration is usually on Russian-speaking minority. Nevertheless, in the latest main integration policy document *National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Implementation Plan for 2019 – 2020* that was adopted in 2018 beneficiaries of international protection are acknowledged as one of the main

target groups (*National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Implementation Plan 2019-2020*, 2018).

The main administration institution in the Institutional Framework for migration and asylum is the Ministry of Interior that works on immigration and asylum policies, as well as administers EU funds in the matters. Institutional Framework also includes the OCMA that works on implementation of immigration and asylum policies, administers asylum procedures, issues personal documents, including the residence permits, etc. In terms of integration policy matters, the main administration institution is the Ministry of Culture. Other important institutions include Society Integration Fund, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, State Employment Agency, and others. Institutional Framework also acknowledges the involvement of NGOs, local government institutions and international organizations. Main NGOs involved in the integration process of beneficiaries of international protection in Latvia are NGO “Shelter “Safe House”” that ensures Latvian language and integration courses, and Latvian Red Cross that ensures mentor support. The main international organization acknowledged in the Institutional Framework for migration and asylum is the International Organization for Migration that assists in voluntary returns and reintegration (EMN Latvia, 2019).

As acknowledged by PROVIDUS senior policy analyst Agnese Lāce, asylum policy is a relatively new phenomena. One may say that before 2015 Latvia basically didn't have an asylum policy as the number of asylum seekers was very small and it was not a priority. Nevertheless, since then the state has made a good base for it but is lacking further development in the field due to a lack of political will. (INT5, 2020) Lack of political will and taking responsibility was acknowledged by several interviewees in Latvia as well as Estonia.

Furthermore, another issue concerning asylum policy in Latvia is the difference of support granted to refugee status holders and subsidiary protection status holders. (INT5, INT6 et al, 2020) Main differences include socio-economic support – refugees receive a monthly allowance 3 months longer period than subsidiary protection holders. Furthermore, refugees are able to receive other social benefits, such as, child-birth allowance and child-care monthly benefit. In addition, in case of obtaining a Latvian citizenship, refugees don't need to provide a document proving a release from the previous citizenship (*Citizenship Law*, 1998). Nevertheless, subsidiary protection holders need to provide such proof as the Citizenship Law mentions only refugee status holders in this regard. Several interviewees criticized this. As said by Edgars Oļševskis (Latvian Centre for

Human Rights, Turiba University) in an interview: “In principle these statuses have a unifying feature that outweighs everything else – people have fled their home country not because they were well there [...] Thus, to separate one from another and to think that one needs more support, the other less, I think it distorts the core meaning, why international protection is granted.” (INT6, 2020)

Moreover, there has been a criticism regarding expiration date of residence permits for subsidiary protection status holders. But in this regard, it must be stated that there is an ongoing process of amendments to the Asylum Law. Amendments would grant subsidiary protection status holders a residence permit for 2 years, starting from the second year. Amendments were submitted to the Parliament (Saeima) of the Republic of Latvia on December 19, 2019, and currently are in the first reading (LR Saeima, 2020). Furthermore, as the author was informed by the Asylum Affairs Division of the OCMA, the Division has already started to renew the residence permits for 2 years for the subsidiary protection status holders applying the Recast Qualification Directive directly. (INT3, 2020)

Another concern raised by the representative of the Ombudsman’s Office and was also acknowledged by other interviewees is that even though according to the Recast Qualification Directive support in areas of life, such as, education, healthcare, housing, etc., provided to the beneficiaries of international protection should be to the same extent as to the nationals and systematically there are no issues acknowledged, it should be noted that in some cases beneficiaries of international protection are in a more disadvantaged position. For example, in order to receive support from the municipality, one has to have a declared address there, sometimes even for a longer period of time. If members of the local community might have a possibility to declare their address in a municipality even if they do not live there (e.g. declare it in a family member’s or friend’s house), there is no such option for beneficiaries of international protection. (INT2, 2020) Also, in terms of finances social capital is an important issue as locals might receive additional support from friends and family members in difficult situations but beneficiaries of international protection don’t have the possibility like that (INT5, 2020).

In case of Estonia, Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens (AGIPA) ensures the majority of obligations set out in the Geneva Convention, UDHR and ECHR, CFREU. AGIPA is ensuring that no person shall be expelled or relocated to a state where his life or freedom might be endangered. Furthermore, AGIPA ensures free access to education for children and special support

for unaccompanied minors. In addition to that, AGIPA also acknowledges the social support granted to the beneficiaries of international protection. (AGIPA, 2006)

As in the case of Latvia, in order to obtain citizenship, beneficiaries of international protection have to go through the same naturalization process as other third-country nationals. According to the Citizenship Act in order to obtain Estonian citizenship through naturalization, a person has to reside in Estonia at least 8 years prior to the application on the grounds of a residence permit, 5 of those years must be with a permanent residence permit. Furthermore, a person has to have command of the Estonian language in at least level B1 according to CEFR language knowledge levels, legal income, registered place of residence in Estonia, as well as prove a sufficient knowledge of Constitution and Citizenship Act. There are no mentions of difference in the naturalization process for beneficiaries of international protection, except that beneficiaries of international protection don't need to be released from the previous citizenship. (*Citizenship Act*, 1995) In order to receive a permanent residence permit in Estonia, a person has to be a resident of Estonia for at least five years with a temporary residence permit, a person has to have officially registered address in the Population Register, have a permanent legal income, health insurance, as well as a command of Estonian language in a level of B1 (CEFR) as minimum. (PBGB, 2020)

The main policy document focusing exclusively on beneficiaries of international protection, is the Action Plan dedicated to actions in regards to the EU relocation and resettlement plan that was approved in 2015. It mainly focuses on responsible institutions and main actions taken by them in order to receive the asylum seekers under the EU plan. Nevertheless, long-term integration plans are also acknowledged in the Action Plan. Moreover, there are several other policy documents that include aspects of beneficiary of international protection integration. For example, Internal Security Development Plan 2015 – 2020 that includes a sub-target of “Balanced Migration and Citizenship Policy”, where reception conditions and support services are acknowledged for the asylum seekers. Integration of beneficiaries of international protection is also a part of “Integrating Estonia 2020”. Even though, as in the case of Latvia, the Action Plan is mainly focused on Russian-speaker integration, one of the goals also includes inclusion of newly arrived immigrants, including beneficiaries of international protection. (UNHCR, 2016: 38-39)

The core institution in the Institutional Framework for migration and asylum is the Ministry of Interior. It develops and coordinates the migration, asylum, citizenship and border policies, as

well as administers EU funds in the matters. Furthermore, the Institutional Framework includes the Police and Border Guard Board that works on implementation of migration and asylum policies, processes asylum applications, issues identity documents, including residence permits, etc. The main administration institution of integration policy is the Ministry of Culture but the main administration institution for social policy for beneficiaries of international protection is the Ministry of Social Affairs. Other institutions included in the Institutional Framework for migration and asylum include Integration Foundation, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and others. Institutional Framework also acknowledges the involvement of NGOs (e.g. Estonian Refugee Council) and local governments, as well as international organizations, such as, IOM. (EMN Estonia, 2019: 10)

Similarly to Latvia, the UNHCR has recommended Estonia to change the duration of the residence permit for subsidiary protection status holders from one year to three years. In addition to that, UNHCR acknowledged that the requirement to take in account the fulfillment of mandatory integration requirements (e.g. learn the Estonian language in a specific level, participate in other integration mechanisms) in a process of renewing the residence permit as set in AGIPA is not in compliance with international and European law. (UNHCR, 2016: 63-64) Nevertheless, as acknowledged by several interviewees, it is not applied in real life. (INT8, INT10, INT11, 2020) Anu Viltrop of the NGO Estonian Refugee Council also acknowledged that in a political level there is no clear set of goals regarding expected results in terms of integration of beneficiaries of international protection. (INT10, 2020). The latter is applicable to both Latvia and Lithuania too. Furthermore, UNHCR has recommended Estonia to review the requirements for obtaining a permanent or long-term residence permit in terms of language knowledge. (UNHCR, 2016: 65) In comparison with Latvia, Estonia indeed has a higher requirement for permanent residence permit in terms of language knowledge – B1 compared to A2.

In case of Lithuania, Law on Legal Status of Aliens ensures the majority of obligations set out in the Geneva Convention, UDHR and ECHR, CFREU. Similarly, as in the case of Latvia and Estonia, Law grants the protection from expelling a person to a state where his life or freedoms might be at threat. Also, family reunification and special support for asylum seekers minors is granted, including access to education. Law also stresses that asylum seekers are protected by all legal acts in force in Lithuania. (*Law on Legal Status of Aliens*, 2004)

Also, in Lithuania in order to obtain a citizenship one has to go through a naturalization process. The requirements for that include being legally a permanent resident of Lithuania for at least 10 years prior the application (7 years in case an alien is married to a Lithuanian citizen) (EMN Lithuania, 2015), having legal income, as well as being able to pass a language test and examination proving the knowledge of fundamentals of the Constitution. There are no differences in the naturalization process for beneficiaries of international protection compared to the others. Except the fact that refugee status holders do not need to submit a notification regarding the renunciation of his or her former citizenship, which means that subsidiary protection holders still need to submit a document proving renunciation of the former citizenship (*Law on Citizenship*, 2010). In order to receive a permanent or long-term residence permit, a person has to live in Lithuania at least 5 years on a grounds of temporary residence permit, have sufficient means to live in Lithuania, health insurance and a person has to pass a language and fundamentals of Constitution test (it is not specified which CEFR level the language test is applicable to). (Migration Department, date unknown (b))

The main integration policy document for integration of beneficiaries of international protection in Lithuania is the “Description of the Procedure of Provision of State Support for the Integration of Persons Who Have Been Granted Asylum” that was approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2016. Description sets out the grounds and regulates the way state support for integration of beneficiaries of international protection is provided. Furthermore, 2018–2020 Action Plan on the Integration of Foreigners into Society is an important integration policy document. It includes 34 measures that are set to improve the legislation and support processes for integration of beneficiaries of integration protection and other foreigners residing in Lithuania. (Ministry of Social Security and Labor, 2020)

The main administration institution of the Institutional Framework for migration and asylum in Lithuania is the Ministry of Interior that works on the development and coordination of migration policy. Furthermore, the Migration Department is the main institution working with implementation of the migration policy in close cooperation with the Police Department and State Border Guard Service. Main administration institution for integration matters of foreigners, including beneficiaries of international protection, is the Ministry of Social Security and Labor. Other institutions included in the Institutional Framework for migration and asylum include

Lithuanian Labor Exchange that is responsible for work permits, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and others. Institutional Framework also acknowledges participation of NGOs, such as, Lithuanian Red Cross, and international organizations – IOM, UNHCR. (EMN Lithuania, 2012)

According to the NIEM report, even though family reunification is granted by the law, there is a time limit in force for facilitated requirements of only three months in Lithuania, which might require reviewing. (NIEM, 2018: 69) UNHCR also recommended Lithuania to review the legislation regarding discrimination that ensures provisions that discourage and punish discriminatory and racist actions. (UNHCR, 2015: 52) Furthermore, as in case of Latvia, only refugee status holders do not need to submit a notification regarding the renunciation of the former citizenship, which does not cover subsidiary protection status holders (*Law on Citizenship*, 2010: Article 18).

#### **3.1.4 Migrant Integration Policy Index**

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (hereinafter – MIPEX) is a tool that measures migrant integration policies in all the Members States and additional countries, such as Australia, Iceland, Canada, South Korea, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, New Zealand, Turkey, as well as the United States of America. MIPEX takes in account eight policy areas: labor market mobility; education; political participation; access to nationality; family reunion; health; permanent residence; anti-discrimination, and divides them in 167 indicators (*What is MIPEX?* Date unknown). Even though it is not directly linked to integration of beneficiaries of international protection, it concerns third-country national immigrant integration. As beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States are third-country nationals, these policy areas are strongly related to their integration in the society.

According to the MIPEX the most favorable state of the Baltic States regarding migrant integration is Estonia with a score of 49 in 2014 that makes it ‘halfway favorable’ in the overall view of migrant integration. Lithuania with a result of 38 and Latvia with a result of 34 are considered as ‘slightly unfavorable’.

According to MIPEX, Estonia has the strongest integration policy results in the Baltic States as well as in Central Europe. Policies in the fields of education and employment are developing for the needs of newcomers and show relatively good results. Nevertheless, the biggest

issues for Estonia include political participation and possibility to obtain citizenship. Also, MIPEX analysis mentions problems of discrimination and lack of legal support there, but 2017 amendments to Equal Treatment Act might change that part of analysis as the Index was adopted in 2015 (MIPEX, 2015a).

In second place from the Baltic States is Lithuania. Even though Lithuania has experienced few positive changes in terms of family unification, long-term residence permits, labor market mobility and anti-discrimination, there is still a lot to do. Lithuania showed very low results in the education policy area; therefore, it should focus on developing the environment for newcomer pupils as well as researchers/professors who have to undergo a complicated path in order to have their professional qualification documents recognized. Also, similarly as in the case of Estonia, Lithuania is experiencing low results in political participation fields as third country nationals can't vote in any elections and participate in political parties (MIPEX, 2015b).

Latvia has the lowest result in migrant integration policy analysis, in fact, Latvia's result is the lowest amongst all the Member States. As acknowledged by MIPEX, Latvia's policies provide more obstacles than opportunities for third-country nationals. Nonetheless, have to mention that Latvia shows relatively good results in terms of labor market mobility and family unification, but the results in education, health, political participation and access to nationality are troubling. Latvia should focus more on integration programs in order to develop these fields (MIPEX, 2015c).

Overall, the Baltic States in this dimension perform medium good. Laws are generally appropriate to the international and European standards but there are still quite a lot of improvements necessary in terms of real-life migrant integration policies and practices, including cooperation between different stakeholders.

UNHCR and representative of the NGO Estonian Refugee Council also acknowledged that there is a need for a clear set of expected integration goals and results of the beneficiaries of international protection, and review of the competent institutions. (UNHCR, 2016; INT10, 2020). Even though it was acknowledged in the research of Estonia, it is applicable to all of the Baltic States. Furthermore, according to MIPEX all three Baltic States have to foster political participation and naturalization process for beneficiaries of international protection – it is possible to obtain a citizenship but it takes a long time, especially for persons having subsidiary protection

status as in all three states this status allows them to receive temporary residence permit but the last 5 years in order to start naturalization process have to be spend with a permanent or long-term residence permit.

In addition, UNHCR recommends Latvia and Estonia to prolong the expiration date of residence permits for the subsidiary protection holders to be in line with the Recast Qualification Directive (Article 24 (2)). (UNHCR, 2015, 2016) As mentioned before, Latvia has already started to overview this aspect and is planning to prolong the validity of the residence permit given to subsidiary protection holders to two years starting from the second year.

### **3.2 Socio-economic dimension**

In this dimension, the author examines existing social and economic support granted by all three Baltic States to the beneficiaries of international protection. That includes monetary support, housing support, language and integration courses, as well as other measures in force in order to foster integration.

#### **3.2.1 General support**

In all three Baltic States, beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to have a mentor/ support person/ curator, who helps them with all the necessary questions and often assists in the communication with state institutions. Furthermore, beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to receive necessary information about their rights and duties in the language they understand, therefore, lawyers and translators are also involved in the process of integration.

In Latvia, mentor service is provided by the Latvian Red Cross Society. Information about their legal rights and duties is provided by professional lawyers from the Information Centre for Newcomers that is administered by the NGO “Shelter “Safe House””. The Information Centre for Newcomers also provides interpretation and translation services to beneficiaries of international protection. (INT4, 2020) Moreover, Latvian Centre for Human Rights is provides asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection free legal aid and help in legal disputes, for example, in case their application for asylum has been refused but they want to appeal the decision. Furthermore, they have started to assist beneficiaries of international protection in the family reunification process. (INT6, 2020) In addition, beneficiaries of international protection can

receive consultations from the Ombudsman's Office if they feel like their rights are violated by the state or they have experienced discrimination. (INT2, 2020)

In Estonia, the support person service is provided by the NGO Estonian Refugee Council. According to Anu Viltrop, Head of Support Services, the support person helps beneficiaries of international protection after they have moved out of the Refugee Accommodation Centre and need to manage several administrative tasks, such as contact the social support service provider in the municipality, put children in school or kindergarten, etc. Also, the support person helps beneficiaries of international protection to set various goals according to their needs and supports them along the way with necessary information. NGO also compensates translation and interpretation services for the first two years after their arrival in Estonia according to the financial possibilities (there are assigned approximately EUR 2000.00 per person for translation services). Furthermore, it must be mentioned that an NGO has built an intranet with the available support services that can be combined for a specific family with tips to the support person – what to do, how to do, whom to call, etc. (INT10, 2020) In addition, Estonian Human Rights Centre provides free legal aid that includes legal counselling on issues such as family reunification and family law, renewal of the residence permits or cessation of protection, as well as applying for different documents, including application for Estonian citizenship. (INT9, 2020)

In Lithuania, mentor or curator service is provided by the NGOs Caritas of Vilnius Archdiocese and Lithuanian Red Cross Society. Curators help beneficiaries of international protection to buy every-day necessities, find accommodation, support in various administrative necessities, for example, registering children in schools and kindergartens, and advise on all other issues (MIPAS, date unknown (b)). Apart from the information provided by curators, beneficiaries of international protection can receive counselling at the Migration Information Centre “I choose Lithuania” ([renkuosilietuva.lt](http://renkuosilietuva.lt)) and Migration Department, information at the Platform for Migration Information and Cooperation (MIPAS), as well as from the NGOs working with asylum and human rights affairs in Lithuania. (INT7, 2020) There are also several integration centres established by the NGOs that provide counselling as well as organize various events. For example, Red Cross Refugee and Migrant Integration Centre InLT in Kaunas and Project of Red Cross - Infocentre for Migrants in Klaipeda (MIPAS, date unknown (a))

Furthermore, in all three Baltic States beneficiaries of international protection are offered integration courses that help them understand life in the respective state where they are located, starting from simple daily habits of locals, supermarkets, up until rights and obligations, including questions regarding residence permits.

In the case of Latvia, an integration course is organized by the NGO “Shelter “Safe House”” under a project “Support Actions for Persons under International Protection II”. During the course asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are able to learn about the history of Latvia, culture and traditions, as well as find out practical information about the integration support mechanisms and other questions that interest participants of the course. (INT4, 2020) In 2019, 10 groups finished the course. All together 138 persons participated in it, of which 118 successfully finished the course (Saliņa, 2020). Furthermore, there is also a mobile application made for immigrants in Latvia called “First Steps in Latvia” (Information Centre for Newcomers, date unknown).

In the case of Estonia, a special integration course for beneficiaries of international protection is organized by Settle Estonia called the international protection module. Training focuses on norms and customs of the Estonian Society, as well as the rights and obligations of the beneficiaries of international protection and integration support mechanisms available for the beneficiaries of international protection, including access to education and labor market (Settle in Estonia, last edited 2020). In addition, NGO Estonian Refugee Council organizes various workshops, one of them is specifically dedicated to digital skills that helps beneficiaries of international protection to understand what kind of digital services are available, how to use them, etc. (INT10, 2020)

In case of Lithuania, integration courses or so called civic orientation training for beneficiaries of international protection is provided by the Red Cross Society’s Integration Centres (MIPAS, date unknown (a))

### **3.2.2 Monetary benefits**

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 302 “Regulations Regarding the Single Financial Support and the Benefit for Covering the Subsistence Costs for a Refugee and Person who has acquired the Alternative Status”, after a person has received international protection in

Latvia, he is entitled to receive a single financial support and monthly allowance. Single financial support for an adult is EUR 278.00. If it is a family, only one of the adults receives this amount of the first-time financial support – a spouse receives EUR 194.00. Single financial support amount for a child is also EUR 194.00. (*Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 302, 2017*)

The amount of monthly allowance for an adult is EUR 139.00 per month. For a spouse amount is EUR 97.00 per month. The allowance for each minor is also EUR 97.00 per month. Refugee status holders can receive monthly allowance for 10 months, but subsidiary protection status holders for 7 months. If a person starts to work, he or she can receive both salary and monthly allowance maximum 3 months. Additional financial support beneficiaries of international protection can receive from the local governments, if they have officially declared an address (State Employment Agency, date unknown).

While asylum seeker is accommodated in the Refugee Accommodation Centre “Mucenieki”, he or she is entitled to receive a daily allowance of EUR 3.00 for food and other necessities that are not provided by the Refugee Accommodation Centre (Biedrība “Patvērums “Drošā māja””, date unknown).

Beneficiaries of international protection who are refugee status holders can receive other social support as citizens, such as child birth allowance, family state benefit, etc. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, beneficiaries of international protection who are subsidiary protection holders are excluded from some of the social support services – such as child-birth allowance. (Kursa-Garkakle, 2015)

In the case of Estonia, according to the Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens (AGIPA), beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to receive a monthly benefit that equals the minimum consumption expenditure. Every next person in the family is entitled to receive the monthly allowance that accounts 80% of the minimum consumption expenditure. Additional financial support is provided by the local governments. Furthermore, beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to receive other social benefits granted in the state, such as state pensions, child-birth allowance, and others. (*AGIPA, 2006*)

A local government pays monthly allowance to the beneficiaries of international protection who can't support themselves. In order to receive this support, it is important to have an address

registered in the territory of the local government and apply for it. (EMN Estonia, 2016) The amount of it is linked to the subsistence level that also depends on the number of family members. Currently it is EUR 160.00/per month for a person who is living alone or for the first adult of the family, EUR 120.00 for the second adult of the family. Subsistence level for each minor is EUR 160.00/per month. (INT10, 2020)

While the decision on granting the asylum is being made, the asylum-seeker is entitled to stay at the Refugee Accommodation Centre in Vao village, Lääne-Viru County. Furthermore, asylum-seekers are provided with basic necessities, clothing and footwear. Medical examinations and health services are also provided. In addition to that, Estonian language lessons and translation services are available for the asylum seekers, as well as monthly allowance at official subsistence level (Government of the Republic of Estonia, last edited 2016).

In the case of Lithuania, according to the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to receive a single financial support as well as monthly allowance after they leave the Refugee Reception Centre. The one-time settlement allowance is EUR 250.00 for adults and EUR 125.00 for children. There is also a special one-time settlement allowance for unaccompanied minors EUR 1375.00 (Ministry of Social Security and Labor, last edited 2020).

The amount of monthly allowance depends on the number of people in the family. For a family of one person the monthly allowance until 6<sup>th</sup> month is EUR 250.00, afterwards – EUR 125.00. For a family of two people monthly allowance until 6<sup>th</sup> month is EUR 375.00, afterwards – EUR 187.50. For a family of three people monthly allowance until 6<sup>th</sup> month is EUR 500.00, afterwards – EUR 250.00. If a family is larger than three people, every additional person receives a monthly allowance of EUR 62.50 until 6<sup>th</sup> month in addition to the amount of allowance for three-person family, afterwards the additional amount of monthly allowance added for every next person is EUR 31.25. Normally the monthly allowance is paid for 12 months but if the beneficiary of international protection fails to be prepared for integration, the period may be extended up to 36 months. In addition to these benefits, beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to receive other social benefits, if applicable. For example, child support benefit, pension, one-time allowance in case of death of a family member, etc. Furthermore, local governments can add additional financial support. (Ministry of Social Security and Labor, last edited 2020)

The first 3 months (period can be maximally extended for 6 months) while the decision on granting the asylum is processed, the asylum-seekers are entitled to stay at the Refugee Reception Centre. While residing there, asylum-seekers are provided with free accommodation, medical assistance, psychological support, evaluation of personal and professional qualities is done, Lithuanian language and culture courses are organized. Also, everyone is provided with basic necessities, clothing and footwear. For school-aged persons additional benefit for buying school supplies is given – EUR 58.50. Within the time spent in the Refugee Reception Centre, asylum-seekers also receive a monthly allowance for food and other needs not provided by the center. The amount of monthly allowance is EUR 87.50. (Ministry of Social Security and Labor, date unknown)

### **3.2.3 Employment**

In Latvia beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to work without any limitations after they have received the residence permit. Exceptions are professions that are exclusively available only for the citizens – for example, state official positions.

Both refugee and subsidiary protection status holders who are at the moment not employed in any way, who are looking for a job and are at least 15 years old but currently not enrolled in the Primary school, can register in the State Employment Agency for the job seeker status. Furthermore, those who are also not enrolled in the Secondary school and are not receiving fully paid social rehabilitation services by the state, can apply for unemployed person's status. Both job seeker and unemployed person statuses gives an opportunity to receive consultations by specialists in the State Employment Agency, including individual profiling, as well as attend courses and other programs provided by the Agency free of charge. (Kursa-Garkakle, 2015)

Courses and programs organized by the State Employment Agency are aimed to develop professional skills and competences of persons looking for a job, including language classes, computer skill development classes, and courses for obtaining a driving license. State Employment Agency also offers paid temporary public work opportunities, training with the employer and subsidized workplaces in case a person is not able to find a job at least 12 months and has the necessary knowledge and skills for the offered subsidized work places. In case a person is attending courses or work at a subsidized job offered by the State Employment Agency, he or she receives

a daily allowance of EUR 5.00 for each attended day in addition to the monthly allowance. In addition, the State Employment Agency helps in case a person is interested to start their own business. (State Employment Agency, date unknown) Also, the State Employment Agency has started a project of language mentors in the workplace. During the project, there is a special person accompanying beneficiaries of international protection in the workplace for several times a week in order to help understand the necessary terminology and other things regarding organization of employment. (INT5, 2020)

As acknowledged by chairman of the board of the NGO “Shelter “Safe House””, people working specifically with beneficiaries of international protection at the State Employment Agency are very open and helpful: “They helped several persons to find a job with a salary between 700 – 1000 EUR that for Latvia is a very good level, especially as they didn’t know the language and didn’t have any specific education [...] Nevertheless, it depends on case by case. It is also highly dependent on the beneficiaries of international protections themselves.” (INT4, 2020)

There is also at least one positive example when beneficiaries of international protection started their own business in Latvia. In the portal nra.lv article “Refugee experience of life and people in Latvia” from 2017 a story of Habib and Karla and their jewelry workshop is told. Habib and Karla came to Latvia from Syria. Prior to the war and the necessity to seek asylum, they owned a jewelry workshop in the city Aleppo. Experience and help from people around them made it possible to open a jewelry workshop “Habibi Jewelry” in Riga (Portāls nra.lv, 2017). According to the homepage [www.habibijewelry.com](http://www.habibijewelry.com) , the store is still operating in 2020.

Overall, in the period from January 2016 until April 2019, 169 beneficiaries of international protection were registered at the State Employment Agency as job-seekers or unemployed persons. 59 of them found a job with the assistance of the State Employment Agency. They don’t have precise data of all employed beneficiaries of international protection as some might have found work themselves. Most popular fields of employment include construction, food industry, logistics, interpretation, and others. Most popular occupations include warehouse employee, driver, interpreter, cook, kitchen employee, and others. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.36*, 2019: 19-20)

Nonetheless, according to the previous researches conducted by UNHCR and Agnese Lāce, Rasmuss Filips Geks under NIEM project, as well as interviews conducted in April 2020 by the

author of this research, there are several issues in terms of integration in the labor market of beneficiaries of international protection in Latvia. First of all, beneficiaries of international protection have difficulties entering the labor market due to language requirements. According to the Article 6 of the Official Language Law, knowledge of the state official language in Latvia is necessary for everyone whose activities affect the lawful interests of the public in the level necessary to perform their professional duties. (*Official Language Law*, 2000) Therefore, if a person wants to start their own restaurant, he or she has to know the language in order to communicate with clients. Also, as acknowledged by Agnese Lāce and Rasmuss Filips Geks, to some extent this law is open to interpretation and some employers use it in order to not hire beneficiaries of international protection. In addition to that, due to the language requirements beneficiaries of international protection have limited access to the professional development courses offered by the State Employment Agency as the majority of them are organized in Latvian. (Lāce, Geks, 2018: 31)

According to the research done by Inara Kantane, Biruta Sloka et al, Latvian language knowledge is also among top three skills that employers view as the most significant skills necessary for the employees. Other skills and attitudes viewed as important by the employers include: professional knowledge, purposefulness, caring for agenda and organization of work, as well as ability to cooperate, plan time, etc. (Kantane, Sloka, Buligina, Tora et al, 2015: 227)

In Estonia, beneficiaries of international protection are also entitled to work without any limitations after they have received the residence permit, they do not need any separate document for that, e.g. work permit. Exceptions are, of course, professions that are exclusively available only for the citizens – for example, state official positions.

After a person registers as job-seeker or unemployed, support mechanisms for integration in the labor market available for all permanent residents of Estonia, including beneficiaries of international protection, are managed by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. They provide job seekers with information about the current opportunities in the labor market, look for suitable job opportunities for individuals (job mediation service), and organize courses for professional training and development of new competences of job seekers. Also, the Unemployment Insurance Fund offers career counselling services and coaching for the work environment, as well as internships and short-term public paid works. Furthermore, the Estonian

Unemployment Insurance Fund pays unemployment allowance to those who have previously worked, scholarships for training, or transport and accommodation allowances. (EMN Estonia, 2016)

Nevertheless, it must be noted that sometimes employees contact the Vao Centre themselves in order to offer job opportunities. Even though those are usually unskilled jobs, at least it is something. Some of the companies that provide work to beneficiaries of international protection are AS E-Betonelement that is a concrete products manufacturer, OÜ Tallinna Pesumaja that is a laundry service provider, OÜ Baltic Log Cabins that works with construction of wooden houses, and others. (EMN Estonia, 2016)

In addition to the support from the state, NGO Estonian Refugee Council from time to time organizes workshops related to employment. According to Anu Viltrop, often it happens that beneficiaries of international protection for various reasons look for a job for a very long time. “Therefore, the essence of these workshops is to help them think whether they have some other skills they can use in Estonia and also give motivation to keep searching for a job, because sometimes after a long-search of job, they lose their self-esteem and motivation to keep looking” said Viltrop in an interview. Furthermore, Estonian Refugee Council has recently established an enterprise in order to give some of the beneficiaries of international protection a job and also to provide an opportunity to test their own business ideas and help developing businesses as the NGO has the knowledge how the Estonian working culture and legislation are. (INT10, 2020)

There have been occasions when beneficiaries of international protection have also started their own businesses. For example, it is the case of Syrian refugees Nermin, Mohamed and now their business partner – Amer, who are operating a restaurant called Ali Baba in Tallinn that specializes in Syrian and Mediterranean food as well as pastries. Amer, who joined Nermin and Mohamed as a business partner, has said: “Many people have lost everything. They don’t have anything anymore. But here in Estonia, we have work. We have our own business!” (Sander, Bach, 2018)

Experiences of the beneficiaries of international protection show that it usually takes about six to nine months to find a permanent job. (EMN Estonia, 2016) As of 2019 out of total 381 beneficiaries of international protection, 273 were registered as job-seekers or unemployed persons, which means that around 100 beneficiaries of international employment were employed

in 2019 (estimated, not precise data). The most popular fields of employment include production and service sectors. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.36*, 2019: 14)

The biggest obstacles for beneficiaries of international protection in the integration of labor market include lack of Estonian, as well as Russian and/ or English knowledge that are the most commonly used languages in daily life and labor market. Also, lack of willingness from the employers to take beneficiaries of international protection. (Nurmela, Anniste, 2016) Furthermore, lack of work experience and low level of education might also be named as the problems beneficiaries of international protection have to face when looking for a job in Estonia. (EMN Estonia, 2016) On the other hand, sometimes their professional knowledge is so specific that in order to keep working in that field in Estonia, they are required to know the language and/ or acquire additional training, which takes time. (INT10, 2020)

As in Latvia and Estonia, also in Lithuania beneficiaries of international protection don't need to obtain a specific work permit. They are allowed to work without any limitations right after receiving the residence permits. Exceptions are again professions that are exclusively available only for the citizens – for example, state official positions.

Those who register as job-seekers at the Employment Service can receive counselling services that include making an individual plan for integration in the labor market. Employment Service Specialists also introduce beneficiaries of international protection with cultural and social norms, labor relations and organization in Lithuania, etc. During the consultations Employment Service Specialist and job-seeker discusses previous professional experiences, possibilities to receive documents proving qualifications. In case there is an interest in entrepreneurship, other organizations are invited to assist in the process, such as, Enterprise Lithuania and others. Furthermore, all registered job-seekers can obtain new professional qualifications by joining courses provided by the Employment Service. In addition, the Employment Service provides mediation services and subsidized workplaces are available for beneficiaries of international protection. Subsidy is applied for up to 2 years in order to foster efficiency of integration in the labor market. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.36*, 2019: 21-22)

Furthermore, Adviser to European Union Investment unit of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania acknowledged that the ministry is planning a project that

would target specifically beneficiaries of international protection in terms of integration in the labor market. With the current circumstances, it could be launched in 2021. (INT7, 2020)

There are cases, when beneficiaries of international protection have started their own businesses as well. For example, Pavel who escaped Belarus in 2010, when opposition activist suppression intensified. Soon after starting a life in Lithuania, he started a construction business and nowadays is a successful businessman, his firm supplies construction equipment. (Kules, 2015)

Experience of beneficiaries of international protection show that on average it takes approximately 4 - 5 months to find a job after registering as a job-seeker. As of 2019, 106 beneficiaries of international protection were registered as job-seekers. 55 of them are participating in temporary employment measures. In the period of 2017 – 2018, 117 beneficiaries of international protection found a full time job. Men are most often employed in construction, furniture and agricultural fields. Women are most often working in cafes and food factories. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.36*, 2019: 21-22)

Nevertheless, similarly as in Latvia and Estonia, there are several problems beneficiaries of international protection have to experience whilst integrating in the labor market. The main issue is again the lack of state language knowledge. According to UNHCR research, it is impossible to learn the Lithuanian language to the level necessary as quickly as they would like to start working. In addition, the UNHCR research acknowledges that the qualifications and diplomas are not recognized by the Lithuanian employers. (UNHCR, 2015)

### **3.2.4 Housing**

While the decision on granting the asylum is being made, asylum seekers in Latvia are able to stay at the Asylum-seeker Accommodation Centre “Mucenieki”. If possible, during the decision making process, asylum seekers can also stay in another place – in that case they are obliged to inform OCMA about that. Within two weeks after they have been granted the asylum, beneficiaries of international protection have to leave the Accommodation Centre. (INT5, 2020)

According to the analysis of existing integration support mechanisms done by Agnese Lāce and Rasmuss Filips Geks, beneficiaries of international protection are not receiving any specially aimed regulated monetary support in terms of housing. Current support mechanisms include the

allowance from the local governments but often they refuse to grant the support as beneficiaries of international protection are not acknowledged as a group of special needs in terms of housing support. Also, in order to ask for support from the local government, a person has to already be registered in the municipality, sometimes even several years. (Lāce, Geks, 2018)

The main support for beneficiaries of international protection is social mentor assistance in the process of searching for a dwelling and in the process of communicating with the homeowners and signing the lease agreement. Furthermore, NGOs are also helping beneficiaries of international protection to find new accommodation after they have to leave the asylum seeker accommodation center. (INT2, 2020) In addition to that, under a project carried out by OCMA beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to receive “starting packages” with several household items that they themselves have requested. Moreover, in 2017 Society Integration Fund introduced a pilot project, where some families of beneficiaries of international protection received compensation for the rent expenses if they have actively attended the language courses, as well as events dedicated to employment and education opportunities. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.66*, 2019: 16-17) Nevertheless, even though the project was successful, it hasn't been continued now. (INT5, 2020)

As acknowledged by several interviewees, the main issue in terms of housing is the discrimination by the homeowners. Often when they find out that the tenant will be a beneficiary of international protection or a third-country national in general, they suddenly do not want them to rent the apartment. Furthermore, beneficiaries of international protection have experienced causes of fraud and in general the monthly allowance is not enough to rent an apartment, especially in Riga where most of the job opportunities are located. (INT5 et al, 2020)

As mentioned above, also in Estonia asylum-seekers can stay in a specially designated accommodation center for asylum seekers called Vao Centre while their decision is being processed. They can stay there additional 4 months after receiving the international protection. Within that time Vao Centre's employees are helping beneficiaries of international protection to look for a new accommodation and job, if necessary. (EMN Estonia, 2016)

The Ministry of Social Affairs has mandated Vao Centre to help beneficiaries of international protection to move in to a new place, including paying the initial expenses of the new housing from the state budget and helping in the process of signing the contract. Priority of new

housing is for local municipality dwellings. Nevertheless, if there are no available places in municipality houses, the commercial real estate market is used. (EMN Estonia, 2016) Furthermore, after they have registered a place of living in the municipality, they can apply for the local municipality's support for rent payment. The amount of the support depends on each municipality. (INT10, 2020)

As mentioned above, while the decision on granting the asylum is being processed, also asylum seekers in Lithuania can stay at the Refugee Reception Centre. They can stay in the premises for additional 3 months (if there are valid grounds this period can be extended to maximum 4 months) after they have received a positive decision and international protection in the state. Within this time beneficiaries of international protection must find another place to live with a help of authority implementing integration. Beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to a one-time settling-in allowance. (EMN Lithuania, 2015) According to the information provided by the representative of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, the amount of one-time settling-in allowance for adults is EUR 250.00 and EUR 125.00 for each child. (INT7, 2020)

The main support in terms of finding a dwelling comes from mentors and integration curators of municipalities. They are assisting beneficiaries of international protection in the process of moving to a new place – helping find an accommodation, mediating the communication with landlords and helping with the documentary process, e.g. signing a lease agreement. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.66*, 2019: 18-19)

There are also several problems in terms of housing that beneficiaries of international protection have to face. First of all, it is hard to find sufficient accommodation in big cities for the money they have per month, but in smaller towns it is almost impossible to find a job. Furthermore, discrimination by the property owners is seen in the market – often they try to avoid renting out properties to foreigners, especially Muslims or people of other races. Moreover, beneficiaries of international protection can join general waiting lines for social housing but they are very long. (EMN Lithuania, 2015)

### **3.2.5 Language**

In Latvia, language classes are not mandatory but there are several options for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection to learn basic Latvian for free. One of the

options is offered by the NGO “Shelter “Safe House”” that organizes Latvian classes under a project “Support Activities for Persons Under International Protection II”. Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection can join Latvian language classes organized by the NGO that are in total 180 hours long. According to the information published on the NGO’s homepage, in 2019 in total 68 persons attended Latvian language classes. 48 successfully finished the courses and received a certificate. (Saliņa, 2020)

Furthermore, those beneficiaries of international protection that are living and have registered their address in the territory of Riga, can apply for the language classes offered by the Riga City Council. Also, those beneficiaries of international protection who are registered at the State Employment Agency as job-seekers or unemployed persons can join the Agency's organized Latvian language courses for free (level A1 up until C2) and even receive a monthly scholarship of EUR 100.00 for the purpose of buying all the materials necessary for lessons. (State Employment Agency, date unknown)

In addition to that, there are several online language learning options - “Shelter “Safe House”” offers Latvian language learning opportunity in Moodle environment, also Latvian Language Agency offers several internet resources for learning Latvian. (NGO “Shelter “Safe House””, date unknown)

According to the Chairman of the Board of the NGO “Shelter “Safe House”” Gunta Vīksne, majority of the participants are satisfied with the courses. They are also glad to be able to visit Riga as the NGO organizes classes both in the Refugee Accommodation Centre “Mucenieki” in Ropaži municipality and at its office in Riga. When classes are organized in Riga, NGO pays for the transport ticket. Regarding learning motivation, Gunta Vīksne says that it depends on the group and concrete individuals: “there are very hardworking groups and some that might not be that motivated.” Nonetheless, in this regard, she reminds that the experiences of the asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection have often been very traumatic and the uncertainty of the asylum seekers if they will be able to stay in Latvia or not can cause a very high level of stress. (INT4, 2020) Therefore, the lack of motivation can also be explained by these reasons. That was acknowledged also by Agnese Lāce. (INT5, 2020)

Issues in terms of language learning include lack of intensive language courses at the very beginning (INT5, 2020), as well as lack of teachers who could teach without an intermediate

language as it makes the process of learning complicated when translators have to translate the information from the intermediate language, especially vital it is in case of asking questions (INT1, 2020, PROVIDUS, 2018: 13). Furthermore, as acknowledged by Agnese Lāce and Rasmuss Filips Geks, most of the language learning opportunities are provided through projects, which means that there is no guarantee of continuity. (Lāce, Geks, 2018: 51)

Since May 1, 2016 free of charge Estonian language courses are mandatory for the beneficiaries of international protection up until they receive level A2. But they can continue learning Estonian for free up until level B2. (Nurmela, Anniste, 2016) The new rule of mandatory Estonian language learning is applicable for persons between 18 years old and retirement age. If they don't manage to meet the obligations, beneficiaries of international protection may be asked to pay back the costs. (UNHCR, 2016) Nevertheless, interviewees acknowledged that in reality there are no strict mechanisms that would control it (INT8, INT10, INT11, 2020).

The main language class provider for immigrants, including beneficiaries of international protection, is the Integration Foundation. Also, language classes are offered by the Tartu Folk High School – since 2019 the amount of language lesson hours has been increased to 300 hours from the previous 100 hours. (EMN Estonia, 2018) Furthermore, Estonian language is taught for free in the Refugee Accommodation Centre by language teachers and volunteers. Since 2016, Tallinn University also offers free language classes for beneficiaries of international protection. Also, beneficiaries of international protection can learn language in the private language teaching enterprises and receive reimbursement of paid money for the lessons in the amount of subsistence limit. The opportunity is available for two years after receiving the refugee status or subsidiary protection status. In addition to that, beneficiaries of international protection can also learn Estonian online using the portal Keeleklikk. (UNHCR, 2016)

In Lithuania language classes are not mandatory for beneficiaries of international protection. Language courses start already at the Refugee Reception Centre. 96 hours of face-to-face Lithuanian language lessons are offered at the Refugee Reception Centre in order to give asylum seekers the basic knowledge of Lithuanian. If there are valid grounds why after these 96 hours asylum seeker was not able to reach A1 level of Lithuanian language, additional 96 hours of Lithuanian language classes are provided (Platform for Migration Information and Cooperation, date unknown). Furthermore, additional 190 hours of Lithuanian language classes are offered to

those who are participating in integration programs in municipalities after they have already received international protection. Classes are organized in different levels usually 2-3 times a week, sometimes even more often depending on a group. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.15*, 2019) According to the information provided by the representative of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, there are also several online tools, where it is possible to learn Lithuanian: friends.ugdome.lt, loecsen.com, and surfacelanguages.com. (INT7, 2020) In addition, free Lithuanian language courses are available at Centras Plus, and there is a language exchange event every Saturday at the restaurant “Pirmas Blynas”. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.15*, 2019)

According to EMN Lithuania, language courses show generally good results thanks to experienced teachers and methods they use, including visual materials. Experience shows that most often students are able to pass the A2 level Lithuanian exam even before completing the whole course. (*AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.15*, 2019) Nonetheless, as acknowledged by the representative of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, the amount of learning hours is not enough to learn Lithuanian in a sufficient level for integration. But according to the “Description of the procedure for providing state support for the integration of asylum seekers” it is planned to increase the amount of Lithuanian language learning hours. Furthermore, recently a project has been launched to prepare a national Lithuanian teaching methodology and to strengthen the capacities of teachers. (INT7, 2020)

Regarding motivation to learn the language, representative of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor says that it depends on a specific group. Moreover, she acknowledged that Lithuanian is not an easy language as well as widely used outside Lithuania that does not help in the matter. (INT7, 2020)

### **3.2.6 Health**

Upon arrival in Latvia at the Refugee Accommodation Centre “Mucenieki”, asylum seekers are going through an individual medical assessment. There is a nurse and doctor available at the centre. After the initial assessment, necessary doctor visits and procedures are arranged with the help of mentors and social workers. Beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to receive the same health care services that the citizens and permanent residents. (Lāce, Geks, 2018) Psychologic support is available at the Information Centre for Newcomers. (INT1, 2020)

The main problems in this field as acknowledged by researchers Agnese Lāce and Rasmuss Geks include large waiting lines for the doctor appointments, as well as lack of specially trained medical personnel who are trained to deal with people who have experienced severe traumas, including psychologists and psychiatrists. (Lāce, Geks, 2018) Language may also be mentioned in this regard as not always translators are available and that may lead to bad consequences. As acknowledged by Alvan Arhenjari in an interview with *Journal IR* when his wife had a surgery there was no translator that would explain the necessary actions during the recovery process at home that led to a development of chronic inflammation as they didn't understand that she has to use antibiotics after the surgery. (Puķe, 10 – 16 October 2019: 47)

Upon arrival in Estonia at the Refugee Accommodation Centre, asylum seekers are examined by a doctor if necessary. Otherwise health care services are provided on the same grounds as to Estonian citizens. (Eriksoo, 2018) Emergency health care support is provided free of charge for all people living in Estonia. Furthermore, social insurance paid by the Health Insurance Fund is guaranteed for all children up to 19 years old, students, employed adults (employee pays the taxes), pregnant women, as well as unemployed persons who are registered at the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. (UNHCR, 2016)

Regarding mental health issues, Anu Viltrop acknowledged that beneficiaries of international protection are not keen on talking about such issues, but even if they would Estonia is lacking professionals in the field with language, such as Arabic, Turkish, etc., knowledge that are widely spoken amongst the beneficiaries of international protection. Moreover, the funding for translation and interpretation is not enough. Nevertheless, in the workshops organized by the NGO Estonian Refugee Council, they try to engage psychologists and mingle in topics related to such issues as that is a very sensitive topic, often the actual name of the workshop does not even say that such issues might be included in order to not scare away beneficiaries of international protection. Furthermore, NGO Estonian Refugee Council is planning to pilot an online counselling project, where beneficiaries of international protection could talk with a specialist that speaks their language. (INT10, 2020)

According to the information provided by the representative of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania, there is an operating Medical Office in the Refugee Reception Centre. A doctor, nurse and a psychologist are available from Monday to

Thursday from 8 AM until 5 PM, as well as on Fridays from 8 AM until 3:45 PM. Furthermore, 30 hours per month of additional psychological support are provided under AMIF. In addition, beneficiaries of international protection are covered by the compulsory health insurance fund and therefore have access to the health care services on the same ground as Lithuanian citizens. (INT7, 2020)

### **3.2.7 Education**

Children of beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to receive free primary and secondary education in the Baltic States as are the citizens. According to the interviewees, they are attending schools and obtaining education in local official language or in one of the minority schools in case they have a knowledge of the language of instruction there. For example, Russian. Integration of children of beneficiaries of international protection depends on each case individually.

Senior adviser of the Law Enforcement Affairs Department of the Chancellor of Justice's Office of the Republic of Estonia Kristiina Albi informed the author that the Chancellor of Justice's Office has made inspection visits to the accommodation centres and said that: "the personnel explained that children can go to school quickly and most children integrate well." Also, children learn the local language more quickly. Furthermore, Albi acknowledged that the readiness of schools to teach migrant children has improved within the recent years – schools are generally prepared to receive pupils with different language and cultural backgrounds. (INT8, 2020)

Anu Viltrop (NGO Estonian Refugee Council) also acknowledged that children are learning language more quickly and often even become translators for their parents. Furthermore, she said that schools are preparing individual plans for children of the migrant background. Therefore, often first they learn language and only then pursue other subjects. In addition, NGO Estonian Refugee Council organizes support programs for kindergarten and school teachers. Nonetheless, sometimes children claim that it is not easy to build friendships, because Estonians are not very open. Especially in the case of teenagers, for younger children it is easier. (INT10, 2020)

In the case of Latvia, Agnese Lāce acknowledged that the main problem in terms of integration in schools is that there is no systematic support, currently it is more *ad hoc*, meaning

that issues are solved in the short term but Latvia is lacking a long-term vision in the field. There are still schools that are not willing to take beneficiaries of international protection, because they think it will take a lot of extra work even though there is a municipality support for special Latvian language assistants for children, etc. Furthermore, it is more difficult for beneficiaries of international protection to study in Latvia, especially at the beginning, due to the fact that their parents don't understand Latvian and therefore can't help with the homework. In this case mentors and social workers are helping a lot but of course they can't help everyone all the time. (INT5, 2020) Especially vital it is now, during the COVID-19 crisis, when learning is happening at home. Moreover, sometimes local pupils are not welcoming children from different cultures and abuse them physically as well as morally. (INT4, 2020)

In addition, representative of the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia pointed out that in some individual cases problems arose when pupils are included in classes that are more appropriate to their age rather than actual knowledge. Therefore, the actual acquisition of knowledge takes place individually. Also, representative of the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia acknowledged that schools are lacking specially trained teachers and in general the amount of time that a teacher can dedicate to pupils is limited and sometimes it is not enough. (INT2, 2020)

On the other hand, Agnese Lāce also acknowledged that the situation is improving and schools are receiving more information regarding the available support for integration of beneficiaries of international protection from local governments as well as the state, and are using it more. Children also learn language more quickly, which makes integration better. (INT5, 2020)

According to the baseline report about Lithuania prepared by Giedrė Blažytė and Karolis Žibas under the NIEM project, the main issue in terms of education there is the lack of state support for integration of beneficiaries of international protection in this field. Furthermore, analysis revealed that schools are often not prepared to receive foreigners and there are no special events organized to inform pupils as well as teachers about the situation of beneficiaries of international protection, thus reducing prejudice and negative attitudes towards them. (Blažytė, Žibas, 2018: 39-42, 62) Nevertheless, representative of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor acknowledged that there are several mechanisms fostering integration of foreigners in schools, including beneficiaries of international protection. For example, there is a network of schools that are

receiving foreigners in order to share their practices and work on the competences. Furthermore, there is a guidance system prepared for teachers regarding integration and education of children. (INT7, 2020)

### **3.2.8 Public opinion and socializing**

Majority of the interviewees acknowledged that the local societies are still intolerant towards asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, especially when talking about more distant cultures compared to the Baltic States – e.g. persons of different color, Muslims, etc. That is also seen in various secondary sources, such as previously conducted interviews publicly available or survey results. Nevertheless, there are events organized in all three Baltic States mainly by the NGOs to raise awareness and foster connections between beneficiaries of international protection and members of the local community.

According to the 2019 Special Eurobarometer No. 493, 25% of the respondents believe that ethnic discrimination is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’ in Latvia, 22% think that discrimination on the basis of skin color is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’ but 12% believe that discrimination on the basis of religion is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’. Nevertheless, according to the Special Eurobarometer No. 493 results, 20% of the respondents would feel ‘uncomfortable’ if their work colleague with whom they have a daily contact was a Muslim person. But 43% of respondents would feel ‘uncomfortable’ if their children were in a romantic relationship with a Muslim person. (Special Eurobarometer No. 493, 2019) Furthermore, according to the survey “Opinion of the Latvian population on ethnic relations” done by the research centre SKDS upon a request of Society Integration Fund, 56 % of Latvian population sees asylum seekers as the main group to be treated with the utmost caution (SIF, 2019).

Therefore, according to the Special Eurobarometer No. 493 data, majority of the respondents do not believe that discrimination on the basis of skin color, ethnicity or religion is widespread in Latvia. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that even though they believe so, when it comes to questions if they would feel comfortable if a Muslim person was present in their lives in work or in the family, the results of feeling uncomfortable are not that low and show signs of discrimination. Furthermore, according to the results of the DemoMig project “Sustainable and Cohesive Latvian Society: solutions to demographic and migration challenges” workshop in the

Vidzeme region, participants have acknowledged that people living in the countryside are more reserved to the different. In addition, when questioned about the necessity to attract foreigners, they agreed that qualified workforce should be attracted but it would be better to attract people of close cultural understanding and mentality. (Krišjāne, Krūmiņš et al (VPP DemoMig), 2020: 28) During the DemoMig workshop in Riga, participants also acknowledged that the local community is mostly not having a positive attitude towards immigrants who are third-country nationals.

In an interview with the Latvian Radio on February 2020, head of the organization “I want to help refugees” said that public prejudice is high in Latvia. Often when he is trying to help beneficiaries of international protection to find housing, owners hang up the phone when they hear people that will live in the apartment come from Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan. Nonetheless, he also acknowledged that the situation has changed to the positive side within the last five years. Organization “I want to help refugees” has also actively tried to raise awareness and promote understanding in the society. For example, they organized an event “Living Library” where everyone could come and hear the stories of beneficiaries of international protection. Furthermore, they have also organized a project “In refugee shoes”, where representatives of the organization went to schools in Riga and led a lecture, as well as a simulation game, about the conditions and experiences that refugees have to go through. (LSM, 2020)

Society Integration Fund has also started a project “Openness is a value” in 2018 where one of the target groups is beneficiaries of international protection, but not only. The aim of the project is to raise openness towards all groups at risk of social exclusion and discrimination (“Atvērtība ir vērtība”, [www.atvertiba.lv](http://www.atvertiba.lv)). During the project, various events dedicated to raising awareness of the daily challenges that these groups have to experience and their life stories are organized. Year 2018 was specifically dedicated to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. Overall, the project is planned until 2022. (Society Integration Fund, 2018)

Furthermore, NGO’s “Shelter “Safe House”” chairman of the board mentioned in the interview that intolerance is still widespread in Latvia. But she also acknowledged that the situation is getting better. NGO “Shelter “Safe House”” also organizes various events that are aimed to raising tolerance and openness of the society. As Gunta Vīksne acknowledged: “Once people get to know each other, they understand that after all we are all humans. We have similar daily issues

– we are worried about our family, health, etc.” These events include cultural evenings, where asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection may introduce locals with their cuisine, traditions, and others. (INT4, 2020)

In addition, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia organizes workshops for the media personnel. Events are organized in order to raise the awareness that would help them develop more qualitative media content related to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. (INT1, 2020)

According to Agnese Lāce, the events organized for socializing and raising awareness have often raised various emotions from the locals, some people become more supportive and open to the beneficiaries of international protection but some people might even have the opposite emotions. Nonetheless, she sees the need for such events in order to reach more and more people. Especially vital, from her point of view, are the personal stories of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection as it endorses the personal connection and understanding. (INT5, 2020)

According to the 2019 Special Eurobarometer No. 493, 35% of respondents believe that ethnic discrimination is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’ in Estonia, 36% of respondents acknowledged that discrimination on the basis of skin color is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’ but in terms of discrimination on the basis of religion only 17% of respondents replied that it is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’. Furthermore, according to the Special Eurobarometer on discrimination 19% of the respondents would feel ‘uncomfortable’ if their work colleague with whom they have a daily contact was Muslim. But 40% of the respondents would feel ‘uncomfortable’ if their children were in a romantic relationship with a Muslim person. (Special Eurobarometer No. 493, 2019)

Except in terms of discrimination on the basis of religion, respondents in Estonia show higher results in terms of prevalence of discrimination in the state. Nevertheless, when it comes to questions if they would feel comfortable if a Muslim person was present in their lives in work or in the family, the results of feeling uncomfortable are not differing that much from Latvia, and are even slightly lower.

According to the study done by Kantar Emor in 2016, in total 30% of Estonian residents are highly critical towards refugees. Nonetheless, study also showed improvements as in 2015 the

result was 40% of the respondents being highly critical towards refugees. Researchers believe that the improvement has been made due to the fact that fuss of the media about refugees has calmed down in 2016. (Government of the Republic of Estonia, 2016) According to the representative of Estonian Human Rights Centre, in 2019 two beneficiaries of international protection turned to the Centre due to problems with discrimination and hostile attitude from Estonians. (INT9, 2020)

Representative of the NGO “Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus” (hereinafter – JMK) in an interview acknowledged that there is a need to improve the openness of Estonian society. JMK also organizes various project-based events in order to raise awareness and openness of the local society, and give an opportunity for the beneficiaries of international protection to meet locals. The last project was dedicated to cultural and sport activities. During the project, beneficiaries of international protection had an opportunity to learn more about the possibilities to attend sport practices and cultural groups, as well as meet the locals. JMK organized events according to the interests of the beneficiaries of international protection. Examples: bike rides, going to the gym, etc. According to the representative of JMK, interest was quite high. Furthermore, he also acknowledged that whenever locals share common interests and actually get to know asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, they become more open and welcoming. (INT11, 2020)

Representative of the NGO Estonian Refugee Council also acknowledged that intolerance is still present in Estonia towards beneficiaries of international protection. Nowadays with the current government the situation is not getting any better, even more worrying. Nevertheless, she also acknowledged that there are still people who are supportive and willing to help. According to her: “Sometimes even bad news ends with more people signing up as volunteers.” NGO Estonian Refugee Council also organizes events and workshops where locals can meet beneficiaries of international protection. (INT10, 2020) For example, in December 2019 Estonian Refugee Council organized a Refugee Christmas bazaar in Tallinn, where beneficiaries of international protection sold food and handicrafts, as well as provided beauty services. (Wright, ERR News, 2019)

According to the 2019 Special Eurobarometer No. 493, 18% of the respondents believe that ethnic discrimination is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’ in Lithuania, 23% think that discrimination on the basis of skin color is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’ but only 15% believe that discrimination on the basis of religion is ‘total widespread’ or ‘widespread’. Furthermore,

according to the Special Eurobarometer No. 493 results, 33% of the respondents would feel 'uncomfortable' if their work colleague with whom they have a daily contact was a Muslim person. But 59% of respondents would feel 'uncomfortable' if their children were in a romantic relationship with a Muslim person. (Special Eurobarometer No. 493, 2019)

Even though, results in terms of Lithuanian respondent view towards prevalence of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, skin color or religion in Lithuania are relatively low, when it comes to questions if they would feel comfortable if a Muslim person was present in their lives in work or in the family, the results of feeling uncomfortable are even higher than in other Baltic States and show signs of discrimination.

Furthermore, a survey done by the Social Research Centre in 2019 shows that Lithuanian public opinion has worsened within the past years in terms of attitude towards asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. According to the survey results, majority of the respondents think that refugees will increase crime and cause social problems in Lithuania. Moreover, 64% of the respondents (compared to 44% in 2015) believe that the majority of asylum seekers are actually economic migrants rather than refugees. A researcher of the Social Research Centre, said to the LRT news that Lithuanian people have a lot of fears, they think that refugees bring only risks, not opportunities to the country. (LRT TV, 2019) Nevertheless, Representative of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania acknowledged that the opinion depends on the region. Major cities, especially the capital, are more accepting and multicultural. However, regions are a bit more stagnant in their perceptions. Nonetheless, there are events and programs organized for the local community by NGOs and AMIF projects. (INT7, 2020)

According to Dominik Hangartner and Matti Sarvimaki (2017: 21, cited by Austers et al, 2019), there are several activities that need to be enforced in order to foster positive relationships between local communities and beneficiaries of international protection. First of all, informative campaigns and narrative building before asylum seekers arrive in the country should be organized. Furthermore, there should be regular contact between locals and asylum seekers. The authors argue that research has shown that understanding why people are seeking an asylum and volunteer inclusion in the inclusion process of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection

help in the long term regarding integration of beneficiaries of international protection (Austers et al, 2019)

In terms of the local society's view regarding integration support mechanisms for immigrants, including beneficiaries of international protection, respondents of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are having very similar views. According to Special Eurobarometer No. 469 "Integration of Immigrants in the European Union", strong support is for providing language courses upon arrival – total 'Agree' was chosen by 91% of respondents in Latvia, 92% of respondents in Lithuania, and 93% in Estonia. Strong support is also for integration programs that would educate immigrants about customs and life in a respective country – total 'Agree' was chosen by 85% of respondents in Latvia, 86% of respondents in Lithuania, and 85% of respondents in Estonia. Furthermore, strong support is also visible for making these integration mechanisms mandatory for immigrants – total 'Agree' was chosen by 89% of respondents in Latvia, 83% of respondents in Lithuania, and 87% of respondents in Estonia. On the other hand, when asked if immigrants should have a right to vote in local elections – total 'Agree' was chosen only by 32% of respondents in Latvia, 36% of respondents in Lithuania, and 31% of respondents in Estonia. (*Special Eurobarometer No.469*, 2018)

Therefore, the results show that when it comes to integration support mechanisms, members of the local societies in the Baltic States are generally supportive towards basic social support measures, such as language teaching and integration courses for immigrants, but when it comes to an actual engagement in the daily affairs of immigrants, for example, in terms of political participation, they are not supportive.

Overall, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are offered various socio-economic support mechanisms including mentor/ social support person help, integration courses, language courses, support for inclusion in the labor market, etc. Nevertheless, there are several issues with the available mechanisms and the intolerance of local communities is still present in the Baltic States, even though there are also various social events organized in order to raise awareness of the local community that would break the intolerance and discrimination. Furthermore, in terms of discrimination, have to mention that both Estonia and Lithuania have separate anti-discrimination laws that prohibits all forms of discrimination. Even though Latvia does not have such law – discrimination is prohibited in other legislations and Constitution

Furthermore, Agnese Lāce and representative of the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia in an interview acknowledged that some of the support mechanisms are not fixed in law, so there is no full guarantee that these mechanisms are available in the long-term. That is a case of a mentor service – currently this support mechanism is realized under projects. In addition, there are still issues with the social support – monthly allowances are below minimum necessary means to sufficiently live in Latvia that often leads to secondary migration to other European states, for example Germany and Sweden. Often these persons later on are sent back to Latvia and that leads to new issues in the integration process as at that moment they are not entitled to receive monetary support, live in the Refugee Accommodation Centre or participate in other integration mechanisms that are available for a specific period of time. Representative of the Ombudsman's Office said that in some cases exceptions are made, for example, in case of accommodation – families who were sent back to Latvia could stay in the Refugee Accommodation Centre, if they didn't have any other options, but in some cases, such as, these integration mechanisms that are available for a specific period of time (e.g. mentor service), exceptions are not made. (INT5, INT2, 2020)

Issue of the secondary migration is also present in both Estonia and Lithuania. According to the interviewees, the main issues that lead to it are connected with the amount of monetary support compared to other EU states but also to the lack of their own diaspora present in the region. Social contacts make it easier for beneficiaries of international protection to find jobs, schooling for their children where there might be even someone who speaks Arabic or any other language, etc., and here in the Baltic States diasporas of more distant cultures are not that large. (INT4, INT5, INT6, INT10 et al, 2020)

Anu Viltrop of the Estonian Refugee Council also acknowledged that there are a lot of support services available for beneficiaries of international protection, compared to few years ago – support systems have developed rapidly. Nevertheless, sometimes the issue is more related to the accessibility of services, including for Estonians themselves, due to the lack of knowledge of the possibilities. In addition, some of the services, including support person service, are also project-based as in case of Latvia. (INT10, 2020)

Adviser to European Union Investment unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania acknowledged that there are very good initiatives started at the moment

but Lithuania is still working on the integration system. Some of the areas are a bit fragmented and accessibility to services is not always smooth too. (INT7, 2020)

UNHCR acknowledged that some of the support services, for example language courses are provided by several stakeholders and are not overviewed by specific institutions. UNHCR recommends reviewing the offered language learning opportunities to increase accessibility, quality and effectiveness of the courses. The UNHCR also recommended a review of the process of validation of professional and academic qualifications and, possibly, the introduction of a special method for how these qualifications could be admitted in case of beneficiaries of international protection who are not able to fulfil the paperwork. In addition, UNHCR acknowledges the need to raise awareness and understanding of both society in general as well as the professional personnel (e.g. medical personnel, teachers, etc.) that are working with beneficiaries of international protection about the reasons why they come to Europe and the Baltic States. (UNHCR, 2014, 2015, 2016)

From the point of view of the beneficiaries of international protection, the main issue in terms of socio-economic integration for them remains the lack of language knowledge. It makes it harder for them to find a job, receive services, especially healthcare services, as well as connect with the locals and find housing. As a refugee residing in Latvia acknowledged in the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (hereinafter – BISS) research: “Language is the only problem. If I knew the language, I could solve all my problems! If I knew the language, I could study, work in a better job. (...) If I spoke Latvian, I wouldn’t have any problems. I’m sure of it.” (BISS, 2018: 74) Nevertheless, another essential issue, as acknowledged by the interviewees and analysis of secondary sources, still remains the low financial support. With the current amount of financial support it is impossible to rent a normal dwelling, especially in larger cities. Furthermore, the necessity to earn more and start working as soon as possible, slows down integration in other spheres of life, including learning the language.

### **3.3 Cultural-religious dimension**

In this dimension, the author examines the beneficiary of international protection possibilities to practice their religion as well as cultural traditions. In addition, the author considers the cultural dimensions analysis developed by Geert Hofstede in order to determine cultural differences. In the analysis, the author compares the results of the Baltic States and two of the most

common countries of origin for the asylum seekers in the period 2015 - 2019, which are Syria and Russia.

### **3.3.1 Religion**

Freedom of religion is acknowledged in the Constitutions of all three Baltic States. In fact, it has been a reason for seeking an asylum for a group of Russian citizens. In an interview for *Delfi Latvia* Russian citizen Larisa (name is changed) told her story of seeking an asylum in Latvia, because she experienced persecution due to her religious beliefs – she was one of few Jehovah’s Witnesses believers in Russia, where the Supreme Court in 2017 declared organization “Jehovah’s Witnesses” as extremist and banned. In addition, as acknowledged in the article with a reference to American Journal “Time”, Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia are basically put in the same box with neo-Nazis. (Dzērve, Fedotova, 2020)

In the interview with *Delfi Latvia*, Larisa said that she chose to come to Latvia, because it is relatively close to Russia and she also knew that many people know Russian. During the first days after arrival in Latvia, Larisa with her family lived in a hotel but after submitting an application at the State Border Guard they moved to the Refugee Accommodation Centre “Mucenieki”. Shortly after arrival and also at the Refugee Accommodation Centre she met members of Latvian Jehovah’s Witnesses organization who helped her with various everyday things. Furthermore, Larisa says positive words about social mentors and their assistance with the state institutions, etc. In addition, she was positively surprised that there is a special Refugee Accommodation Centre and even a possibility to receive financial support whilst living there. After receiving a refugee status, she was entitled to receive a monthly allowance. Even though she acknowledged that with the monthly allowance alone it is not possible to rent an apartment and buy other needs, she says that money was not the reason she came here, Larisa plans to start working. She joined Latvian language course at the Refugee Accommodation Centre as well as at the Latvian Jehovah’s Witnesses organization, where she can also practice her religious beliefs freely compared to Russia. Overall, Larisa talks positively about Latvia and people there. Authors of the article also contacted Latvian Jehovah’s Witnesses spokesperson Vjačeslavs Zaicevs, who said that a couple of dozen asylum seekers as Larisa have come to Latvia within the last years, as well as Lithuania. (Dzērve, Fedotova, 2020)

Furthermore, there are installed prayer rooms at the Refugee Accommodation Centres in Latvia (INT6, 2020) and Lithuania (INT7, 2020). Interviewees also didn't acknowledge any major issues regarding freedom of religion in the Baltic States as that is more of a private thing (INT1, INT6, 2020). Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are able to practice their religions freely as far as it does not disturb public order.

### **3.3.2 Cultural differences**

In order to analyze cultural differences between beneficiaries of international protection and local communities of the Baltic States, the author used Geert Hofstede's cultural values analysis that consists of 6 dimensions: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation, and indulgence. Comparison was made between the Baltic States and two the most popular countries of origin of the beneficiaries of international protection there in the period of 2015 – 2019.

Dimension of power distance refers to expectations and acceptance of the less powerful members of organizations and institutions of equality of power distribution. A lower result in this dimension shows that the society prefers equality and decentralization in decision making and power. Dimension of individualism refers to the degree of interdependence in the society. A lower result in this dimension refers to more collective and interdependent societies, nevertheless higher score refers to more individualistic societies. Dimension of masculinity refers to qualities of life and motivation of people. Higher score in this dimension shows that the society is more masculine – people want to be the best, society is driven by competition and success. Nevertheless, a lower score in this dimension shows that the society is more humble and caring for others, as well as quality of life is more important than success to the people. The dimension of uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent members of the society feel threatened by unknown situations and try to avoid them. A higher score in this dimension shows that the society is not fond of ambiguous and unforeseen situations, and tries to avoid that. The dimension of long term orientation refers to the way society is maintaining links with its past while dealing with the challenges of today and tomorrow. A higher result in this dimension shows that the society is more pragmatic, encouraging modernization whilst keeping and adopting the traditions to the situation. Nevertheless, society's with lower results in this dimension show more normative nature, where change is seen with suspicion. Finally, the dimension of indulgence refers to the extent people are trying to control

their ambitions and impulses. Higher level in this dimension shows that the members of society are more indulgent. However, lower level in this dimension indicates more restraint societies that are often cynic and pessimistic, they don't put a lot of emphasis on leisure time and gratification of personal desires. (Hofstede, date unknown (c))

All three Baltic States show relatively similar results in all dimensions except of masculinity. In the dimension of power distance the average result is 42 that indicates societies preferring more equality and decentralization rather than centralization. In the dimension of individualism the average score is 63 that characterizes more individualistic societies. In dimension of masculinity the average result is 19 between the Baltic States, but have to say that even though all three Baltic States show more feminine society impression, results varied between them – Estonia scored 30 being the most competition oriented of the Baltic States, Lithuania is in the middle with a score of 19, and Latvia is the most feminine of three with a score 9. In the dimension of uncertainty avoidance the average result is 63, showing that the Baltic States do not like unexpected situations and therefore are trying to avoid uncertainties. In the dimension of long term orientation the average score is 78. It indicates that the societies of Baltic States are more pragmatic. They believe truth depends on the concrete situation and context, they can also adapt traditions to changed conditions. Finally, in the dimension of indulgence the average result between the Baltic States is 15 that characterizes restrained societies that don't put much effort on leisure and are more cynic, pessimistic in nature. (Hofstede, date unknown (a))

In comparison with Syria and Russia, the two most popular countries of origin of the asylum seekers in the period of 2015 – 2019 in the Baltic States, have to say that there are quite visible differences, especially in terms of power distance, where both Syria and Russia score very high – 80 and 93. Also, visible differences are in terms of individualism, where both Syria (35) and Russia (39) show lower results than the Baltic States, indicating more collective societies. Dimension of masculinity shows that Syria has no specific preference in the dimension as it scores almost in the middle - 52. Russia's result is closer to the Baltic States – 36, showing more feminine characteristics of society. Dimension of uncertainty avoidance shows that as the Baltic States, Syria (60) and Russia are not preferring uncertainty with an especially high result for Russia – 95. In terms of long term orientation, Russia's result is similar to the Baltic States – 81. Nevertheless, the result for Syria is noticeably lower – 30, which means that the society does not like change.

The dimension of indulgence shows that Russia is also a more restrained society with a score 20. The score in this dimension for Syria is not available. (Hofstede, date unknown (b))

Cultural Dimension analysis by Geert Hofstede shows that the societies of Baltic States and Russia, Syria are quite different in some of the aspects, especially when compared to Syria. Therefore, beneficiaries of international protection have to adjust to strong cultural environment changes. In terms of Russian beneficiaries of international protection, there are also visible differences but not that strong. Furthermore, as acknowledged by several interviewees, Russian language is still widely known and used in the Baltic States, which makes Russian and other Russian speaking beneficiaries of international protection integration much more easier when compared with beneficiaries of international protection coming from more distant countries. (INT3 et al, 2020)

As of the possibilities to practice cultural traditions by the beneficiaries of international protection, the principle is the same as with the religion – they are free to practice their cultural traditions as long as it does not disturb public order. Furthermore, as mentioned in the sub-section of public opinion and socializing, various NGOs in the Baltic States are open to organize events dedicated to the cultural traditions practiced by the beneficiaries of international protection, including dancing and musical events, as well as events introducing local cuisines. Furthermore, from April 24, 2020, until May 23, 2020 Information Centre for Newcomers in Latvia invited everyone to share their Ramadan recipe stories supporting the Muslim tradition of Ramadan or the holy month of fasting. (INT4, 2020) Nonetheless, in terms of practicing cultural traditions, the issue of lack of diaspora arises again – if there is no diaspora of a specific culture, the possibilities to truly practice traditions are more a private thing then.

To summarize, overall there are no highly visible issues in terms of religious and cultural practices of beneficiaries of international protection. As all three Baltic States by the law are allowing religious freedom, beneficiaries of international protection can practice their religious traditions freely as far as it does not disturb the public order, of course. Nevertheless, the main problems acknowledged in this dimension include the cultural differences between beneficiaries of international protection and societies of the Baltic States, especially in terms of more distant cultures, such as Syria, that makes adoption process harder in the society, as well as a lack of

diaspora of people coming from these more distant cultures that would make the adoption process easier as there would be more people who experienced the same issues.

Based on the primary and secondary sources analyzed during the study, the author has made a table that includes a summary of the integration support measures available to the beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States. *Table 1* compares some of the main integration support measures for the beneficiaries of international protection between the Baltic States. The sequence of the measures is followed the dimensions included in the data analysis. The author focused specifically on those support measures that are available for beneficiaries of international protection and did not include some that are available for them when they are still asylum seekers.

<b>Integration support measure</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>
<b>Specific Action Plan for beneficiaries of international protection</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Specific law regulating asylum affairs</b>	Yes (Asylum Law)	Yes (Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens)	No (asylum affairs are under the Law on the Legal Status of the Aliens)
<b>Duration of residence permit</b>	Refugee status holder – 5 years; subsidiary protection status holder – 1 year (to be 2 years starting from the 2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	Refugee status holder – 3 years; subsidiary protection status holder – 1 year	Refugee status holder – 5 years; subsidiary protection status holder – 2 years
<b>Acquisition of citizenship</b>	Possible through naturalization; refugees exempted	Possible through naturalization; all beneficiaries of	Possible through naturalization; refugees exempted

	from the requirement to renounce previous citizenship; minimum 5 years spent in the country	international protection exempted from the requirement to renounce previous citizenship; minimum 8 years spent in the country	from the requirement to renounce previous citizenship; minimum 7 years spent in the country (in case a foreigner is a spouse of a citizen of Lithuania, normally – minimum 10 years)
<b>Difference between the support granted to refugee and subsidiary protection status holders</b>	Yes (subsidiary protection status holders receive the monthly allowance shorter time, they also can't receive other social benefits, such as child-birth allowance)	No	No
<b>Mentor/support person service</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Translation services available</b>	Yes	Yes, but limited to the financial support 2000 EUR per person for two years	No clear information
<b>Free legal aid</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Integration courses</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Monthly allowance</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> adult: 139 EUR 2 <sup>nd</sup> adult: 97 EUR Children: 97 EUR	1 <sup>st</sup> adult: 160 EUR* 2 <sup>nd</sup> adult: 120 EUR Children: 160 EUR	1 person: 250 EUR 2 person family: 375 EUR

		*Depends on the subsistence level	3 person family: 500 EUR + each person 62.50 EUR
<b>Special support for integration in the labor market</b>	Public employment services available to the same extent as to the nationals + State Employment Agency has a specific group of people who work with beneficiaries of international protection (Project “Integration of refugee and alternative status holders in the labor market”)	Public employment services available to the same extent as to the nationals	Public employment services available to the same extent as to the nationals
<b>Free language courses</b>	Yes, various sources	Yes, various sources	Yes, various sources
<b>Special support for housing</b>	No (except a starting package with necessary household items); can stay 2 weeks after receiving status in Refugee Accommodation Centre	Yes – initial expenses paid by the state, can apply for municipality’s support for rent payment, can stay 4 months after receiving status in Refugee	Yes – one time settlement allowance; can stay 3 months after receiving status in Refugee Accommodation Centre

		Accommodation Centre	
<b>Special healthcare support</b>	No	No	No
<b>Special support for integration in schools</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Organized events for socializing between locals and beneficiaries of international protection</b>	Yes (mostly organized by the NGOs)	Yes (mostly organized by the NGOs)	Yes (mostly organized by the NGOs)
<b>Possibility to practice cultural and religious traditions freely</b>	Yes, as far as it does not disturb the public order	Yes, as far as it does not disturb the public order	Yes, as far as it does not disturb the public order

*Table 1.* Summary of the integration support measures available to the beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States. Source: interviews conducted by the author on April/May, 2020, national legislation of the Baltic States (Asylum, Citizenship Laws), and publicly available information in the state institution homepages.

Overall, the comparison shows that the support measures are rather similar in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. There are just few areas that show a significant differences – for example, the housing support, monetary benefits, conditions for naturalization, and duration of residence permit. Nevertheless, the most significant difference is that in Latvia there is a difference between the support granted to refugee and subsidiary protection status holders.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three-dimension integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States analysis has shown that, overall, systems for the integration of asylum seekers and the beneficiaries of international protection are still developing in the Baltic States. Some may say they hardly existed prior to 2015, when the number of asylum seekers started to increase due to the EU's relocation and resettlement plan. This prompted the Baltic States to improve their asylum systems. The Baltic States have put in place a good base and many valuable integration mechanisms for further development. Nevertheless, there are several issues that are acknowledged by the stakeholders involved in the system of integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.

In terms of the legal-political dimension, laws in general correspond to international and European standards. However, there are issues apparent in real-life migrant integration policies and practices, including cooperation between different stakeholders. There is a need for clear integration goals and results for the beneficiaries of international protection, and a review of the responsible institutions in all three Baltic States. This would help make it clear who is responsible for what. Furthermore, the procedure of admission of academic and professional qualifications should be reviewed and, possibly, a special system for beneficiaries of international protection should be introduced. In addition, Latvia and Estonia should review the duration of the residence permit for subsidiary protection holders (Latvia is already in the process of that). Also, in Latvia, there is still a difference in social support between refugee status and subsidiary protection status holders that should be reviewed, especially in terms of the social benefit system. This is because subsidiary protection status holders are not entitled to receive child support and other social benefits. Furthermore, the monthly allowance for beneficiaries of international protection is paid for a shorter period than holders of subsidiary protection status. Finally, the Baltic States lack the political will to foster changes in the legal-political system of integration of beneficiaries of international protection.

In terms of the socio-economic dimension, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are offered various socio-economic support mechanisms including a social support person/mentor/curator, language and integration courses, free legal aid, support for employment, schooling for children with special support, some monetary benefits are, and others.

Nevertheless, issues with the current integration measures available are related to accessibility of the services. For example, language courses are often hard to combine with employment. There are long lines for health services. Also, there is a lack of professionals able to speak languages common among beneficiaries of international protection, such as Arabic and Turkish (especially in case of mental/psychological support where language is essential to speak about the issues). Some of the services (e.g. language courses) are provided by several organizations and may confuse those in need for them. There is a lack of information about possibilities, which may lead to missed opportunities. In addition, relatively low monetary support leads to an early will for the beneficiaries of international protection to want to start work. However, they are often unable to do so, due to the lack of local language knowledge. This then forms *a vicious circle* which also consists of housing issues, especially in Latvia and Lithuania, where beneficiaries of international protection cannot afford the monthly rent in areas where they would be able to find a job. Moreover, the issue of intolerance and discrimination towards beneficiaries of international protection from the local communities in the Baltic States is still present, especially in the housing sector. Some landlords refuse to rent out properties when they hear that the potential tenant is a refugee. Furthermore, several integration support mechanisms, including such essential services as the support person service, operate only under specific projects and are not set in the law. Consequently, a long-term guarantee is not available. In general, several interviewees acknowledged that there is a lack of long-term planning in the field.

Regarding the cultural-religious dimension, issues regarding some kind of restrictions to practice religious or cultural traditions in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were not found by the author. Beneficiaries of international protection, as all residents of the Baltic States, enjoy the right to freedom of culture and religion. Nevertheless, according to Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions analysis, the societies of Baltic States differ visibly from the two most common countries of origin (Syria and Russia) of the beneficiaries of international protection. This is more marked in the case of Syria, as they do not have the advantage of the Russian-speaking beneficiaries.

Overall, the main issue, in terms of integration of beneficiaries of international protection, is the lack of language knowledge. This is because it is related to multiple spheres of life such as employment, education, and receiving various services. In addition, financial support granted by

the states in the first months after receiving the status is not sufficient for daily necessities, especially housing. Furthermore, intolerance among the local communities in the Baltic States and lack of beneficiary of international protection country of origin diasporas remain important issues. Nevertheless, these issues are most often topical for beneficiaries of international protection who come from more distant cultures and/or do not speak other widely-used languages in the region, such as Russian or English.

When the results of the Baltic States are compared, there is no forerunner among the three states. In all three of them the asylum systems are still developing and still have several issues, especially related to secondary migration. In some areas of life one has a bit better support measures available, in other area of life – the other one. For example, Latvia could look to its Baltic neighbors in terms of housing support, at least in terms the permission to stay at the Refugee Accommodation Centre longer time after receiving the international protection status. This is also visible in terms of equal social support for refugee and subsidiary protection status holders. Estonia and Lithuania could look at the example of Latvia's Information Centre for Newcomers. This is especially evident in the translation services available for the newcomers, including beneficiaries of international protection. Nevertheless, Lithuania and Latvia could learn from Estonia in terms of more innovative approaches towards integration measures. The financial support is also not high in all three of the Baltic States. Nonetheless, have to mention again that in Estonia and Lithuania beneficiaries of international protection are also able to receive other social support benefits. Whereas in Latvia only refugees can receive that.

A summary table on some of the main support measures available to the beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States is available at the end of chapter No. 3 - *Data analysis: integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States* as Table 1. More detailed comparison of the available support measures is available in the specific sub-chapters under chapter No. 3. Specific recommendations, how the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States could be developed, are acknowledged below. Recommendations where no specific state is highlighted are applicable to all three of the Baltic States. Nevertheless, recommendations where a specific state is acknowledged are dedicated specifically to the highlighted state/states.

*Recommendations:*

1. Create a strategy that not only acknowledges the support mechanisms available for integration of beneficiaries of international protection, but also forms specific goals and expected results, as well as reviews institutional framework clearly defining who is responsible for what. Furthermore, it should be evaluated systematically, so that the progress and necessary improvements are acknowledged, and improvements to the integration mechanisms made. This could be done for all third-country nationals, including a specific chapter for beneficiaries of international protection;
2. Form one national center for the main integration support services – e.g. language learning, integration course, mentor/support person service, translation support. These kind of basic integration support mechanisms can be combined together for all third-country nationals. It would be easier for both supervision and evaluation, as well as the beneficiaries themselves, as, for example, they would not need to examine various opportunities for language learning. In addition, this would provide more resources that may allow providing language courses more often and in different timings, including at the evenings. Therefore, those beneficiaries of international protection who are employed, could also join the course;
3. Set in the law and have a permanent service provider for some of these basic support services, such as, the mentor support, so there wouldn't be any doubt that is a permanent service available to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection;
4. Increase the amount of monthly financial support for the beneficiaries of international protection for at least the first 6 months after receiving the protection to the minimum wage for the main person in the family and at least 50% of it for every next person. So that they would be able to afford a more or less normal living space and other basic necessities, as well as dedicate more time for language learning and developing other skills (e.g. professional) during the first couple of months;
5. Develop psychological help services for beneficiaries of international protection. If there are no specialists that can speak the native languages of the beneficiaries of international protection, it is worth considering the Estonian Refugee Council's idea of online support services in this regard. This consists of specialists located in other countries who speak the necessary language providing sessions via video call;

6. Develop translating/interpreting services. For example, a good initiative has been started in Latvia, where interpreters assist in the first days of work for the beneficiaries of international protection. Also, translating and interpreting services should be developed in the health service sector. For example, several translators could have partnerships with the biggest hospitals that may be requested by the beneficiaries of international protection in advance the appointment with the doctor;
7. Motivate companies to employ beneficiaries of international protection by offering tax rebates;
8. In case of Latvia and Lithuania, review housing support granted to the beneficiaries of international protection, starting from the time they can spend in the Refugee Accommodation Centre for free after receiving international protection (in case of Latvia) – 2 weeks is a very short time to find an accommodation with such limited budget even for the locals, not talking about beneficiaries of international protection who experience additional issues in the housing market, continuing with a financial support at the beginning of moving out of the Refugee Accommodation Centers until beneficiaries are earning enough themselves to pay for the dwelling and other expenses;
9. In Latvia, equalize social benefit support for refugee status and subsidiary protection status holders, so that subsidiary protection status holders would also be able to receive child-birth support, family benefits, and be able to reunify with their family members as soon as possible;
10. In Estonia (and Latvia, but there it is already in process) review the duration of residence permits for beneficiaries of international protection, especially subsidiary protection status holders, so they would be able to focus more on the integration process rather than worry when they have to renew their residence permit again;
11. In Latvia and Lithuania, review the option to allow also subsidiary protection holders to be exempt from the necessity to provide a proof of the release of previous citizenship;
12. Continue cultivating local community's understanding of asylum seeker/ beneficiary of international protection situation, foster tolerance of the local community. Show positive examples of integration of beneficiaries of international protection to the public, as well as acknowledge their struggles and not that positive life stories. That can be done both in real life events, such as the Living Libraries that was organized in Latvia and cultural events

that have also been organized in the Baltic States, as well as interviews for the media. The latter might work in both ways – raising the tolerance of the local community as well as help beneficiaries of international protection to meet and get to know locals.

It is hoped by the author that this paper has given a brief overview of the current situation in terms of integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States, existing support mechanisms, the main problems, and some possible improvements. Nevertheless, the analysis does not fully reflect the situation. There is a need to have a deeper analysis of each area of integration separately. In Estonia and Lithuania, it should be done by the members of the local community, or someone who fluently speaks the local language, as during the research the author encountered problems of understanding some of the secondary sources as well as laws that were not translated into English. Furthermore, in further analysis members of the receiving societies and beneficiaries of international protection should be interviewed as well in order to get a more comprehensive view of the whole situation of integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis scientific advisor prof. Dr. habil.oec. Juris Krūmiņš. Prof. Krūmiņš was always available for consultations whenever I had a question about my research or wanted to show the progress of the study. Moreover, whenever he saw a good article, book or an event (including DemoMig) that could be useful for my research, he always suggested me to look at it. A lot of this information was very helpful. He consistently allowed this paper to be my own work, but steered me in the right direction whenever he thought I needed it. Therefore, I'm truly grateful for his help and support throughout the whole process of writing my thesis.

I would also like to thank the state institutions and NGOs, especially the individuals, who responded to my invitation to participate in the interviews and/or provided me with additional information sources: Agnese Lāce and the public policy think-tank PROVIDUS; Anu Viltrop and the NGO Estonian Refugee Council; Baiba Kiršteina, Gundega Bruņeniece, Ineta Piļāne and the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia; Dan Prits and the NGO Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus; Edgars Oļševskis and the Latvian Centre for Human Rights; Gunta Vīksne and the NGO "Shelter 'Safe House'"; Kristīne Lipiņa and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia; Kristiina Albi and Office of the Chancellor of Justice of the Republic of Estonia; Laura Perevičiūtė and the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania; Liina Laanpere and the Estonian Human Rights Centre; Līga Vijupe and the Asylum Affairs Division of the OCMA; Anne-Ly Reimaa from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia. This research would hardly be possible without them.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the lecturers of the Baltic Sea Region Studies program for the new knowledge I've gained within these two years.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my family, friends and colleagues for providing me with continuous support and encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. Special thanks to Kārlis Roberts Stuklis who gave valuable suggestions on language use. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

## REFERENCES

### Legal documents

*1950 European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and its' Protocols.* Available at: <https://www.echr.coe.int/pages/home.aspx?p=basictexts> [12 May 2020]

*Act on Granting International Protection to Aliens (entry in force: 01.07.2006.).* Available at: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530102013009/consolide> [11 May 2020]

*Asylum Law (entry into force: 19.01.2016).* Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/278986> [11 May 2020]

*Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 302 "Regulations Regarding the Single Financial Support and the Benefit for Covering the Subsistence Costs for a Refugee and Person who has acquired the Alternative Status" issued in accordance with Asylum Law Article 53 (11). (Entry into force: 06.06.2017).* Available at: <http://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=291311> [15 May 2020]

*Cabinet Order No. 759 "Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection" (entry into force: 02.12.2015).* Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/id/278257-action-plan-for-movement-and-admission-in-latvia-of-persons-who-need-international-protection> [11 May 2020]

*Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.* Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012P%2FTXT> [11 May 2020]

*Citizenship Act (entry into force: 01.04.1995).* Available at: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/530102013074/consolide> [26 May 2020]

*Citizenship Law (entry into force: 25.08.1998).* Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57512-citizenship-law> [21 May 2020]

*Council of Europe (2020). Chart of signatures and ratifications of Treaty 005 Convention of the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.* Available at: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/search-on-treaties/-/conventions/treaty/005/signatures?p\\_auth=7eMbxiH](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/search-on-treaties/-/conventions/treaty/005/signatures?p_auth=7eMbxiH) [15 May 2020]

*Description of the Procedure of Provision of State Support for the Integration of Persons Who Have Been Granted Asylum (in Lithuanian) (entry into force: 31.12.2014).* Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ee908ca090d211e4bb408baba2bddd3> [15 May 2020]

*Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (the Recast Qualification Directive).* Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32011L0095> [26 May 2020]

- Law on Citizenship (entry into force: 02.12.2010).* Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/7d4f43a1d63b11e69c5d8175b5879c31?jfwid=-ji9gtnhdw> [26 May 2020]
- Law on Legal Status of Aliens (entry into force: 29.04.2004).* Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/d7890bc0fa2e11e4877aa4fe9d0c24b0?jfwid=q86m1vvqg> [11 May 2020]
- Official Language Law of the Republic of Latvia (entry into force: 01.09.2000).* Available at: <https://m.likumi.lv/ta/id/14740-valsts-valodas-likums> [26 May 2020]
- Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013.* Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R0603> [26 May 2020]
- Saeima (2020). *Nr: 543/Lp13 Grozījumi Patvēruma likumā.* Available at: [https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/saeimalivs13.nsf/webAll?SearchView&Query=\(Title=\\*patv%C4%93ruma\\*\)&SearchMax=0&SearchOrder=4](https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/saeimalivs13.nsf/webAll?SearchView&Query=(Title=*patv%C4%93ruma*)&SearchMax=0&SearchOrder=4) [7 May 2020]
- The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.* Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html> [11 May 2020]
- United Nations: *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [11 May 2020]

## Other sources

- Abdulmajid, A. (2018). *Refugees in The Netherlands: Expectations and integration challenges.* Eburon Uitgeverij BV.
- Austers, A., Beitnere-Le Galla, D., & Rasnača, Z. (2019). *Patvēruma meklētāju problēma un tās risinājumi Eiropas Savienībā un Latvijā.* Latvijas Universitātes Akadēmiskais apgāds.
- Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BISS) (2017). *Trešo valstu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017: Pētījuma rezultātu ziņojums.* Ministry of Culture, EU. Available at: [https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas\\_integracija/Petijumi/TVP\\_petijuma\\_zinojums\\_2017-BISS.pdf](https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Petijumi/TVP_petijuma_zinojums_2017-BISS.pdf) [26 May 2020]
- Biedrība "Patvērums "Drošā māja"" (date unknown). *Biežāk uzdotie jautājumi.* Available at: <http://www.beglis.lv/lv/biezak-uzdotie-jautajumi> [12 April 2020]
- Blažytė, G. & Žibas, K. (2018). *Pabėgėlių integracija europoje – atsakingas požiūris: nacionalinio integracijos vertinimo mechanizmo (niem) projekto nacionalinė ataskaita. NIEM National Report 2018.* Diversity Development Group. Available at: <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub> [30 May 2020]
- Dzērve, L. & Fedotova, L. (2020). *Larisas stāsts. Par 'ekstrēmistiem' Krievijā pasludinātie Jehovas liecinieki patvērumu rod Latvijā.* DELFI Latvia. Available at:

- <https://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/larisas-stasts-par-ekstremistiem-krievija-pasludinatie-jehovas-licinieki-patverumu-rod-latvija.d?id=52078807> [10 May 2020]
- EMN Estonia (2018): *Annual Report on Migration and Asylum Estonia 2018*. Available at: [www.emn.ee](http://www.emn.ee) [22 May 2020]
- EMN Focussed Study (2015). *Integration of beneficiaries of international/humanitarian protection into the labour market: policies and good practices*. EMN Lithuania. European Commission. Available at: <http://emn.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Studija-EN.pdf> [30 May 2020]
- EMN Latvia (2019). *Institutional Framework for Migration and Asylum in Latvia*. Available at: [www.emn.lv](http://www.emn.lv) [26 May 2020]
- EMN Lithuania (2009). *The Republic of Lithuania practices regarding concerning the granting of non-EU harmonized protection statuses*. Vilnius. EMN. Available at: [http://www.iom.lt/images/publikacijos/failai/1427877705\\_16a\\_lithuania\\_national\\_report\\_non-eu\\_harmonised\\_forms\\_of\\_protection\\_final\\_version\\_11nov09\\_en.pdf](http://www.iom.lt/images/publikacijos/failai/1427877705_16a_lithuania_national_report_non-eu_harmonised_forms_of_protection_final_version_11nov09_en.pdf) [30 May 2020]
- EMN Lithuania (date unknown). *Migration statistics Lithuania: Asylum*. Available at: <https://123.emn.lt/en/#chart-27-desc> [9 May 2020]
- EMN Lithuania (last updated: 2019). *Statistics: Asylum*. Available at: <https://123.emn.lt/en/#asylum> [11 May 2020]
- Eriksoo, H. et al. (2018). *Migrants and refugees: Good practices in hospitals and healthcare services. Hope Survey*. HOPE Publications.
- Estonian Public Service Academy, European Migration Network (2010). *2008 Migration and Asylum Statistics Report of Estonia*. Tallinn. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/docs/migration-statistics/asylum-migration/2008/06a\\_estonia\\_annual\\_report\\_on\\_migration\\_and\\_international\\_protection\\_statistics\\_2008\\_version\\_21sept2\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/migration-statistics/asylum-migration/2008/06a_estonia_annual_report_on_migration_and_international_protection_statistics_2008_version_21sept2_en.pdf) [30 May 2020]
- European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations: *Forced displacement: refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people (IDPs)*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what-we-do/humanitarian-aid/refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what-we-do/humanitarian-aid/refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons_en) [30 May 2020]
- European Commission, EMN (2019). *AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.15 Early language support. Requested by UK EMN NCP on 29 January 2019*.
- European Commission (2018). *National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Implementation Plan 2019-2020*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/national-identity-civil-society-and-integration-policy-implementation-plan-2019-2020> [26 May 2020]

- European Commission (2018). *Special Eurobarometer 469: Integration of immigrants in the EU*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2169> [10 May 2020]
- European Commission (2020) *Asylum Statistics: Citizenship of first-time applicants*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics#Citizenship\\_of\\_first-time\\_applicants:\\_largest\\_numbers\\_from\\_Syria.2C\\_Afghanistan\\_and\\_Venezuela](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics#Citizenship_of_first-time_applicants:_largest_numbers_from_Syria.2C_Afghanistan_and_Venezuela) [10 May 2020]
- European Commission (date unknown) *Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en) [12 April 2020]
- European Commission (date unknown) *Common European Asylum System*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en) [11 May 2020]
- European Commission, EMN (2019). *AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.36 Refugee Employment Support. Requested by EMN NCP United Kingdom on 15 March 2019*.
- European Commission, EMN (2019). *AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.66 Access to housing for international protection holders. Requested by EMN NCP Italy on 20 June 2019*.
- European Commission: *European Agenda on Migration*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en) [30 May 2020]
- European Migration Network (date unknown). *EMN Glossary*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en) [11 May 2020]
- European Union (date unknown). *Goals and values of EU*. Available at: [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en) [10 May 2020]
- Eurostat (2016). *First-time asylum applicants in the EU 2015*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/asylum2015> [9 May 2020]
- Eurostat (2017). *First-time asylum applicants in the EU 2016*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/asylum2016> [9 May 2020]
- Eurostat (2018). *First-time asylum applicants in the EU 2017*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/asylum2017> [9 May 2020]
- Eurostat (2019). *First-time asylum applicants in the EU 2018*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/asylum2018> [9 May 2020]
- Eurostat (2020a). *Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded)*. Available at: [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asyappctza&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en)

- Eurostat (2020b). *First-time asylum applicants in the EU 2019*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/visualisations> [9 May 2020]
- Garcés-Mascareñas, B., & Penninx, R. (2016). *Integration processes and policies in Europe. Contexts, levels and actors*. Springer Open. IMISCOE Research Series.
- Government of the Republic of Estonia (2016). *The general attitude of Estonian residents towards migration and refugees has significantly improved*. Available at: <https://www.valitsus.ee/en/news/general-attitude-estonian-residents-towards-migration-and-refugees-has-significantly-improved> [9 May 2020]
- Government of the Republic of Estonia (last edited 2016). *Refugee Crisis*. Available at: <https://www.valitsus.ee/en/refugees> [12 April 2020]
- Hangartner, D. & Sarvimaki, M. (2017). *Dealing with the Refugee Crisis: Policy Lessons from Economics and Political Science*. Report for Finland's Economic Policy Council.
- Hofstede, G. (date unknown (c)). *The 6-D model of national culture*. Available at: <https://geerthofstede.com/culture-geert-hofstede-gert-jan-hofstede/6d-model-of-national-culture/> [11 May 2020]
- Hofstede, G. (date unknown(a)). *Cultural Dimensions. Country Comparison: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania*. Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/estonia,latvia,lithuania/>[11 May 2020]
- Hofstede, G. (date unknown(b)). *Cultural Dimensions. Country Comparison: Syria, Russia*. Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/russia,syria/>[11 May 2020]
- Information Centre for Newcomers (date unknown). *The mobile application "First Steps in Latvia"*. Available at: <http://www.integration.lv/en/the-mobile-application-%E2%80%9Cfirst-steps-in-latvia%E2%80%9D>[11 May 2020]
- Juchno, P. (2007). *Statistics in focus: Population and Social Conditions, Asylum Applications in the European Union, 110/2007*. European Communities. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3433488/5285137/KS-SF-07-110-EN.PDF/c95cc2ce-b50c-498e-95fb-cd507ef29e27> [30 May 2020]
- Kantane, I., Sloka, B., Buligina, I., Tora, G., Busevica, R., Buligina, A., ... & Tora, P. (2015). *Expectations by employers on skills, knowledge and attitudes of employees*. European Integration Studies, (9). Available at: <http://www.eis.ktu.lt/index.php/EIS/article/view/12809/7202> [26 May 2020]
- Kim, J. & Liu, M. (2018). *Primary Data Analysis. The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

- Krišjāne, Z., Krūmiņš, J. (zin. redaktori) (2020). *Izaicinājumi un risinājumi ilgspējīgas sabiedrības attīstībai Latvijā. Reģionālo ideju darbnīcu rezultātu apkopojums Rīga, Pierīgā, Vidzemē, Kurzemē, Zemgalē, Latgalē*. Rīga: LU, VPP DemoMig.
- Kules, R. (2015). *In person: Pavel's successful integration in Lithuania*. UNHCR Vilnius. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/914-in-person-pavels-successful-integration-in-lithuania.html> [22 May 2020]
- Kursa-Garkakle, K. (2015) *Starptautiskās/ humānās aizsardzības saņēmēju integrācija darba tirgū Latvijā: politika un labās prakses piemēri*. EMN Latvia, OCMA. Available at: <http://www.emn.lv/?p=2221> [30 May 2020]
- Lāce, A. (2017). *How to measure asylum seeker and refugee integration?* Available at: <http://providus.lv/en/articles/9459/print> [22 April 2020]
- Lāce, A., Geks, R.F. (2018). *Starptautiskās aizsardzības saņēmēju integrācijas izvērtēšana un uzlabošana. Sākotnējais izvērtējums: Latvija*. PROVIDUS. (Under the project National Integration Evaluation Mechanism: Measuring and Improving Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection (NIEM)). Available at: <http://providus.lv/article/starptautiskas-aizsardzibas-sanemeju-integracijas-izvertesana-un-uzlabosana-sakotnejais-izvertejums-latvija> [30 April 2020]
- LRT TV naujienu tarnyba, LRT.lt (2019). *Lithuanians grow more hostile towards refugees, survey shows*. Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1103656/lithuanians-grow-more-hostile-towards-refugees-survey-shows> [9 May 2020]
- Luik, E. (2018). *EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum: Estonia 2018*. EMN Estonia. Available at: <https://www.emn.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/emn-annual-report-on-migration-and-asylum-estonia-2018.pdf> [30 May 2020]
- Migration Department under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (date unknown). *Long-term residence*. Available at: <https://www.migracija.lt/en/ilgalaikis-gyvenimas> [24 May 2020]
- Migration Department under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (date unknown). *Asylum procedure in Lithuania*. Available at: <https://www.migracija.lt/en/noriu-gauti-prieglobst%C4%AF-lr> [11 May 2020]
- Migration policy institute (date unknown). *Immigrant integration*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/topics/immigrant-integration> [10 May 2020]
- Ministry of Social Security and Labour (date unknown). *Integration of foreigners*. Available at: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/en/activities/social-integration/integration-of-foreigners> [10 May 2020]
- Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (last edited: 2020). *Integration of Asylum Beneficiaries*. Available at: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/en/activities/social-integration/integration-of-foreigners/integration-of-asylum-beneficiaries> [11 May 2020]

- MIPAS (date unknown (a)). *Integration Centres*. Available at: <https://mipas.lt/en/2017/11/22/integration-centers-2/> [25 May 2020]
- MIPAS (date unknown (b)). *Integration of foreigners who have been granted asylum*. Available at: <https://mipas.lt/en/2017/11/24/integration-of-foreigners-who-have-been-granted-asylum/> [25 May 2020]
- MIPEX (2015a). *Country profiles: Estonia*. Available at: <http://www.mipex.eu/estonia> [11 May 2020]
- MIPEX (2015b). *Country profiles: Latvia*. Available at: <http://www.mipex.eu/latvia> [11 May 2020]
- MIPEX (2015c). *Country profiles: Lithuania*. Available at: <http://www.mipex.eu/lithuania> [11 May 2020]
- MIPEX (date unknown). *What is MIPEX?* Available at: <http://www.mipex.eu/what-is-mipex> [11 May 2020]
- NGO “Shelter “Safe House”” (date unknown). *Information for newcomers: Mastering Latvian Language*. Available at: <https://patverums-dm.lv/en/mastering-latvian-language> [4 May 2020]
- Nurmela, K. & Anniste, K. (2016). *Labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees: Estonia*. European Commission. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15905&langId=en> [30 May 2020]
- OCMA (date unknown (a)) *Pilsonības un migrācijas lietu pārvaldes statistika: Patvēruma meklētāji*. Available at: <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/statistika/patveruma-mekletaji.html> [11 May 2020]
- OCMA (date unknown (b)). *Patvēruma piešķiršanas procedūra Latvijā*. Available at: <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/pakalpojumi/iecelosana-lv/patveruma-meklesana/patveruma-pieskirsanas-procedura.html> [11 May 2020]
- PBGB (date unknown). *International protection*. Available at: <https://www.politsei.ee/en/instructions/international-protection> [24 May 2020]
- Persaud, N. (2012). *Interviewing. Encyclopedia of Research Design*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Platform for Migration Information and Cooperation (date unknown). *Integration of Foreigners who have been granted asylum*. Available at: <https://mipas.lt/en/2017/11/24/integration-of-foreigners-who-have-been-granted-asylum/> [11 May 2020]
- Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB) (2020). *Long-term residence permit*. Available at: <https://www2.politsei.ee/en/teenused/residence-permit/pikaajalise-elaniku-elamisluba/> [26 May 2020]

- Portāls nra.lv (2017). *Bēgļu pieredze par dzīvi un cilvēkiem Latvijā*. Available at: <https://nra.lv/latvija/208814-beglu-pieredze-par-dzivi-un-cilvekiem-latvija.htm> [11 May 2020]
- PROVIDUS (2018). *Izvērtējums par Patvēruma, migrācijas un integrācijas fonda 2014. – 2020. gada plānošanas perioda mērķa grupas apmierinātības izvērtējumu par Nacionālās programmas ietvaros sniegtajiem pakalpojumiem*. Ministry of Culture, AMIF. Available at: [https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/PMIF/rezultati/Izvertejums\\_PROVIDUS.pdf](https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/PMIF/rezultati/Izvertejums_PROVIDUS.pdf) [18 May 2020]
- Puķe, I. (10 – 16 October 2019). *Pilotprojekts*. Journal IR.
- Rātfelders, T. (2020) *Vai Eiropa ir jaunas migrācijas krīzes priekšvakarā?* Available at: <https://www.tvnet.lv/6913437/vai-eiropa-ir-jaunas-migracijas-krizes-prieksa> [11 May 2020]
- Renkuos Lietuva (2020). *Lithuanian language classes*. Available at: <https://www.renkuosilietuva.lt/en/lithuanian-language-classes/>[9 May 2020]
- Robila, M. (2018). *Refugees and Social Integration in Europe*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Available at: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila\\_EGM\\_2018.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila_EGM_2018.pdf) [30 May 2020]
- Rozenberga, M., LSM (2020) *Biedrības vadītājs par bēgļiem Latvijā: sabiedrības attieksme mainās, bet politiskās gribas trūkst*. Available at: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/biedribas-vaditajs-par-begliem-latvija-sabiedribas-attieksme-mainas-bet-politiskas-gribas-trukst.a347658/> [29 April 2020]
- Saliņa, R. (2020). *Infografika: Integrācijas mācību kursā pērn piedalījušās 138, bet latviešu valodu mācījušās 68 starptautiskās aizsardzības personas*. Available at: <https://patverums-dm.lv/lv/atbalsta-pasakumi-starptautiskas-aizsardzibas-personam-ii> [11 May 2020]
- Sander, M. & Bach, C. (2018). *From war in Syria to pastries in Tallinn*. UNHCR. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/20563-from-war-in-syria-to-pastries-in-tallinn.html> [11 May 2020]
- Settle in Estonia (last edited 2020). *The international protection module*. Available at: <https://www.settleinestonia.ee/en/the-international-protection-module/> [10 May 2020]
- Society Integration Fund (2018). *Atvērtība ir vērtība*. Available at: [https://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=10454%3AAtv-ertiba-ir-vertiba&catid=14%3AJaunumi&Itemid=186&lang=lv](https://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10454%3AAtv-ertiba-ir-vertiba&catid=14%3AJaunumi&Itemid=186&lang=lv) [27 April 2020]
- Society Integration Fund (2019). *Aptauja: iedzīvotāju viedoklis par etniskajām attiecībām Latvijā*. Available at: [https://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=10603%3AApt](https://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10603%3AApt)

[auja-iedzivotaju-viedoklis-par-etniskajam-attiecibam-Latvija&catid=14%3AJaunumi&Itemid=186&lang=lv](#) [10 May 2020]

State Employment Agency (date unknown). *Information for asylum seekers, refugees and persons with subsidiary protection status*. Available at: <https://begluintegracija.nva.gov.lv/en/> [26 May 2020]

Statistical Office of Estonia, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, Statistics Lithuania (2015). *2011 Population and Housing Censuses in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania*.

The Guardian (2020). *Turkey: Erdogan holds talks with EU leaders over border opening*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/09/turkey-erdogan-holds-talks-with-eu-leaders-over-border-opening> [10 May 2020]

UNHCR (2006), *UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms*. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/42ce7d444.html> [11 May 2020]

UNHCR (2008). *UNHCR Statement on Subsidiary Protection Under the EC Qualification Directive for People Threatened by Indiscriminate Violence*. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/479df7472.pdf> [10 May 2020]

UNHCR (2013a). *A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Europe*. Available at: [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) [22 May 2020]

UNHCR (2013b). *The Integration of resettled refugees essentials for establishing a Resettlement Programme and fundamentals for Sustainable Resettlement Programmes*. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/52a6d85b6.pdf> [30 May 2020]

UNHCR (2014). *Integration of refugees in Lithuania: Participation and Empowerment*. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/lt/8928-integration-of-refugees-in-lithuania-participation-and-empowerment.html> [26 May 2020]

UNHCR (2015). *Integration of refugees in Latvia: Participation and Empowerment*. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/58a4877c4.html> [26 May 2020]

UNHCR (2016). *Integration of refugees in Estonia: Participation and Empowerment*. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/586e251d4.html> [26 May 2020]

Wright, H., ERR news (2019). *First Refugee Christmas bazaar takes place in Tallinn*. Available at: <https://news.err.ee/1013188/gallery-first-refugee-christmas-bazaar-takes-place-in-tallinn> [26 May 2020]

Maģistra darbs „Integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Baltic States” (Starptautiskās aizsardzības saņēmēju integrācija Baltijas valstīs) izstrādāts Latvijas Universitātes Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

Autore: Lelde Maija Līce \_\_\_\_\_

/paraksts un datums/

Rekomendēju darbu aizstāvēšanai

Vadītājs: profesors Dr. habil.oec. Juris Krūmiņš \_\_\_\_\_

/paraksts un datums/

Recenzents: profesore Dr. oec. Biruta Sloka

Darbs iesniegts Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē \_\_\_\_\_

Lietvede: \_\_\_\_\_

Darbs aizstāvēts maģistra gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē \_\_\_\_\_

protokols nr. \_\_\_\_\_, vērtējums \_\_\_\_\_

Komisijas sekretāre: lektore Dr. hist. Inese Runce \_\_\_\_\_

/paraksts/