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Everybody is person
Everybody want live

MONITORING REPORT **2025**



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The Lithuanian Red Cross is a non-governmental organization that provides social, humanitarian, and legal assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other migrants regardless of their legal status.

Adhering to the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the Lithuanian Red Cross strives to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being, to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs and without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions, and does not engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

This report summarizes the information collected in 2025 by the monitoring team of the Lithuanian Red Cross in the framework of the project funded by the United Nations Refugee Agency.

When evaluating the collected data, the monitors of the Lithuanian Red Cross rely on their professional expertise and many years of experience in the field of migration and asylum. We are grateful to our partners and colleagues for their additional insights.

This report is for information purposes only and does not create / entail rights or legal obligations in dealing with individual cases.

Lithuanian Red Cross. (April 2026). *Monitoring Report 2025*

Photos: Lithuanian Red Cross

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AUTHORS' NOTE

When analysing 2025, one's eyes are drawn to unexpected figures that prompt a paradoxical question: why did the number of asylum seekers decrease in almost all European Union countries, while in Lithuania, on the contrary, it increased (albeit slightly, but still grew to some extent)? What is really behind these figures and what do they say about the actual situation? Or more precisely – do they reflect the real situation, or do they instead mislead and create an illusion for those who do not work with this every day?

Although the main purpose of our work as observers of the Lithuanian Red Cross is not to answer precisely these questions, in order to understand the context and explain certain phenomena at the national and regional level, let us try to analyse to what extent (if at all) these figures correlate with the situation and trends observed in recent years.

We would like to begin the introduction to the 2025 monitoring report by noting that for perhaps the first time (excluding the chaotic period of 2021–2022, when all foreigners were de facto detained together under identical conditions, regardless of their different legal status) we had the opportunity to collect so much high-quality and representative information from foreigners under the responsibility of the competent state authorities, some of whom were not necessarily asylum seekers. This is precisely what can help answer the above-mentioned questions and explain how one becomes an asylum seeker in Lithuania and what this depends on. Without all this, statistics would remain just dry numbers that surprise us, while reality seems to suggest a completely different picture.

The reason why in 2025 we had broader access to foreigners (not only to asylum seekers but also to those seeking to become such) was the establishment of a new institution – the Reception and Integration Agency. Over the course of the year, the vast majority of foreigners who arrived in Lithuania in various ways – in ways provided for by law as well as irregularly, those transferred under the Dublin III Regulation, those who had served their sentence in places of imprisonment, etc. – came under its responsibility. The new institution took into its own hands the entire process of ensuring reception conditions and services – from material provision, living conditions, catering, medical, psychological and interpreting services to vulnerability assessments and age-determination procedures. This burden was not an easy one, and 2025 brought quite a few surprises – an increased number of residents in the centres, including unaccompanied children moving through Lithuania, as well as a changed demographic profile. The picture of countries of origin changed. For example, Somalia unexpectedly appeared in the second place in the statistics on countries of origin of asylum seekers. The gender ratio of arriving foreigners also changed. In 2025, when visiting reception and detention centres, we met more young women than ever before, along with the aforementioned minors and other vulnerable persons. All this posed additional challenges for the state as to how to respond to needs and risks related to possible exploitation, human trafficking, the provision of quality communication, etc.

We see that Lithuania remains an intensive transit point reflecting the general situation in the region, where, from Finland to Poland, strict national deterrence measures are applied to those seeking to enter the European Union irregularly. A continuous flow of foreigners (almost two and a half times more than in 2024) moved through our country from the Latvian side; they were apprehended in the Šiauliai, Panevėžys and Utena counties, and often in other rather unexpected parts of the country. The border with Poland became a kind of bottleneck in this complicated transit journey through Lithuania. On the neighbouring country's side, foreigners were apprehended and returned to Lithuania; these were people who had previously managed to cross Lithuania or enter our country irregularly from Belarus and continue their journey to Poland, which introduced external border controls in the summer of 2025.

In light of this, we raise the question of whether, given the sharp decrease in the number of asylum seekers arriving directly in Lithuania through border crossing points and across the so-called “green border”, the increased Lithuanian figures are not related to side circumstances – to put it simply, a no-way-out situation in which an asylum application is accepted when a person is not “taken over” by a Latvia that is at an impasse or by a principled Poland. More than once we have observed that foreigners who had been waiting for something undefined for a long time in de facto detention conditions eventually became asylum seekers not necessarily because they actively sought this themselves, but because this uncertainty, from a purely legal perspective, has to “materialise” or even “be legalised” while a person awaits further steps, for example, while in formal medical quarantine.

Another distinctive feature observed in 2025 was asylum seekers who are Ukrainian citizens. Although, for example, in nearby Estonia Ukrainians make up the majority of asylum seekers in that country, in Lithuania we had not seen such a trend over the past few years. Meanwhile, in 2025 we observed some growth, when Ukrainian citizens somewhat unexpectedly appeared in fourth place in the statistical table. We mention Ukrainian citizens in the context of access to the asylum procedure – to which we have devoted particular attention in recent years – not by coincidence. This target group, much like asylum seekers from the countries of Central Asia or the Caucasus, often does not fall into the category of newly arrived persons, i.e. those who, after regular or irregular border crossing and first contact with Lithuanian officials, immediately invoke the need for international protection. In other words, they end up in the asylum procedure later and under different circumstances, which are known to us as observers and to our colleagues, the lawyers of the Lithuanian Red Cross, but whose analysis in the context of monitoring is not a priority.

We can only imagine, when trying to model the situation of a possible increase in the number of asylum seekers, what it would look like if at least half of the nearly 400 unaccompanied children who were in Lithuania and whose access to the asylum procedure is not restricted had submitted asylum applications in 2025. However, in our conversations with them, we repeatedly heard that the fear of being returned to Latvia, which for many foreigners is associated with not the best memories of experiences at the border (violence, aggression, “pushbacks”) and of overcrowded temporary accommodation or detention centres (Latvia’s situation is a déjà vu of what Lithuania experienced in 2021–2022), as well as the fear of experiencing indirect return (chain refoulement) to Belarus in general, even if such fear is unfounded, led to the fact that there were very few unaccompanied children in the asylum procedure and that they most often absconded.

To conclude this introduction, we would like to remind the reader once again that the reception of asylum seekers (and other foreigners who may have corresponding needs), which includes material conditions, living arrangements, services received, etc., has long since ceased to fit within the framework of the monitoring that was carried out until 2021. Our activities are naturally evolving and require a broader conceptual approach – from a person’s fundamental right to asylum to the path that must be taken to reach the basic freedoms and rights of each individual. Therefore, we hope that this short introduction will at least partly provide some context and make it easier to read the extensive and complex report, in which, among other things, particular attention has for several years been devoted to the effectiveness of access to the asylum procedure, restrictions on freedom of movement in foreigners’ centres, and interinstitutional cooperation, for example when, after an exception is applied, a person admitted to the country due to a critical state of health ends up in a medical institution, and so on.

Let us sincerely hope that in 2026 there will be much more transparency and clarity, when the Member States of the European Union, under the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, begin to carry out at least minimal independent monitoring of the initial screening.

The material for this report in 2025 was systematically documented and collected through our communication with hundreds of foreigners accommodated or detained in the premises of institutions with which the Lithuanian Red Cross has agreements, as well as with those persons who ultimately did not end up under the responsibility of Lithuanian institutions. In summarising the information obtained, we also relied on comments and clarifications received from the state institutions themselves, analysed documents, and cooperated with our lawyer colleagues, whose competence is to provide legal insights. The scope of the information collected during monitoring always includes open sources of information as well – both at the national and international level.

Enjoy your reading!

Justina Karaliūtė and Stasys Vaitonis, the monitoring team of the Lithuanian Red Cross

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Agency – Reception and Integration Agency

ASD – Asylum Seekers' Dormitory

BCP – Border Crossing Point

DDF – Dormitory for Detained Foreigners

DDW – Dormitory for Women Detainees

DVP – Dormitory for Vulnerable Persons

ECtHR – European Court of Human Rights

EU – European Union

EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum

Eurostat – European Union Statistics Office

FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

FD – Frontier District

FRB – Foreigners' Reception Building

FRC – Foreigners' Registration Center

FRONTEX FRO – Fundamental Rights Officer of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

FS – Frontier Station

LLSF – Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Foreigners

LR – Republic of Lithuania

LRC – Lithuanian Red Cross

MD – Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania

MIGRIS – Lithuanian Migration Information System

MFC – Multi-Functional Centre

MoI – Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania

MoSSL – Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization(s)

NPHC – National Public Health Centre

RIO – Rules of Internal Order

SBGS – State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees / UN Refugee Agency

S U M M A R Y

- The total number of asylum seekers in Lithuania grew slightly compared with 2024. In 2025 there was also a greater diversity of countries of origin – 40 (in 2024 – 30). Compared with 2024, the number of applications registered by the State Border Guard Service remained almost identical, while the number of applications registered by the Migration Department increased by about 8 per cent.
- Compared with 2024, the number of asylum seekers arriving through border crossing points on the borders with Belarus and the Russian Federation fell five-fold. Since the spring of 2023 (for more than two and a half years), not a single asylum application from Russian citizens has been accepted at Lithuanian border crossing points. In 2025 the Lithuanian Red Cross recorded 10 incidents in which persons applied for asylum at Lithuanian border crossing points, but their asylum applications were not accepted and the persons were forced to return to Belarus or Russia. At the same time, the number of applications registered after a person crossed the border irregularly was higher in 2025. However, it should be noted that the majority of them entered the European Union irregularly via Latvia and were later apprehended in Lithuanian territory or transferred to Lithuania from Poland. In 2025, the number of asylum applications accepted from foreigners arriving irregularly directly to Lithuania decreased. The same applies to Belarusian citizens, who in recent years have constituted the majority of irregularly arriving asylum seekers for whom the State Border Guard Service usually made exceptions and did not “push back”.
- In 2025, “push-backs” at the border with Belarus were about 40 per cent more frequent than in 2024. A significant proportion of persons at the border are “deterred” from crossing irregularly, i.e. in many cases border guards had no contact with those persons and only observed them moving on the other side of the border. The statutory exceptions for “humanitarian reasons” were applied in 2025 to only 1 per cent of all those who tried to cross the border at an unauthorised place. Irregular border crossing remains dangerous to health and life. In 2025, at least 2 deaths were known at the border with Belarus (the bodies of another 2 persons were found near the border, but geographically on the Belarusian side). Two cases were observed where foreigners who had crossed the border irregularly were hospitalised in Lithuania due to critical health conditions; in one case, partial amputation of the legs was performed. In other cases, bodily injuries were observed resulting from attempts to overcome the physical barrier – a fence with segments of cutting concertina wire. Testimonies were collected from persons about injuries suffered by foreigners at the Belarusian and Latvian borders: dog bites, the use of electric devices, physical and psychological violence, etc. Among those injured were children.
- In 2025 there was a marked increase in the number of unaccompanied foreign children moving through Lithuanian territory. When apprehended in Lithuanian territory or transferred from Poland, unaccompanied children were directed from border units to the designated Rukla Reception Centre (in 2025, 378 unaccompanied children were admitted). The Lithuanian Red Cross has no data indicating that unaccompanied children were detained or that they lacked access to the asylum procedure (apart from cases where persons left the Rukla Reception Centre, reached Poland and were transferred back to Lithuania after a medical age-assessment procedure was carried out in the neighbouring country). A significant number of them (268) left in 2025; another 94 unaccompanied children under the responsibility of the Reception and Integration Agency were transferred to Latvia under a readmission arrangement.

- In 2025, no systemic non-compliance with reception and protection standards was observed in border units. In essence, all necessary conditions were ensured; at times the level of reception depended on the preparedness of a specific border unit to receive asylum seekers and on the practices applied. In 2025 it was not observed that asylum seekers in border units were held in detention facilities, although in one case asylum seekers were subjected to disproportionate restrictions on freedom of movement. In isolated cases it was observed that, for example, necessary hygiene items were not ensured, not all premises were suitable for accommodating asylum seekers, and excessively strict movement-restriction measures were applied, but these were not recurring trends, rather they were due to infrastructural limitations or practices applied by individual units, and recommendations were therefore issued on how to change or at least minimise these practices.
- Persons travelling in transit from Latvia through Lithuania who did not yet have the status of asylum seekers were most often *de facto* detained at the Pabradė Reception Centre and spent a relatively short period – up to 24 hours – in border units. Persons from whom information was collected indicated that during their stay in border units they were usually not allowed to use telephones, could not wash, and were not provided with hygiene items, but they received food packages and water.
- In 2025 the newly established Reception and Integration Agency units faced a heavy workload because of an unexpectedly increased number of residents, particularly the Pabradė and Rukla reception centres. With the sharp increase in the number of unaccompanied children in the Rukla Reception Centre, deficiencies in recommended reception and protection standards were observed (too many people accommodated in one room, a lack of lockable individual lockers). Nevertheless, during the year the centre changed its accommodation organisation arrangements and adapted to the changes, ensuring a greater reserve of living space for unaccompanied children and ordering additional furniture. Unaccompanied children brought from border units were immediately provided with sets of clothing and footwear, an initial food ration, a primary medical assessment, the opportunity to wash, and a cash allowance for food and minor expenses.
- Another issue relevant for the Rukla Reception Centre (including the Girionys unit) and the Vilnius Reception Centre was the accommodation of temporary protection beneficiaries and the related challenges. First, due to a shortage of places, it became necessary to accommodate together single persons who had previously lived separately. While the residents of the centres had already come to terms with the fact that they would have to pay for accommodation services, the issue of personal space and privacy caused some dissatisfaction. It should be noted that the staff of the Rukla and Vilnius Reception Centres managed to calm the mood of the residents and explain the reasons for the changes. The second challenge was communication and the response concerning fixed-term accommodation contracts, which meant that a significant number of residents of these centres would have to leave the accommodation where some of them had spent two or three years. The staff made efforts to inform them in advance, to look for alternatives and to empower the residents themselves to look for solutions independently.
- The Rukla and Vilnius Reception Centres in 2025 stood out for good information dissemination, involvement of residents, and organisation of leisure and activities. Conditions were created for residents' self-organised activities, with sufficient spaces both indoors and outdoors, for example greenhouses, small gardens, etc. Minor residents also had fairly good conditions. Except for unaccompanied children, who often absconded, all other minors attended educational institutions during the year.

- A specific feature of the newly established Pabradė Reception Centre in 2025 was the constantly changing population, whose number was increasing. Over the year, the centre received more than a thousand persons, and the previously unused floors of the new multifunctional building were put into operation. The centre was not fully prepared for such a number of residents, and therefore, during the year, there was a constant lack of written information in common areas, the supply of season-appropriate clothing and footwear was not ensured, and communication between residents and staff was limited due to a lack of interpreters. It should be mentioned that the vast majority of newly arrived residents had come to Lithuania from the territory of Latvia, and restrictions on freedom of movement were applied to them. This led to additional tensions and difficulties in ensuring the possibility to leave the centre temporarily, access to the asylum procedure, and the provision of information on decisions taken with regard to these persons, etc.
- A fundamental change in 2025 was the transfer of responsibility for ensuring reception conditions from the State Border Guard Service. After the Reception and Integration Agency became responsible for ensuring reception conditions and providing services at the Foreigners' Registration Centre operating in Pabradė, there were considerable difficulties in cooperation and information exchange between the two institutions, as well as in monitoring emerging needs. For these reasons, challenges arose during the year, for example in ensuring that detained foreigners had the opportunity to go outside regularly, or in repairing non-functioning infrastructure in a timely manner. One of the main problematic areas observed at the Foreigners' Registration Centre was that the Reception and Integration Agency essentially did not organise regular leisure activities for detainees.
- A major change in 2025 was the application of mandatory medical isolation (quarantine) at the Pabradė Reception Centre. Until autumn 2025, an open-ended quarantine was applied to all persons newly brought to the centre, regardless of the circumstances of their entry into Lithuania and their state of health. Sometimes the quarantine lasted for up to a month. In September, following an explanation from the National Public Health Centre, the application of quarantine fundamentally changed. Although the taking of blood samples and chest X-rays to detect tuberculosis remained a mandatory procedure, if, upon a person's arrival and after an initial examination by medical staff, there were no indications that the person was suffering from infectious diseases, isolation is no longer applied, and the person waits for further tests and their results in common living areas together with other persons.

I. MONITORING 2025: NUMBERS AND FACTS

In 2025, monitoring was carried out by two monitors of the Lithuanian Red Cross (hereinafter – LRC). The principle of gender equality was ensured in the performance of activities, i.e. depending on the circumstances, information that was sensitive or confidential from the gender perspective could be collected by a female monitor or a male monitor. Monitoring was carried out on the basis of the agreement of 2 June 2010 between the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – SBGS), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (hereinafter – UNHCR) and the LRC, as well as the agreement of 16 May 2025 between the Reception and Integration Agency under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Agency) and the LRC[1].

Monitoring objectives: (1) to **observe** (to have access to the places for lodging asylum applications defined in legal acts, documents, asylum seekers, etc.), (2) to **collect and assess** (to objectively record how procedures are carried out, whether reception and protection conditions comply with standards and legal acts, and to analyse the collected material), (3) to **inform** (to provide information to and cooperate with the competent state authorities which have the obligation to ensure appropriate reception and protection conditions) and to strive for change needed to ensure the fundamental rights of asylum seekers.

Monitoring is carried out on the basis of the guidelines of the European Union Agency for Asylum (hereinafter – EUAA) on reception conditions for asylum seekers[2], the guidelines on reception conditions for unaccompanied children[3], the practical registration guide on lodging applications for international protection[4], practical recommendations for conducting registration remotely[5], other complementary EUAA guidelines, Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection[6], the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Foreigners[7], and other national and international legal acts, agreements and recommendations.

[1] Prior to that monitoring of the Agency facilities had been carried out pursuant to the February 27, 2020 agreement between the LRC and the Refugee Reception Centre, whose functions were taken over by the newly established Agency.

[2] See EASO, Guidance on Reception Conditions: Operational standards and indicators, September 2016:

<https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/guidance-reception-conditions>

[3] See EASO, Guidance on Reception Conditions for Unaccompanied Children: Operational standards and indicators, December 2018:

<https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/guidance-reception-conditions-unaccompanied-children>

[4] See EASO, Practical Guide on Registration: Lodging of applications for international protection, December 2021:

<https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-guide-registration>

[5] See EASO, Practical Recommendations on Conducting Remote/Online Registration (Lodging), May 2020:

<https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-recommendations-conducting-remoteonline-registration-lodging>

[6] See Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32013L0033>

[7] See Republic of Lithuania Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/fr/legalAct/TAR.42837E5A79DD/asr>

1. LRC MONITORING STATISTICS

In 2025, LRC monitors carried out 50 visits, all of them in person, i.e. by being physically present at the place where monitoring was carried out. For half of the visits – 25 – two LRC monitors went due to the scope of the monitoring. Part of the monitoring visits were carried out by LRC monitors together with UNHCR representatives. For more detailed information on the exact dates, locations, nature and purpose of monitoring visits, see *Annex 1: "Monitoring Statistics"*.

In 2025, 59 monitoring reports were prepared, including more extensive, continuous thematic monitoring reports dedicated to access to the asylum procedure, updated for 2025. The number of monitoring visits and reports differs because: (1) during some visits more than one monitoring activity was carried out, for example monitoring access to the asylum procedure (including preliminary interviews), as well as reception and protection conditions; (2) the aforementioned thematic monitoring report and several other reports were based not only on information collected during specific visits, but also on interviews conducted in person, by telephone or via social networks, as well as on processing publicly available data, communicating with competent state authorities, etc.; (3) some reports were internal and submitted only to UNHCR. The consolidated annual monitoring report was prepared on the basis of all 2025 reports, including internal reports and those for which no physical monitoring visits were carried out, but information was collected in other ways.

For comparison, in 2024 two more monitoring visits were carried out (52, all in person), and a few more reports were prepared (65).

LRC monitors traditionally calculate another indicator that is no less important – feedback from institutions: comments provided after reports are submitted, expressed needs to supplement them, initiated interinstitutional meetings and discussions. In 2025, 16 reports (one third of all reports) received feedback. In 2024, institutional comments were also provided on 16 reports.

2. ASYLUM STATISTICS

2.1. National statistics

According to the data provided by the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – MD), **in 2025 the number of registered asylum applications increased slightly (including repeated applications, as over the course of the year the MD, when providing figures, does not distinguish those who applied for asylum for the first time). If in 2024 a total of 362 asylum applications were registered in Lithuania (including repeated ones), in 2025 there were 381, or 5 per cent more**[8]. The number of asylum applications in the country increased for the first time since 2021.

The highest numbers of applications for asylum were registered in May (46), July (45), September (46) and October (48). The lowest numbers were registered in April (11) and June (19). In all other months, the number of asylum applications exceeded 20. For more on the situation regarding the lodging of asylum applications in Lithuania in 2025, see *Annex 2: "SBGS and National Statistics"*.

In 2025, the number of countries of origin of asylum seekers also increased. Asylum applications in 2025 were lodged by **citizens of 40 countries** (in 2024 – 30). For several years in a row, citizens of Belarus have dominated the statistics on countries of origin (83 applications). However, the number of Belarusians, compared with 2024, fell almost by half, and the gap with applicants from other countries was not as large. In 2025, new countries of

[8] See Asylum statistics, Migration department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania: <https://migracija.lrv.lt/lt/statistika/menesine-migracijos-statistika/prieglobscio-statistika/>

origin appeared in the irregular migration flow from Latvia, which adjusted the overall statistics. Somalia stood out in particular (46), overtaking the Russian Federation (34) in the statistical table, whereas in recent years Russia had been among the leading countries alongside Belarus. A significant number of applications continued to be lodged by citizens of Ukraine (29) and Tajikistan (24), which completes the top five – these are foreigners who generally do not fall into the irregular migration category. The increase in the number of Ukrainian asylum seekers began to be observed already in 2024. For no other country did the number of asylum applications lodged by its citizens reach 20 in 2025.

For more on countries of origin of asylum seekers, see *Annex 2: “SBGS and National Statistics”*.

2.2. SBGS statistics

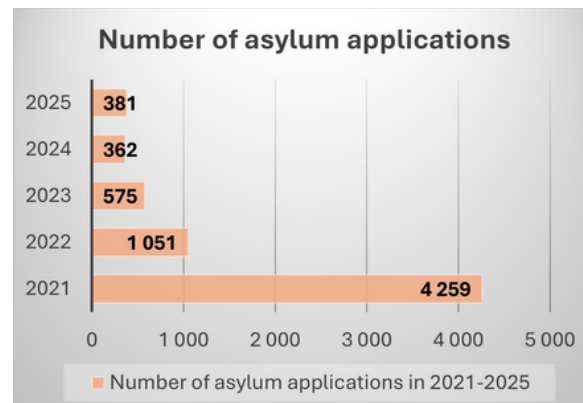
Border Guard Service (hereinafter – SBGS), which, among other things, contains disaggregated data on applications for asylum registered by the SBGS and overall national asylum statistics, including applications registered in the territorial units of the MD. The SBGS breaks down statistical data into: (1) applications lodged at SBGS border crossing points (BCPs); (2) applications lodged at the border and within the territory of the country. The second category includes asylum applications registered at SBGS frontier districts (hereinafter – FD) and

stations (hereinafter – FS) (after an irregular border crossing or when a foreign national is apprehended in the territory of Lithuania, as well as when the application is registered within the country), applications registered by the MD and in both centres located in Pabradė. Accordingly, the statistics are broken down by place of lodging: 1) MD; 2) SBGS BU; 3) SBGS Foreigners’ Registration Centre (hereinafter – FRC); 4) Pabradė Reception Centre (hereinafter – RC).

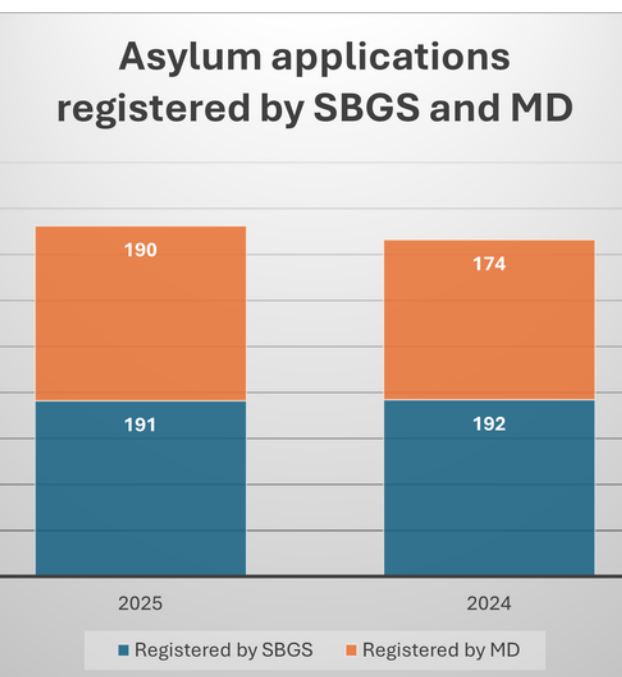
According to SBGS data, 381 asylum applications were registered in Lithuania in 2025. Of these, 7 were registered at SBGS BCPs[9], 23 – at SBGS FDs or FSs, 48 – at the SBGS FRC, and 190 – in the territorial units of the MD. A total of 84 applications were lodged by persons accommodated at the Pabradė RC by court decision or decision of the SBGS (they were registered by officers of the SBGS FRC). Another 29 applications were lodged by persons who had been transferred to Lithuania under the Dublin III Regulation[10]. These statistics coincide with the MD figures presented above.

Compared with 2024, the number of applications registered by the SBGS remained almost identical, while the number of applications registered by the MD increased by about 8 per cent.

For more on the distribution of asylum seekers by month and place of registration, see *Annex 2: “SBGS and National Statistics”*.



COMPARING WITH 2024, THE NUMBER OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS REGISTERED BY THE SBGS REMAINED SIMILAR, WHILE THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS REGISTERED BY THE MD INCREASED BY ABOUT 8 PER CENT



[9] Compared to the LRC data, one asylum seeker, who arrived via road BCP, appears in the SBGS statistics not under the BCP, but rather under FD/FS category.

[10] Compared to the LRC data, there is a significant difference in numbers of asylum seekers transferred pursuant to Dublin III regulation. It's possible that the MD considered some of asylum applications lodged by these Dublin transferrees as renewed rather than subsequent.

2.3. Lithuania in the EU context

According to the data of the EU statistical office (hereinafter – Eurostat) for the first nine months of 2025, the numbers of first-time asylum applicants in the Member States can also be seen[11]. The data show that while the change in the number of asylum applications in Lithuania was slight, overall in the EU the number of first-time asylum applicants in 2025 decreased significantly.

LITHUANIA, TOGETHER WITH HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA AND MALTA, IS AMONG THE EU COUNTRIES REGISTERING THE LOWEST NUMBERS OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS

Lithuania, together with Hungary, Slovakia and Malta, remains among the EU Member States registering the lowest numbers of asylum applications. The situation is similar when comparing Lithuania in the regional context, where similar migration trends prevail. According to Eurostat data for the first nine months of 2025, not only neighbouring Poland, with 8,235 first-time registered asylum applications, but also Latvia (920) and Estonia (775) registered significantly more asylum applications.

During the first nine months of 2025, the total number of first-time asylum applications registered in the EU was 506,635 (data for the 27 EU Member States), which is almost 26 per cent fewer than in the same period in 2024. As in 2024, the top five countries registering the highest numbers of applications in 2025 were the same, but Germany, with 86,515 first-time registered asylum applications (more than twice less compared to the same period in 2024), was overtaken by three countries – Spain (106,615), France (93,645) and Italy (91,800). Greece (40,840) completes the top five. These countries registered more than 80 per cent of all asylum applications lodged in the EU.

For more on asylum seekers in the EU by country, see [*Annex 3: “EU Asylum Statistics”*](#).

[11] By the end of January 2026, the Eurostat has made available the full 2025 statistics for Lithuania, which showed that in 2025 the number of first-time applicants in Lithuania had slightly increased.

[12] See. Eurostat, Data Browser, Asylum and first time asylum applicants – monthly data 2025 January - September, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00189/default/table?lang=en>



II. BORDER MONITORING

1. GENERAL STATISTICS

1.1. SBGS Notifications Regarding Asylum Applicants

In 2025, LRC monitors received notifications from the SBGS concerning 206 persons who submitted asylum applications^[13] (for comparison, in 2024 notifications were received concerning 196 persons who submitted asylum applications, or approximately 5 percent fewer than in 2025). Of the asylum applicants 182 were adults (146 men, 36 women); 24 were children (18 boys, 6 girls); 6 of them were unaccompanied.

The SBGS notifications concerned nationals of 36 countries (for comparison, 26 countries in 2024). The largest numbers of applications were submitted by nationals of Ukraine (26), Belarus (19), Iraq (17), Somalia (16), Tajikistan (13), Pakistan and Iran (11 each), and Afghanistan (10). The number of applications submitted by nationals of other countries did not reach 10: Russian Federation (9), Azerbaijan (8), Eritrea (7), Algeria, India, Uzbekistan (5 each), Egypt, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka (4 each), Cameroon, Moldova, Syria, Türkiye (3 each), Kazakhstan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Morocco (2 each), Armenia, Bangladesh, Guinea-Bissau, Ecuador, Ghana, Israel, China, Kyrgyzstan, Colombia, Nigeria, Sudan (1 each), and one stateless person.

The LRC collects data received from SBGS border units (FD, FS, BCP) and the FRC. These statistics also include information on subsequent asylum applications, as well as asylum-seeking foreigners transferred under the Dublin III Regulation, transferred from correctional institutions, identified within the territory of the country as lacking the right to remain in Lithuania, and others. Various changes occurred during the process. For example, new circumstances emerged regarding asylum applicants' declared country of origin, some persons withdrew their applications, transfers to neighboring countries took place on the basis of readmission, and so forth. For these reasons, minor statistical discrepancies are possible, for example when compared with the aggregated statistics published by the SBGS.

According to LRC data, in 2025 the SBGS registered at least 142 first-time asylum applications (excluding applications submitted by persons transferred under the Dublin III Regulation, some of whom also submitted applications for the first time). 8 asylum applicants arrived through SBGS BCP (5 through the external border with Belarus and the Russian Federation, 3 through an airport); at least 14 persons crossed directly from Belarus into Lithuania irregularly; at least 72 persons irregularly crossed the EU external border in neighboring countries (or

[13] Here and throughout, a "notification" is understood as information about the planned registration of an asylum application, rather than an application that has actually been registered. The statistics include all notifications received, without distinguishing cases where applications were subsequently not registered for one reason or another.

COMPARED WITH 2024, THE NUMBER OF ASYLUM SEEKERS ARRIVING THROUGH BCPS DECREASED SEVERAL TIMES OVER, WHILE THE NUMBER OF ASYLUM SEEKERS WHO CROSSED THE EU BORDER IRREGULARLY AND REACHED LITHUANIA INCREASED. HOWEVER, THE NUMBER OF ASYLUM SEEKERS ARRIVING DIRECTLY AND IRREGULARLY IN LITHUANIA DECREASED, ESPECIALLY AMONG CITIZENS OF BELARUS

arrived in Lithuania without having the right to do so) and were detained while transiting through Lithuania or were subsequently transferred from Poland; at least 3 persons submitted asylum applications after arriving legally from other EU countries or while transiting through Lithuanian territory from third countries with authorization to do so. Part of the asylum-seeking population consisted of foreigners transferred to the SBGS from correctional institutions, as well as persons who had previously resided legally in Lithuania but had lost that right, failed to comply with an obligation to leave the country, and so forth. At least 31 foreigners submitted a subsequent asylum application.

Compared with 2024, the number of foreigners arriving through border crossing points declined several times over. The number of foreigners who crossed the border directly into Lithuania irregularly (particularly Belarusian citizens) also decreased significantly. At the same time, in 2025 the number of asylum applicants who had irregularly crossed the EU external border in neighboring countries, traveled through Lithuania, and were detained or transferred from Poland increased[14]. This is primarily linked to the situation in Latvia and the irregular migration flow passing through that country and reaching Lithuania.

More information concerning the profile of asylum applicants, the distribution of countries of origin according to mode of arrival, and the SBGS border units that submitted the greatest number of notifications to the LRC is provided in *Annex 4: "LRC-Collected Data"*.

2. ACCESS TO THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE

As in previous years, access to the asylum procedure remained the principal area of concern within LRC monitoring activities in 2025. The state-level emergency situation declared in 2021 due to the "mass influx of foreigners from the Republic of Belarus"[15] remained in force throughout 2025. No legislative amendments were adopted that would facilitate foreigners' access to the asylum procedure in Lithuania. On the contrary, various legislative amendments further narrowed the opportunities to seek asylum. Under the legal framework currently in force in Lithuania during the emergency situation, asylum may be requested in three ways: (1) by submitting an application to the SBGS at a BCP or in a transit zone; (2) by submitting an application to the SBGS or the MD within the territory of the Republic of Lithuania; (3) by submitting an application at consular offices or diplomatic missions of the Republic of Lithuania while abroad.

2.1. Possibility of Seeking Asylum at Border Crossing Points

According to LRC data, in 2025, for the first time since 2023, asylum applications were registered at international railway BCPs (a total of two applications on the border with Belarus). Meanwhile, compared with 2024, the number of asylum applications accepted at road BCPs fell fivefold and was the lowest since the 2020–2021 period, when international migration was restricted due to the coronavirus pandemic. **Since spring 2023 (for more than two and a half years), not a single asylum application from a Russian citizen has been accepted at Lithuanian BCPs.**

According to data provided by the SBGS, during eight months of 2025 (January, February, June, July, August,

[14] See: "Flows of Illegal Secondary Migration from Latvia More Than Doubled Last Year," 2026-01-06, SBGS: <https://vsat.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/neteisetos-antrines-migracijos-is-latvijos-srautai-pernai-isaugo-daugiau-kaip-dukart-LUA/>

[15] Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the declaration of a state-level emergency, the appointment of the head of state-level emergency operations, and the strengthening of the protection of the state border of the Republic of Lithuania [version of 2025-11-20]: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/ad73a4c1dc0011eb866fe2e083228059/asr> [2025-11-20 redakcija]

October,[16] November, and December), no asylum applications were submitted at any BCP. Further comparative statistics are provided in *Annex 4: "LRC-Collected Data"*.

The LRC possesses information concerning a total of 10 cases in which asylum applications were not accepted at the external border with Belarus and Russia (including cases where asylum applications were repeatedly not accepted from the same individuals who arrived at BCPs on different days or at different BCPs on the same day). Most incidents occurred at road BCPs on the Belarusian border, but incidents were also recorded at a road BCP on the Russian border and at both railway BCPs (on the Belarusian and Russian borders), through which transit passenger trains from Russia operate. Further information regarding these incidents and the overall 2025 situation is available in *"Access to the Asylum Procedure at Diplomatic Missions of the Republic of Lithuania Abroad and at SBGS BCPs. 2025 Update"*[17].

It should be noted that at the end of 2025, due to meteorological balloons allegedly used for smuggling purposes that disrupted Lithuanian airspace and airport operations, BCPs operating on the Belarusian border were temporarily closed for one night. When the situation repeated itself, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania temporarily closed the Šalčininkai BCP for three weeks and restricted travel through the Medininkai BCP. Representatives of the SBGS maintained that these measures had no impact on access to the asylum procedure.

2.2. Possibility of Seeking Asylum After Crossing the Border Irregularly

According to the Law on the State Border and Its Protection,[18] during a declared state-level emergency resulting from a mass influx of foreigners, the Government, upon proposal of the National Security Commission, may decide not to admit foreigners who have crossed or intend to cross the border irregularly and who are located within the border area. Such a Government resolution concerning the non-admission of persons who crossed the border irregularly was adopted in 2023 and remained unchanged in 2025. The law states that the non-admission provision must be applied individually in every case and is not applicable when "the foreigner is fleeing armed conflicts specified in the Government decision, as well as persecution as defined in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or seeks entry into the territory of the Republic of Lithuania for humanitarian purposes." In essence, this statutory provision indicates that foreigners who cross the border irregularly may be "pushed back" to the country from which they arrived (Belarus or the Russian Federation). However, this provision applies only if the person is located within a five-kilometre border zone and should not be applied in the exceptional situations specified above.

Nevertheless, although the corresponding Government resolution was adopted, no list of armed conflicts was incorporated into it. As a result, throughout 2025 the exception concerning persons fleeing armed conflicts continued not to be applied. It is important to emphasize that the SBGS procedure governing the individual assessment of persons who cross the border irregularly is not public. Therefore, the LRC does not know who is responsible for determining, and by what means, whether a person crossing the border irregularly is fleeing persecution. Such an assessment should be time-intensive, interpreters are often necessary, and communication with foreigners is frequently required. However, practice indicates that pushbacks are carried out while foreigners remain in natural terrain and often immediately after entering Lithuanian territory. In such situations, the assessment described by law would have to be conducted, for example, in a forest over a period of minutes or hours, using interpreters and a competent SBGS officer. Particular attention should be drawn to the fact that in 2025 SBGS press releases frequently stated that some foreigners counted in pushback statistics had never actually entered Lithuanian territory (for example, they remained behind the physical barrier fence). Without any direct physical contact, they were "deterred" from entering Lithuanian territory. In other words, instead of

[16] One asylum seeker who, in the LRC statistics for October 2025, was classified as arriving through a BCP was listed in the SBGS summary under the SBGS FS section, i.e., the application was accepted not at a BCP but at another SBGS structural unit.

[17] See: Access to the Asylum Procedure in Diplomatic Missions of the Republic of Lithuania Abroad and at Border Crossing Points of the State Border Guard Service, Update 2025, Lithuanian Red Cross: <https://redcross.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/PRIEIGA-PRIE-PROCEDUROS-LT-2025.pdf>

[18] See: Law on the State Border and Its Protection of the Republic of Lithuania [version of 2025-07-01]: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.101063/asr> [2025-07-01 redakcija]

conducting an individual assessment, foreigners were frightened into not approaching Lithuanian territory[19]. It is likely that the overwhelming majority of foreigners attempting to cross the border irregularly are either deterred from crossing or pushed back to Belarus without a comprehensive individual assessment being conducted. The SBGS website publishes daily statistics on pushbacks carried out on the previous day, indicating how many persons attempting to cross irregularly from Belarus into Lithuania were denied entry.

The conclusion that a comprehensive individual assessment is not being carried out is partly supported by the statistics for 2025:

- During the year, 1,652 “pushbacks” were carried out at the Lithuanian–Belarusian border (it should be noted that the statistics presented refer to the number of pushbacks carried out, not to the number of individual persons who attempted to cross the border. It is likely that some foreigners attempted to cross the border several times; therefore, the number of unique individuals who attempted to cross the border is somewhat lower);
- According to data from the Official Statistics Portal of the State Data Agency, in 2025, 29[20] persons were admitted into Lithuania after irregularly crossing the border from Belarus. According to data available to the LRC, among these 29 persons there were 5 Belarusian citizens (asylum applications registered by the SBGS immediately after crossing the border), 3 citizens of the Russian Federation (asylum applications registered by the SBGS immediately after crossing the border), 2 Iranian citizens (asylum applications registered some time later in a medical institution and in one of the SBGS border units) (see *Hospitalized Asylum Seekers*), 1 Sri Lankan citizen (asylum application registered some time later in a medical institution) (see *Hospitalized Asylum Seekers*), a group of 8 persons from Afghanistan and Pakistan (detained in Poland and transferred to Lithuania), a group of 3 persons from Iran and Iraq (detained in Poland and transferred to Lithuania), while the LRC has no information about another 7 persons (all admitted on the same day).

After assessing the statistics and excluding 11 persons who managed to reach Poland (these cases are not counted because the persons were admitted into the territory after being transferred from Poland, i.e., they were not in the border area at that time and therefore could not have been subject to “pushbacks”), it can be seen that, out of 1,652 pushbacks, the exception allowing entry into the territory was applied to at most[21] 18 persons, or only approximately one percent of those attempting to cross the border[22].

Immediately after irregular border crossings, only 8 asylum applications were registered in 2025 – an exceptionally low number. For comparison, in 2024, the asylum applications of 41 persons were registered at border units immediately after irregular border crossings.

While in 2024, after a break, cases of irregular border crossings at the border with the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation and accepted asylum applications were observed (all submitted by Russian citizens), no such cases were observed in 2025. It is true that at the end of the year the SBGS officially announced at least one person (a Russian citizen) detained at the border with Russia; however, it was not indicated that this person had submitted an asylum application[23]. LRC monitors also received no reports from the SBGS regarding asylum seekers arriving irregularly at the border with Russia in 2025. The LRC has no information indicating that “pushbacks” are being carried out at the border with the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation.

[19] See: “39 Illegal Migrants Failed to Enter Lithuania from Belarus on Monday,” 2025-10-21, SBGS: <https://vsat.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/pirmadieni-i-lietuva-is-baltarusijos-nepateko-39-neteiseti-migrantai-video-y27/>

[20] See: Official Statistics Portal, “Monitoring of Illegal Migration (since 2021-01-01)”: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/neteiseta-migracija-dashboard>

[21] The term “at most” is used on the assumption that the group of 7 persons unknown to the LRC may have been identified in the border area and not subjected to a “pushback.” However, such a scenario is unlikely, because if asylum had been requested at an SBGS border unit, the LRC would have been informed immediately.

[22] It should be noted that the statistics on “pushbacks” do not reflect the exact number of individuals who attempted to cross the border, but rather the number of crossing attempts. Therefore, the LRC does not know how many individual persons attempted to cross the border, and the percentage calculation is only approximate.

[23] See: “Russian Citizen Will Spend New Year’s in Lithuania Behind Bars,” 2025-12-31, SBGS: <https://vsat.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/rusijos-pilietis-naujus-metus-lietuvoje-pasitikis-uz-grotu-jxr/>

Despite legal and physical obstacles (the physical barrier erected at the border, surveillance cameras, difficult climatic conditions during certain seasons, etc.), which reduce the possibility of requesting asylum after an irregular border crossing, the number of attempts to cross the border irregularly increased in 2025 (1,652 persons) compared with 2024 (1,002 persons). In many cases, persons attempting to cross the border irregularly and seeking asylum are forced to choose methods that pose risks to their health and lives. According to representatives of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – Mol), entering Lithuania irregularly is extremely difficult: *“Lithuania currently applies comprehensive state border protection measures – a physical barrier has been erected on the border with Belarus, the state border is monitored using modern surveillance systems, and rapid responses to incidents are ensured. Due to these measures, it is essentially impossible to enter the territory of the Republic of Lithuania illegally through the ‘green’ border”*[24]. When communicating with asylum seekers who crossed the Lithuanian–Belarusian border irregularly and are accommodated or detained in temporary accommodation and detention centres for foreigners, LRC monitors usually ask them to share their border-crossing experiences (their testimonies are presented below). It should be noted that, according to information available in the media, in 2025 the remains of 2 deceased persons – presumably foreigners – were found at Lithuania’s border with Belarus. In one of the reported cases, the remains of 3 persons were found in a river, although 2 bodies were geographically located on the Belarusian side of the border. In 2025, two cases were also observed in which foreigners who had crossed the border irregularly were hospitalized in Lithuania due to critical health conditions; one of them underwent foot amputations.

Dangers and Risks When Crossing the Border Irregularly

- In the first quarter of 2025, a woman and a man **crossed the border by river using an inflatable rubber boat**[25]. Before crossing the border, they stated that they had practiced how to inflate the boat as quickly as possible. According to them, after launching the boat into the water, they were noticed by a fisherman on the Belarusian side. According to the female asylum seeker, the fisherman quickly left the area, but the asylum seekers could hear him calling someone and speaking about (quote) “objects in front of him”.
- In the first quarter of 2025, a woman stated that she **crossed the border by walking across a frozen river**; during the crossing her shoes became soaked and some of her clothing became wet.
- In the second quarter of 2025, a woman **crossed the border via a river using an inflatable mattress**. She stated that she inflated the mattress using an electric pump, lay on it, and crossed the river in that manner. The river crossing took approximately 20 minutes.
- In the second quarter of 2025, a man stated that he **crossed the border by climbing over the fence erected at the border**[26]. According to him, he brought a ladder, leaned it against the fence, and climbed to the top. After reaching the top, he had to jump down to the Lithuanian side, but failed because his hand became caught in a section of the fence fitted with razor wire. He then fell to the ground (on the Lithuanian side) and injured his back. When SBGS officers arrived, the asylum seeker was bleeding heavily from his hand. His hand was bandaged on site, and emergency medical services were called because of the injuries. At the medical institution he was diagnosed with a spinal vertebra contusion, and two fingers on his hand were stitched and bandaged.
- In the second quarter of 2025, a man stated that he **crossed the border by climbing over the fence erected at the border**. According to him, after reaching the fence he set up a ladder, threw his backpack onto the Lithuanian side, and then attempted to climb over. Once on top of the fence, he stated that he pressed down the razor wire with his foot and hand, tearing his sock and cutting his hands in the process. He simply jumped from the top of the fence onto the Lithuanian side and sustained no additional injuries during the jump.
- In the third quarter of 2025, a man stated that he **crossed the border by climbing over the fence erected at the border**. According to him, after reaching the fence he set up a ladder and, once at the top, threw his backpack onto the Lithuanian side in order to soften the impact of the jump. According to the man, the jump onto the Lithuanian side was successful; he only slightly scratched his palm and did not require medical assistance.

[24] See: “Lithuanian Government Response to Attempts by the Belarusian Regime to Change Hybrid Attack Tactics at the Border”:

<https://vrm.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/baltarusijos-rezimo-bandymams-keisti-hibridines-atakos-taktika-pasienyje-lietuvos-vyriausybes-atsakas/>

[25] Here and throughout, the exact period and location of the border crossing are not specified due to the risk of revealing the identities of potential asylum seekers.

[26] See: Construction of the Physical Barrier on the Border with Belarus (2022), EPSO-G: <https://www.epsog.lt/lt/projects/fizinio-barjero-priesienos-su-baltarusija-irengimas-1>

- In the third quarter of 2025, a man stated that he **crossed the border by wading through a lake**. He stated that he crossed the lake at night, but while in the water he noticed officers patrolling on the Belarusian side and illuminating the area with flashlights. As a result, he could not cross directly and had to change direction in order to find a place to hide. After changing the planned crossing route, the asylum seeker stated that he had to pass through a swamp, where he became stuck. He reported that he suffered no serious injuries during the crossing, only tearing his trousers and scratching his legs.

2.3. Possibility to Apply for Asylum Within the Country (Secondary Migration from Latvia)

In recent years, an inseparable element of access to the asylum procedure has been the so-called “secondary migration from Latvia.” As the arrival of foreigners through BCPs is restricted and crossings of the state border at unauthorized locations are prevented, a significant proportion of asylum seekers have arrived irregularly not directly from Belarus into Lithuania, but via Latvia, subsequently moving through Lithuanian territory and being detained by Lithuanian authorities or reaching Poland and then being transferred to Lithuania[27]. Compared to 2024, this flow more than doubled. In 2025, officers of the SBGS detained 1,288 foreigners who had no right to remain in Lithuania and who had either been transported from Latvia or had traveled independently from Latvia, whereas in 2024 there were 540 such persons[28].

In previous years, the LRC monitors lacked information regarding access to the asylum procedure in Lithuania for persons arriving from Latvian territory because they had limited access to such persons throughout the year. Since, in 2025, the majority of such individuals were accommodated by decision of the SBGS at the Agency (with intensive restrictions on freedom of movement), the situation regarding access changed—the LRC representatives had the opportunity to meet with a large proportion of the target group regardless of their legal status (only a small number of them were asylum seekers).

As mentioned above, while present in Lithuanian territory, foreigners may express a need to seek asylum either to the MD or to the SBGS—institutions which are in turn responsible for registering asylum applications. Nevertheless, in 2025 numerous cases were observed in which, despite a person being present in Lithuania and communicating with both responsible institutions, it took one month or more before they succeeded in submitting an asylum application. The commonly observed practice was that persons accommodated at the Pabradė RC stated that they had written asylum applications several times and handed them over to the Pabradė RC staff, but their asylum applications were not registered. In an attempt to determine the reasons why asylum applications were not being registered, the LRC contacted both the Agency and representatives of the SBGS FRC. Representatives of the Agency indicated that they forwarded all applications addressed to the SBGS to SBGS representatives, while representatives of the SBGS FRC stated that they register all asylum applications received, regardless of whether the person may be transferred to Latvia under a readmission agreement or not. When the institutions were asked how many such asylum applications the Agency had transferred to the SBGS in 2025, representatives of the Agency stated that they do not maintain such statistical information, while representatives of the SBGS FRC stated that the Agency had transferred 25 asylum applications to them. Given that the Agency does not maintain official statistics on how many and what types of applications it has transferred to the SBGS, it is impossible to verify whether all applications are forwarded and, accordingly, how the SBGS responds to them.

Representatives of the SBGS FRC further indicated that, upon receiving asylum applications, they organize an interview with the applicant, explain the person’s legal situation, the consequences of submitting an asylum application, etc. (for example, if a person arrived in Lithuania via Latvia, without being an asylum seeker they would be transferred to Latvia under the readmission agreement and the transfer would likely occur within 30

[27] No data are available on how many of these persons may have entered the EU not through Latvia but, for example, through Estonia or Finland. This does not change the fact that all such foreigners must pass through Latvian territory before arriving in Lithuania. The term refers to persons who arrived in Lithuania from Latvia and were subsequently detained in Lithuania or transferred to Lithuania from Poland. While in Lithuania, such persons typically await readmission to Latvia.

[28] See: Flows of Illegal Secondary Migration from Latvia More Than Doubled Last Year, 2026-01-06, SBGS: <https://vsat.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/neteisetos-antrines-migracijos-is-latvijos-srautai-pernai-isaugo-daugiau-kaip-dukart-LUA/>

days; however, if they applied for asylum, they would be transferred to Latvia under the Dublin III Regulation, which would take longer, but the final outcome would be identical, i.e., the person would end up in Latvia). It should be noted that persons interviewed by the LRC who claimed to have sought asylum never indicated that such conversations had taken place with them or that they had changed their minds about the need to seek asylum in Lithuania as a result of such conversations.

Cases were also observed in which persons living at Pabradė RC—that is, in a territory where one of the institutions accepting asylum applications, the SBGS, operates in neighboring buildings—submitted asylum applications that received no response and therefore contacted the MD by email. Persons who sent emails to the MD stating that they wished to seek asylum in Lithuania received standard-form responses explaining how to apply for asylum in Lithuania, including the possibility of submitting an asylum application to the MD. In other words, while physically present in Lithuania, these persons contacted both institutions responsible for registering asylum applications, yet their applications were not registered; they were only provided with general information on how to seek asylum in Lithuania. It should be noted that their freedom of movement was restricted; they were not permitted to leave the centre’s territory and travel independently to a territorial office of the MD.

Despite the aforementioned cases, which were not isolated incidents, in 2025 there were also cases in which asylum applications submitted by persons involved in “secondary migration from Latvia” were registered. According to data available to the LRC, in 2025 at least 72 asylum seekers who had arrived from Latvia or had been transferred from Poland[29] were registered in Lithuania, which almost matched the situation in 2023 (75). By contrast, in 2024 there were significantly fewer such cases – 13. Given the complex circumstances surrounding the arrival of asylum seekers in Lithuania, the LRC possesses only approximate information regarding how many asylum seekers arrived in Lithuania from Latvia. The LRC also has no information as to what determines whether a person’s asylum application will be accepted. Nevertheless, persons belonging to the target group who were encountered during visits most often indicated that they had submitted asylum applications several times before their applications were finally registered.

The situation was somewhat different for unaccompanied or separated children who entered the EU via Latvia. When individual children or groups of children were detained (including after being transferred from Poland), they were directed from SBGS border units to the Rukla RC, which is designated for this purpose. The LRC has no information suggesting that unaccompanied children were detained or lacked access to the asylum procedure (except in cases where unaccompanied children left the Rukla RC, were detained in Poland, where during the year they began to be subjected to medical age-assessment procedures, and were subsequently transferred back to Lithuania with an indication that the persons were adults).

Summary

- **Although legal exceptions exist allowing asylum applications to be registered after an irregular border crossing, such exceptions are applied extremely rarely (most often to Belarusian citizens or in cases of critical health conditions; however, even such cases were far fewer in 2025 than in previous years).**
- **According to the legal framework, before persons are “pushed back,” an individual assessment should be conducted to determine whether an exception should be applied. However, it is more likely that a comprehensive individual assessment is not carried out, and that some persons at the border are simply “deterred” from attempting an irregular crossing; that is, SBGS officers often have no contact with these persons at all.**

[29] Foreigners arriving from Latvia and those transferred from Poland are not distinguished, because in many cases it is impossible to determine precisely the circumstances of their entry into EU territory, or the testimonies provided by the foreigners themselves differ substantially. It cannot be ruled out that foreigners transferred to Lithuania from Poland may also have arrived via Latvia and crossed Lithuanian territory in transit.

- Although it is legally possible to apply for asylum at operating international BCPs, in 2025 the number of asylum seekers arriving through the external border with Belarus fell fivefold – only 5 asylum applications were registered. In 2025, the LRC recorded 10 incidents in which persons arrived at Lithuanian BCPs but their asylum applications were not accepted, and they were forced to return to Belarus or Russia.
- Persons present in Lithuania who had arrived via Latvia were often unable to submit an asylum application in Lithuania, or succeeded in doing so only after several attempts.

3. RECEPTION AND PROTECTION CONDITIONS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SBGS BORDER UNITS

In 2025, LRC monitors carried out 13 monitoring visits concerning reception and protection conditions in SBGS border units. Ten visits were conducted in the FS, and three – at the BCPs. The most frequently visited was the A. Barauskas FS (3 times); Kapčiamiestis FS, Švenčionys FS, Vilnius Airport FS, and Kybartai Road BCP were each visited twice; Druskininkai FS and Kena Railway BCP were each visited once. Compared to previous years, LRC monitors conducted fewer monitoring visits to border units in 2025. For comparison, twice as many monitoring visits were carried out in border units in 2024 – 27 visits – and 25 visits in 2023. This change was essentially caused by the significant decrease in the number of asylum applications registered in border units.

General Practices

In 2025, the practice continued whereby asylum seekers were accommodated in border units for the shortest possible period, usually 1–3 days. The exact duration spent in a border unit essentially depended on when the asylum seeker was brought to the unit – on a working day, in the evening, or during a weekend. Initial procedural actions (initial interview, fingerprinting, etc.) are usually carried out only on working days, and accordingly, decisions of the MD regarding registration and accommodation of asylum seekers are also received only on working days. Therefore, all procedural actions are generally completed on the first working day following the asylum seeker's arrival in Lithuania. Depending on the individual situation (the asylum seeker's preferences and the MD's accommodation decision), some asylum seekers are transferred from border units to foreigner accommodation or detention centres, while others depart independently to a place of residence of their own choosing.

It should be noted that no systemic problems regarding reception and protection conditions in border units were observed. In essence, everything depends on the specific border unit and the suitability of its infrastructure for receiving asylum seekers. For example, during every visit to the Vilnius Airport FS, it was concluded that reception conditions did not meet recommended standards; however, this was most often due to the location of the station itself – the unit is situated in part of the Vilnius Airport building where there are no windows. Because of this location, natural daylight does not enter the asylum seekers' rooms, they are not provided with the opportunity to go outside, etc. In essence, the situation regarding reception conditions would only change if the entire location of the FS were changed.

It should be noted that in all border units the recommended standard of providing asylum seekers with warm, thermally prepared food at least once per day is not fully met. In all border units, a dry food package is provided, which typically includes canned meat, canned vegetables, breadsticks, instant porridge or noodles, instant coffee, tea, water, and similar items. In certain cases, the food package includes a military-style instant or otherwise prepared meal. It should be noted that the provision of instant products can essentially be regarded as providing the opportunity to prepare hot food, considering that in all observed cases asylum seekers were given access to an electric kettle.

Since the establishment of the Agency in 2025, this institution has been responsible for ensuring the provision of food, hygiene items, and clothing to asylum seekers who end up in SBGS units. Nevertheless, during all visits to border units, the SBGS confirmed that asylum seekers were being issued food and hygiene packages from SBGS reserves and that new packages from the Agency had not reached the border units. However, on 25 April 2025, the SBGS informed the LRC that on 24 April 2025 the Agency had transferred 50 food packages to the SBGS, which were to be distributed among border units. In all cases, however, SBGS representatives stated that they had not requested assistance from the Agency and at that time had sufficient food products and hygiene items specifically intended for asylum seekers[30].

Recommendations Issued in 2025

During monitoring of border units in 2025, no critical failures to meet recommended standards were recorded. Unlike previous years, there were no cases in 2025 where asylum seekers were accommodated in detention facilities or where they were not allowed to use a telephone. However, a regulatory change that entered into force at the beginning of 2025, requiring the registration of all new prepaid SIM cards[31], became an additional obstacle to ensuring asylum seekers' communication with the outside world, particularly when they did not possess identity documents or when their documents had been temporarily taken after accommodation/detention.

During 9 of the 13 visits, no deficiencies in relation to recommended reception and protection standards were observed, and therefore no recommendations were issued. It should be noted that during all visits to A. Barauskas FS, Kapčiamiestis FS, Švenčionys FS, and Kybartai Road BCP, it was concluded that recommended reception and protection conditions were ensured. Corrective issues were observed during two visits to the Vilnius Airport FS, during a visit to Kena Railway BCP, and during a visit to Druskininkai FS.

In addition to the aforementioned fundamental problem at Vilnius Airport FS related to the location of the unit, recommendations were issued during both visits concerning the provision of a full hygiene package to asylum seekers. In both observed cases, asylum seekers only had access to previously used hygiene products left in the sanitary facilities (shampoo and soap). In other border units, the practice is to provide asylum seekers with an individual package containing at least a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, and soap (the exact contents vary depending on the border unit). A case was also observed in which an asylum seeker with mobility difficulties was temporarily accommodated at Vilnius Airport FS and was unable to fully use the sanitary facilities because they were not adapted for persons with mobility disabilities. It was recommended that persons with mobility difficulties, especially those not arriving directly through Vilnius Airport, be temporarily accommodated in another border unit with specially adapted infrastructure (for example, Medininkai BCP in the particular case).

During one of the visits to Vilnius Airport FS, as well as during the visit to Kena Railway BCP, it was observed that some of the food products being distributed had passed their expiration dates. It should be noted that observations made two years earlier (2023) at Kena Railway BCP had been taken into account – in the case observed in 2025, asylum seekers were provided with the opportunity to go outside temporarily, and a window handle had been left in the room, ensuring the possibility of opening the window.

For several consecutive years, identical reception deficiencies have been observed at Druskininkai FS, related to intensive control of the risk that asylum seekers might abscond. Container-type housing units located on the station's premises are used to accommodate asylum seekers. For several years in a row, a situation has been observed whereby asylum seekers detained at Druskininkai FS are continuously kept locked inside these container units, are not allowed to communicate with persons with whom they arrived but who were detained separately (including relatives), armed SBGS officers remain on constant guard, and asylum seekers wishing to

[30] Based on interviews with persons encountered in foreigners' centres, there is information indicating that in certain cases the SBGS also provides food and/or hygiene packages to foreigners detained in border units for being illegally present in Lithuania; however, the contents of those packages may differ, may be incomplete, or otherwise vary.

[31] See SIM Card Registration and Changed Number Prefixes: What Is Important to Know from the New Year?, 2025-01-02, lrt.lt: <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/mokslas-ir-it/11/2450945/sim-korteliu-registracija-ir-pasikeitusi-numeriu-pradzia-ka-svarbu-zinoti-nuo-naujuju>

use the sanitary facilities must call officers through a window so that they can be let out. The same situation was observed during the 2025 visit, when spouses were detained in separate container units. It should be noted that the spouses were separated to ensure their safety because there was insufficient information confirming that they were indeed related through marriage. Such a practice, whereby asylum seekers of different genders are accommodated/detained separately until all relevant circumstances are clarified, is generally consistent with applicable recommendations. Nevertheless, the continued problematic aspect is not only the limited possibility for asylum seekers to go outside, but also the restriction on communication among themselves, for example during the daytime. Where there are uncertainties regarding family relationships but no indications that one person may pose a threat to another, they should at least be provided with a minimal opportunity to communicate with each other.

Summary

- During all visits to A. Barauskas FS, Kapčiamiestis FS, Švenčionys FS, and Kybartai Road BCP, it was concluded that recommended reception and protection conditions were being ensured.
- No systemic problems concerning reception and protection conditions were observed – the conditions provided depended primarily on the preparedness of the particular border unit to receive asylum seekers and on the practices applied there.
- In 2025, there were no cases observed where asylum seekers were held in detention facilities within border units – in most cases they were accommodated in designated rooms (except at Druskininkai FS, where intensive detention practices were applied to asylum seekers, including locking the doors of the container units and maintaining constant armed guard presence).
- In isolated cases, it was observed that necessary hygiene items were not provided, not all facilities were adapted for accommodating asylum seekers, and strict movement restrictions were applied.

4. RECEPTION OF OTHER FOREIGNERS

Unlike previous years, no cases were observed in 2025 where persons from the “secondary migration from Latvia” flow who had been detained in Lithuania or transferred to Lithuania from Poland were held for long periods in border units. During the previous two years, persons arriving in Lithuania in this way sometimes spent as long as a week in border units, where minimum reception conditions were not ensured, they were not allowed to use telephones, and they were not always provided with the opportunity to shower and wash themselves. In 2025, persons interviewed at Pabradė RC who had arrived in Lithuania via Latvia most often indicated that they spent only several hours or up to one day in border units. According to them, food packages were provided in the border units, but hygiene items were often not provided and they were not allowed to use telephones. After being transferred several hours later or after one day to foreigners’ accommodation or detention centres, their telephones were returned shortly thereafter, hygiene items were immediately issued, accommodation with access to showers was provided, and so on. It should also be noted that since the establishment of the Agency in 2025, persons arriving in Lithuania from Latvian territory were accommodated (*de facto* detained) by the Agency rather than remaining under the authority of the SBGS. Consequently, the LRC had unrestricted access to this target group (except when quarantine measures were applied). More information regarding the reception of this group can be found in the section “Monitoring of Foreigners’ Accommodation and Detention Centres”.

Summary

- Persons arriving in Lithuania via Latvia were usually accommodated (*de facto* detained) at Pabradė Foreigners Registration Centre and spent only a short period in border units.
- All interviewed persons stated that they were not allowed to use telephones during their stay in border units.
- Food packages and drinking water were provided to the persons.

III. MONITORING IN HOSPITALS

In 2025, there were two cases in which persons applied for asylum while in medical institutions. The LRC is not aware of any additional cases in which persons were hospitalized in Lithuanian medical institutions immediately after irregularly crossing the border with Belarus.

Hospitalization Due to General Exhaustion

The asylum seeker recounted that she traveled within Lithuanian territory in a group of three people – with a relative and another man who had left the country of origin together with them. While searching for a place where they could cross the border irregularly, they wandered through the forests along the Lithuanian–Belarusian border for approximately one week. The asylum seeker stated that after three days they ran out of water and food and therefore began searching for cleaner sources of water. After drinking water from a swamp, the woman's health deteriorated after some time and she began vomiting. As time passed, the woman's condition worsened and she became unable to walk. Throughout the period during which internet connection was available in the forest, the individuals remained in contact with relatives living in another EU country and shared their location with them. The woman stated that at one point, when she felt unwell and began losing consciousness, the third person separated from them and remained behind, while she and her relative continued moving in search of water. The asylum seeker stated that during this time she was being carried by her relative. After a couple of hours, they were found by SBGS officers. The woman could not say who had called for assistance because she was in poor condition at the time. Articles available publicly state that the NGO Sienos Grupė ("Border Group") informed the authorities of the individuals' location [32].

On the day of the LRC monitoring visit, two armed SBGS officers (a man and a woman) were on duty inside the asylum seeker's hospital room and stated that they remained there continuously. At the hospital, the asylum seeker was provided with hygiene products and clothing. An SBGS officer present on site stated that the officers themselves had purchased basic hygiene items with their own money, while hospital staff stated that they had provided some clothing.

The asylum seeker did not have a personal telephone with her. According to her, during the initial asylum interview (approximately three days after her admission to the medical institution), she was briefly allowed to contact her relative, who at that time was being held in one of the border units. The SBGS officers present in the room stated that the NGO *Sienos Grupė* had delivered a telephone for the asylum seeker, but she was not allowed to use it.

[32] See A Man's Body Found at the Border with Belarus: Presumed to Be an Illegal Migrant, 2025-09-08, Irytas.lt: <https://www.irytas.lt/lietuvosdiena/nelaimes/2025/09/08/news/pasienyje-su-baltarusija-rastas-vyro-kunas-spejama-kad-tai-neteisetas-migrantas-39440517>

During the same week, information appeared publicly that human remains had been discovered near the location where the asylum seeker and her relative had been found[33]. Some time later, it was confirmed that the remains belonged to the third person who had been traveling together with the asylum seekers.

Case of Frostbite of the Feet

The asylum seeker stated that he spent approximately four days in the forests along the Belarusian–Lithuanian border. According to him, during the first days his shoes became soaked, outdoor temperatures were quite low, and his feet were constantly cold and wet, resulting in pain in his feet. Despite his health condition, the asylum seeker stated that he continued moving independently throughout the entire period. The asylum seeker stated that he did not encounter Belarusian or other state officials at the border and did not experience any “pushbacks.” He stated that he crossed the Lithuanian border in a group of four people. After crossing the border, they were found by Lithuanian officials, who quickly noticed his serious medical condition. According to the asylum seeker, he was promptly placed in a vehicle and taken to a medical institution. The asylum seeker stated that he did not know what happened to the other individuals who crossed the border with him (they were not transported to the medical institution together with him). He also stated that only he experienced health problems, while the others traveling with him were healthy.

At the medical institution, the asylum seeker was diagnosed with frostbite of the feet. During the LRC monitoring visit, he was suffering severe pain in his feet and was unable to walk because of the pain. Medical personnel determined that at least partial amputation of the feet might be necessary.

At the medical institution, at least one SBGS officer was continuously stationed outside the asylum seeker’s room. From the day the person’s asylum application was registered (five days after hospitalization), the asylum seeker was given back his personal telephone and his use of it was not restricted. SBGS representatives stated that the medical institution had provided the asylum seeker with clothing and hygiene products.

Some time later, the LRC received information that both of the individual’s feet had been amputated. This is the only case of limb amputation known to the LRC in 2025.

Summary

- **The reception conditions of asylum seekers in medical institutions depend on the specific SBGS border unit whose officers are assigned to guard the asylum seekers. For example, in one case the patient’s privacy was not ensured – SBGS officers, including male officers, remained inside the hospital room. In another observed case, by contrast, SBGS officers remained in the corridor. Accordingly, restrictions on telephone use also differed: in one case telephone use was not allowed at all, while in the other it was unrestricted.**
- **As in previous years, it remains unclear who is responsible for ensuring the provision of hygiene products, clothing, and other essential items to hospitalized asylum seekers. In both observed cases, the approach was improvised; the necessary items were provided either by medical institution staff or by individual SBGS officers acting on their own initiative. It should be noted that following the establishment of the Agency, the provision of essential items should be the responsibility of that institution. However, in order for the Agency to respond to an individual’s needs, the SBGS must first inform the Agency about the presence of an asylum seeker at a particular location and the need to provide the required items.**

[33] *Ibid.*

IV. UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

In 2025, an exceptional situation was observed in which a large number of unaccompanied foreign children were identified within the territory of Lithuania. According to data provided by the Agency, 377 unaccompanied children (312 boys and 66 girls) came under its responsibility in 2025. For comparison, in 2024 there were 42 such children[34] (approximately 89% fewer). Even in 2021, when the number of asylum seekers increased significantly, only half as many unaccompanied children were identified in Lithuania – 190[35]. In 2025, unaccompanied children from 15 different countries of origin were identified in Lithuania, most commonly from Somalia (309), Ethiopia (22), and Afghanistan (12). It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of unaccompanied children arrived in Lithuania after irregularly crossing the border from Belarus into Latvia. Some children were detained within Lithuanian territory, while others were transferred to Lithuania from Poland.

Information about unaccompanied foreign children present in Lithuanian territory is usually received from SBGS border units. Once it is established that a foreigner detained in Lithuania without the right to remain in the country is a minor, the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service (hereinafter – SCRPA) is informed. Representatives of SCRPA, together with a state-appointed lawyer, must participate in procedural actions. Under the current procedure, SCRPA decides on the accommodation of an unaccompanied foreign child in the Agency's facilities, specifically at the Rukla RC.

The LRC noticed the increase in the number of unaccompanied children in May 2025, when the SBGS informed the LRC about registered asylum applications from unaccompanied children. Later during the year, most asylum applications from unaccompanied children were registered at the MD offices. It should be noted that a relatively small proportion of unaccompanied children sought asylum in Lithuania – 41 out of 377 (less than 11%)[36].

In response to the increased flow of unaccompanied children, two targeted monitoring visits were carried out during the year at Rukla RC, during which reception and protection conditions specifically for unaccompanied children were assessed. In addition, the situation of unaccompanied children was evaluated during two regular monitoring visits. Thus, the situation of unaccompanied children was examined in detail during a total of four visits (15 May 2025, 6 August 2025, 3 September 2025, and 24 November 2025).

1. RECEPTION AND PROTECTION CONDITIONS AT RUKLA RC

One of the buildings at Rukla RC contains a section specifically designed for accommodating unaccompanied children. Access by other residents to these premises is restricted – the doors to the section are locked, and

[34] See Migration Yearbook 2024, Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania: <https://migracija.lrv.lt/public/canonical/1750415196/1330/MM%202024%20LT.pdf>

[35] See Migration Yearbook 2021, Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania: [https://migracija.lrv.lt/uploads/migracija/documents/files/2021%20m_%20migracijos%20metra%C5%A1tis_skelbimui\(3\).pdf](https://migracija.lrv.lt/uploads/migracija/documents/files/2021%20m_%20migracijos%20metra%C5%A1tis_skelbimui(3).pdf)

[36] Data provided by the Agency.

special keys are available only to RC staff and the unaccompanied children. The section includes a leisure room created specifically for them, equipped with a computer, television, board games, and additional written information intended specifically for this target group. The increase in the number of unaccompanied children during 2025 created challenges regarding where and how to accommodate them at Rukla RC while ensuring recommended protection standards. Initially, a gender-segregated approach was used: boys were accommodated in the dedicated unaccompanied children's section, while girls were accommodated in the so-called "victims' section" located in another building (theoretically intended for victims of human trafficking), which is also separated from other living quarters and has separate access control. As the numbers continued to increase, this became insufficient. Consequently, all adult residents of the centre and families were relocated to one building, leaving another building exclusively for the accommodation of unaccompanied boys. Since the number of unaccompanied girls was lower than that of boys, girls remained in the victims' section at the end of the year. This decision was also made in order to house girls separately from boys and thereby avoid potential risks. As the number of unaccompanied boys subsequently decreased, an unoccupied floor of their building has been kept empty as a reserve.

During two visits to the centre, it was observed that the accommodation arrangements for unaccompanied children did not comply with the recommended EUAA standard of housing no more than six single individuals in one room. During one visit, some rooms housed up to eight persons; during another, up to twelve persons. The increased number of residents also resulted in another problem – an insufficient number of lockable lockers. Although lockable lockers were available in the section for unaccompanied children, once the recommended occupancy limits per room were exceeded, it was no longer possible to ensure that every child had a locker. During the year, the centre resolved this issue, and by the time of the last visit new lockable lockers had been delivered.

All unaccompanied children interviewed stated that immediately after arriving at the centre they were provided with basic clothing, footwear, hygiene products, bedding sets, kitchen utensils, and similar necessities. No cases were observed where children lacked clothing or footwear. As there is no canteen at the centre, all residents prepare their own meals (all residents except beneficiaries of temporary protection receive a monthly allowance for food purchases). On the first day after arrival at the centre, unaccompanied children are provided with pre-prepared food packages so that they have food until they receive money for food purchases, become familiar with the environment, and are able to go shopping independently. Unaccompanied children receive an allowance equal to 0.7 times the level of state-supported income for food and minor expenses, which amounted to approximately EUR 154 in 2025 (approximately EUR 163 from 1 January 2026). Printed information about this is available in the corridors. As the year progressed, payment of the allowance was organized twice per week (Mondays and Thursdays), meaning that children arriving, for example, on a weekend received the allowance already on Monday, although the payment covered the entire month in advance. All interviewed children confirmed that they had received the allowance. According to a representative of the centre, because of the frequent absconding of unaccompanied children, a new practice was introduced in autumn whereby the allowance was divided into installments and paid twice per week in smaller amounts, rather than for the entire month in advance.

Following accommodation at the centre, unaccompanied children are essentially provided with the telephones previously confiscated by the SBGS without delay (except when they arrive on weekends, when, for example, social staff are not working). Those who do not have personal telephones are allowed to use the centre's telephones. Wi-Fi is continuously available throughout the centre. Despite these technical possibilities, some interviewed children indicated that they did not maintain contact with their relatives because family members in their countries of origin lacked access to internet services. During the year, there were cases where the LRC's family tracing and restoration of family links services were required because children had lost contact with their relatives.

In 2025, the majority of unaccompanied children absconded relatively quickly. For this reason, educational institutions were not contacted immediately after the children arrived at the centre. The centre administration

stated that educational institutions would be contacted only if children remained at the centre for at least one month. During the last monitoring visit, representatives of the centre stated that the unaccompanied child who had lived there the longest had spent two months in the centre. According to data provided by the Agency, a total of 257 unaccompanied children absconded from Rukla RC in 2025 (excluding repeated returns), while 94 unaccompanied children were transferred to Latvia.

In 2025, not a single unaccompanied child accommodated at Rukla RC began attending an educational institution[37]. Because children abscond so quickly, it is often not possible to complete a comprehensive vulnerability assessment, finalize age assessment procedures, and so forth.

2. AGE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

On 27 May 2025, the procedure description regulating the age assessment of foreigners was amended[38], essentially establishing in Lithuania a multidisciplinary age assessment procedure that complies with recommended standards[39]. According to the updated procedure description, the procedure consists of three stages: I. Interview of the foreigner with a social worker; II. Interview of the foreigner with a psychologist; III. Medical examination. Unlike previously, an X-ray of the person's bones is used for age determination only if, after the preceding stages have been completed, there remain reasonable doubts as to whether the person is in fact a minor.

According to data provided by the Agency, since 6 June 2025, 92 age assessment procedures were initiated, of which 36 were completed. In 21 cases it was confirmed that the person was a minor, while in 15 cases it was established that a person presenting themselves as a minor was in fact an adult. Five age assessment examinations were carried out at Pabradė RC, while the majority (87) were conducted at Rukla RC. According to data provided by the Agency, most age assessment procedures were initiated by the SBGS (57), followed by the MD (20) and the Agency (15).

In many cases, age assessment procedures were initiated but not completed because unaccompanied children absconded from Rukla RC. Some of the persons who absconded (particularly after Poland tightened controls at the border with Lithuania[40]) were later detained while attempting to leave Lithuania or after already entering Polish territory. It was observed that during the year Polish authorities increasingly began carrying out age assessment procedures on foreigners presenting themselves as unaccompanied children (in Poland, age determination is based exclusively on bone X-rays). As a result, persons regarded as minors in Lithuania were recognized as adults in Poland and, accordingly, when readmitted to Lithuania were treated as adults (regardless of the age they themselves indicated to Lithuanian authorities). For this reason, cases occurred during the year where persons claiming to be children ended up in Pabradė RC together with adults. It should be noted that although the LRC recorded a considerable number of such cases, only five age assessment examinations were conducted at Pabradė RC. Most often, examinations were not initiated because it was stated that the SBGS possessed information confirming the person's age. According to the SBGS, in such cases reliance was frequently placed on the results of age assessment examinations carried out in Poland. Some persons who presented themselves as children and were accommodated together with adults in Pabradė RC stated that they had also contacted the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights Protection by email.

[37] It should be noted that the three unaccompanied children who remained for a longer period and did not abscond began attending school in January 2026.

[38] See Description of the Procedure for the Accommodation of Unaccompanied Minor Foreigners, the Search for Family Members or Other Legal Representatives of Unaccompanied Minor Foreigners Who Are Not Asylum Seekers, the Determination of Their Legal Status and Other Related Procedural Actions, and the Procedure for the Determination of the Age of Foreigners: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/3189fe70cc1a11e39b2ab5bbcc4f49fb/asr>

[39] See European Union Agency for Asylum, Practical Guide on Age Assessment: <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-guide-age-assessment-0>

[40] See Poland Temporarily Introduces Checks at the Borders with Germany and Lithuania, 2025-07-07, Irt.lt: <https://www.irt.lt/naujienos/eismas/7/2604167/lenkija-laikinai-iveda-patikras-prie-vokietijos-ir-lietuvos-sienu>

3. OTHER OBSERVATIONS

In 2025, situations were observed in which unaccompanied children, after being detained within Lithuanian territory or transferred from Poland, were held in SBGS border units. Most often, unaccompanied children spent up to one day in border units (sometimes only a few hours and did not stay overnight there). The interviewed children stated that they received food and water in the border units, but were not provided with hygiene products. Some stated that they had access to a shower and hot water, while others did not. Without exception, all stated that they were not given the opportunity to use a phone while in the border units. However, after transfer to Rukla RC, their phones were returned or they were provided with access to a phone supplied by staff.

- All interviewed children stated that they had left their countries of origin without parents or other close family members—travelling alone or with friends.
- Unaccompanied children who did not apply for asylum in Lithuania and did not abscond were generally transferred to Latvia under readmission procedures.
- Only a small proportion of the unaccompanied children identified in Lithuania applied for asylum (41 out of 377)[41]. Those who applied for asylum usually absconded.
- Following the increase in the number of unaccompanied children, and while decisions regarding their transfer to Latvia were being made, guardianship by Rukla RC staff was for a period not assigned. In deciding questions relating to readmission, reliance was instead placed on the reasoned opinion of the SCRPAS regarding the best interests of the child. According to data provided by the Agency, temporary guardianship was assigned to 265 unaccompanied children (out of 377) in 2025, with Rukla RC appointed as guardian. It should be noted that once guardianship is assigned, it is the guardian who has the right to provide a reasoned opinion as to whether transferring the child to Latvia is in the child's best interests. Where guardianship had not been assigned, this opinion was provided by SCRPAS representatives, who did not necessarily have direct contact with the child.
- Unaccompanied children report experiencing violence at the border, often not only from Belarusian officials but also from Latvian officials or persons assisting them. Some unaccompanied children stated that service dogs were set upon them and that electric shock devices were used against them. They frequently showed injuries on their arms or legs which they claimed had been sustained while attempting to enter the EU. The LRC has no possibility to verify or confirm the circumstances described by the children or the origin of their injuries; however, it documents such cases.

Summary

- **Following the increase in the number of unaccompanied children, shortcomings in relation to recommended reception and protection standards were observed at Rukla RC. Nevertheless, during the year the staff of Rukla RC changed the accommodation arrangements and adapted to the changes by ensuring a larger reserve of living space for unaccompanied children and ordering additional furniture to ensure compliance with recommended standards.**
- **During temporary stays in SBGS border units, reception conditions were ensured only at a minimal level. However, identified unaccompanied children were quickly referred for accommodation to the specially adapted Rukla RC.**
- **In some cases, unaccompanied children were accommodated at Pabradė RC together with adults. In five cases, age assessment examinations were conducted on persons presenting themselves as children, and in two known cases the examinations concluded that the persons were children, after which they were transferred to Rukla RC. There were also cases where persons claiming to be children and accommodated with adults were not subjected to age assessment examinations.**
- **Following the increase in numbers of unaccompanied children, some weren't placed under temporary guardianship with Rukla RC appointed as guardian. In such cases, the staff of Rukla RC, who worked directly and continuously with the unaccompanied children, had no direct influence when assessing the best interests of the child and, for example, deciding issues relating to their transfer to Latvia.**

[41] Based on the data provided by the Agency.

V. MONITORING OF FOREIGNERS' ACCOMMODATION AND DETENTION CENTERS

As mentioned, the structure of accommodation and detention centres changed in 2025. Following the establishment of the Agency, the former RRC became Agency Reception Centres: the Naujininkai RRC, among other changes, was renamed into Vilnius RC, while the Girionys RRC became a branch of Rukla RC. The most significant changes took place in Pabradė, where the SBGS FRC transferred part of its buildings and responsibilities to the Agency. Beginning in 2025, Pabradė RC was established, while the Pabradė FRC retained responsibility only for foreigners detained by court or SBGS decision. Thus, from 2025 onwards, two separate centres have operated in Pabradė: the FRC, administered by the SBGS; and the RC, administered by the Agency. The buildings previously belonging to the FRC were divided between the two institutions: the Asylum Seekers' Dormitory (hereinafter – ASD), the Dormitory for Vulnerable Persons (hereinafter – DVP), the Foreigners Reception Building (hereinafter – FRB), and one of the Multi-functional Centers (hereinafter – MFC) were transferred to the Agency; while the Dormitory for Detained Foreigners (hereinafter – DDF), the Dormitory for Detained Women (hereinafter – DDW), and the second multi-functional center remained under the FRC. Reception conditions for both persons accommodated in Agency facilities and foreigners detained in the FRC and under SBGS responsibility are ensured by the Agency, which is responsible for supplying clothing and footwear, hygiene products, medical and psychological services, arranging interpreters when necessary, purchasing furniture and other items/equipment needed in residential premises, and so forth. FRC officers ensure perimeter security of the detention buildings and are responsible for informing persons about decisions restricting their freedom of movement. The responsibility of the RC, meanwhile, is to inform foreigners under its authority about decisions of the MD concerning them. Persons in detention are informed about MD decisions affecting them by FRC officers.

In 2025, the FRC and RC located in Pabradė were the only centres accommodating foreigners whose freedom of movement was restricted. Taking this into account, as well as the additional risks faced by persons whose freedom of movement is restricted (such as complete dependence on services and opportunities provided within the centre), LRC monitors visited the FRC and RC more frequently in 2025. Every month (from March until the end of the year), LRC monitors conducted two separate visits to the FRC and RC respectively (a total of nine monitoring visits concerning reception and protection conditions at each centre). Additional attention was also devoted in 2025 to Rukla RC, where unaccompanied children are accommodated. The centre was visited three times for monitoring of overall reception and protection conditions and an additional two times specifically for monitoring the reception and protection conditions of unaccompanied children. The least frequently visited centres were Vilnius RC and the Girionys branch of Rukla RC—three visits each. The majority of residents of Vilnius RC in 2025 were beneficiaries of temporary protection (refugees from Ukraine), while a smaller proportion consisted of asylum seekers, foreigners unlawfully present in the country, and beneficiaries of asylum. The Girionys branch is intended exclusively for beneficiaries of temporary protection, whereas residents of Rukla RC included foreigners granted asylum in Lithuania, asylum seekers, beneficiaries of temporary protection, and foreigners unlawfully present in the country. The FRC and Pabradė RC accommodated asylum seekers and foreigners unlawfully present in the country.

The information below is provided separately for each accommodation and detention centre. Additional subsections address certain important issues observed in the centres during 2025: 1) paid accommodation and fixed-term tenancy agreements; 2) *de facto* detention; 3) quarantine in Pabradė RC.

1. RUKLA RC

1. MATERIAL RECEPTION CONDITIONS

- During full-scale visits, it was observed that reception conditions generally complied with recommended standards. Deficiencies were observed only during two visits involving unaccompanied children, when some rooms accommodated eight and twelve persons respectively. This situation arose in order to avoid accommodating unaccompanied children next to adults and to maintain at least minimal separation of this vulnerable group. As mentioned above, by the end of the year these deficiencies were no longer observed, not only because the flow of unaccompanied children had decreased, but also because of decisions taken by the administration of Rukla RC to reorganize accommodation arrangements by dedicating one residential building exclusively to unaccompanied children, thereby maintaining reserve capacity to accommodate a sufficiently large number of unaccompanied children.
- During some visits, it was observed that changes in accommodation arrangements resulting from the increased flow of unaccompanied children led to single adults who had previously lived alone being accommodated in rooms with two to four persons, creating a need for lockable lockers. Previously, when most single adults lived alone in their rooms and could lock their rooms when leaving, lockable lockers were not an issue at the centre. Following the change in practice, it was observed that lockers were available only in some rooms. During the year, centre staff responded to the situation, and by the final visit new lockable lockers had already been delivered to the centre. All other recommended furniture in residential rooms was provided. It was observed that, where possible and necessary, residents were even provided with additional furniture such as sofas and armchairs, helping to create a more comfortable living environment and making the rooms feel more like homes rather than collective accommodation facilities. All rooms are lockable, and residents may lock themselves inside or lock the room when leaving the centre.
- Rukla RC does not provide catering services; therefore, all residents, except persons granted asylum[42] and beneficiaries of temporary protection[43], receive a monthly allowance for purchasing food. No cases were encountered in which interviewed residents stated that they had not received their allowance, had received it late, or experienced similar problems. All residents may use communal kitchens equipped with cooking appliances (ovens and cooktops), while refrigerators and kettles are also available in residential rooms. During the summer period, residents are additionally given the possibility to cook outdoors—barbecue facilities and firewood are provided. It should be noted that the centre devoted considerable effort to securing additional support for residents. Products supplied by the NGO Food Bank are delivered to the centre twice a week so that residents can reduce their food expenses. As the number of unaccompanied children increased during the year, the majority of assistance from the NGO Food Bank was directed to this vulnerable group, resulting in other centre residents receiving less supplementary food assistance for a period of time. However, by the end of the year, when the number of unaccompanied children decreased, food assistance again began to be distributed more extensively among other residents.
- During all visits, it was observed that residents were supplied with essential items and necessities. Upon arrival at the centre, all residents receive bedding sets and kitchen utensils (the composition of the sets varies somewhat depending on legal status). All residents, except beneficiaries of temporary protection, are immediately provided upon arrival with basic hygiene products, clothing, and footwear.
- All residents have access to sanitary facilities where showers, hot water, and similar amenities are available. Residents also have access to washing machines and dryers.

[42] Under Resolution No. 998 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 5 October 2016, On the Approval of the Description of the Conditions and Procedure for Providing Lithuanian State Support for the Integration of Foreigners (<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/5c01c030913d11e69ad4c8713b612d0f/asr>), beneficiaries of asylum receive various targeted benefits during the integration support period. In this respect, their situation is not comparable to that of other categories of foreigners accommodated in centres administered by the Agency and is therefore not assessed within the context of this report.

[43] This category of persons is distinguished because, unlike asylum seekers or foreigners unlawfully present in Lithuania, the applicable legal framework grants beneficiaries of temporary protection numerous social guarantees provided at state and municipal level. Accordingly, from the perspective of social protection, their situation is less vulnerable and they are less dependent on services provided by the Agency.

2. PROTECTION

2.1. Access to Medical and Psychological Services

- A medical office is available at the RC and operates on all working days. No cases were encountered during monitoring visits in which interviewed persons indicated that they were not receiving the medical services they needed. Services at the medical office are available to all residents regardless of their legal status. When access to specialist doctors is required, residents use referrals issued by the RC family physician and receive additional services outside the RC. Transportation to medical institutions is provided to all RC residents, except beneficiaries of temporary protection, whenever needed.
- The RC employs a psychologist who provides services to all residents regardless of their legal status. During visits, interviewed persons generally stated that they had access to psychological services and used them when needed. During the final monitoring visit, it was observed that access to these services was temporarily restricted because the psychologist was on leave and later left her position; consequently, the services were unavailable at the end of the year.

2.2. Access to Information and Interpreters

- The RC stands out for the abundance and diversity of publicly available written, visual, and audio information. The RC makes efforts to ensure that information relevant to residents is accessible in ways they can understand, frequently using visual materials and providing information in different relevant languages. Unlike other Agency centres, informational videos in various languages concerning issues relevant to foreigners living in Lithuania are continuously displayed in the common areas of Rukla RC. In addition, visual information is available not only in common areas but also in residential rooms or room blocks, for example, instructions on how to call for help in the event of fire, violence, or other emergencies.
- As in other Agency centres, there are no interpreters physically present at Rukla RC; however, interpreters are engaged remotely whenever necessary. It was observed that interpreters are most frequently used during psychological consultations, vulnerability assessments of residents, and other procedures. For everyday communication with residents, social workers and medical staff more often use online translation applications. Despite the fact that interpreters are not involved in every interaction, persons interviewed during LRC visits generally stated that they were satisfied with communication with RC staff. According to residents, they were clearly informed about the RC Rules of Internal Order (hereinafter – RIO) and know where to turn when they need particular services.

2.3. Organization of Accommodation

- During the year, the practice concerning accommodation of persons in the RC changed. Because the RC housed a relatively small number of people, during the first half of the year the practice remained that single individuals were accommodated alone in rooms, while families were accommodated together. Some larger families were allocated two adjacent rooms so that they could live more comfortably. However, the situation changed as the number of unaccompanied children increased, creating a need to free certain floors and eventually an entire building specifically for accommodating unaccompanied children. In response, a new practice was introduced whereby single individuals were accommodated together with other single individuals. In all cases, women were accommodated with women and men with men.
- Some rooms in the RC have private sanitary facilities, while other residents share sanitary facilities with occupants of rooms located within the same room block. The RC does not have sanitary facilities intended for an entire floor. Accordingly, sanitary facilities are not designated by gender, since access depends not on gender but on the room in which a person lives. The usual practice observed was that a room block accommodated only men or only women, meaning that the use of sanitary facilities complied with protection

standards. Nevertheless, isolated cases were observed in which single men and single women, or families and single men, were accommodated in different rooms within the same room block, resulting in unrelated men and women sharing the same sanitary facility.

- No more than four single individuals were accommodated in one room. As mentioned in the section of the report concerning unaccompanied children, when the number of unaccompanied children increased, they were accommodated in groups of eight to twelve persons per room; however, once the flow decreased, this practice was discontinued.

3. OTHER OBSERVATIONS

- Residents of the RC are offered various recreational and engagement activities: holidays are celebrated collectively, excursions are organized, Russian-speaking residents are offered classes on Lithuanian history and culture, Lithuanian language classes for asylum seekers were introduced during the year, and various NGOs organize activities for children. The RC also provides recreational spaces for both children and adults, including a children's playroom, a climbing wall facility, a library, recreation rooms (some equipped with computers, board games, etc.), outdoor playgrounds, sports facilities, greenhouses, gazebos, and similar amenities.

1.1. GIRIONYS BRANCH

In 2025, only beneficiaries of temporary protection resided at the Girionys branch, all of whom were citizens of Ukraine. Given that beneficiaries of temporary protection living in Agency facilities are not provided with hygiene packages, laundry supplies, monthly allowances, and similar benefits, LRC monitors assess the Girionys branch to a lesser extent than other Agency centres. Therefore, the situation at this branch is described only in general terms.

- From a material standpoint, the Girionys branch has the newest residential facilities. Rooms and common areas show the least wear and tear and are furnished in accordance with recommended standards. Residents have access to recreational areas inside the building, including a separate space for children and, at the end of the year, a newly established recreational room for adults.
- Throughout the year, the Girionys branch remained the only Agency facility where single individuals were accommodated alone in their rooms (except for isolated exceptional cases, for example where two persons shared a room because both had mobility difficulties and needed accommodation on the ground floor).
- Since all residents of the branch are beneficiaries of temporary protection, they are not provided with hygiene products, clothing, food allowances, or similar support. However, at the beginning of the year, deliveries of additional food products from the NGO Food Bank were organized, and local residents occasionally brought supplementary food products (fruit and vegetables) to the residents.
- Psychological services provided by the Agency's psychologist are continuously available at the branch (the psychologist herself is a beneficiary of temporary protection and lives at the branch). Maintenance and repair of material infrastructure are handled by a facilities manager employed at the branch. A social worker was normally available as well; however, during the year, due to the increase in the number of unaccompanied children, the social worker spent most of her time at Rukla RC. By the end of the year she had returned to working full-time at the Girionys branch. During the first half of the year, a coordinator was also employed at the branch, essentially serving as an English-language teacher for children; however, by the time of the final LRC visit she was no longer working there.

- Various engagement activities are continuously organized at the Girionys branch. At the beginning of the year, lectures on Lithuanian history and culture were offered, and community activities such as volunteer work, holiday celebrations, and similar events were organized regularly. Residents were encouraged to engage in creative activities, including building birdhouses and preparing Christmas and Easter decorations. During the summer, all interested children were taken to camps, while excursions for adults were organized from time to time.
- Given that all residents of the Girionys branch were long-term residents, they had been paying the newly introduced accommodation fee in Agency facilities since the beginning of the year (see *Paid Accommodation and Fixed-Term Tenancy Agreements*). Residents generally accepted the new fee in good faith and had been informed in advance about the change in procedure. However, during the year residents were informed that their accommodation agreements with the Agency would expire at the end of February 2026 and that they would have to move out. This news caused significant stress and dissatisfaction among residents. The majority stated that they had no possibility of moving elsewhere because they lacked sufficient income for independent living, rent, and similar expenses. It should be noted that more than half of the residents of the branch are of retirement age (60+) or have disabilities. During the final visit by LRC monitors, residents stated that they still had no solution to this problem. They reported having contacted the Kaunas District Municipality regarding the possibility of obtaining social housing or other assistance, but no alternative solutions had been offered. Employees of the Girionys branch stated that they were making efforts to help residents find rental housing at affordable prices, contact municipalities in other cities regarding possible accommodation, and similar measures.

Summary

- **Due to the unexpected increase in the number of unaccompanied children during the year, most resources were directed toward the reception of this target group. As a result, the number of recreational activities available to adults decreased somewhat, and the supply of supplementary food assistance at Rukla RC and the Girionys branch was temporarily interrupted.**
- **Despite the challenges arising from the sharp increase and rapid turnover of unaccompanied children, Rukla RC was able to respond promptly and adapt to the changed situation. Even with the increased number of residents, all persons were provided with sufficient clothing, hygiene products, and other essential items.**
- **Both Rukla RC and the Girionys branch place significant emphasis on resident engagement. Various excursions are offered, holidays are celebrated collectively, and educational and artistic activities are organized for residents.**
- **Rukla RC applies good practices regarding the provision of information to residents—not only through verbal communication but also through extensive information presented in different formats and languages.**
- **Recommendations were issued only regarding the organization of accommodation within room blocks where residents share common sanitary facilities, namely that only members of the same family or single persons of the same gender should reside within the same block; and the provision of lockable lockers when unrelated persons are accommodated in the same room.**

2. VILNIUS RC

1. MATERIAL RECEPTION CONDITIONS

- During all monitoring visits, it was concluded that the material reception conditions at Vilnius RC complied with recommended standards. Residents are accommodated in rooms housing no more than six persons, and the rooms are furnished with the necessary furniture. It was observed that, where possible, residents are also offered additional furniture not provided for in the recommended standards but which contributes to creating a more comfortable, home-like atmosphere. It was also observed that residents are allowed to arrange their rooms in a way that makes them more comfortable, for example by laying rugs, hanging additional curtains, or similar measures. All rooms can be locked from both the inside and the outside. In the middle of the year, a new practice was observed whereby, due to the high number of residents, single residents began to be accommodated two per room. As a result, some rooms required lockable lockers so that residents could safely store valuable belongings. In the observed cases, residents sharing rooms indicated that they had access to lockable lockers.
- No catering service is provided at the RC. All residents (except beneficiaries of temporary protection) receive a monthly allowance for purchasing food, and residents buy and prepare their own meals independently. Communal kitchens equipped with basic cooking appliances are available on all residential floors. Every newly arrived resident receives a basic set of kitchen utensils.
- Residents of the RC (except beneficiaries of temporary protection) receive a package of hygiene products every month (adapted according to gender and age). Clothing and footwear are issued according to need and season. Household cleaning products are provided for communal use by all residents.

2. PROTECTION

2.1. Access to Medical and Psychological Services

- A medical office operates at Vilnius RC, where family physician services are available. Services are provided to all residents of the RC. Where necessary, the family physician may issue referrals to healthcare institutions outside the RC and prescribe medication. When additional medical services are required, residents attend healthcare institutions in the city (transportation to medical institutions may be provided, where necessary, for residents other than beneficiaries of temporary protection). During monitoring visits, there were no cases when interviewed residents stated that they lacked access to the medical services they needed.
- A psychologist is employed at Vilnius RC and provides services to all residents regardless of their legal status. All residents interviewed during monitoring visits were aware of the possibility of receiving psychological services, although relatively few made use of them. Those interested indicated that they had the psychologist's contact details and could arrange consultation times directly with her.

2.2. Access to Information and Interpreters

- Residents interviewed during monitoring visits generally indicated that they were provided with all relevant information regarding life in the RC, available services, and the RIO. Nevertheless, during one visit attention was drawn to the possibility that not all newly accommodated residents had been thoroughly informed about accommodation arrangements and the IRP. During a later visit, it was observed that the RC had taken into account feedback provided by the LRC and prepared an information leaflet for newly arrived residents (available in Lithuanian, English, and Russian). The leaflet explains what services are available at the RC; how to contact different members of RC staff; contact details of the MD and NGOs; the emergency number 112; addresses of the nearest grocery store and pharmacy.
- Although information boards at the RC were generally orderly and did not require recommendations concerning reorganization, during the final visit it was observed that the RC had devoted additional attention

to reviewing them. The boards contained only relevant information, available in the main Russian and English languages, and the information was visually noticeable, easy to understand, and attracted attention.

- The majority of RC residents interviewed during LRC monitoring visits were able to communicate in Russian or English (with rare exceptions where residents spoke, for example, French; however, such families always included at least one person able to communicate in English, Russian, or Lithuanian). Consequently, RC staff generally communicated directly with residents and no significant need for interpreters was observed.

2.3. Organization of Accommodation

- During the first half of the year, the practice at the RC was to accommodate all single residents individually in separate rooms. Around the middle of the year, however, the practice changed so that the RC could accommodate more residents (beneficiaries of temporary protection were the first group to be accommodated in shared rooms). Persons newly moving into the RC were informed in advance about the changed accommodation arrangements. Families continued to live in separate rooms. Where possible, larger families were allocated two adjacent rooms in order to ensure the recommended living space.
- In both RC buildings, residents use communal sanitary facilities (that is, rooms and room blocks do not have private sanitary facilities), and therefore accommodation arrangements do not affect which sanitary facilities a resident uses. All communal sanitary facilities are clearly separated by gender. Additional notices are often displayed on the doors stating that women's facilities may be used only by women and men's facilities only by men. Informal allocation of sanitary facilities by residents themselves, as had been observed in previous years, is no longer permitted.

3. OTHER OBSERVATIONS

- Various leisure and engagement activities are offered at Vilnius RC. Residents are encouraged to celebrate holidays together, and different recreational spaces are available, including climbing walls, a gym, a library, a classroom, and a sewing room. During the warmer months, residents may also use greenhouses and gardening plots located outdoors. During the final monitoring visit, it was observed that the number of activities organized inside the RC had decreased. However, additional information regarding events taking place in the city of Vilnius had been added to information boards, and residents stated that they did not feel a lack of activities and were able to occupy themselves independently.
- Vilnius RC uses a so-called “info desk” practice. According to a regular schedule, RC representatives are available in a designated room where residents may come and express their needs. The info desk is primarily used for reporting broken or malfunctioning items and equipment, registering for medical appointments, addressing other day-to-day needs.

Summary

- **Recommended reception and protection conditions were generally ensured at Vilnius RC.**
- **Residents had access to all relevant information. Information was provided in understandable languages and presented using pictures, colours, and other attention-grabbing methods. During the year, information leaflets were created to help newly arrived residents conveniently find all relevant information in one place.**
- **Significant attention is devoted to ensuring that residents feel as though they are living in a home rather than in a collective accommodation facility. Residents are allowed to have additional furniture in their rooms, greenhouses and gardening plots are available outdoors, community-building among residents is encouraged, and holidays are celebrated together.**

3. PABRADĖ RC AND SBGS FRC

As mentioned above, since 2025 two centres administered by different institutions have been operating in Pabradė: Pabradė RC and the SBGS FRC. The Agency provides part of the services to persons accommodated in the FRC, while certain information-related functions at the RC are carried out by FRC staff. Throughout 2025, LRC monitors visited both centres every month. Given that the reception and protection conditions observed differed depending on the building in which persons were accommodated or detained, the information in this part of the report is presented by building rather than by centre: 1) DDF, 2) DDW, 3) MFC, 4) DVP, 5) ASD.

3.1. General Information

- A medical office operates at Pabradė RC, providing primary healthcare services to all residents of both the RC and the FRC, regardless of their legal status. The medical office issues referrals to specialist physicians, prescriptions, and medication. It operates on all working days, and at least one member of the medical staff is partially available during weekends.
- Two psychologists are employed at Pabradė RC. They provide psychological services, where necessary, to all residents of both the RC and the FRC, regardless of their legal status.
- Pabradė RC is the only Agency facility with a canteen. Residents of both the RC and the FRC receive meals three times per day; consequently, none of the resident categories receive a monthly food allowance. At the beginning of 2025, a dietitian was hired and introduced a new menu for the canteen, which prompted dissatisfaction among some residents (insufficient variety, too little salt or sugar in the meals, etc.). Residents may choose one of three meal options: 1) traditional (including meat dishes, including pork); 2) alternative (meat dishes excluding pork); 3) vegetarian (no meat). No cases were encountered in which residents indicated that they were not receiving food compatible with their religious beliefs. One case was observed where a woman with diabetes was not provided with a special diet. Representatives of the RC stated that meals could not be adapted to every individual's medical needs. Later, representatives of the RC explained that, for example, persons with diabetes are provided with medication and therefore there is no need to provide a special diet.

3.2. Pabradė RC – Figures and Facts[44]

During 2025, a total of 1,040 foreigners (unique individuals) were accommodated at Pabradė RC, including:

- 228 persons were asylum seekers.
- 126 persons were accommodated at the RC pursuant to a court decision (of these, 104 persons were subject to the alternative to detention measure consisting of accommodation in a temporary accommodation facility with an obligation not to leave the territory belonging to the temporary accommodation facility without the permission of the head of the temporary accommodation facility or a person authorized by him or her (hereinafter – the "*alternative to detention requiring permission to leave*").).
- 770 persons were accommodated (*de facto* detained) at the RC by decision of the SBGS.
- 144 persons were accommodated at the RC by decision of the MD.

During 2025, 77 persons absconded from Pabradė RC and did not return (of these, 44 persons were subject to restrictions on freedom of movement and were permitted to leave the territory of the RC only with the permission of the head of the centre).

[44] These statistical data relate only to Pabradė RC and do not include statistics from the FRC. The data presented below are based on information provided to the LRC by the Agency.

3.3. DDF

The DDF is used exclusively for the detention of adult men (either by court decision or by SBGS decision for up to 48 hours). The 1st floor is used by the SBGS for quarantine purposes, where newly admitted persons spend a relatively short period. The 2nd and 3rd floors are used for longer-term detention. Each floor is divided into three sectors separated from one another by barred gates. During 2025, asylum seekers – the only category of detained foreigners whom LRC monitors are permitted to meet^[45] – were generally detained on the 2nd floor. Accordingly, the information below essentially reflects the reception and protection conditions on the 2nd floor of the DDF.

Material reception conditions

- Most commonly, asylum seekers were accommodated one or two persons per room. Rooms can be locked from the inside and contain the basic furniture (beds, tables, chairs, wardrobes). Windows are fitted with blinds, and televisions are mounted on the walls. Throughout the year, a recurring problem was observed concerning the wardrobes in residents' rooms. Although the wardrobes were fitted with locks, some doors had been broken and residents were not provided with keys enabling them to secure valuable belongings. It should be noted that shared lockable lockers are available on the 1st floor of the DDF, which detained persons may request to use; however, residents generally were not aware of this possibility.
- Each residential sector contains a shared recreation room equipped with a refrigerator, an electric kettle, a microwave oven, a television. The recreation rooms normally contain a limited number of leisure items, such as puzzles and checkers. Residents also have access to shared sanitary facilities within each sector, including showers with hot water, toilets, washbasins. Only one of the sectors on the 2nd floor contains a laundry room, which is shared by residents of all three sectors. There are no kitchens within the residential sectors; the shared kitchen is located on the 1st floor of the DDF.
- Detained asylum seekers generally stated that they were provided with basic hygiene products, clothing, footwear, and laundry detergent. In exceptional cases, individuals reported that they had not received hygiene products for more than one month or lacked certain clothing items, such as underwear.
- A shopping service is organized twice per week for detained persons^[46]. Interviewees occasionally stated that the shopping service did not function smoothly because the staff of Pabradė RC responsible for collecting residents' shopping requests did not use interpreters when communicating with them. As a result, residents were unable to explain accurately which products they wished to purchase.
- Opportunities for detained foreigners to spend time outdoors are restricted. They may go outside only during designated hours and only within a limited area (either the fenced area surrounding the building or the sports field). According to the approved daily schedule of the FRC, detained persons should be allowed outdoors three times per day for two hours each time. The schedule of services provided to detained persons specifies that one of these outdoor periods consists of access to the sports field (during the other periods, detainees are allowed only into the fenced area surrounding the building). Nevertheless, throughout the year interviewed persons stated that they were not in practice allowed to go outdoors three times per day. Typically, they reported being allowed outside once per day (most often to the sports field) for one hour. According to interviewees, depending on the URC security staff on duty, there were days when they were not allowed outside at all. Sometimes the security staff explained the refusal by referring to bad weather or the lack of accompanying Agency staff; in other cases, no explanation was provided.

[45] Pursuant to the agreement between the LRC, UNHCR, and the SBGS, LRC monitors assess reception and protection conditions in SBGS units only with respect to persons who have the status of asylum seekers. The situation is different in Agency facilities, where LRC monitors assess the reception and protection conditions of all residents, regardless of their legal status. Accordingly, when describing monitoring in FRC buildings (DDF and DDW), only the situation of asylum seekers is presented, whereas when describing monitoring in RC buildings (MFC, DVP, and ASD), the situation of all residents is presented.

[46] Twice per week, the social staff of Pabradė RC collect detained persons' shopping requests and purchase the requested items on their behalf. The goods are purchased using the asylum seekers' own funds; therefore, persons without personal financial resources cannot make use of this service.

Protection

- To see a doctor or receive psychological services, detained persons must submit a written request to the security staff or may contact the medical personnel by using the permanently available landline telephone (the contact details of FRC and RC staff are displayed next to the telephones). During the year, no problems concerning access to medical personnel or psychological services were observed. It was noted that detained asylum seekers regularly included persons requiring the services of a psychiatrist or even inpatient treatment in a psychiatric hospital. During the year, several detained asylum seekers went on hunger strike. In those cases, it was observed that the persons on hunger strike received medical supervision, and medical staff visited them daily.
- According to the Description of the Conditions and Procedure for the Detention of Foreigners at the SBGS, detained persons must be given the opportunity to use their personal mobile telephone every second day for no longer than one hour, while, following an assessment of the individual circumstances, the head of the centre may authorize more frequent use of a mobile telephone. Persons who do not have a personal telephone are provided with an opportunity to use an NGO telephone^[47]. During visits by LRC monitors, it was observed that detained persons were able to use mobile telephones under the conditions provided for in the above-mentioned Description. During the year, one case was observed in which, taking the person's individual needs into account, permission was granted to use the telephone more frequently. Interviewed asylum seekers frequently stated that the time allocated for telephone use was insufficient. They explained that they did not have enough time to maintain contact with several close relatives and therefore often chose to maintain regular contact with only one family member. In many cases, relatives in the country of origin had limited access to the internet, and time differences also created practical difficulties, making it challenging and not always possible to communicate during the limited period allowed.
- Interviewed detained asylum seekers frequently stated that they had not been informed about the FRC RIO in a language they understood. According to them, the IRP were often handed to them in a language they did not understand. Representatives of the FRC stated that oral explanations are not provided and that newly arrived persons are given only written copies of the RIO. It should be noted that, following the establishment of the Agency in 2025 and the resulting changes to the scope of services provided by the FRC, the FRC RIO were revised during the first half of the year. During the second half of the year, representatives of the FRC confirmed that the new RIO had been translated into 16 different languages (previously they had been available only in English, Russian, and Lithuanian). Nevertheless, throughout the year the updated written RIO were not available on the second floor of the DDF premises. Only the previous version of the FRC RIO was available in the common areas.
- The notice boards in the DDF contain a large amount of written information, including contact details of the LRC, UNHCR, State-Guaranteed Legal Aid (hereinafter – SGLA) providers; daily schedules; contact details of the embassies of different countries; contact details of URC inspectors; information on suicide prevention, etc. Some of this information is available only in Russian and English, while other information is also provided in additional languages.
- Residents may request assistance either by using the landline telephone or by attracting the attention of staff through the surveillance cameras installed in the common areas. Security personnel are present at the DDF 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Other Observations

- Following transfer to the FRC, detained asylum seekers generally entered quarantine. Interviewed detainees usually stated that they spent their first days in the quarantine premises located on the 1st floor of the DDF, after which they were transferred to the 3rd floor, from where they were subsequently assigned to the appropriate residential sector according to their legal status. Quarantine generally lasted up to one week or slightly longer. During the year, LRC monitors visited the quarantine premises on the 1st floor twice (once

[47] See Chapter X of the Description of the Conditions and Procedure for the Detention of Foreigners at the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.416A9F142BD3/asr>

during the first half of the year and once during the second half). It was observed that the reception conditions in the quarantine premises did not comply with the recommended standards. For example, 12 sleeping places were installed in two interconnected rooms (without doors)[48]; all residents shared one sanitary facility, consisting of one shower, one toilet, and one washbasin[49]. It was also observed that the toilet in the sanitary facility was positioned immediately next to a window that could not be covered, allowing persons outside the building to see individuals using the sanitary facilities.

- Throughout the year, no organized recreational or meaningful activities were provided for detained foreigners. They were only given opportunities to engage independently in certain activities. According to the schedule of services provided to detainees, detained persons should be able to prepare food every day (using the kitchen on the 1st floor of the DDF for two hours); visit the recreation room on the 1st floor of the DDF (one hour); use the gym (one hour); visit the library three times per week. The recreation room on the 1st floor contains a table tennis table, a desktop computer with internet access, other leisure equipment. Despite the schedule, detained persons interviewed throughout the year stated that, in practice, they were able to use the kitchen no more than two or three times per week, depending on demand. They generally stated that they could access the recreation room every day; however, some members of the SBGS security staff occasionally refused them access to the recreation room without providing any explanation.
- Detained persons are allowed to receive visitors, provided that they submit a request in advance. Visits take place in a room specifically designated for this purpose, located in another FRC building.

3.3. DDW

The DDW is intended for women, spouses (couples), and families with children detained by court order or by decision of the SBGS. Throughout the year, the DDW was the building least frequently visited by LRC monitors because there were often no detained female asylum seekers accommodated there, and therefore LRC monitors were not permitted to visit the building. Reception and protection conditions in the DDW were monitored only during the last three LRC monitoring visits to the FRC (September, October, and December). The building consists of two floors containing residential rooms. LRC monitors visited only the first floor, where female asylum seekers were accommodated. Accordingly, the information below reflects the situation only on the first floor of the DDW. No information is available regarding families with children who were detained in this building during 2025.

Material Reception Conditions

- In the observed cases, female asylum seekers were accommodated one to three persons per room. Each room has a private sanitary facility equipped with a shower, a washbasin, and a toilet. The rooms can be locked from the inside. Each room contains the basic furniture recommended by the standards, including beds, bedside cabinets, chairs, a table. The windows are fitted with blinds. Televisions are installed in the residential rooms and connected to Wi-Fi, allowing residents to use YouTube and other internet applications available on the televisions.
- Female asylum seekers may freely use the communal kitchen, recreation room, prayer room, and laundry room. The recreation room contains a table football game, a television, a small number of colouring books and activity books. The prayer room contains a prayer mat, while the kitchen is equipped with the basic utensils and equipment necessary for preparing food.

[48] Given that the two rooms are interconnected and cannot be separated by doors or other means when necessary, they are treated as one single room, in which no more than six single persons should be accommodated.

[49] According to the EUAA Guidance on Reception Conditions, Standards 6 and 8: no more than six single persons should be accommodated in one room; and there should be at least one washbasin and one toilet for every ten persons. See: <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/guidance-reception-conditions>

- In the observed cases, female asylum seekers stated that they had been provided with basic hygiene products, laundry detergent, and clothing. Additional food products and other items may be purchased through the shopping service organized twice per week.
- Residents of the first floor of the DDW may freely access the fenced outdoor area surrounding the building. However, they are not permitted to leave the fenced area, for example, they are not offered or provided with an opportunity to go to the sports field.

Protection

- The same procedure for registering for medical or psychological services applies in the DDW as in the DDF – a written request must be submitted and handed to the permanently available FRC security staff. During monitoring visits, cases were observed in which female asylum seekers did not know how to register for an appointment with a doctor or psychologist. During the monitoring visits, LRC representatives explained the applicable procedure to them.
- Female asylum seekers who had communicated with social workers and the psychologist stated that interpreters had not been used during those consultations, resulting in poor-quality communication.
- Interviewed female asylum seekers stated that their privacy was not always respected in the DDW. According to them, during routine resident checks carried out when security staff changed shifts (often while the women were still asleep), officers – including male officers – frequently entered their rooms without knocking or without waiting for permission to enter.
- Detained female asylum seekers may use telephones under the same arrangements as detained men – one hour every second day.
- As in the case of detained men, detained female asylum seekers were not informed orally about the FRC RIO. During the last two monitoring visits to the URC, the updated FRC RIO were available on the DDW notice boards in English and Russian.
- During the monitoring visit carried out in September, it was observed that the notice boards in the DDW contained outdated and no longer relevant information. During subsequent visits, it was noted that new information had been added, including the updated RIO, Agency posters concerning the legal and social guarantees applicable to foreigners unlawfully present in Lithuania (available in different languages), posters of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) concerning voluntary return to the country of origin.

Other Observations

- Like detained men, detained women are expected to spend their first days at the FRC in quarantine. Interviewed FRC staff stated that the second floor of the DDW is used for the quarantine of women and families and can be locked in order to separate it from the first floor and prevent interaction between residents. Nevertheless, the interviewed female asylum seekers stated that they had lived on the first floor from the first day of their transfer to the FRC. They stated that they did not experience any specific quarantine restrictions, except that they were not allowed to go to the canteen, and meals were instead delivered directly to their residential rooms.
- As with detained men, no organized recreational or meaningful activities were provided for detained women. It should be noted that there were periods when only one woman was accommodated in the DDW. In such cases, she had no opportunity to communicate with other residents or participate in activities together with the RC staff. According to the woman concerned, the resulting loneliness and lack of activities caused her psychological difficulties.

3.5. MFC

The MFC accommodates persons who have been made subject by court order to an alternative to detention measure requiring them not to leave the accommodation facility without permission, as well as persons in respect of whom the SBGS has adopted a decision on accommodation in a temporary accommodation facility without granting the right to move freely within the territory of Lithuania (hereinafter – persons accommodated by SBGS decision). Throughout the year, the purpose of the different floors of the building changed. During the first half of the year the 1st and 4th floors were used to accommodate vulnerable persons, families, and women, as well as for quarantine; the 2nd floor was used to accommodate single adult men; the 3rd floor was used for the quarantine of adult men. From September, following changes to quarantine practices, the quarantine regime in the MFC building was discontinued. However, the allocation of residents according to gender and/or vulnerability remained unchanged. Reception and protection conditions during quarantine are discussed in greater detail in the section "*Quarantine at Pabradė RC*".

Material Reception Conditions

- The MFC is the newest building at Pabradė RC, having been completed only in 2024. Accordingly, the residential premises were designed in accordance with the recommended standards. Each room contains no more than six sleeping places (normally three bunk beds), six lockable bedside cabinets, six larger lockable wardrobes, chairs, a table. All rooms have windows fitted with blinds. As in the other buildings, it was observed throughout the year that residents did not have the keys to the bedside cabinets or wardrobes and therefore could not lock away their personal belongings. This created practical problems. During one period, an individual living in the MFC repeatedly stole other residents' belongings, while residents had no possibility of securing their possessions, for example when going to the canteen or after obtaining permission to leave the centre temporarily.
- Residents on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the MFC are accommodated under rather cramped conditions, frequently with six persons per room. During one monitoring visit, it was observed that eight persons were living in one room, exceeding the recommended occupancy standard. Representatives of the RC stated that those persons had moved into the room on their own initiative, rather than as a result of a decision by the staff.
- Every room has its own private sanitary facility, consisting of a shower, a washbasin, and a toilet.
- Every floor contains communal laundry rooms, kitchens, prayer rooms, and recreation rooms. During one monitoring visit, it was observed that residents on the 1st floor, which had only recently been put into operation, did not have access to either the kitchen or the laundry room. These rooms were locked. As a result, residents were unable not only to prepare additional food but also to make tea or similar drinks because they had no access to an electric kettle, and they had to wash their clothes by hand. During later monitoring visits, these rooms had been unlocked and residents were able to use the kettle. No similar problems were observed on the other floors. Nevertheless, during the final monitoring visit to the RC, it was observed that no kitchen utensils (pots, saucepans, etc.) were available in the kitchen on the 3rd floor, while all of the kettles there were broken. As a result, residents boiled hot drinks in empty tins from canned vegetables. Representatives of the RC stated that kitchen utensils had been provided but that residents themselves chose to boil water in tins or that some residents took the utensils away, leaving an insufficient number for everyone. On the other floors of the MFC and in the other RC buildings, no cases were observed where residents voluntarily prepared food or drinks in this manner.
- Interviewed residents of the MFC generally stated that they received basic hygiene products and laundry detergent every month. In one observed case, residents on the 1st floor stated that they had not received laundry detergent and therefore had been forced to wash their clothes using dishwashing liquid or other cleaning products. This problem was no longer observed during later monitoring visits.

- Throughout the year, a serious shortage of clothing and footwear for newly arrived residents (usually persons arriving from the territory of Latvia) was observed in the MFC. Residents frequently stated that, upon arrival at the RC, they had not been issued any clothing or shoes. Cases were observed where persons walked around wrapped only in towels because they stated that they had no spare clothing and therefore, after washing the only clothes they possessed, they had to cover themselves with towels. In some cases, residents stated that they wrapped themselves in towels because they had no sweaters or other warm clothing. Almost all interviewed persons stated that they had received slippers, which were often the only footwear they possessed. For example, during visits to the RC in September and October, when outdoor temperatures were already low, the majority of MFC residents were still wearing slippers and stated that they had no warmer footwear. Representatives of the RC explained that at the beginning of the year a standard set of clothing and footwear had been issued to every newly arrived resident. However, they had observed that residents often threw away the clothing they received and therefore decided to change the practice by issuing clothing only to persons who specifically expressed such a need. Nevertheless, interviewed residents repeatedly told the LRC that they had informed staff of their need for clothing or had submitted written requests but that clothing was still not issued. The problem concerning the shortage of clothing and footwear was resolved during the second half of November, when a new shipment of clothing arrived at the RC and was distributed to MFC residents.
- MFC residents are allowed unrestricted access to the fenced outdoor area surrounding the building: residents of the 1st and 4th floors use one fenced courtyard; residents of the 2nd and 3rd floors use another. Given the restrictions on freedom of movement imposed on MFC residents, they may leave the centre temporarily only after obtaining permission from the head of the centre. Different practices regarding temporary departures were observed throughout the year. During the first half of the year, residents were allowed to leave the centre only when accompanied by RC staff, and such outings were generally limited to visits to the nearest grocery store. Later, residents began to be allowed to leave without staff escort. Throughout the year, it was observed that not all residents were aware that they could apply for permission to leave the centre temporarily, and consequently some never submitted such requests. During monitoring visits in the autumn, it was observed that an increasing number of MFC residents expressed concern that they were not being permitted to leave the centre, while the reasons for refusing permission were not explained. Further information concerning the restrictions on freedom of movement applicable to MFC residents is provided in the section "*De Facto Detention*".
- Where residents were unable to leave the centre, the RC staff generally organized an additional grocery shopping service. Nevertheless, cases were observed where residents stated that this service had not been provided, forcing them to ask other residents who had been granted permission to leave temporarily to purchase items on their behalf. This practice sometimes led to disagreements because, according to the interviewed residents, those doing the shopping did not always return the correct change or demanded payment in exchange for providing the service.

Protection

- During the first half of the year, a situation was observed in which the RC lacked sufficient staff, and the duty personnel who were supposed to be continuously present in the MFC were only rarely available. Given that, at that time, some residents were locked in their rooms (during quarantine on the 3rd floor) or were unable to leave the fenced area surrounding the building (on the 2nd floor), the issue of residents' safety was particularly significant. In the event of an emergency, residents would not have been able to leave their accommodation independently or summon assistance. Many residents stated that they did not feel safe. Representatives of the RC responded to the identified risks by installing emergency call buttons on the individual floors, while in the rooms used for quarantine, special devices for summoning the duty staff were installed in every room. During the second half of the year, additional staff were also recruited, and duty personnel became physically available more frequently. Landline telephones are also available in the corridors, with staff contact details displayed next to them.

- Most MFC rooms can be locked from the inside. However, when the 3rd floor was being used for quarantine and residents were kept locked in their rooms, the door locks were modified so that they could no longer be locked from the inside. According to the RC administration, room keys were not issued to residents because a lot of rooms accommodated a relatively large number of people. There were isolated cases where a room was occupied by only one person and, upon request, that resident was provided with a key.
- Throughout the year, a lack of written information was observed in the MFC. During the first monitoring visits, there was essentially no written information available in the MFC corridors. Gradually, more information appeared on the 2nd and 1st floors. On the 3rd and 4th floors, which had been used for quarantine, information appeared only towards the end of the year. It was only during the final monitoring visit that written information became available concerning SGLA and the legal and social guarantees applicable to foreigners unlawfully present in Lithuania. Although the situation improved during the year, the amount of information available still depended on the particular floor of the MFC and, in any event, never reached the level observed in the Agency's other divisions or even in the other buildings of Pabradė Reception Centre. It should be noted that broader access to written information was particularly important in the MFC because interviewed residents generally stated that they were not provided with relevant information orally and therefore had to rely on information displayed on notice boards or on information shared by longer-term residents.
- Interviewed residents stated that they had limited access to interpreters in languages they understood. First, according to the residents, the decisions imposing restrictions on their freedom of movement were not translated or explained in a language they understood. Representatives of the FRC responsible for informing residents stated that oral interpretation or explanation was not practiced, considering that the written translation of the operative part of the decision should be sufficient. It should be noted that these written translations of the operative part of the decision were available only in a small number of foreign languages, which the residents did not necessarily understand. Interviewed residents also stated that interpreters were not used in day-to-day communication, for example with the social staff. According to them, staff usually communicated in Russian, a language that many residents did not understand (LRC monitors also observed this practice during monitoring visits). Residents further stated that consultations with psychologists were likewise often conducted in English or Russian, languages that they either did not understand or understood only minimally. Cases were observed where residents did not wish to continue psychological consultations because they were unable to communicate effectively with the psychologist. At the end of the year, representatives of the RC stated that they had acquired electronic translation devices, which were expected to facilitate everyday communication with residents.
- Interviewed residents generally stated that they received the necessary medical services. Most residents explained that medical personnel visited the MFC regularly, asked residents whether they had any medical needs, delivered necessary medication, carried out initial examinations, and performed other routine medical procedures. According to residents, where necessary they were transported to medical institutions outside the RC, where they underwent surgery or other medical interventions. Neither medical treatment outside the RC nor prescribed medication involved any cost to the residents. The principal problem identified by residents was the limited possibility of communicating with medical personnel. According to them, medical staff also generally did not use interpreters and instead attempted to communicate in English or Russian.
- The psychologist's office is located on the 2nd floor of the MFC. The psychologist is often physically present in the office, allowing residents to register for consultations directly. The psychologist's contact details are also displayed on the different floors of the MFC. Although residents stated that they had access to psychological services, interpreters were frequently not present during consultations. Accordingly, residents who spoke Russian or English were generally more satisfied with the consultations than those who did not.
- Residents' use of mobile telephones is not restricted, and Wi-Fi is available in the corridors. The quality of the Wi-Fi signal in the rooms is poorer, and in some cases Wi-Fi was not available at all. During the year, additional measures were taken to improve the quality of the internet connection.

Other Observations

- At the beginning of the year, representatives of the NGO Artscape regularly visited the MFC and organized various artistic activities with residents. During the year these activities were discontinued and resumed only towards the end of the year. Representatives of the NGO Caritas visited the MFC regularly. At the beginning of the year, residents stated that Caritas representatives communicated with them on a regular basis, inquired about their needs, brought clothing whenever possible, and occasionally went outside with them to play football or engage in similar activities. During the second half of the year, as the number of MFC residents increased – particularly the number of women – Caritas also began organizing a greater number of recreational activities, including "discos." Following the increase in the number of women, volunteers and psychologists from the LRC also temporarily organized artistic and therapeutic activities specifically for women. Residents also stated that they occasionally participated in therapeutic activities organized by the RC psychologist (for example, colouring sessions). During the first half of the year, an RC staff member organized several excursions to Vilnius for MFC residents. During the final LRC monitoring visit, it was observed that the NGO Vilnius Social Club was organizing football training sessions for MFC residents. A gym is available on the 1st floor of the MFC. It is normally kept locked but may be accessed upon request to the staff.
- In order to obtain permission to leave the centre temporarily, request additional clothing, or register at the medical office, MFC residents must submit a written request to the staff. Throughout the year, one of the most significant concerns expressed by MFC residents was the lack of feedback. According to the residents, after submitting a request they were often uncertain whether it had reached the responsible staff, why it had not been granted, or why they had not received a formal reply. Some residents stated that they stopped submitting requests as they did not believe that this request-submission mechanism functioned effectively.

3.6. DVP

The DVP is primarily used to accommodate vulnerable persons (e.g., LGBTQ+ persons, persons with disabilities, etc.), single women, and families. In certain cases, the DVP also accommodated persons whose freedom of movement was restricted, that is, persons subject to the alternative to detention measure requiring them not to leave the centre without permission. However, the DVP was used primarily to accommodate persons who were entitled to leave the centre temporarily without obtaining additional permission.

Material Reception Conditions

- Residents were generally accommodated as members of the same family or as no more than three unrelated persons of the same sex per room. Each room has a private sanitary facility consisting of a shower, a washbasin, and a toilet. Each room is equipped with the necessary furniture: beds, tables, chairs, wardrobes. The windows are fitted with blinds. Although the wardrobes in the DVP are not lockable, residents may use the shared lockable lockers located on the ground floor of the ASD Building for storing valuable belongings.
- The DVP contains a communal kitchen and a recreation room. The kitchen is equipped with the basic utensils, cookware, and appliances necessary for preparing food. The recreation room contains children's toys, colouring books, children's books, puzzles, and similar items.
- During interviews with LRC monitors, DVP residents stated that they regularly received hygiene products and laundry detergent. Residents also generally stated that they had been provided with clothing and footwear.
- The DVP is not surrounded by a separate fence. Accordingly, residents of this building are not restricted to the area immediately surrounding the building, regardless of whether restrictions on their freedom of movement apply to them (with the exception of the separately fenced areas surrounding the FRB and the MFC). As noted above, the DVP occasionally accommodated residents subject to the alternative to detention measure requiring them not to leave the centre without permission. In such cases, before leaving the centre temporarily, residents were required to submit a request and obtain permission from the head of the RC. In the cases monitored by the LRC, no difficulties were observed in obtaining permission to leave temporarily, particularly in relation to families.

Protection

- Use of mobile telephones is not restricted, and Wi-Fi is continuously available throughout the building.
- Interviewed residents stated that they had access to medical staff and psychological services. The medical office is located on the ground floor of the ASD, to which DVP residents have easy access. Accordingly, during the medical office's working hours, residents may attend in person and request the assistance they require. It should be noted that, at one point during the year, a wheelchair user was living in the DVP. In response to this person's needs, a ramp was installed at the entrance to the ASD so that the individual could independently access the medical office.
- Notice boards contain relevant written information for residents, available in different languages. Among other things, residents can find contact details of various NGOs and SGLA providers, as well as (by the end of the year) information (in several languages) concerning the legal and social guarantees applicable to foreigners unlawfully present in Lithuania.

Other Observations

- Throughout the year, no activities organized by the RC staff for DVP residents (including children) were observed. A timetable of activities for children was displayed on the notice boards; however, the listed activities essentially consisted only of access to recreational equipment, such as daily access to sports facilities and children's playgrounds, children's library; access to the computer room five times per week; the possibility of borrowing toys once per week, if needed; and only one genuine organized activity per week: a relaxation session with the RC psychologist. It should be noted that the relaxation session for adults was scheduled at the same time and on the same day as the session for children. A timetable of activities for adults was also displayed, including weekly relaxation sessions; therapeutic activities with a psychotherapist; Qur'an reading sessions for women; Islamic religious activities; Lithuanian language lessons twice per week; morning exercise sessions for women twice per week. Throughout the year, however, residents of the DVP and ASD stated that they had not actually been able to participate in the activities listed on the timetable. During the second half of the year, Lithuanian language classes were organized for asylum seekers living in the DVP and ASD. However, these classes were soon discontinued because, according to the RC administration, the minimum number of participants required to form a group was not reached (asylum seekers living in the MFC were not offered the opportunity to attend these classes). A similar situation arose with physiotherapy sessions, which also failed to attract residents' interest.

3.7. ASD

The ASD is used to accommodate adult single men who are subject to the alternative to detention measure consisting of accommodation in a temporary accommodation facility without restrictions on freedom of movement. Since the building accommodates exclusively single adult men whose freedom of movement is not restricted (generally persons who have not been identified as vulnerable, although not exclusively), residents interviewed during LRC monitoring visits identified almost no problematic issues, apart from general failures by some residents to comply with the internal rules (for example, in kitchens and sanitary facilities, or failure to observe quiet hours). Accordingly, LRC monitors visited the ASD less frequently and collected less detailed information regarding reception and protection conditions than in the other buildings.

Material Reception Conditions

- The majority of residents are accommodated quite spaciouly, with one or two persons per room. The rooms contain all of the essential furniture, and the windows are fitted with blinds. All residents have keys to their rooms and may lock their rooms from both the inside and the outside. Although there are no lockable lockers inside the rooms, residents may, where necessary, use the shared lockable lockers located on the ground floor. In addition, many residents occupy rooms individually and may therefore simply lock their rooms when leaving.

- Residents use shared sanitary facilities, laundry rooms, and kitchens. The sanitary facilities are not separated by gender, because only men reside in the building. The sanitary facilities contain showers, washbasins, and toilets. During visits, no concerns were observed indicating that the number of sanitary facilities failed to meet the recommended standards. The kitchens contain the basic appliances necessary for preparing food.
- Interviewed residents stated that they received basic hygiene products, clothing, footwear, laundry detergent.
- The ASD is not surrounded by a separate fence. Accordingly, residents are not restricted to the area immediately surrounding the building and may move freely throughout the territory of the RC, except for the separately fenced areas surrounding the FRB and the MFC. Residents of the ASD may also leave the centre temporarily without obtaining additional permission.

Protection

- The protection conditions observed in the ASD are identical to those described for the DVP (*see above*).

Other Observations

- A recreation room is available on the ground floor of the ASD. It contains a small library and computers. The room is normally kept locked; however, residents may request access from the staff.
- The situation regarding organized recreational activities in the ASD is identical to that in the DVP (*see above*).

Summary

- **Infrastructure-wise, the material reception conditions at Pabradė RC and the FRC complied with the standards, subject to minor deviations. Residential rooms were not overcrowded, their furnishing met the recommended standards. The principal shortcoming observed – the lack of lockable lockers (or the lack of keys to the lockers) and the resulting inability to store personal belongings securely – was relevant in all buildings. Compared with the situation observed in 2024, additional blinds had been installed in the ASD and DDF. However, blinds were still lacking in the sanitary facilities of the DDF quarantine premises, where residents' dignity was not adequately ensured.**
- **As the number of residents increased, a significant shortage of clothing and footwear was observed for an extended period. The problem was most pronounced in the MFC, where residents frequently possessed only one set of clothing and had no opportunity to change into clean clothes. Nevertheless, by the end of the year the majority of residents had been provided with clothing and footwear.**
- **More substantial problems were identified with protection conditions, ranging from a lack of interpreters and insufficient information to shortcomings in ensuring physical safety in the MFC. Some of the identified issues were resolved during the year, e. g. staff call devices were installed and additional personnel were recruited, helping to improve residents' physical safety. The amount of written information also gradually increased. Nevertheless, interpretation-related problems persisted throughout the year - it was not observed that on-call staff, social staff, psychologists or medical staff would use interpreters more often and provide information to residents in a language they understand. The same applied to the lack of feedback. MFC residents in particular expressed concern that relevant information was not being shared with them and that they were not receiving responses to their questions or written requests.**
- **During the year, greater resources were devoted to expanding recreational and engagement activities for MFC residents, which is a welcome development. However, detained people in the DDF and the DDW, who cannot regularly use telephones and whose opportunities for independent activities are even more limited, continued to experience a significant lack of organized activities. In practice, activities were largely limited to occasional communal cooking sessions and the additional grocery shopping service.**

4. BENEFICIARIES OF TEMPORARY PROTECTION: PAID ACCOMMODATION AND FIXED-TERM ACCOMMODATION AGREEMENTS

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Pursuant to Article 13(1) of Council Directive 2001/55/EC[50], Member States are required to ensure that persons enjoying temporary protection have the right to suitable accommodation or, where necessary, the right to receive the means to obtain housing. In implementing this requirement, until 15 November 2024, Article 94(1)(2) of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Foreigners (hereinafter – the LLSF) provided that foreigners entitled to temporary protection had the right, until a decision on the granting (or refusal) of temporary protection was adopted, but not longer than the period of temporary protection, to reside free of charge in accommodation facilities operated by state and municipal institutions. This right was not additionally limited by time or other conditions. However, several years after the beginning of the Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine, and as the application of the temporary protection mechanism continued, the aforementioned provision of the LLSF was amended. It was established that beneficiaries of temporary protection would have the right to reside free of charge in accommodation facilities operated by state or municipal institutions for no longer than six months from the date on which the relevant person's application for a residence permit was registered in the Lithuanian Migration Information System (MIGRIS). It was also established that, after the expiry of the free accommodation period in accommodation facilities operated by state or municipal institutions, the right to continue residing there would remain, provided that accommodation fees were paid in accordance with the procedures established by the managers and users of those institutions. In order to mitigate the impact of these changes, the legislator provided that the amended provisions of Article 94(1)(2) of the LLSF would apply to foreigners entitled to temporary protection, or already granted temporary protection, who had been accommodated in state or municipal accommodation facilities before the amendments entered into force, only after a period of three months following the entry into force of the legislative amendments (i.e., from 15 February 2025)[51].

However, this exception does not mean that the six-month period would begin to run for such persons only from 15 February 2025, because the starting point remains the same for everyone—the date on which the application for a residence permit was registered in MIGRIS. In practice, this means that if, for example, a beneficiary of temporary protection had their residence permit application registered in March 2024 and had lived in temporary accommodation since then, the maximum free accommodation period established by the LLSF would be considered to have expired in September 2024 (i.e., before the amendment of the LLSF). Nevertheless, such a person would only be required to leave the temporary accommodation facility on 15 February 2025, three months after the amendments entered into force. Correspondingly, if a beneficiary of temporary protection submitted an application for a residence permit and moved into temporary accommodation in September 2024, the six-month period established by the LLSF would expire in March 2025, and the person would then immediately be required to move out.

It should be noted that the explanatory memorandum accompanying the draft amendment to the LLSF stated that limiting the period during which beneficiaries of temporary protection may reside free of charge in accommodation facilities operated by state and municipal institutions was justified, *inter alia*, because the majority (62.3%) of beneficiaries of temporary protection registered in MIGRIS were employed. Therefore, granting the right to reside free of charge in accommodation facilities or to receive compensation for part of rental housing costs without assessing income and assets did not ensure the efficient and fair use of state budget funds[52]. However, the right to reside free of charge in state and municipal accommodation facilities was restricted for all beneficiaries of temporary protection, not only those who were employed, and the assessment of their income and assets is not mentioned at all in the amended legislation. Another argument presented in the explanatory memorandum to justify limiting the possibility for beneficiaries of temporary protection to reside free of charge in accommodation facilities operated by state and municipal institutions was that unconditional and long-term support does not encourage the social integration of such foreigners, their integration into the labour market, or their initiative in independently resolving their housing situation.

[50] Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on Minimum Standards for Giving Temporary Protection in the Event of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons and on Measures Promoting a Balance of Efforts Between Member States in Receiving such Persons and Bearing the Consequences Thereof: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/LT/TXT/?uri=celex:32001L0055>

[51] See Law on Amendment of Articles 62, 63 and 94 of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Foreigners No. IX-2206: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/c7fb95429d4611ef955ff95815eb5ce5>

[52] See Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Law on Amendment of Article 94 of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Foreigners No. IX-2206: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/06dec3f02fa011efb121d2fe3a0eff27>

On 30 December 2024, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania established that a beneficiary of temporary protection may be permitted to reside free of charge in temporary accommodation facilities where, after the expiry of the period established in Article 94(1)(2) of the LLSF, such a foreigner suddenly loses their place of residence due to a natural disaster or another reason beyond their control and their employment-related income in Lithuania is less than three times the amount of state-supported income. In such cases, the person may be accommodated for no longer than one month from the date of accommodation in the temporary accommodation facility; or, where the foreigner is a vulnerable person, for no longer than three months from the date of accommodation. The Government also authorized the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania to establish, *inter alia*, cases in which foreigners, including beneficiaries of temporary protection, may be permitted to reside in temporary accommodation facilities at their own expense where vacant places are available[53].

On 3 January 2025, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour approved a procedure under which beneficiaries of temporary protection may be permitted to reside in temporary accommodation facilities at their own expense if, during the period established by the Government during which they were allowed to reside there free of charge, they were unable to find housing and move out. Such residence may continue for no longer than three months after the expiry of the Government-established period. A beneficiary of temporary protection may also be permitted to reside in temporary accommodation facilities at their own expense for up to three months if they suddenly lose their place of residence due to a natural disaster or another reason beyond their control[54].

Summarizing the legal framework described above, a beneficiary of temporary protection who is a vulnerable person (for example, a pension-age person or a disabled person unable to work and living on a pension or benefits) and whose income is less than three times the amount of state-supported income may reside free of charge in accommodation facilities operated by state and municipal institutions for a period of up to six months from the date on which their application for a residence permit was registered in MIGRIS under Article 94(1)(2) of the LLSF; thereafter reside free of charge for an additional three-month period in a temporary accommodation facility administered by the Agency under the Government Resolution (provided that they cannot live independently due to a “reason beyond their control”); thereafter remain in the temporary accommodation facility for a further three months, paying for accommodation (if they are unable to find housing and move out); and finally pay for accommodation for an additional three months (if they are unable to move out due to a “reason beyond their control”).

When the totality of these guarantees is assessed from the perspective of a healthy, employable person, there is little doubt that the period of support provided—during which the person can obtain employment, secure a source of income, independently find housing, and leave the temporary accommodation facility where they have been living on preferential terms—is more than sufficient. On the other hand, when these guarantees are assessed from the perspective of a socially vulnerable person whose vulnerability is determined by unchanging circumstances (for example, age or disability) and whose ability to satisfy their needs independently remains extremely limited regardless of the passage of time, a natural question arises: what happens next (how, where)?

Throughout 2025, the impact of the amended legal framework on beneficiaries of temporary protection living in Agency facilities was monitored. In light of the changed regulation, accommodation agreements for all beneficiaries of temporary protection who had already been living in temporary accommodation facilities administered by the Agency were extended at the beginning of the year for a fixed term. For persons who no longer had a legal basis to reside free of charge in temporary accommodation facilities, the agreements established a fee for living in Agency facilities. The amount of the fee is calculated in accordance with procedures established by the Minister of Social Security and Labour[55] and varied depending on the specific facility, but

[53] See Resolution No. 1094 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 30 December 2024, “On the Granting of Authority and on Cases in Which Foreigners Are Permitted to Reside Free of Charge in Temporary Accommodation Facilities”: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/f32f9810c6a911ef940bca4d136e126f>

[54] See “Description of the Conditions and Procedure for the Accommodation of Foreigners in Temporary Accommodation Facilities and the Procedure for Temporary Departure from Temporary Accommodation Facilities”: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/29fe52d5ca1211efb81fa0211f8edf4d/asr>

[55] See “Description of the Procedure for Payment for Residence in Temporary Accommodation Facilities”: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/29fe52d5ca1211efb81fa0211f8edf4d/asr>

was approximately EUR 50 per person everywhere (half that amount was charged for minor children). At the beginning of the year there were concerns about possible negative reactions from residents to these changes. Therefore, residents of all Agency facilities were informed in advance about the changing arrangements, given time to accumulate savings, and encouraged to consider moving into independent housing. During visits to Agency facilities, LRC monitors did not encounter dissatisfaction regarding the newly introduced fee. Residents generally accepted the change calmly. According to them, the amount payable was not high compared to ordinary rental prices in larger cities, and all residents stated that they were able to afford the fee.

The attitudes of beneficiaries of temporary protection living in Agency facilities began to change during the second half of the year, when residents were informed that their signed tenancy agreements would not be renewed and that, at the end of February 2026, long-term residents of the Agency centres would have to move out because, under the legal framework, there would no longer be any basis allowing them to continue residing there, even if they paid for accommodation. It should be noted that a significant proportion of the beneficiaries of temporary protection who had lived in Agency facilities for a long period consisted of pension-age persons and persons with disabilities (that is, persons unable to work and living on pensions or social benefits), who stated that they were unable to rent housing independently. Throughout the year, it was observed that representatives of Agency facilities made efforts to find alternative accommodation solutions for beneficiaries of temporary protection. However, during the final visits by LRC monitors to Vilnius RC and Rukla RC (including the Girionys branch), this issue had still not been fully resolved. Among the possible alternatives discussed were the possibility of receiving compensation for part of housing rental costs in accordance with the established procedure; a one-time settlement allowance; compensation for housing maintenance (heating) costs. However, for at least some residents of the centres, renting housing at market prices would still involve expenses exceeding their financial means. Another possibility mentioned was accommodation under similar conditions in more remote locations. However, residents themselves viewed the prospect of moving farther away from major cities unfavourably. Finally, according to representatives of the Agency, some beneficiaries of temporary protection living in the centres have relatives who support them financially and could accommodate them.

According to the LRC's assessment, the accommodation fee system introduced in 2025, based on a fixed amount payable for accommodation, enabled the Agency to provide suitable accommodation conditions for beneficiaries of temporary protection while taking into account their vulnerability and assessing their ability to meet their own needs. Nevertheless, it is almost certain that in February 2026 the needs of such socially vulnerable persons, their ability to meet those needs independently, as well as their legal status and the corresponding obligations of the state, will remain unchanged (temporary protection for persons from Ukraine has been extended until March 2027). In 2026, the LRC plans to continue monitoring the situation of these individuals and respond as necessary. Given the good-faith efforts made by Agency staff to find solutions acceptable to residents of the centres, it is hoped that none of them will be left without shelter or abandoned to their fate.

5. DE FACTO DETENTION

The current legal framework provides for several forms of *de facto* detention of asylum seekers: (1) a court-imposed alternative to detention measure—accommodation in a temporary accommodation facility with an obligation not to leave the territory belonging to the accommodation facility without the permission of the head of the facility or a person authorized by him or her (hereinafter in this section – the “alternative to detention”); (2) a decision of the SBGS to accommodate a person in a temporary accommodation facility without granting the right to move freely within the territory of Lithuania. In both cases, individuals are usually accommodated at Pabradė RC, using the MFC, the perimeter of which is surrounded by high barbed-wire fences, and they find themselves in the same factual situation—they may only go into the fenced area surrounding the residential building and may not leave the territory of Pabradė RC without permission or escort. In its judgment of 30 June 2022 in Case C-72/22[56], the Court of Justice held that a person “accommodated” in a centre whose territory he or she cannot leave without permission and escort must be regarded as being separated from the rest of the population and deprived of freedom of movement, that is, as a person subject to “detention” within the meaning of EU law. Nevertheless, Lithuanian authorities, including the courts, have consistently refused to regard the aforementioned restrictions on freedom of movement as “detention”.

[56] Judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union (First Chamber) of 30 June 2022 in case C 72/22 PPU, ECLI:EU:C:2022:505

Throughout 2025, a total of 1,040 foreigners (unique individuals) were accommodated / *de facto* detained at Pabradė RC. 104 of these were subject to the aforementioned “alternative to detention”, and 770 were “accommodated” at the RC by decision of the SBGS. Thus, 84% of all residents were subject to *de facto* detention.

5.1. „Alternative to detention”

According to the EUAA *Guidelines on Alternatives to Detention*, published in December 2024[57], the concept of an “alternative to detention measure” is not defined in EU law. However, it is widely accepted that alternatives to detention are measures not involving deprivation of liberty and applying a lower degree of coercion than detention. Such measures may be applied only where a legal ground for detention exists and must be less restrictive than deprivation of liberty. Where restrictions create a situation comparable to deprivation of liberty, such measures cannot be regarded as alternatives to detention but rather as alternative forms of detention or *de facto* detention, regardless of how they are labelled in national legal systems.

In Lithuania, *de facto* detention was legalized in March 2021, following the entry into force of amendments to the LLSF that had already been adopted in 2020 (i.e., before the “mass influx of foreigners from the Republic of Belarus”). Article 115 (“Alternatives to Detention”) paragraph 2 of the LLSF was supplemented with point 5, establishing a qualitatively new “alternative to detention measure”: *to accommodate a foreigner at the State Border Guard Service while establishing the right to move only within the territory belonging to the place of accommodation*.

The application of this “alternative to detention” changed following Ruling No. KT53-A-N6/2023 of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania of 7 June 2023, On the Compliance of the Provisions of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. Among other things, the Constitutional Court found that the alternative to detention established in Article 115(2)(5) of the LLSF - accommodating a foreigner at the SBGS while limiting movement to the territory belonging to the accommodation facility - was, in light of the circumstances of its application, equivalent to detention. Accordingly, Article 115(2)(5) was amended (the amendments entered into force on 30 December 2023) and reformulated as follows: *“to accommodate a foreigner at the State Border Guard Service while imposing an obligation not to leave the territory belonging to the accommodation facility without the permission of the head of the accommodation facility or a person authorized by him or her”*. At the same time, Article 115 was supplemented with paragraph 6, providing that where this measure is imposed: *“the foreigner may be permitted by the head of the accommodation facility or a person authorized by him or her to leave the accommodation facility temporarily where the risk of absconding from the accommodation facility is being managed”*.

According to the explanatory memorandum accompanying the legislative amendments[58], these changes were made, *inter alia*, in light of Article 8(4) of Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, which mentions, as an example of an alternative to detention, an *“obligation to stay at an assigned place”*. It should be noted that the aforementioned EUAA 2024 Guidelines explain this alternative measure as an obligation to reside in a specific place designated by the authorities – from private residences to shelters or reception centres. If a person wishes to change residence, prior approval from the responsible authority is required. The Guidelines further indicate that this measure is sometimes combined with other measures, such as an obligation to report regularly to the authorities, and describe accommodation in open centres as an example of the obligation to stay at an assigned place. It is almost beyond doubt that, in this context, the phrase *“obligation to stay at an assigned place”* means an obligation to reside in a particular place and not change residence without permission, rather than an obligation to remain physically present there at all times without being able to leave. In other words, the measure concerns a prohibition on changing one’s residence without permission, not a prohibition on moving beyond its boundaries.

[57] See European Union Agency for Asylum, *Guidelines on alternatives to detention* – December 2024, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2847/2645998>

[58] See Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Law on Amendment of Articles 5, 79, 113, 115, 125, 126, 140(8), 140(10), 140(13), 140(14), and 140(19) of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Foreigners No. IX-2206: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/2a7d78a04aeb11ee8185e4f3ad07094a>

Moreover, reference should again be made to the judgment of the Court of Justice in Case C-72/22 PPU, in which the Court clearly stated that a person accommodated in a centre whose territory he or she cannot leave without permission and escort must be regarded as separated from the rest of the population and deprived of freedom of movement – that is, as a person subject to detention rather than an alternative to detention measure.

Until 1 January 2025, when such persons were under the responsibility of the SBGS, they were usually accommodated in the DDF (men), or the DDW (women). Access to outdoor areas and time spent outdoors were unrestricted, but individuals could only enter the fenced area surrounding the relevant residential building. Compared with the conditions applied to persons detained by court order, the following differences were observed: asylum seekers subject to the “alternative to detention” could use personal telephones without restrictions; they could go outdoors and remain outdoors without time limits; whereas detained asylum seekers could use telephones and go outdoors only for limited periods according to a schedule. As noted above, from 30 December 2023 the LLSF introduced the possibility for asylum seekers subject to the “alternative to detention” to obtain permission to leave the territory of the accommodation facility temporarily. According to information provided by the FRC, throughout 2024 the administration received only six requests from asylum seekers seeking permission to leave the centre temporarily, and none of these requests were granted. One of the reasons given for refusing such requests was a lack of officers needed to organize escorts[59].

From 1 January 2025, when foreigners subject to the “alternative to detention” came under the responsibility of the Agency, they were usually accommodated in: the MFC (men), or the DVP (women). Access to outdoor areas and time spent outdoors are not restricted, but persons accommodated in the MFC may go only into the fenced area surrounding the residential building. Use of personal telephones is not restricted.

According to information provided by the administration of Pabradė RC, the system for granting permission to leave the centre temporarily is operational and is actively used by residents, although practice has changed over time. For example, at the beginning of September 2025, the administration reported that since the beginning of the year 518 requests to leave the centre temporarily had been received, and only 19 requests (less than 4%) had been rejected. At the end of 2025, Agency representatives reported that 1,566 requests had been received during the year, and permission had been granted in 1,416 cases, meaning that permission was refused in approximately 9.6% of cases. These figures suggest that refusals became more frequent during the last quarter of the year. Agency representatives stated that refusals were based on risk of absconding, overlap between the requested departure time and court hearings or interviews, violations of the RIO, requests from the SBGS not to allow departure because returns or transfers were scheduled.

The overwhelming majority of requests concerned the need to shop at a grocery store located near the centre. In 2025, a practice was introduced whereby foreigners accommodated under the obligation not to leave the centre without permission could, upon submitting a request, be allowed to go shopping at the nearest store twice per week. According to the information collected, persons who obtained permission could also leave temporarily for other reasons, including using an ATM, attending church, visiting a pharmacy. A woman with children was allowed to leave the centre temporarily for leisure purposes, and one case was recorded in which a man was permitted to travel to Vilnius to meet representatives of an NGO. Initially, groups leaving for the store were accompanied by Pabradė RC staff. However, by the end of summer 2025, it was observed that staff no longer accompanied persons temporarily leaving the centre. Nevertheless, information collected at the end of 2025 shows that the factual situation remained dynamic and continued to change. Cases were regularly recorded in which certain individuals were denied permission to leave the centre temporarily without being informed of the reasons for refusal. According to the centre administration, because of the increased number of residents, it was not possible to provide individualized explanations for every refusal.

At the end of October 2025, the majority of interviewed residents of Pabradė RC whose freedom of movement was restricted stated that they had no possibility of leaving the centre temporarily. Several newly arrived

[59] See (1) Lithuanian Red Cross. (February 2024). Monitoring Report 2023: <https://redcross.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2023-ANNUAL-MONITORING-REPORT.pdf>; (2) Lithuanian Red Cross. (April 2025). Monitoring Report 2024: <https://redcross.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/MSA24-EN.pdf>

residents stated that they had been able to go to a store once per week, while others indicated that they had been able to leave only once or twice per month. Several persons stated that they had previously been allowed to leave the centre but that later requests were refused. The overwhelming majority of interviewees stated that they had never been permitted to leave the centre: some had submitted requests that were rejected; others had not submitted requests at all because, having observed the experiences of other residents, they had no expectation that permission would be granted. In autumn 2025, Pabradė RC established and circulated the following rules for submitting requests to leave the centre temporarily:

1. Requests to leave the centre are accepted on Tuesdays and Thursdays until 12:00 noon.
2. Requests are assessed individually.
3. Requests submitted after 12:00 noon are not accepted.
4. The same person may submit up to three requests per week (other cases are reviewed individually).
5. In the event of violations of the Internal Rules of Procedure, permission may be limited to once per week or refused altogether (the person will be informed in advance).
6. The reason for departure must be clearly indicated.
7. A person may remain outside the centre for up to eight hours per day from the time specified in the request.
8. A person leaving the centre must return at the time indicated in the request (if the person returns later, future requests may be refused).
9. The return time indicated in the request may not be later than 21:00.
10. Only one date may be indicated in a request. Requests containing multiple dates will not be registered.

During a monitoring visit carried out at the beginning of December 2025, it was observed, *inter alia*, that notices posted on bulletin boards on the third floor of the MFC stated that residents of the third floor would not be permitted to leave the centre temporarily for one week because of violations of the RIO and disorder in the kitchen – a collective punishment applied to all residents of the floor. A representative of the centre stated that, although the notice indicated otherwise, residents were in practice still allowed to leave the centre temporarily. However, interviewed residents of the third floor stated that they had no longer been able to leave temporarily for some time. Some residents stated that they had never been able to leave, despite having lived at the centre for one to one and a half months.

The system for temporary departures from Pabradė RC described above generally functioned throughout the year, and some persons subject to the “alternative to detention” were able to make use of it. From this perspective, the situation of some persons subject to this measure changed during the year, and it was observed that, once permission was granted, they could leave the centre without escort, albeit only for a short period. On the other hand, despite the legislative provision having been reformulated several times, the situation of other persons subject to the same “alternative to detention” remained essentially unchanged – they could leave the centre only with permission, which they did not receive. According to the Court of Justice, such a situation constitutes detention. If, in a particular case, while “*managing the risk of absconding from the temporary accommodation facility*,” a person is in practice not allowed to leave the centre temporarily, then it is almost beyond doubt that a person “accommodated” under such conditions must be regarded as separated from the rest of the population and deprived of freedom of movement, that is, as a person subject to “detention” within the meaning of EU law.

5.2. SBGS Decision on “Accommodation”

Although many aspects of the practical application of the above-discussed “alternative to detention” require improvement, and although the restriction on freedom of movement in certain cases amounts to *de facto* detention, it is important not to overlook that this measure is imposed by courts that have the authority to decide on detention and only in cases where a statutory ground for detention exists. In other words, instead of imposing the discussed “alternative to detention,” the same court could, under the same circumstances and in respect of the same person, lawfully and legitimately order detention – a more severe restriction on freedom of movement. The problem with *de facto* detention in this context is merely that choosing this measure makes it unnecessary even to consider other available alternatives to detention and distorts statistics on detention.

An entirely different situation arises when *de facto* detention is imposed by institutions that do not have the authority to decide on detention, and when they do so in the absence of a statutory ground for detention. In 2021, when Lithuania faced a sharply increased flow of asylum seekers, Lithuanian authorities confined thousands of foreigners, including minor children, in camps that were spontaneously established for that purpose in various locations, more than thirty of which were created at that time. Although the applicable legal provisions require that detention be carried out only on strictly defined grounds and following an individual assessment of each case, and furthermore only by means of a written decision and only by a court or with prompt judicial review, a pragmatic solution was chosen – in this case, detention simply was not called “detention”. By describing the confinement of asylum seekers in isolated locations where their freedom of movement was removed as “accommodation without granting the right to move freely within the territory of the Republic of Lithuania,” a legal model was created that made it possible not to regard persons confined in camps as detained, or even as being within Lithuanian territory at all, and thus to disregard the legal provisions governing detention. The *de facto* detention described above was applied on the basis of a general statutory provision, without assessing individual circumstances and without adopting individual decisions. Under such circumstances, people could be kept in closed camps for up to six months and, after that period expired, for an additional six months, although during the latter period the MD or the SBGS would issue the relevant administrative decisions[60]. It should be noted that the European Court of Human Rights is currently examining several applications against Lithuania concerning the above-described practice of restricting freedom of movement.

As with the previously discussed “alternative to detention measure,” the situation changed following Ruling No. KT53-A-N6/2023 of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania of 7 June 2023, “On the Compliance of the Provisions of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania”. After assessing the legal framework then in force and the manner in which it had been applied, the Court held that the provisions of the LLSF under which foreigners were required to be accommodated in designated locations without being granted the right to move freely within the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, where such accommodation could last for up to six months and where no decision subject to judicial review had been adopted by a competent authority, were contrary to Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. Attention should be drawn to the numerous cautious “safeguards” referred to by the Court which have nothing to do with the definition of “detention” under EU law, such as the duration of the “accommodation” (up to six months), the absence of individual decisions, and the lack of an opportunity to challenge the measure before a court. In implementing the Court’s ruling, the institutions essentially chose to preserve the same model of “accommodation without granting the right to move freely within the territory of the Republic of Lithuania,” merely providing that it could last not up to six months but “only” up to five months, and requiring the competent authority (the MD or the SBGS) to adopt administrative decisions that could be challenged before a court. It should additionally be noted that the LLSF does not provide foreigners wishing to challenge such administrative decisions before a court with access to state-guaranteed legal aid for that purpose, even though, given that “accommodation” constitutes a material reception condition, EU law guarantees at least asylum seekers such a possibility[61].

In essence, the Constitutional Court’s ruling of 7 June 2023 did not affect the practice whereby *de facto* detention is not regarded as “detention” within the meaning of EU law and is therefore applied in the absence of detention grounds established by EU law and without complying with the procedural safeguards provided therein. It should be noted that the Court found the previous legal framework to be incompatible with Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. This constitutional provision establishes general rules applicable in cases of “detention” and “deprivation of liberty”. If the factual situation of “accommodated” persons did not amount to detention or deprivation of liberty, the guarantees contained in Article 20 of the Constitution would very likely not apply to them, meaning that the provision would have been irrelevant to the case before the Court. Accordingly, the mere fact that the amended legal framework allegedly no longer conflicts with Article 20 of the Constitution means only that the constitutional procedural guarantees applicable to detained persons are now observed; it does not mean that *de facto* detained persons are no longer regarded as “detained” within the

[60] More on the discussed practices during the relevant time-frame: Lithuanian Red Cross. (February 2023). Legal overview #9: <https://redcross.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/TEISINE-APZVALGA-9.pdf>

[61] See art 26(1) and 26(2) of the Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast).

meaning of Article 20 of the Constitution. In any event, the legal framework currently in force^[62] still empowers the MD and the SBGS, by their own decision, to “temporarily accommodate” a foreigner without granting the right to move freely within the territory of the Republic of Lithuania for a period of up to five months, that is, to *de facto* detain a person by administrative decision (rather than by court order) in the absence of a statutory ground for detention.

In the cases observed during 2025, foreigners were “accommodated” by decision of the SBGS without any assessment of individual circumstances. This *de facto* detention measure was applied to all persons arriving from Latvian territory while they were awaiting readmission to Latvia. Accordingly, a person would be *de facto* detained by an SBGS decision until it became clear, for example, that transfer to Latvia would not be possible, at which point the SBGS would apply to the court seeking an order for detention.

Since 1 January 2025, foreigners subject to this form of “temporary accommodation” have come under the responsibility of the Agency and are generally held at Pabradė RC under the same conditions as foreigners subject to the court-imposed “alternative to detention measure” described above. As with the latter group, foreigners in this category may, with the permission of the head of the temporary accommodation facility or a person authorized by him or her, be allowed temporarily to leave the facility in order to obtain medical, social, educational, catering or other services, receive psychological assistance, or purchase food products, where such services are not available at the accommodation facility and where the risk of absconding from the temporary accommodation facility is being managed^[63]. Thus, some “temporarily accommodated” persons who receive permission may leave the centre temporarily without escort. However, a portion of such persons frequently do not receive permission to leave the centre temporarily. According to the assessment of the Court of Justice, a person who is “temporarily accommodated” under such conditions must be regarded as separated from the rest of the population and deprived of freedom of movement, that is, as a person subject to “detention” within the meaning of EU law.

6. QUARANTINE AT PABRADĖ RC

General Information

Continuing the discussion of the issue of *de facto* detention, it is impossible to avoid the question of mandatory medical isolation (quarantine). At the beginning of 2025, Pabradė RC exhibited the same practice of using quarantine as a form of *de facto* detention without a court order as had been observed in 2023–2024 at the SBGS FRC. The FRC RIO provided, and continue to provide, that every person newly arriving or brought to the centre is initially held separately from other foreigners (i.e., in quarantine)^[64]. Meanwhile, the Agency’s RIO, which apply to all Agency divisions, contain no provision establishing such a mandatory quarantine regime for everyone without exception. Despite this, during the first half of the year the quarantine regime at Pabradė RC was applied to all newly admitted persons without exception. According to representatives of Pabradė RC, quarantine for persons accommodated at the centre was applied pursuant to paragraphs 3.5 and 3.7 of the Description of the Procedure for the Identification and Case Management of Persons with Tuberculosis, which provide that persons living in closed collective environments (nursing and care institutions, homeless shelters, etc.), and persons arriving from countries with a high incidence of tuberculosis (more than 50 cases per 100,000 inhabitants) are regarded as belonging to groups at risk of tuberculosis. However, during visits by the LRC, it was observed that quarantine was applied to all newly accommodated persons regardless of the country from which they arrived, whether they had recently undergone a medical examination or not, etc. For example, quarantine was imposed even on foreigners who had been lawfully residing in Lithuania before being accommodated at Pabradė RC, or

[62] See para 3-4 of Article 140⁸ of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners (applicable during emergency situation), also para 3¹ of Article 5 (not applicable during emergency situation): <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.232378/RsZCJHTtKS> (consolidated version in force in 2025)

[63] See para 6 of Article 140⁸ of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.232378/RsZCJHTtKS> (consolidated version in force in 2025)

[64] See para 15.4 of the Rules of Internal Order of the State Border Guard Service Foreigners Registration Centre: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/d94e6d600a8111f0a1c6f244a8c21f99>

on persons transferred to Lithuania under the Dublin III Regulation, who had undergone mandatory medical examinations in another state prior to their flight.

Particularly lengthy quarantine periods were imposed on persons involved in “secondary migration from Latvia” who were awaiting readmission to that country. In such cases, some individuals spent a month or more in quarantine. It was observed that these persons often were not even subjected to the chest X-ray examination used to detect tuberculosis (after which, if no signs of disease were found, quarantine for other residents would normally be discontinued). The justification given was that, once transferred to Latvia, the individuals would likely undergo another X-ray examination there, and excessively frequent X-ray examinations are harmful to human health. As a result, quarantine for persons awaiting readmission became effectively unlimited in duration – that is, it lasted until the person was transferred to Latvia. The need to isolate such persons for ostensibly medical reasons was closely linked to the prospects of the readmission procedure. Once it became clear that Latvia would refuse to take back the foreigner, the need for mandatory medical isolation likewise disappeared. Based on the observed practice, it is highly likely that quarantine in such cases was used as a means of detaining individuals without a court order, ensuring that they would not abscond before readmission and isolating them from any contact with the outside world, including LRC monitors or persons providing legal assistance to foreigners.

For other residents of the centre, quarantine usually lasted from one day to several days, until an X-ray examination had been carried out and a negative result obtained. Longer quarantine periods were applied only in exceptional cases where there were reasonable grounds to suspect that a person was suffering from a contagious disease.

Reception and Protection Conditions During Quarantine

Some residents spent their quarantine period in the FRB, which had been specially adapted for this purpose, while others spent it in the MFC. Most commonly, persons arriving from Latvian territory spent their quarantine period in the MFC (women / families / vulnerable persons – on the 1st or 4th floors; men – on the 3rd floor). LRC monitors were not allowed to visit persons in quarantine. Consequently, information regarding quarantine conditions was collected by email (when persons in quarantine contacted LRC representatives themselves), and later through in-person interviews with residents (for example, when transfer to Latvia proved impossible and individuals were moved from quarantine premises to other accommodation).

Some interviewees stated that they spent the quarantine period in the same room as persons with whom they had not travelled and whom they did not know. In other words, persons who had had no physical contact prior to quarantine were isolated together, thereby creating a risk that, if one person was ill, residents could infect one another during the isolation period.

According to residents’ accounts, persons quarantined on the 3rd and 4th floors of the MFC were for a period not allowed to go outside. Residents reported spending two weeks or more indoors without any possibility of going outdoors. During the second half of the year, residents of the 3rd floor stated that they could go outside only “sometimes.” There was no clear schedule, as some residents stated that they could go outside once every three days, while others stated that they could do so once per week. By contrast, persons quarantined on the 1st floor of the MFC could freely access the fenced area surrounding the building, while foreigners accommodated in the FRB were allowed to enter an internal courtyard several times per day for short periods (the practice evolved during the year: initially, people stated that they could go outside for only 5 minutes, later, for 15 minutes, during the second half of the year – for longer periods).

During the first half of the year, a practice was observed whereby persons quarantined on the 3rd floor of the MFC were kept locked in their rooms. They were not allowed even to enter the corridor or, for example, use the kitchen. Being locked in rooms reduced opportunities to maintain contact with relatives. The MFC regularly experiences Wi-Fi problems because of the structure of the building, wall thickness, and similar factors. Wi-Fi is generally available only in the corridor, which quarantined residents could not access.

It should be noted that telephone use during quarantine was not restricted in either the MFC or the FRB. Changes to the practice of locking residents in rooms on the 3rd floor of the MFC were observed in July, when room doors were unlocked (the same approach was applied on other MFC floors). However, in the FRB all persons in quarantine continued to be locked in their rooms.

Given that, at the beginning of the year, the centre did not have sufficient staff on duty and many persons in quarantine were locked in rooms, the LRC raised concerns regarding residents' safety and their ability to summon staff when necessary. In response to these recommendations, Pabradė RC installed devices in all rooms on the 3rd floor of the MFC and throughout the FRB. By pressing these devices, residents could call on-duty staff and communicate their needs.

Persons in quarantine were not only excluded from all organized activities, but were also not provided with any materials for independent leisure activities, such as puzzles, board games, books or similar items. Interviewed residents stated that, during quarantine, staff arranged additional shopping services for them.

Persons spending quarantine on the 3rd and 4th floors of the MFC had virtually no access to relevant written information. There were either no information boards on these floors or the boards were empty.

Changes During the Second Half of the Year

The quarantine practice at Pabradė RC changed in mid-September following consultations with the National Public Health Centre concerning whether the application of quarantine was mandatory. Agency representatives informed the LRC that quarantine would no longer be mandatory for every newly admitted person without exception and would be applied only where there were indications that a person might be suffering from a disease requiring isolation.

Already during an LRC monitoring visit conducted at the end of September, it was observed that quarantine practices had changed substantially: all floors of the MFC had been opened, residents were allowed to go outdoors freely and move freely between floors (1st and 4th floors were available for women, families, and vulnerable persons; 2nd and 3rd floors – for adult men). Accordingly, LRC monitors were allowed unrestricted access to all floors of the MFC.

Since autumn, only the specially adapted FRB building has been used for quarantine. The quarantine period itself usually lasts from several hours to one day, until the person undergoes an initial examination by medical staff. As before, all residents of Pabradė RC undergo tuberculosis screening by X-ray. However, residents may now wait for this procedure while accommodated together with other residents. If, during the initial medical examination, there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a person may have a contagious disease – or if such a disease is identified later – the person remains in longer isolation in the FRB. Since the second half of September, no cases have been observed in which quarantine at Pabradė RC was used without an objective justification, that is, as a means of restricting a person's freedom of movement.

VI. INTERVIEW MONITORING

In 2025, the LRC conducted monitoring of a total of seven initial (registration) interviews of asylum seekers carried out by officers of the SBGS. The majority of the interviews were monitored at the SBGS FRC (4 interviews), while one monitoring visit each was conducted at the Vilnius Airport FS, Rukla RC[65], and Druskininkai FS. Four of the monitored interviews were conducted with men, two with women, and one with an unaccompanied child. All monitored interviews involved citizens of different countries of origin: India, Iraq, Iran, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, and Ukraine.

As in previous years, interviews were most often organized in a hybrid format, where some participants attended in person while others participated remotely. Most commonly, the interpreter(s) joined remotely via video call. In all observed cases, two separate computers were used during the interviews: one was used by the interviewing officer to enter information into Lithuania's Migration Information System (MIGRIS), while the second computer was placed in front of the asylum seeker with the video call activated. This practice generally complies with the standards for conducting interviews in a hybrid format (it is particularly important to ensure that all participants can see one another).

During three monitoring exercises, no deviations from the recommended interview standards were observed. During two interviews, minor deviations were identified, and one recommendation was issued in each case: 1) in one case, the officer failed to inform the applicant about the confidentiality of the interview; 2) in another case, the officer failed to explain the interpreter's role during the interview, and during the course of the interview the interpreter repeatedly expressed personal opinions regarding the information provided by the asylum seeker. During two interviews, more significant deviations from the recommended standards were identified: 1) an inappropriate seating arrangement was chosen (some interview participants were seated behind the applicant); the interpreter translating into the asylum seeker's native language did not have their camera switched on during the interview; the officer did not ask whether the asylum seeker objected to the participation of the LRC observer in the interview; the asylum seeker was not informed about the interview procedure; at the end of the interview, the asylum seeker was not familiarized with the information recorded during the interview and was not given an opportunity to correct or supplement it; the asylum seeker was not informed about the subsequent procedural steps; 2) the asylum seeker was not informed of the possibility of taking a break; at the beginning of the interview, the interviewing officer did not explain the purpose of the interview, its intended structure, or how it would proceed; the officer did not inform the asylum seeker that the interview was confidential (information about confidentiality was only provided during the interview after the asylum seeker herself raised the issue of confidentiality).

It should be noted that the majority of the monitored interviews took place at the SBGS FRC (often involving interviews conducted by the same officer). Interviews are also conducted by officers of the Migration Divisions of SBGS border units; however, when asylum seeker interviews were carried out in border units, LRC monitors usually did not have sufficient time to attend and monitor them. In view of this, LRC monitors do not consider the aggregated interview-monitoring data for 2025 to be representative of, or reflective of, the overall situation across SBGS units.

[65] The initial interview and other initial procedures for the unaccompanied child at Rukla RC were carried out by officers of the Migration Division of the Vilnius FD of the SBGS.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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In 2025, all stakeholders working in the field of migration had a good opportunity to test how to operate under difficult conditions when faced with an increased flow of vulnerable foreigners, how several institutions can cooperate effectively in providing services to the same target group of persons, and similar matters. In 2025, a new age assessment procedure began to be applied, requiring an assessment of available resources, capacities, operating algorithms, and the ability to respond in a timely manner.

Although there were not particularly many asylum seekers temporarily accommodated in SBGS border units in 2025, it was observed that reception and protection conditions for asylum seekers at the border improved. First, premises intended for detention are no longer used. Even in cases where intensive restrictions on freedom of movement were applied (e.g., locking doors, escorting persons to sanitary facilities, inability to communicate with other persons, etc.), almost all asylum seekers lived in premises that met standards. Only isolated cases of infrastructural deficiencies were observed, which, objectively speaking, representatives of SBGS border units have no possibility to eliminate (for example, the absence of windows or natural daylight). A second important aspect was that all asylum seekers were allowed to use a telephone and were provided with access to printed written information in a language they understood. However, the amended regulation introducing the obligation to register all new prepaid SIM cards created challenges in ensuring asylum seekers' communication with the outside world, particularly in cases where persons did not possess documents or, for example, where documents had been temporarily taken after their accommodation/detention.

When assessing the situation in foreigners' accommodation and detention centres, rather different practices were observed in 2025.

The least changing situation in the field of reception and protection was observed at Vilnius RC, where resident turnover was relatively low, resulting in fewer communication- and organization-related reception challenges. The greatest challenges during the year were related to the redistribution of long-term residents of Vilnius RC in order to accommodate newly arriving persons, which resulted in single individuals being accommodated together in rooms occupied by two or more persons.

Rukla RC, for its part, experienced a high turnover within its target group – unaccompanied children. It should be noted that the staff of Rukla RC succeeded in coping with the increased flow of unaccompanied children: they promptly implemented infrastructure changes, ensured material support, access to information and interpreters, including for rare languages that had previously been used little in practice.

The most difficult situation was probably at Pabradė RC, after the Agency took over part of the buildings of the SBGS FRC. As increasing numbers of new residents were brought to Pabradė RC during the year, the centre lacked several essential elements: (1) additional staff; (2) coordination of material/logistical support; (3) provision of information and interpretation services; and (4) organization of leisure and meaningful activities.

All of the above-mentioned issues were essentially resolved, or at least were in the process of being resolved, during the second half of the year (at the latest by autumn). Nevertheless, perhaps the most significant positive change achieved at Pabradė RC during the year was the modification of quarantine arrangements, with quarantine no longer being used from autumn 2025 as a tool for restricting freedom of movement.

In 2025, widespread *de facto* detention of foreigners was observed. As many as 84% of all residents of Pabradė RC in 2025 were subject to actual detention (an “alternative to detention measure” was imposed or the persons were “accommodated” by decision of the SBGS). Although some of these persons were occasionally allowed to leave the centre temporarily with permission from the centre director, such permits were not granted to everyone. Cases were observed where residents of an entire floor were subjected to collective punishment and, for a certain period, no one was allowed to leave the centre at all.

A relatively small proportion of asylum seekers in 2025 consisted of foreigners detained in the SBGS FRC, for whom the Agency provided material support and services. Nevertheless, despite minor shortcomings likely caused more by deficiencies in inter-institutional communication, the greatest challenges faced by asylum seekers under the responsibility of the SBGS were not related to infrastructure or service deficiencies but rather to excessively strict and punitive measures. First, detained asylum seekers continue to have extremely limited opportunities to use mobile telephones and the internet. Second, opportunities to spend even minimal time outdoors in fresh air are not always ensured.

Alongside reception and protection conditions, another equally important aspect should be mentioned – access to the asylum procedure, which was restricted both for persons arriving at BCPs and for persons who were *de facto* detained. Although laws and international agreements oblige state officials and civil servants to hear and appropriately respond to the needs of both groups, a situation was observed in 2025 where access was restricted and granted only in more exceptional cases or under circumstances where the will of the asylum seeker himself or herself was not necessarily the determining factor.

Based on observations made in 2025, we recommend that the responsible state institutions:

- **Ensure access to the asylum procedure in all cases for foreigners arriving at international BCPs or while under the authority of state institutions – in temporary accommodation or detention centres for foreigners;**
- **Ensure, in all cases, the dignity of detained foreigners and conditions conducive to mental health, including opportunities to spend designated periods of time outdoors and the organization of leisure and meaningful activities;**
- **Assess the justification and proportionality of strict rules restricting the use of telephones and the internet in detention, seeking a fair balance between the interests of the individual and those of the state;**
- **Ensure foreigners’ access to relevant information in languages and formats they understand (written, visual, audio, etc.);**

- **Ensure foreigners' access to interpretation services, particularly when providing psychological and medical services;**
- **Ensure that foreigners are provided with comprehensive information regarding their legal status (rights, obligations, applicable procedures) and that decisions affecting them are explained, especially those related to restrictions on freedom of movement (including information on the reasons for such decisions and the consequences of those decisions for the individual);**
- **Ensure the prompt distribution of material items, particularly seasonally appropriate clothing and footwear, as well as hygiene and household items, while taking into account individuals' special needs;**
- **Pay greater attention, taking into account the needs of the residents themselves, to the organization, diversity, and promotion of leisure and meaningful activities. It is observed that residents of the centres actively engage in leisure activities – trips, excursions, sports competitions, community activities together (e.g., celebrations, gardening, etc.) – compared with educational activities, which attract fewer participants;**
- **Strengthen inter-institutional cooperation through the effective exchange of information regarding the needs, changed legal status, and other relevant circumstances of foreigners residing in temporary accommodation or detention centres, as well as those who have ended up in medical institutions. Correspondingly, exchange good practices between different units of the same institution that possess greater experience and expertise in particular areas.**

ANNEXES

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Annex 1: Monitoring Statistics

Figure 1. 2025 LRC Monitoring Visits: date, location, access, purpose.

LRC monitoring visits in 2025				
No.	Date of Visit	Location	Access	Purpose of Monitoring
1	2025-01-28	Vilnius Airport FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
2	2025-02-03	Kapčiamiestis FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
3	2025-02-24	Švenčionys FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
4	2025-03-03	Vilnius RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
5	2025-03-05	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
6	2025-03-06	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
7	2025-03-13	Kybartai Road BCP	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
8	2025-04-09	Rukla RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
9	2025-04-16	Girionys RC[66]	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
10	2025-04-22	Vilnius Airport FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions + initial (registration) interview
11	2025-04-23	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
12	2025-04-28	Kapčiamiestis FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
13	2025-04-29	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
14	2025-05-05	A. Barauskas FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
15	2025-05-13	Kena FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
16	2025-05-15	Rukla RC	On-site	Access to asylum procedure
17	2025-05-19	Rukla RC	On-site	Initial (registration) interview
18	2025-05-21	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
19	2025-05-29	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
20	2025-05-30	A. Barauskas FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
21	2025-06-09	Kaunas Prison	On-site	Access to asylum procedure
22	2025-06-13	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Initial (registration) interview
23	2025-06-19	Vilnius RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
24	2025-06-25	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
25	2025-06-30	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
26	2025-07-14	A. Barauskas FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
27	2025-07-23	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
28	2025-07-31	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
29	2025-08-04	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Initial (registration) interview
30	2025-08-06	Rukla RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
31	2025-08-13	Girionys RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
32	2025-08-20	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Initial (registration) interview
33	2025-08-26	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
34	2025-08-27	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
35	2025-08-29	Švenčionys FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
36	2025-09-02	Varėna Hospital	On-site	Access to asylum procedure
37	2025-09-03	Rukla RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
38	2025-09-04	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Initial (registration) interview
39	2025-09-10	Kybartai Road BCP	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
40	2025-09-24	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
41	2025-09-25	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
42	2025-10-08	Visaginas Hospital	On-site	Access to asylum procedure
43	2025-10-16	Vilnius RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
44	2025-10-23	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
45	2025-10-30	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
46	2025-11-17	Druskininkai FS	On-site	Reception / protection conditions + initial (registration) interview
47	2025-11-21	Pabradė FRC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
48	2025-11-24	Rukla RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
49	2025-12-03	Pabradė RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
50	2025-12-17	Girionys RC	On-site	Reception / protection conditions
Total		50 visits	50 - On-site, 0 - remote	

[66] For the purpose of this table, the Girionys branch of Agency's Rukla RC is referred to as "Girionys RC".

A total of 34 visits were carried out to foreigners' temporary accommodation and detention centres, and 13 visits were conducted to SBGS border units (FS and BCPs). On 3 occasions, the purpose of the monitoring was to assess access to asylum procedure in SBGS border units within whose areas of operation asylum seekers had been identified or apprehended[67]. However, these visits were not carried out at SBGS border units per se but at other locations (2 at healthcare institutions to which asylum seekers had been taken due to health problems, and 1 at a correctional institution).

In terms of the frequency of monitoring visits, the FRC and Pabradė RC stood out among the foreigners' accommodation and detention centres. The URC was monitored 13 times (including 4 visits during which initial interviews of asylum seekers were monitored). Pabradė RC was visited 9 times. The other centres were visited less frequently: Rukla RC – 6 visits (including 1 monitoring of an initial interview of an asylum seeker); Vilnius RC and the Girionys branch of Rukla RC – 3 visits each.

Among the SBGS border units (FS and BCPs), in 2025 LRC monitors most frequently visited A. Barauskas FS (3 visits), as well as Švenčionys FS, Kapčiamiestis FS, and the Vilnius Airport FS (2 visits each). Monitoring visits were conducted in 3 of the 4 SBGS FD. The only FD not visited was the Coast Guard FD, where no asylum applications were lodged in 2025. Within the territorial units of the Varėna FD, 6 monitoring visits were carried out, within the Vilnius FD – 5 visits, and within the Pagėgiai FD – 2 visits.

In 41 cases, reception and protection conditions were monitored in foreigners' accommodation and detention centres, SBGS border units, or other locations. In 7 cases, initial interviews of asylum seekers were monitored. In 4 cases, visits were carried out for the purpose of collecting information concerning access to asylum procedure. The number of visits and the number of reports prepared differ because, in certain cases, different types of monitoring were carried out during a single visit (for example, monitoring of reception and protection conditions together with monitoring of an initial interview, or monitoring of access to the asylum procedure).

[67] One individual – an unaccompanied child – did not have the status of an asylum seeker at the time of the visit. The visit to the correctional institution was carried out and the information collected on the basis of the LRC cooperation agreement with the Lithuanian Prison Service under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania.

Annex 2: SBGS and National Statistics

Figure 1. The MD statistics on asylum applications by country of origin and timeline (month, quarter, year).

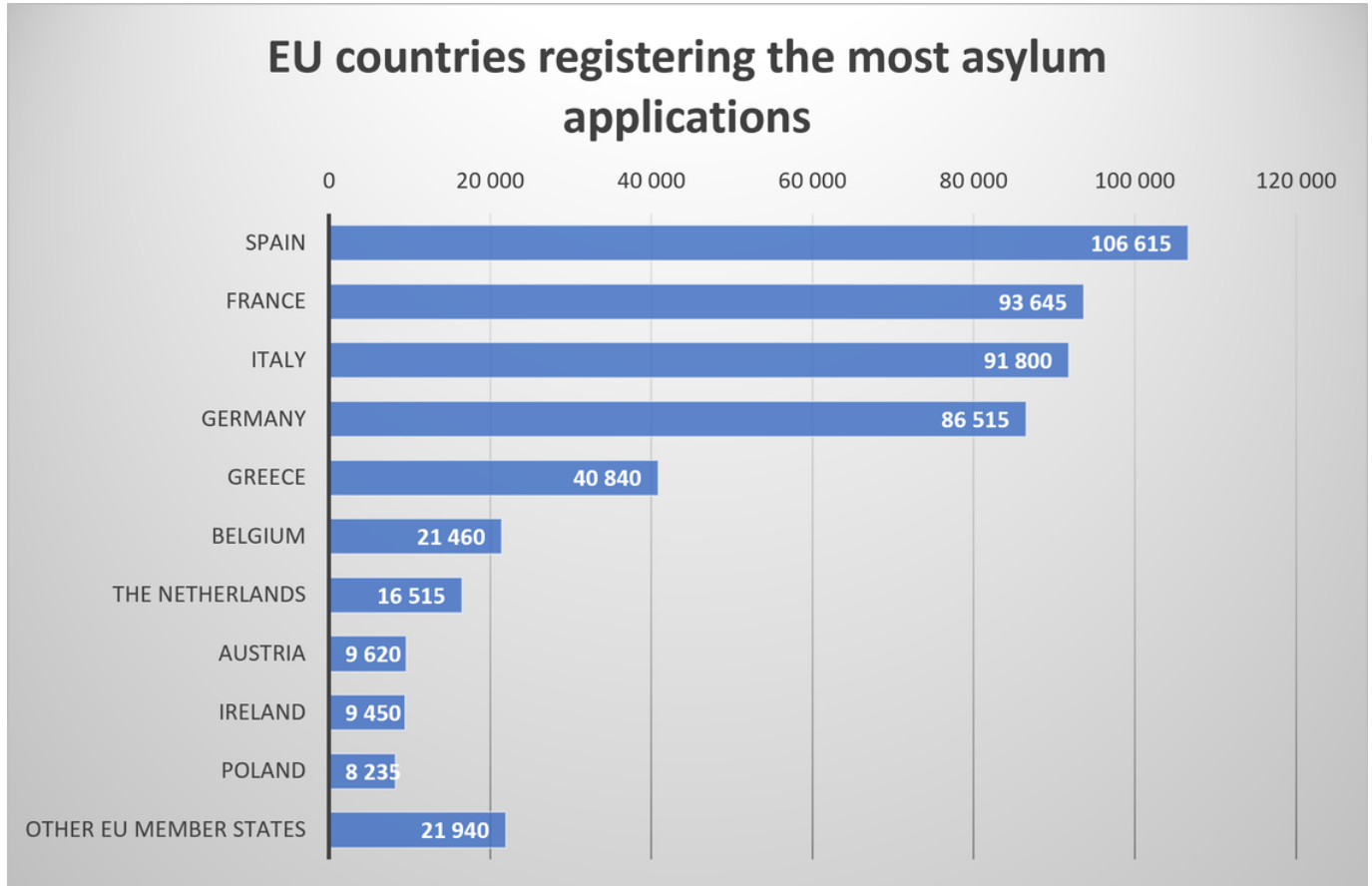
No	Country of origin	January	February	March	Q1	April	May	June	Q2	July	August	September	Q3	October	November	December	Q4	TOTAL
	TOTAL	26	28	22	76	11	46	19	76	45	28	46	119	48	36	26	110	381
1	Belarus	6	6	7	19	1	14	8	23	5	6	11	22	7	8	4	19	83
2	Somalia				0		19		19	3	6	13	22	4	1		5	46
3	Russia	3	7	5	15	3	1	2	6	3	2	3	8	5		1	6	35
4	Ukraine	1	5	4	10	3	2	1	6	6	1	1	8			4	4	28
5	Tajikistan	2	1		3	1	1	1	3	8			8		9	1	10	24
6	Afghanistan	2	1		3	1	1	1	3	2	1		3		4	5	9	18
7	Iraq	6	1		7			1	1	1		1	2	5		1	6	16
8	Pakistan			1	1				0			1	1	7	2	2	11	13
9	Turkey	1	1		2		1		1	5		1	6		2	1	3	12
10	Iran				0				0		1	4	5	3	2	1	6	11
11	Azerbaijan	1	3	1	5			1	1	1		1	2		1	1	2	10
12	Uzbekistan		1	1	2			1	1	2	1		3	1	1		2	8
13	Eritrea				0				0			1	1	6			6	7
14	Syria	1			1			1	1				0	1	2	1	4	6
15	Moldova				0				0			2	2	3			3	5
16	Algeria				0	2	1		3				0	1	1		2	5
17	Egypt				0		1		1			1	1	1	2		3	5
18	Ethiopia				0		2		2		2		2				0	4
19	Cameroon				0			1	1	2		1	3				0	4
20	USA	1			1		2		2				0				0	3
21	Kyrgyzstan			2	2				0		1		1				0	3
22	Nigeria				0				0	2	1		3				0	3
23	India				0				0		3		3				0	3
24	Sri Lanka				0				0			2	2	1			1	3
25	Morocco				0		1		1		1		1			1	1	3
26	Congo DR		1		1				0	1			1				0	2
27	Bangladesh				0				0		2		2				0	2
28	Israel	1			1				0			1	1				0	2
29	Sudan				0				0			2	2				0	2
30	Kazakhstan				0				0	1			1	1			1	2
31	Ghana			1	1	0			0				0			1	1	2
32	Yemen				0				0				0		1	1	2	2
33	Tunisia	1			1				0				0				0	1
34	Guinea Bissau		1		1				0				0				0	1
35	Ecuador				0			1	1				0				0	1
36	Colombia				0				0	1			1				0	1
37	State of Palestine				0				0	1			1				0	1
38	South African Republic				0				0	1			1				0	1
39	Armenia				0				0				0	1			1	1
40	Myanmar				0				0				0	1			1	1
41	China				0				0				0			1	1	1

Figure 2. Statistics on asylum applications as provided by the SBGS, including applications submitted to the MD.

2025	Applications at the SBGS BCPs	Applications at the border (arriving irregularly) and within the country					Total
		SBGS FD / FS	SBGS FRC	Reception and Integration Agency (registered by SBGS)	MD units	Transferred pursuant to Dublin III regulation	
January	0	3	0	1	16	8	28
February	0	1	0	7	15	3	26
March	1	0	7	2	12	0	22
April	2	1	5	0	3	0	11
May	3	6	4	2	28	3	46
June	0	0	3	0	11	4	18
July	0	4	5	4	22	10	45
August	0	2	4	9	12	1	28
September	1	2	4	13	26	0	46
October	0	2	6	18	23	0	49
November	0	2	5	16	13	0	36
December	0	0	5	12	9	0	26
Total	7	23	48	84	190	29	381
374							

Annex 3: EU Asylum Statistics

Figure 1. EU countries registering the most asylum applications (until 1 October 2025).



Annex 4: LRC-Collected Data

Figure 1. LRC-Collected Data on Asylum Applications Registered in 2025.

Note: This table includes only those foreigners whose asylum application registration circumstances fall into specific categories: arrived via BCP, arrived irregularly, or transferred under the Dublin III Regulation.

SBGS initial notifications about asylum seekers and their countries of origin in 2025						
Arrived irregularly			Arrived via BCPs			Transferred pursuant to Dublin III regulation
External border with Belarus	External border with Russia	Border with other EU countries (including transit)	External border with Belarus	External border with Russia	Airports	
BLR – 5 IRN – 4 RUS – 3 IRQ – 1 LKA – 1	n/a	SOM – 15 PAK – 10 TJK – 9 AFG – 8 ERI – 7 ETH – 4 IND – 4 IRN – 4 SYR – 3 EGY – 2 YEM – 2 BGD – 1 DZA – 1 MAR – 1 SDN – 1	BLR – 2 UKR – 1	BLR – 2	UKR – 3	IRQ – 15 BLR – 5 UZB – 5 AZE – 4 TJK – 4 UKR – 4 AFG – 2 CMR – 2 KAZ – 2 RUS – 2 CHN – 1 COD – 1 EGY – 1 GHA – 1 IND – 1 NGA – 1 PAK – 1 TUR – 1
14	0	72	3	2	3	53
			5			
			8			
86		147				

Country names are displayed using three-letter codes in accordance with the International Organization for Standardization ISO 3166 standard (ISO 3166-1 alpha-3): AFG – Afghanistan, AZE – Azerbaijan, BGD – Bangladesh, BLR – Belarus, CHN – China, CMR – Cameroon, COD – Ivory Coast, DZA – Algeria, EGY – Egypt, ERI – Eritrea, ETH – Ethiopia, YEM – Yemen, IND – India, IRQ – Iraq, IRN – Iran, KAZ – Kazakhstan, LKA – Sri Lanka, MAR – Morocco, NGA – Nigeria, PAK – Pakistan, RUS – Russia, SDN – Sudan, SYR – Syria, SOM – Somalia, TJK – Tajikistan, TUR – Turkey, UKR – Ukraine, UZB – Uzbekistan.

When considering only asylum applications registered by SBGS border units (FD, FS, and BCPs), the highest number of notifications in 2025 were received from the Vilnius Airport FS of the Vilnius FD – 15 notifications/cases, involving 15 asylum seekers[68]; the A. Barauskas FS of the Varėna FD – 4 notifications/cases, involving 5 asylum seekers[69]; the Pūškai FS of the Vilnius FD – 3 notifications/cases, involving 3 asylum seekers[70]; the Kapčiamiestis FS of the Varėna FD – 2 notifications/cases, involving 3 asylum seekers[71]; the Kybartai FS of the Pagėgiai FD – 2 notifications/cases, involving 2 asylum seekers[72].

Figure 2. LRC-Collected Data on 2025 Asylum Applications Registered by SBGS (regardless of submission circumstances).

Asylum applications registered by the SBGS in 2025 (by month, gender, as well as age and vulnerability categories)							
Month	By gender		Children (among them)		Unaccompanied or separated children (among them)		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
January	7	5	3	1	0	0	12
February	10	2	1	0	0	0	12
March	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
April	10	1	0	0	0	0	11
May	18	1	4	0	4	0	19
June	9	2	0	0	0	0	11
July	17	5	5	0	2	0	22
August	15	4	0	0	0	0	19
September	19	2	0	0	0	0	21
October	18	9	1	2	0	0	27
November	17	9	4	3	0	0	26
December	15	2	0	0	0	0	17
Total	164	42	18	6	6	0	206
	206		24		6		

[68] Only in three cases did the asylum seekers arrive independently and were received in the asylum seeker facilities of the Vilnius Airport FS, where they spent at least one night and where the initial procedural steps were carried out. In all other cases, the notifications concerned asylum seekers transferred to Lithuania under the Dublin III Regulation. In such cases, the registration of the asylum applications was not carried out on site – that is, not by specialists of the Migration Division of the Vilnius FD – but by the SBGS FRC. Officers serving at the Vilnius Airport FS performed only the initial information function and transferred the foreigners on the same day to their colleagues at the SBGS FRC. There was also one case in 2025 in which an asylum seeker who had not arrived through the airport was temporarily accommodated at the Vilnius Airport FS after the initial procedures had been carried out by the Migration Division of the Vilnius FD in Mickūnai.

[69] In one case, the asylum seekers were identified within the area of operation of the A. Barauskas FS, but only after they had already travelled further into the territory of Lithuania. In that case, the Migration Division of the Varėna FD informed the LRC about the asylum seekers.

[70] Following an irregular border crossing within the area of operation of the Pūškai FS, asylum seekers were usually transferred for temporary accommodation to the Švenčionys FS of the Vilnius FD. There were also cases in which asylum seekers had to be transported urgently to a healthcare institution.

[71] In one case, asylum seekers entered Lithuania irregularly within the area of operation of the Kapčiamiestis FS, but continued travelling and reached Poland, where they were apprehended and transferred back to Lithuania. They ultimately arrived at a unit of the Varėna FD, which informed the LRC about the asylum seekers. This case is not included in the notification statistics for the Kapčiamiestis FS.

[72] In practice, asylum seekers are physically received at the structural units of the Kybartai FS – the Kybartai Road BCP or the Kybartai Railway BCP – however, the notifications are received from the duty officers of the Kybartai FS.

According to the LRC data, the fewest asylum applications were registered by the SBGS in March (9), April (11), June (11), January (12), and February (12); while the highest numbers were registered in October (27), November (26), July (22), and September (21) [73].

Figure 3. Arrival of asylum seekers via international BCPs (excluding airports) in 2025 and comparison with previous years.

Asylum seekers arriving regularly via BCPs (external border with Belarus and Russia)							
2022		2023		2024		2025	
Border with Belarus	Border with Russia	Border with Belarus	Border with Russia	Border with Belarus	Border with Russia	Border with Belarus	Border with Russia
RUS – 55 TJK – 21 BLR – 6 UKR – 5 AZE – 3	BLR – 24 RUS – 14 UKR – 2	TJK – 6 RUS – 1	BLR – 17	CUB – 11 TJK – 4 UZB – 4	BLR – 6	BLR – 2 UKR – 1	BLR – 2
90	40	7	17	19	6	3	2
130		24		25		5	

Country names in the table are displayed using three-letter codes from the International Organization for Standardization ISO 3166 standard (ISO 3166-1 alpha-3): AZE – Azerbaijan, BLR – Belarus, CUB – Cuba, RUS – Russia, TJK – Tajikistan, UKR – Ukraine, UZB – Uzbekistan.

[73] Compared with the statistics published by the SBGS, the monthly number of registered applications may differ slightly because the SBGS counts asylum seekers according to the actual date of registration of the application. By contrast, the LRC records the date on which it receives notification of the intended registration of an asylum application—that is, from the moment the individual submits the asylum application. As a result, for example, a notification may be received at the end of one month, while the actual registration of the application is carried out only at the beginning of the following month.



**Lietuvos
Raudonasis
Kryžius**



J. Jasinskio g. 16B
03163 Vilnius
info@redcross.lt

