

International  
Organization  
for Migration

European  
Migration  
Network

# The integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market

## 2022/1

EMN STUDY

This publication was conducted under the European Migration Network (EMN) 2021–2022 Work Programme.

EMN is a Network composed of migration experts which aims to collect, analyse and provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum. By the decree of the Government of Republic of Lithuania International Organization for Migration Vilnius Office acts as the national coordinator for the EMN activities in Lithuania.

More information about EMN activities in Lithuania: **[www.emn.lt](http://www.emn.lt)**.

#### **Contact details:**

European Migration Network National Contact Point in Lithuania  
A. Jakšto str. 12, 4th floor  
LT-01105, Vilnius  
Tel.: +370 5 2624897  
Email: [emnlithuania@iom.int](mailto:emnlithuania@iom.int)

© International Organization for Migration (IOM), European Migration Network (EMN), 2022

---

Information provided in this publication do not Necessarily reflect the opinions and views of the Republic of Lithuania, the European Commission and International Organization for Migration or its Member States, nor are they bound by its conclusions. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used for commercial purposes without a written permission of IOM Vilnius Office.

**The integration  
of applicants for  
international  
protection in the  
labour market**

---

2022/1

---

EMN STUDY

# CONTENT

---

SUMMARY.....	8
1. INTEGRATION OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION - DATA AND DEBATES.....	10
2. INTEGRATION POLICIES IN THE EMN MEMBER STATES AND OBSERVER COUNTRIES.....	14
3. ACCESSING THE LABOUR MARKET (EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT).....	17
4. SUPPORT MEASURES TO ENHANCE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT.....	23
5. GOOD PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES.....	25
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	28

# SUMMARY

---

Throughout most of the study period, asylum applicants were not allowed to work in Lithuania. The amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners passed on 3 December 2019 allowed asylum applicants, as of 1 January 2020, to take up employment in Lithuania if the Migration Department does not make an asylum decision within 6 months from the lodging of an application for asylum and the delay cannot be attributed to the applicant. Between 2020 and June 2022, 154 asylum applicants acquired the right to take up employment in Lithuania (in 2020 – 34; in 2021 – 53; in 2022 – 67).

In 2021, when Lithuania faced an influx of irregular migrants, with the number of applications for asylum increasing 13 times in one year, the government declared a country-wide extreme situation on 2 July 2021 and the Seimas introduced a state of emergency on 9 November 2021. In June 2022, after a long debate, the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners was amended to regulate the right of those asylum applicants who entered the country during martial law, a state of emergency, or an extreme situation declared due to a mass influx of foreigners. Such foreigners were allowed to take up employment or to engage in self-employment activities only after 12 months from the registration of a foreigner in the Lithuanian Migration Information System. The provisions of this amendment entered into force on 1 August 2022.

During the period under study, asylum applicants were not subject to any restrictions on taking up employment (for example, working for a single employer or only in a certain occupation) and there was no obligation to obtain a work permit. However, there was also no possibility to engage in self-employment activities or to participate in the labour market integration support programs run by the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Currently, asylum applicants are assisted in labour market integration by the staff of non-governmental organizations and the Refugees' Reception Centre under projects funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund ('AMIF').

# 1.

---

Integration of  
applicants for  
international  
protection - data  
and debates

Question (further – Q) 1. Please provide an overview of the main trends (number of applications for international protection, age, sex, citizenship) in international protection applicants in your country in the period January 2017 - June 2022.

In 2017-2019, Lithuania saw only a slight increase in the number of asylum applicants<sup>1</sup>:

- In 2017 – 475 asylum applicants, of whom 24% (115 persons) were children under the age of 14, 26% (125 persons) were girls and women aged 14 and over, and 50% (235 persons) were boys and men aged 14 and over;
- In 2018 – 413 asylum applicants, of whom 30% (123 persons) were children under the age of 14, 23% (125 persons) were girls and women aged 14 and over, and 47% (195 persons) were boys and men aged 14 and over;
- In 2019 – 629 asylum applicants (365 working-age persons), of whom 44% (279 persons) were children under the age of 14, 22% (140 persons) were girls and women aged 14 and over, and 33% (210 persons) were boys and men aged 14 and over.

The countries from which Lithuania received the most asylum applicants during 2017-2019 were Tajikistan, Syria, Russia, Belarus, Eritrea and etc.

In 2020, the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to a decrease in the flow of asylum applicants, with 265 asylum applicants applying for asylum in Lithuania, of whom 32% (85 persons) were children under the age of 14, 19% (50 persons) were girls and women aged 14 and over, and 47% (125 persons) were boys and men aged 14 and over.

In 2021, Lithuania faced an influx of migrants, with applications for asylum received from 4,214 (3,320 working-age) persons. Compared to 2020, the number of applications for asylum increased by 1,226.8%. As regards the citizenship of asylum applicants, 5 countries stand out: Iraq – 2,480 persons (14 in 2020), Afghanistan – 297 persons, Belarus – 260 persons (81 in 2020), the Democratic Republic of the Congo – 149 (0 in 2020), Russia – 132 (88 in 2020). Of those applying for asylum in Lithuania in 2021, 21% (894 persons) were children under the age of 14, 20% (870 persons) were women and girls aged 14 and over, and 58% (2,455 persons) were men and boys aged 14 and over. Only 15 persons were over 65.

In the first half of 2022, 480 persons applied for asylum in Lithuania, of whom 26% (125 persons) were women and girls aged 14 and over and 70% (335 persons) were boys and men aged 14 and over. Following the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine, the number of asylum applicants from Belarus (195 persons) and Russia (65 persons) has further increased.

Q2. Is the labour market situation of international protection applicants monitored with official data (gathered by the authorities and reliable)? If so, please provide an overview in terms of indicators that are used in your country, focus on specific groups, data collection intervals etc.

As asylum applicants were not allowed to take up employment in 2017-2019 and were granted such a right as of 1 January 2020, no data were previously collected. From 1 January 2020 until 30 June 2022, data were collected on the number of applicants for international protection/asylum

<sup>1</sup> The source of the data provided below is the [Migration Yearbooks](#) published by the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania.

applicants who acquired the right to take up employment. Information on them is collected by the Migration Department, which issues a foreigner's registration certificate, which indicates the right to take up employment. Statistics on foreigners who have requested to indicate in a foreigner's registration certificate their right to take up employment in Lithuania during the examination of their application for asylum are published by the Migration Department semi-annually. Please note, however, that no data has been gathered on how many of those who have acquired the right to take up employment have actually taken up employment, nor on the nature of their employment nor any other related indicators.

Q3. Are statistics available on applications/grants/refusals of the applications to access the labour market/self-employment as well as the employment rates of applicants for international protection? Yes/No

Yes.

If yes, then please provide the totals per year in the period 2017-2022.

Number of foreigners who in 2020 requested to indicate in a foreigner's registration certificate their right to take up employment in the Republic of Lithuania during the examination of their application for asylum, by citizenship, age and sex								
Citizenship	Male				Female			
	Foreigners' age groups, years							
	Under 25	25-40	40-55	Over 55	Under 25	25-40	40-55	Over 55
Afghanistan		1						
Azerbaijan		1				3	1	
Belarus			2					
Egypt			1					
Iraq	1							
Iran		3					1	
Libya		1						
Moldova			1					
Pakistan		1						
Russia		1		1				
Somali		1						
Tajikistan		12						
Uzbekistan			1					
Total:		21	5	1	-	4	2	-
Total	34							

In total, 154 asylum applicants acquired the right to take up employment between 1 January 2020 and 30 June 2022 (prior to 2020, asylum applicants were not allowed to access the labour market and therefore no statistics are available).



Number of foreigners who in 2021 requested to indicate in a foreigner's registration certificate their right to take up employment in the Republic of Lithuania during the examination of their application for asylum, by citizenship	
Citizenship	Number
Afghanistan	1
Azerbaijan	2
Tajikistan	2
South Sudan	1
Iraq	1
Russia	5
Belarus	37
Türkiye	3
Nigeria	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

In January-June 2022, 67 persons were issued a foreigner's registration certificate with the right to take up employment.

Please note that the above statistics only show those who have acquired the right to take up employment. No data are collected on the number of asylum applicants who have actually exercised their right to take up employment and have taken up employment. Taking into account the labour market situation in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, we can assume that this had a negative impact on the ability of asylum applicants to independently find and take up employment even if they had the right to take up employment.

#### Q4. What are the main public and policy debates regarding applicants for international protection's labour market integration (e.g., time frame for access, opportunities and challenges)?

Although NGOs working in the field of human rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Lithuania have long been raising the issue of the right of asylum applicants to take up employment and have called for the transposition into national law of provisions of Article 15(1) of the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, the provision granting this right was introduced in the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners only at the end of 2019. The main reason for the delay in granting asylum applicants the right to take up employment has been the potential threat of abuse of the asylum system, given that Lithuania is a country that guards the external borders of the European Union. Moreover, since the number of asylum applicants until 2021 was not very large (a considerable share of them – about 40% – were children under the age of 14) and asylum applicants often used Lithuania as a transit country to other EU countries, the issue of the integration of asylum applicants into the labour market in Lithuania did not receive much support and interest from either politicians or employers. In 2019, during a discussion of the draft amendment to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, there was a debate regarding the length of the period after which asylum applicants would acquire the right to take up employment in Lithuania – whether it should be 3, 6 or 9 months. The decision to allow asylum applicants to take up employment in certain cases was eventually passed and, as of 1 January 2020, an asylum applicant is allowed to exercise this right if the Migration Department does not examine their asylum case within 6 months through no fault of the asylum applicant.

In 2021, Lithuania's asylum system was severely affected by an unprecedented and unpredictable situation, when a disproportionately large number of asylum applicants entered Lithuania via Belarus within a relatively short period of time. The influx of irregular migrants sparked further debate and necessitated the adoption of measures to tackle the migration crisis, ensure national security and protect the external borders of the European Union, as well as to address the situation of migrants who have illegally crossed the border, turning into a political instrument used by the Belarusian regime. As a result of the massive influx of foreigners, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania declared a country-wide extreme situation on 2 July 2021 and the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania introduced a state of emergency on 9 November 2021. Subsequently, in order to ensure fast and smooth asylum procedures, the Ministry of the Interior drafted, and the Seimas passed amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners allowing for a different regulation of asylum seekers during the period of martial law, a state of emergency, and an extreme situation due to a massive influx of foreigners.

In June 2022, the Seimas passed amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners related to the right of asylum applicants to take up employment during martial law, a state of emergency, and an extreme situation due to a mass influx of foreigners. The amendments regulate the right of such persons to take up employment or to engage in self-employment activities after 12 months from the registration of a foreigner in the Lithuanian Migration Information System. Asylum applicants entering the country during martial law, a state of emergency, as well as during an extreme situation due to a mass influx of foreigners must obtain a foreigner's registration certificate with the right to take up employment issued by the Migration Department. These and related decisions were taken in view of the rapid increase in the number of irregular migrants crossing the Belarusian border in 2021 and with a view to enabling asylum applicants to become self-supporting, without creating conditions that could encourage migrants to abuse the asylum system. Please note that while debates on these legislative changes were held and the law was passed by the Parliament in the first half of 2022, the amendments entered into force as late as on 1 August 2022. Therefore, the present study assesses the integration of asylum applicants into the labour market prior to these changes.

# 2.

## Integration policies in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries

Q5. Does your state have a specific policy/strategy to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals? Yes/No

No. There is no specific policy to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals as such. Foreigners who have residence permits in Lithuania benefit from the same labour market integration measures as Lithuanian citizens.

a. If yes, does it encompass applicants of international protection? Yes/No

i. If yes, please provide a brief outline of the strategy/policy in place in your country to integrate applicants of international protection into the labour market.

No.

ii. If no, please answer question 5b below.

b. If no, how is the labour market integration of applicants for international protection addressed? Is there a mainstreaming labour market integration approach applicable? Yes/No

No.

i. If no, please provide a reason, if available, and describe briefly how international protection applicants are treated in practice with regard to labour market integration.

Although, as of 1 January 2020, asylum applicants have the right to take up employment in Lithuania if the Migration Department does not take an asylum decision within 6 months, they do not have the possibility to register with the Employment Service and to receive its services and participate in programs supporting labour market integration. This is so because, according to the legislation currently in force, third-country nationals can only register with the Employment Service if they have a residence permit in Lithuania.

Asylum applicants who come from culturally different countries and have not acquired sufficient Lithuanian language skills need assistance in finding employment, translation/interpretation services for job interviews, translating and signing employment contracts, as well as assistance at the workplace. Translators/interpreters are also needed for employment disputes and various business matters. Insufficient language skills, gender and ethnic stereotypes, lack of education and/or qualifications, possessing low-demand professions, the non-recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications in Lithuania are the main barriers to employment for asylum applicants, which are addressed by referring for help to non-governmental organizations. Currently, assistance is provided by translators/interpreters, lawyers, employment counsellors and Lithuanian language teachers of NGOs, the Refugees' Reception Centre, either on a voluntary basis or funded by the AMIF.

Q6. Have there been any major changes in the strategy/policy to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals within the temporal scope of the study (January 2017 – June 2022)? Yes/No

Yes.



If yes, please explain briefly the content, including what was the driver and objective for these changes?

In order to implement the provisions 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 (recast), the amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, which entered into force on 1 January 2020, provide asylum applicants with the opportunity to take up employment in Lithuania if the Migration Department has not taken an asylum decision within 6 months from the lodging of an application for asylum through no fault of an asylum applicant.

In order to facilitate the integration of third-country nationals into the labour market, the amendments to the Law on Employment, which entered into force on 1 June 2022, enable the Employment Service to finance state language training for foreigners (lawfully residing in Lithuania) (not applicable to asylum applicants).

The same amendments stipulate that the Employment Service will provide mediation services to asylum applicants who have the right to take up employment and intend to take up employment in the Republic of Lithuania under an employment contract, thus facilitating their access to the labour market.

In June 2022, following the increase in the number of asylum applicants and in view of the financial burden on the State to maintain a large number of asylum applicants, the Seimas amended the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners and introduced provisions related to the right of asylum applicants to take up employment during martial law, a state of emergency and an extreme situation declared due to a mass influx of foreigners. Article 14013 of the Law grants such persons the right to take up employment or to engage in self-employment activities after 12 months from the registration of a foreigner in the Lithuanian Migration Information System, if this right has not been acquired after the lapse of 6 months in cases when the Migration Department has not examined the asylum case through no fault of an asylum applicant. Asylum applicants entering during martial law, a state of emergency, as well as an extreme situation declared due to a mass influx of foreigners must obtain a foreigner's registration certificate with the right to take up employment issued by the Migration Department. Moreover, as of 1 August 2022, when these amendments entered into force, an asylum applicant who has acquired the right to take up employment has the possibility to engage in self-employment activities and to benefit from information, counselling and employment mediation services provided by the Employment Service, as well as to participate in the qualification acquisition or improvement and labour market integration support programs run by international organizations and NGOs which help to prepare to enter the labour market.

Q7. Are specific governance structures in place to support the labour market integration of international protection applicants? If yes, please provide an organigram or overview of the institutional framework for developing and implementing relevant strategy/policies/measures on the labour market integration of applicants for international protection.

No.

a. Describe the key stakeholders and their role (government departments, public authorities, trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, others?)

b. Indicate the responsibilities of the different key actors, noting whether their role is specific to international protection applicants or more general.

# 3.

Accessing the  
labour market  
(employment and  
self-employment)

### 3.1. Procedures for accessing the labour market

Q8. Please describe the procedure required to enter the labour market/self-employment for an applicant for international protection in your state.

a. Does your state regulate differently access to employment or self-employment?

b. Please provide in your response an overview of the applicable legal framework and make a clear distinction between what is prescribed in laws, policy documents and practice.

The right to take up employment is regulated by the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners. As of 1 January 2020, asylum applicants have the possibility to take up employment in Lithuania if the Migration Department, through no fault of an asylum applicant, has not taken a decision on the granting of asylum within 6 months from the lodging of an application for asylum. As of 1 August 2022, asylum applicants who have the right to take up employment are also allowed to engage in self-employment activities. Under normal circumstances (i.e., when a martial law, a state of emergency or an extreme situation due to a massive influx of foreigners has not been declared), there is no procedure for entering the labour market – asylum seekers simply need to apply to the Migration Department to have their foreigner registration certificate replaced in order to indicate in it that they have the right to work.

Following the entry into force on 1 January 2022 of the amendments to the Labour Code, which stipulate that wages and other benefits related to the employment relationship must only be paid by a bank transfer to a payment account indicated by an employee, asylum applicants have faced a new challenge of receiving wages. Not all asylum applicants were able to open bank accounts, as the Law on the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing stipulates that when identifying a customer that is a natural person, financial institutions require the customer that is a natural person to produce an identity document of the Republic of Lithuania or a foreign state or a residence permit in the Republic of Lithuania. Asylum applicants are not always in possession of identity documents, and a foreigner's registration certificate issued to them is not considered to be an identity document. Therefore, in the spring of 2022, amendments to the Labour Code and the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners were initiated, stipulating that an asylum applicant who has acquired the right to take up employment and who, for objective reasons, does not have a payment account may be paid wages and other benefits related to the employment relationship, as well as allowances and reimbursement of business travel expenses in cash.

Moreover, in order to facilitate access to the labour market for asylum applicants who have the right to take up employment and intend to take up employment in Lithuania under an employment contract and to implement the provisions 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 (recast), an amendment to the Law on Employment was passed on 1 June 2022 stipulating that the Employment Service provides employment mediation services to asylum applicants.

Although there are no restrictions on the type of employment asylum applicants can engage in, asylum applicants usually speak only their mother tongue and do not speak Lithuanian and other languages in which they can communicate fluently, which limits their employment opportunities. Insufficient language skills, lack of education and/or qualifications, low-demand professions, the non-recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications in Lithuania are the most important barriers to employment for asylum applicants.

#### 3.1.1. Employment

Q9. What is the minimum period from lodging an application for international protection after which an applicant has access to the labour market?

The Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners stipulates that an asylum applicant acquires the right to take up employment if the Migration Department has not taken an asylum decision within 6 months from the lodging of the application for asylum through no fault of the asylum applicant. Having acquired the right to take up employment, the asylum applicant submits to the Migration Department an application requesting to indicate this right in a foreigner's registration certificate. Having received the request, the Migration Department issues/renews the foreigner's registration certificate within 10 days for a period of 6 months and indicates in it that the asylum applicant or an irregular migrant has the right to take up employment.

Q10. Please describe the reasoning related to the minimum period of accessing the labour market and conditions of access to the labour market/self-employment.

The period of accessing the labour market is set by law. According to Article 81 of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, an application for asylum must be examined as to substance as soon as possible but not later than within 6 months from the lodging of the application for asylum. The time limit for the examination of the application is also linked to the right to take up employment guaranteed under Article 71(1)(10) of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, which the asylum applicant acquires if, through no fault of his own, the Migration Department does not take an asylum decision within 6 months from the lodging of the application for asylum. In order for this right to be activated, the asylum applicant or a state institution or a facility in which the asylum applicant is accommodated must submit to the Migration Department, in writing or through MIGRIS (Migration Information System), an application for the renewal of a foreigner's certificate, requesting to indicate in the certificate the right to take up employment. There are no additional conditions or requirements for taking up employment.

Q11. Is the right to access the labour market automatic after a specified period? Yes/No

Yes.

Q12. What kind of documents are necessary in order to access the labour market?

If an asylum applicant has acquired the right to take up employment and wishes to exercise this right, it can be done by itself or a state institution or a facility in which it is accommodated requests this right to be indicated in a foreigner's registration certificate. The Migration Department, having ascertained that the asylum applicant it acquired the right to take up employment, issues/renews the foreigner's registration certificate for a period of 6 months indicating in it that the asylum applicant has the right to take up employment.

### Q13. Is a work permit or another type of administrative application/decision necessary for accessing the labour market? Yes/No

Yes. While a work permit is not required, the right to take up employment must be indicated in a foreigner's registration certificate issued to an asylum applicant. Point 4 of Article 64 of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners stipulates that a foreigner's employment is considered illegal or his engagement in other activities in the Republic of Lithuania is considered unlawful, regardless of whether it is remunerated or not, if it is an asylum applicant who takes up employment without a foreigner's registration certificate attesting to his right to take up employment and/or without a contract of employment.

#### a) If yes, please specify:

##### i. Who is required to submit the application, the applicant/employer/jointly by both?

An application for the renewal of a foreigner's registration certificate requesting to indicate in it that an asylum applicant has the right to take up employment must be submitted by the asylum applicant or by a facility in which the asylum applicant is accommodated.

##### ii. Which authority is responsible for granting access to the labour market?

The right to take up employment is acquired automatically. The Migration Department is responsible for renewing a foreigner's registration certificate by indicating in it the right to take up employment.

##### iii. What are the criteria for obtaining the work permit?

A work permit is not required. To decide on indicating in a foreigner's registration certificate the right to take up employment, the Migration Department assesses whether there is any fault of an asylum applicant that a decision on the granting of asylum has not been taken within 6 months from the lodging of an application for asylum.

##### iv. What is the average duration of the procedure to grant access to the labour market? If applicable, please also add any official time limits according to law/policy.

The Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners stipulates as follows:

- the Migration Department issues a foreigner's registration certificate to an asylum applicant within 3 days from the lodging of an application for asylum;
- the foreigner's registration certificate is issued or renewed for a period of 6 months and is valid until the expiry of the time limit laid down in it, but not longer than the period during which the asylum applicant has the right to remain on the territory of the Republic of Lithuania.

Order No 1V-131 of the Minister of the Interior of 24 February 2016 [on Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Granting and Withdrawing Asylum in the Republic of Lithuania](#) stipulates that an asylum applicant or a state institution or a facility in which the asylum applicant is accommodated submits to the Migration Department an application for the renewal of a certificate and, if the asylum applicant has acquired the right to take up employment and wishes to exercise it, requests to indicate this right in the certificate. The Migration Department, having ascertained that the asylum applicant has acquired the right to take up employment, issues the foreigner's registration certificate with the right to take up employment indicated in it.

The issue of a foreigner's registration certificate with the right to take up employment usually takes between 10 and 20 days.

### 3.1.2. Self-employment

#### Q14. Is self-employment of international protection applicants permitted in your state? Yes/No

During the period under study, no.

### 3.2. Conditions and limitations in accessing the labour market

#### Q15. Please provide a reference to the legal base (where relevant, linking it to what is described in Q8, if applicable, and make a clear distinction between what is prescribed in laws, policy guidance and practice).

Not applicable during the period under study.

#### Q16. Is the authorisation limited to certain employment sectors or occupations? In other words, are applicants for international protection excluded from some labour market sectors or from certain occupations? Yes/No

No. There are no restrictions imposed on asylum applicants under national law. They can take up employment in all sectors and perform a wide range of job functions provided, of course, that they meet the eligibility requirements for a vacant position as set by the employer. Asylum applicants wishing to take up employment in a regulated profession would have to meet certain requirements to work in that profession (e.g., obtain recognition of their professional qualifications).

#### Q17. Is employment restricted to a single employer?

During the period under study, no.

#### Q18. If applicable, please describe the conditions and procedures of the renewal of the authorisation to access the labour market. Are they the same for all employment sectors and occupations?

Not applicable during the period under study.

#### Q19. Does your Member State give priority to EU and EEA citizens (Art. 15/2 clause 2 of the Reception Conditions Directive Recast (2013/33/EU)) and to other legally resident third-country nationals in accessing the labour market? Yes/No

No.

Q20. Are there any other limitations in place, either in law or in specific measures relating to applicants of international protection for accessing the labour market/self-employment?

There are no limitations relating exclusively to asylum applicants. However, they are likely not to meet some of the requirements that apply to anyone who intends to take up employment in Lithuania. For example, a lack of knowledge of the state language may prevent them from applying for certain positions, as the requirements concerning the Lithuanian language are laid down in the Law on the State Language and in Resolution No. 1688 of the Government of 24 December 2003 on the Establishment of State Language Proficiency Categories and the Approval of the Procedure of Their Application. Moreover, the Law on the Civil Service provides that only a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania is entitled to become a civil servant.

# 4.

---

Support measures  
to enhance  
labour market  
integration and self-  
employment

Area/component	Overview of the main measures	Stakeholders	Target group
1. Language acquisition	<i>Projects of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund aimed at Lithuanian language acquisition.</i>	<i>Projects implemented by the Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas, the Lithuanian Red Cross Society, the Refugees' Reception Centre.</i>	<i>Measure addresses the integration of third-country nationals.</i>
2. Vocational education and training (including reskilling schemes)			-
3. Civic integration courses			-
4. Support for recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications including those formal qualifications that cannot be documented (lost or destroyed in the context of existing procedures for recognition of foreign qualifications)			-
5. Skill assessments to validate prior (non-accredited) learning and experience			-
6. Information and counselling (labour market orientation, tailored advice, other)	<i>Projects of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund aimed at providing integration services to third-country nationals.</i>	<i>Projects implemented by the Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas, the Lithuanian Red Cross Society, the Refugees' Reception Centre.</i>	<i>Measure addresses the integration of third-country nationals.</i>
7. Incentive measures for employers (e.g., tax reductions, labour matching services, recruitment support)			-
8. Support for self-employment (for example preferential taxation and social security contributions, administrative support with establishing a company etc., business plan development, other)			-
9. Indirect support (e.g., childcare, transport)	<i>Projects of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund aimed at providing integration services to third-country nationals.</i>	<i>Projects implemented by the Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas, the Lithuanian Red Cross Society, the Refugees' Reception Centre.</i>	<i>Measure addresses the integration of third-country nationals.</i>

## 5.

## Good practices and challenges



There were no examples of integration support programs, projects, legislative or other practical initiatives in Lithuania that were available specifically for applicants for international protection and that were identified by experts as a “good practice”.

**Q21. Are there any specific protocols, synergies between agencies/institutions to support labour market integration of international protection applicants that have been identified as good practices?**

No.

**Q22. What kind of challenges has been identified in your country when it comes to access to the labour market by applicants for international protection? Please provide a distinction between legislative challenges and challenges in practice and specify how those challenges have been identified.**

Although asylum applicants have the possibility to take up employment in the Republic of Lithuania if the Migration Department has not taken a decision on the granting of asylum within 6 months, they do not have the possibility to register with the Employment Service and to receive its services (except for the possibility to receive its mediation services, which was formalized in 2022), because according to the legislation currently in force, foreigners can only register with the Employment Service and participate in the labour market integration programs run by it if they have a residence permit in the Republic of Lithuania. Moreover, according to the legislation in force during the period under study, asylum applicants were not entitled to engage in self-employment activities.

The results of an [anonymous survey](#) conducted under the international project on the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism show that the most frequent challenges to integration into the labour market faced by the respondents were the lack of Lithuanian language skills (50%) and prejudiced attitudes of the society (42%). Surveys of third-country nationals conducted under the project on Enhancing the Competence of Municipalities in Providing Services to Third-Country Nationals, implemented with funds of the National Program 2014-2020 of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, also showed that one of the reasons for the unemployment or lower-skilled employment was the Lithuanian language barrier and the reluctance of employers to employ migrants (especially, the more vulnerable groups, as well as people belonging to other cultures, religions, races). More vulnerable third-country nationals (e.g., asylum applicants) often take up lower-skilled employment compared to employment in their country of origin. The research conducted under the project Enhancing the Competence of Municipalities in Providing Services to Third-Country Nationals also identified the challenge of access to information and services in search of employment. The majority of the survey participants claimed that they found employment on their own (most often by searching for it on the Internet or in social networks) or through social contacts in Lithuania (family members, other relatives, friends and acquaintances). Non-governmental organizations implementing integration programs for third-country nationals played an important role in searching for employment opportunities, especially for some migrant groups. Please note that during the above-mentioned surveys, interviews were conducted with persons who have been granted asylum (no similar surveys have been undertaken with asylum applicants in Lithuania). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the insights of these surveys are applicable to the situation of asylum applicants as well.

Asylum applicants from far-away countries who have not learned the Lithuanian language sufficiently need assistance in finding employment, translation/interpretation services for job interviews, translating and signing employment contracts, as well as assistance at the workplace. Translators/interpreters are also needed for employment disputes and various business matters. Currently, assistance is provided by translators/interpreters, lawyers, employment counsellors and Lithuanian language teachers of NGOs, the Refugees' Reception Centre, either on a voluntary basis or funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.



# 6.

## Conclusions

Q23. Please synthesise the findings of your national report by drawing conclusions from your responses:

a) What are the main trends with regard to the situation of international protection applicants in the context of labour market integration and what are the main debates regarding their labour market integration identified in your country (Section 1)?

Although human rights NGOs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lithuania have long been raising the issue of granting to asylum applicants the right to take up employment, the provisions granting this right were only introduced in the law at the end of 2019. The main reason for the delay in granting to asylum applicants the right to take up employment has been the perceived threat of abuse of the asylum system, given that Lithuania is a country that guards the external borders of the European Union.

Following the entry into force in 2020 of the legislative amendments granting to asylum applicants the right to take up employment, not all those who were granted the right were able to exercise it due to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that were imposed.

Asylum applicants who acquired the right to take up employment were not allowed to engage in self-employment activities during the period under study (until 1 August 2022).

Until 30 June 2022, no information was collected in Lithuania on the number of asylum applicants who took up employment and, therefore, it is not possible to assess the percentage of asylum applicants who have successfully exercised their right to take up employment. Insufficient language skills, lack of education and/or qualifications, low-demand professions, non-recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications in Lithuania are the most important barriers to employment for asylum applicants.

In Lithuania, labour market integration measures are available to only those foreigners who have residence permits in Lithuania. Therefore, during the period under analysis, asylum applicants did not have the possibility to benefit from the services provided by the Employment Service and labour market integration support programs. Only after 1 August 2022, following the entry into force of legislative amendments, asylum applicants who have acquired the right to take up employment will have the possibility to engage in self-employment activities and will be able to benefit from information, counselling and employment mediation services provided by the Employment Service. They will also be able to participate in the qualification acquisition or improvement and labour market integration support programs run by international and non-governmental organizations, which help to prepare to access the labour market.

In 2021, amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners were passed as a result of the increase in the number of asylum applicants. The amendments provide that, during martial law, a state of emergency and an extreme situation declared due to a mass influx of foreigners, asylum applicants have the right to take up employment or to engage in self-employment activities after 12 months from their registration in the Lithuanian Migration Information System. Asylum applicants entering the country during martial law, a state of emergency or an emergency declared due to a mass influx of foreigners must obtain a foreigner's registration certificate with the right to take up employment issued by the Migration Department.

The AMIF projects implemented by the Lithuanian Red Cross Society and the Refugees' Reception Centre will give asylum applicants the possibility to receive mentoring services (assessment of personal capacities and needs, assistance in career planning, business plan, escort services, assistance in establishing work or business contacts, assistance at the workplace, business environment, career counselling); expert services (business plan drafting, individual business and career planning counselling); vocational training, courses (to acquire or to improve qualifications and existing competences needed in the modern labour market); additional Lithuanian language training at a foreigner's workplace; translation and interpretation services (translator's and interpreter's services in communication with a mentor, in job interviews, at the workplace, etc.); reimbursement of costs of childcare or employment activities (reimbursement of babysitting or kindergarten costs for parents while undergoing vocational training, preparing to take up employment, engaging in self-employment activities or setting up a business). These changes are expected to help asylum applicants access the labour market more quickly and successfully in the future.

b) If at all and to what extent are international protection applicants specifically addressed in national integration policies with regard labour market integration (Section 2)? What are the key characteristics of the national integration policies for promoting labour market participation for the applicants of international protection (Section 2) and how is the access to employment and self-employment for applicants of international protection regulated/supported (Section 3)?

Until 2021, the number of asylum applicants was small. Moreover, asylum applicants often choose Lithuania as a transit country to other EU countries rather than as their destination country. This is evidenced by the large number of requests from other countries to the Republic of Lithuania to take over the examination of applications for asylum under the Dublin III Regulation (390 in 2021, 575 in 2020, 995 in 2019, 1,140 in 2018 and 2,144 in 2017). Therefore, the issues raised by NGOs and international organizations regarding the integration of asylum applicants into the labour market in Lithuania did not previously receive much support and interest from either politicians or employers.

Asylum applicants are not under restrictions or obligations to meet specific requirements when taking up employment and they do not need to obtain a work permit. However, they also do not have the possibility to register with the Employment Service and benefit from its services, or to take part in programs that support labour market integration.

Currently, labour market integration services are provided by translators/interpreters, lawyers, employment counsellors and Lithuanian language teachers of NGOs, the Refugees' Reception Centre, either on a voluntary basis or funded by the AMIF.

c) To what extent are targeted measures to support labour market participation available in your country, specifically addressing applicants for international protection (Section 4) and what has been identified as challenge as well as good practice in this area (Section 5)?

In 2020-2021, descriptions of project financing conditions for projects aiming at the integration of third-country nationals under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Program were revised to include new measures or a new target group (asylum applicants), thus providing the possibility to participate in the integration activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations and the Refugees' Reception Centre (language courses, employment counselling, translation/interpretation services, etc.). This is expected to support the labour market participation of asylum applicants.

---

EMN is a Network composed of migration experts which aims to collect, analyse and provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum. By the decree of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania International Organization for Migration Vilnius Office acts as the national coordinator for the EMN activities in Lithuania.

The EMN National Contact Point (NCP) in Lithuania is composed of representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, the Migration Department, the State border guard service as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Vilnius Office which acts as the national coordinator for the EMN activities in Lithuania. EMN NCP in Lithuania also collaborates with other entities from governmental as well as non-governmental institutions working in the area of migration.

---