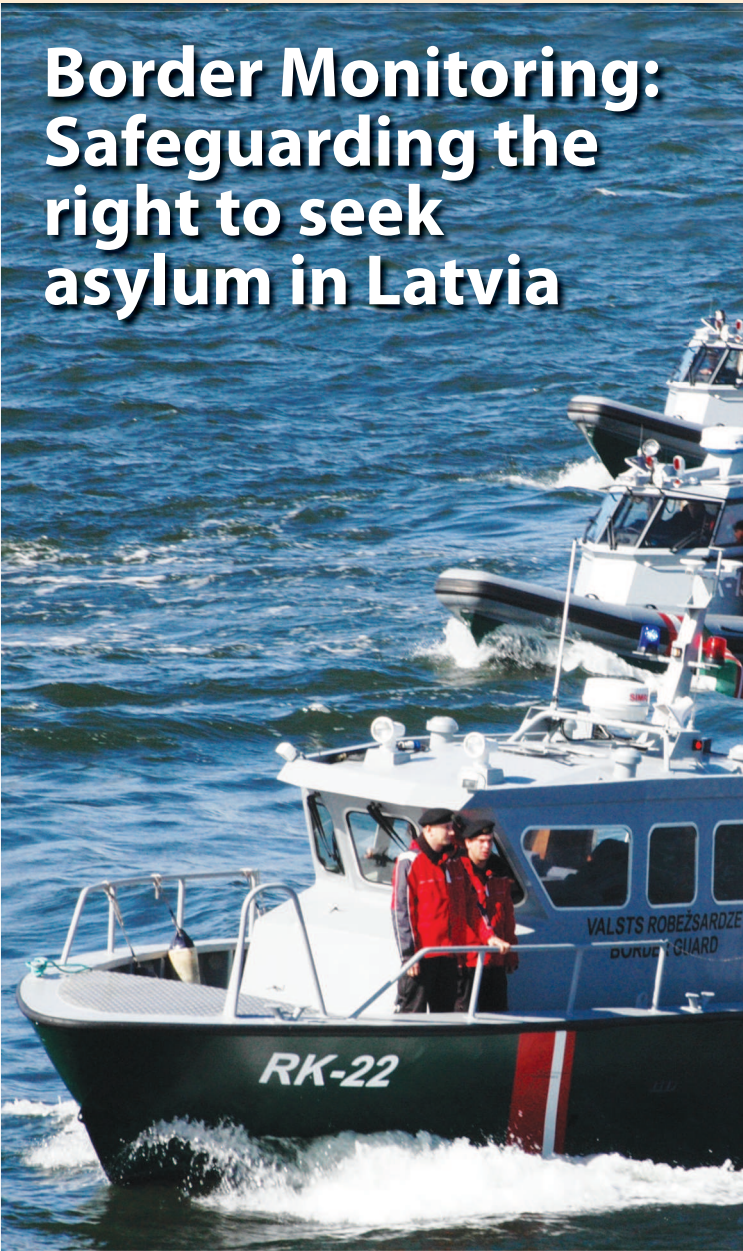


Border Monitoring: Safeguarding the right to seek asylum in Latvia



People escaping persecution and conflict

Millions of people are forced to leave their home country because of persecution and conflict. Some of those in need of protection come to Latvia. It is crucial to make sure that these persons who need and seek protection are aware of their rights to apply for asylum in accordance with Latvian laws and the conventions to which Latvia is a signatory.



Identifying people in need of protection

Latvia has signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. This means that Latvia is responsible for identifying people in need of international protection and for ensuring that they have access to the asylum procedure. It furthermore has an obligation to make sure that refugees and asylum-seekers are not returned to places where their lives or freedom are threatened. Latvia is also a member of the European Union (EU) and one of the entry points to the EU. Border monitoring is an effective tool, helping Latvia to adhere to its international commitments towards refugees.



Border monitoring agreement

In order to assist the Latvian government in fulfilling its international obligations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) concluded an agreement in 2011 with the Latvian State Border Guard.

The aim of the agreement is to support access of asylum-seekers to Latvia and the country's asylum procedure. It allows UNHCR to monitor activities at the border crossing points and at the international airport in Riga. On behalf of UNHCR, the non governmental organization Latvian Centre for Human Rights (LCHR), will regularly visit border areas, the airport and detention facilities and will have access to statistics and the case files of asylum-seekers. Specific issues that emerge will be discussed in working group meetings. UNHCR will also provide support and training to the border guards and other stakeholders.

Similar agreements have been concluded in several other countries in Europe such as Hungary and Lithuania.

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