

Kingdom of the Netherlands

February 2024

Protection space: In 2023 the protection space in the Netherlands came under pressure causing backlogs in asylum and family reunification applications and anti-refugee sentiment in the public debate.

Equal accommodation across municipalities: In January 2024, the Senate approved a law to ensure the equal distribution of responsibility to accommodate asylum-seekers across Dutch municipalities.

Child Protection: In 2024, UNHCR joined a consortium of organisations to advocate for better protection of children in reception centres, in particular unaccompanied children.

UNHCR POPULATION STATISTICS (as of mid-2023)*

Refugees **224,333**
 Asylum-seekers **33,173**
 Stateless people **5,172**

Top three countries of origin*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Ukraine	89,533	Syrian Arab Republic	11,559
Syrian Arab Rep.	58,827	Turkey	2,403
Eritrea	19,147	Yemen	2,069

*UNHCR mid-2023 Trends and UNHCR [data finder](#)

Socio-economic inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Netherlands

Court rules on work period limitations for asylum-seekers

On 29 November 2023, the Council of State, the highest administrative body in the Netherlands, ruled that the '24-week requirement' is contrary to European Law. The requirement stipulates that asylum-seekers may work up to a maximum of 24 weeks within a 52 week period. This ruling is expected to enhance the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees by addressing the employment restrictions many of them face.

Plan Einstein: A proven success towards inclusion and participation

Plan Einstein is an innovative approach developed by the municipality of Utrecht and its partners for the reception and integration of refugees in Utrecht city. [Plan Einstein](#) aims to create a social environment where local youth and refugees live, learn and work together.

HIGHLIGHTS

UNHCR recommendations on improving reception conditions

UNHCR published a [report](#) with recommendations to the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum-Seekers (COA), municipalities and the central government to improve the reception conditions for asylum-seekers and refugees in the Netherlands. UNHCR issued 25 concrete considerations for improving the reception system based on over 40 visits to reception facilities in the Netherlands. UNHCR also shared these recommendations with media through a [press release](#).

UNHCR tackles myths and false narratives

In the run up to the Parliamentary Elections in November 2023, UNHCR published a [series of fact checkers](#), to combat myths and false data and narratives circulating in Dutch media and political debates.



Farkhunda Muhtaj calls for adequate reception and protection for people forced to flee. © UNHCR/Farkhunda Muhtaj

Farkhunda Muhtaj supports UNHCR's Hope Away From Home Campaign

Farkhunda Muhtaj, captain of the Afghan women's football team and player in the Dutch premier league, is a strong refugee activist, who recently encouraged the general Dutch public to sign [UNHCR's Hope Away From Home petition](#) to improve access to shelter and protection – among other services.

Key Priorities

- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR increased its cooperation with the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) with the aim of strengthening quality and capacity of the asylum procedure. UNHCR contributed technical guidance for the INS' interviewing and decision-making procedures. In coordination with the INS, UNHCR is planning workshops and structural trainings for INS staff in 2024.
- **Inclusion:** Due to a social housing shortage, refugees are accommodated in asylum centres for extended periods, delaying their inclusion and participation. At the end of 2023, UNHCR conducted a study on flexible temporary housing projects to assess the benefits and social impact in refugees. The report, set for release in early 2024, aims to guide municipalities and stakeholders in adopting flexible housing solutions for recognized refugees from Ukraine by highlighting successful initiatives. An increasing number of municipalities are utilising temporary housing as a solution to the lack of social housing.
- **Reception monitoring:** UNHCR undertook over 20 reception monitoring visits in 2023. Many of the visits were to emergency reception facilities. UNHCR notes concerns over the reception conditions in emergency facilities as these may compound mental health issues and hamper inclusion and the development of children, owing to the temporary nature of these facilities.

Working with Partners

- **Refugee Led Organizations (RLOs):** UNHCR strengthened its cooperation with refugee-led and community-based organisations. Following the general elections in November 2023, the organizations will draft a joint statement, sharing their concerns on the growing anti-refugee sentiment in society, to political parties. UNHCR will organise workshops to support capacity building, and support forcibly displaced people have

their voices included in policy and decision-making procedures.

- **External engagement:** UNHCR strives to continually lead by offering the most reliable and factual information on refugee-related issues to media and stakeholders. In December 2023, the reception conditions in Ter Apel reception centre had deteriorated. UNHCR provided a statement to media, urging a revision of the reception system, resulting in extensive media coverage and visibility on concerns.

Statelessness

- The Netherlands has acceded to both the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions on Statelessness, and has implemented statelessness determination procedures in October 2023. However, a determination of statelessness does not directly lead to residency rights in the Netherlands; an additional procedure assesses whether stateless individuals can return to their country of habitual residence before granting a residence permit.
- In 2023, UNHCR conducted six training sessions on statelessness to judges, immigration staff, lawyers and social workers involved in the statelessness determination procedures and assisting stateless people.

UNHCR Presence in The Netherlands

Staff:

7 National Staff
2 Interns

Offices:

1 Country Office in The Hague

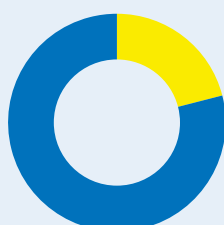
Financial information (31 January 2024)*

*Information relates to Representation for EU Affairs, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the Liaison Offices to EUAA and Frontex

Financial requirements for 2024

\$ 12.2 M

**Funding gap 79%
\$ 9.6 M**



**Funded 21%
\$ 2.6 M**

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UNHCR is also grateful for the generous contributions from the private sector and individuals.