



**PROVIDUS**  
FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY

# ASYLUM SEEKERS IN LATVIA: DATA, CHALLENGES AND PLANS



PROVIDUS' expertise is supported by the Europe for Citizens program of the European Union.  
Responsibility with the content of the activities lies with the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS.

# OUTLINE

- Overview of migration statistics
- Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the action plan adopted by Latvian government
- Presentation of PROVIDUS' research about the asylum seekers currently staying in Mucenieki

# OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION STATISTICS WITH A FOCUS ON REFUGEES: GLOBAL, EUROPEAN AND LATVIAN PERSPECTIVE

Dace AKULE, director of PROVIDUS

# Global migration



- Unprecedented movements of people: 60 million left homes due to military conflicts and persecutions.
- According to UN data – approximately 14 million left their homes in 2014.

Source: "[The Flight of Refugees Around the Globe](#)", *The New York Times*, June 2015, data from *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* until December 2014.

# Where are asylum seekers living now?

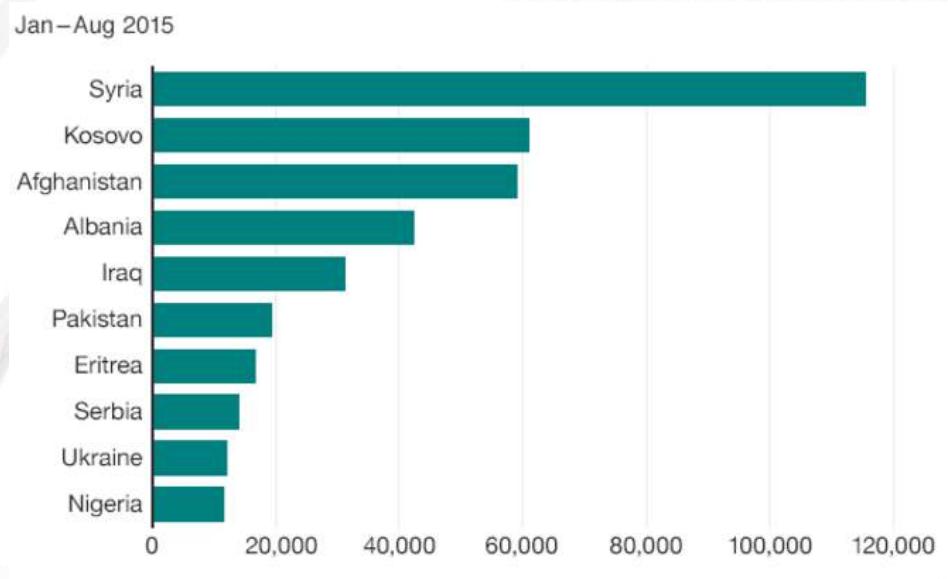


Source: "[The Flight of Refugees Around the Globe](#)", The New York Times, June 2015, data from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees until December 2014.

# Where are asylum seekers living now?



- Most citizens of African countries fleeing military conflicts or persecution have stayed in the African continent. Conflicts in Somalia, Sudan, Congo, as well as in other regions – Syria.



Source: Eurostat

BBC

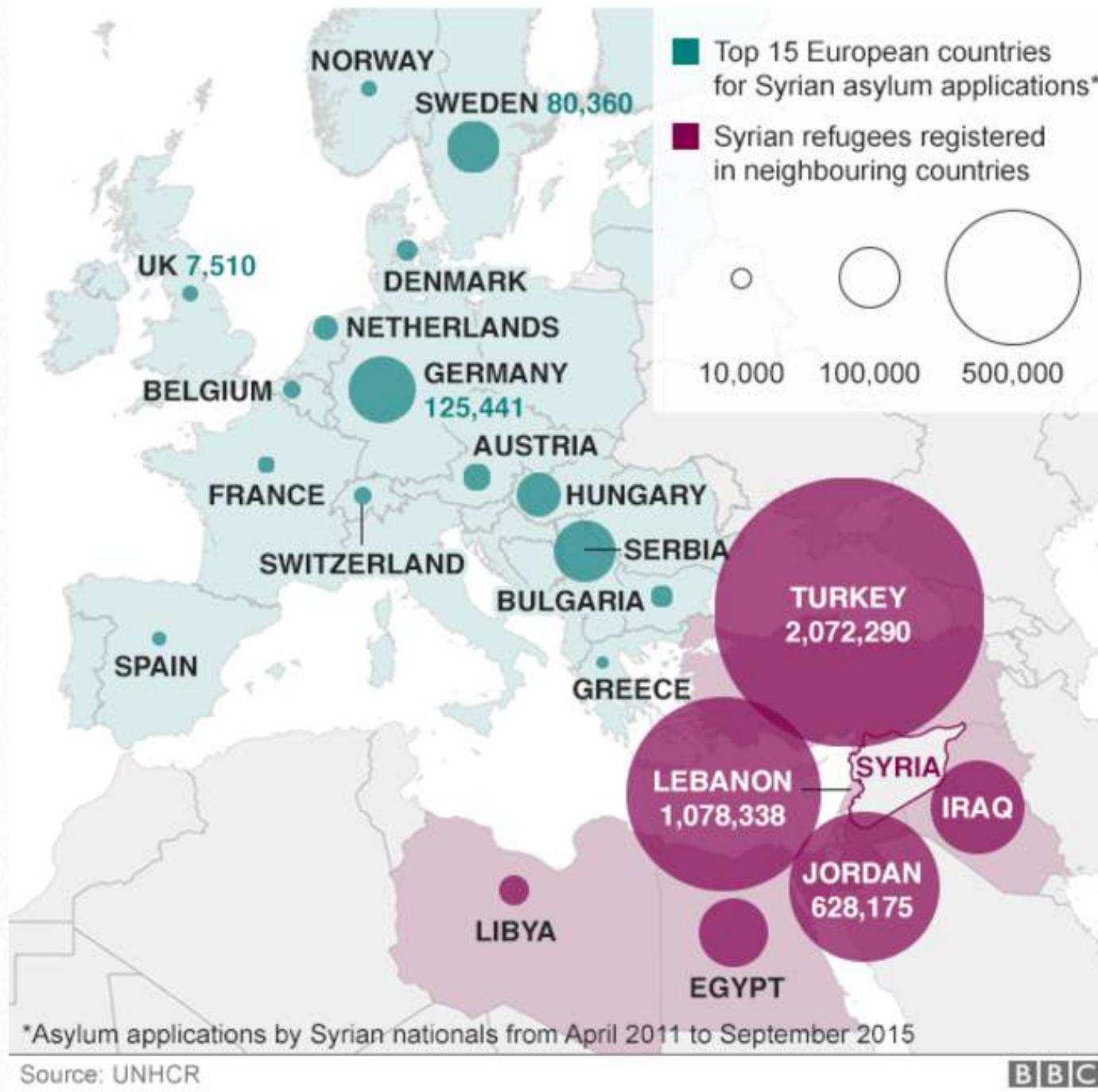
Sources: "[The Flight of Refugees Around the Globe](#)", *The New York Times*, June 2015, UNHCR data until December 2014; "[Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in graphics](#)", BBC, October 2015, data from UNCHR, IOM, Eurostat, European Commission, Frontex.

# Asylum seekers from Syria

- Approximately 12 million or 50% of Syrians left their homes.
- Most still live in Syria; approximately 4 million (until December 2014) went abroad: mostly to neighbouring countries Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.
- Until the end of 2014 Egypt welcomed approximately 140 000 Syrians – almost as much as all other countries together. Among EU countries Sweden accepted the highest number of Syrians – approximately 33 000 until December 2014.



Source: "[The Flight of Refugees Around the Globe](#)", The New York Times, June 2015, data from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees until December 2014.

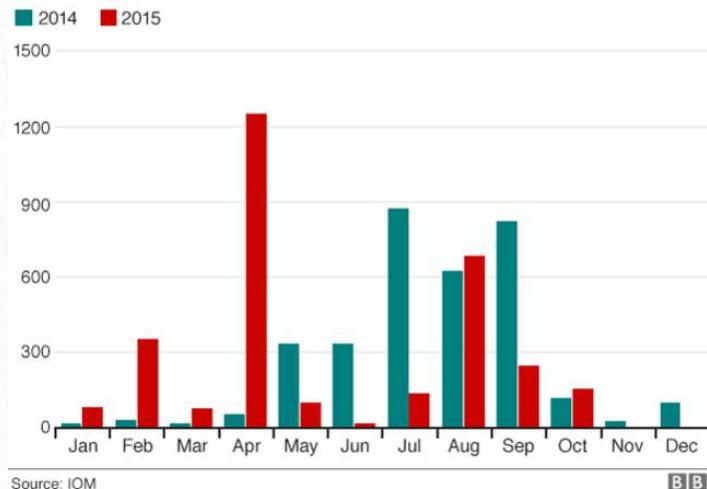


# Asylum seekers from Syria

Data for April 2011 – September 2015

Source: "[Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in graphics](#)", BBC, October 2015, data from UNCHR, IOM, Eurostat, European Commission, Frontex.

## Death of migrants in Mediterranean sea

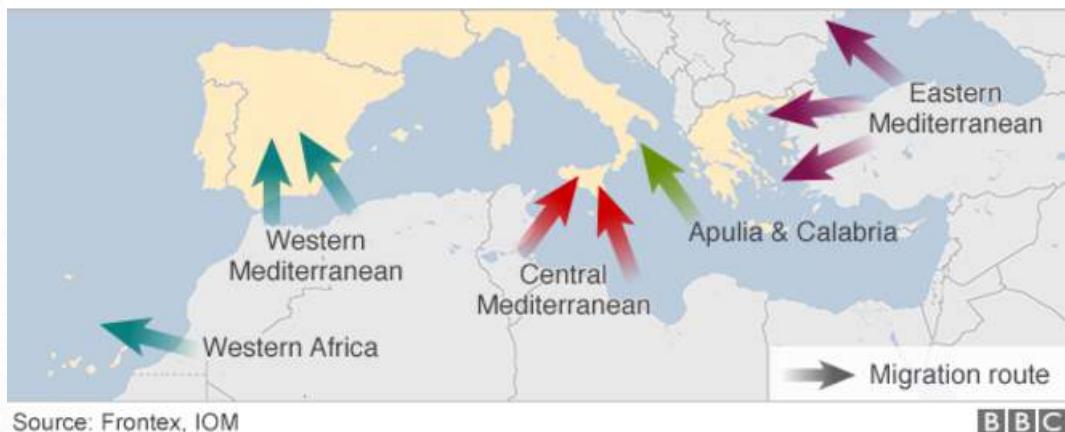


# Why such increase of migration to Europe?

- Worsening of situation in the country of origin, hopelessness after 4 years in camps,
- Good weather
- European Commission proposal in Spring 2015 on the need to relocate asylum seekers in the EU,
- Human trafficking, smuggling.



Figures up to 20 October 2015



Source: “[Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in graphics](#)”, BBC, October 2015, data from UNCHR, IOM, Eurostat, European Commission, Frontex.

# Where they live in Europe?

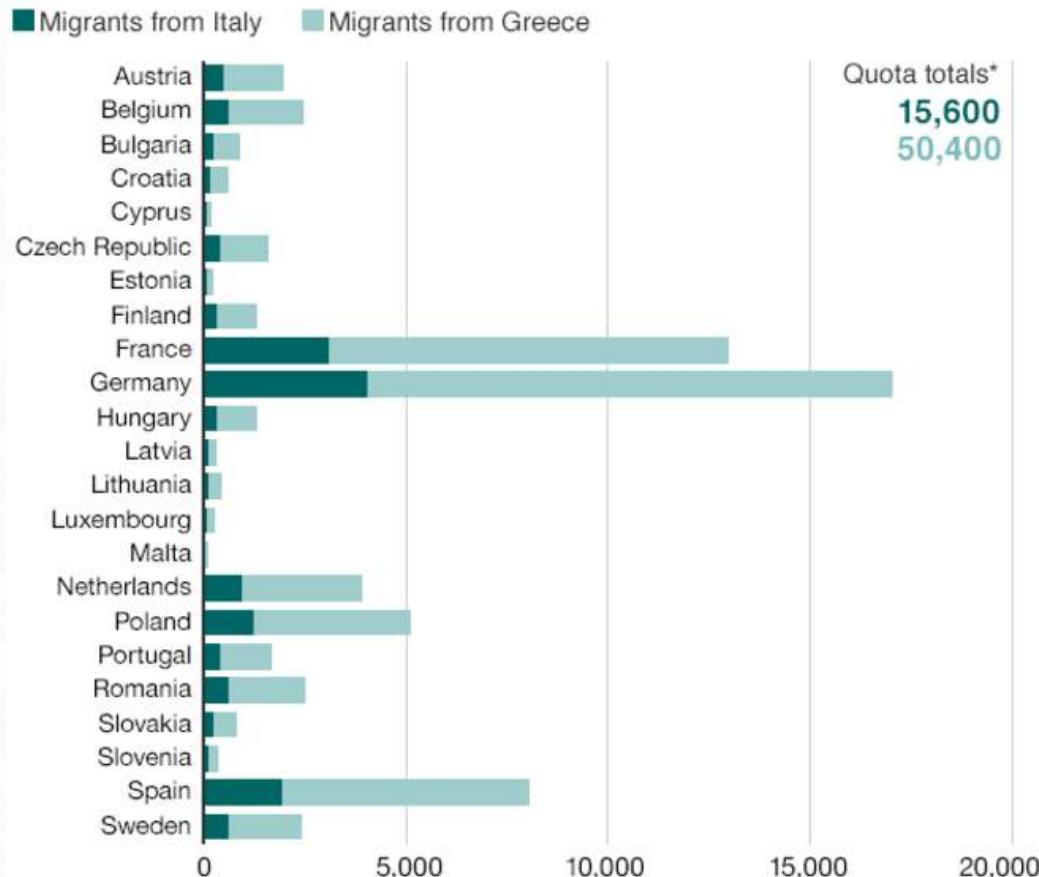


- According to IOM data, during January-October 2015 the highest number of people tried to cross EU borders - 650 000. In January-October 2014 the number was 280 000.

- In 2014 EU member states granted protection (refugee or alternative status) to 184 665 people, while the number of applications was 570 000.

Source: "[Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in graphics](#)", BBC, October 2015, data from UNCHR, IOM, Eurostat, European Commission, Frontex.

# Where will they live in Europe?



Note: UK has opted out, Ireland has offered to take 4,000, Denmark will take 1,000.  
 Switzerland and Norway have also agreed to take refugees, numbers yet to be agreed.  
 \*Relocation of a further 54,000 migrants still to be decided.

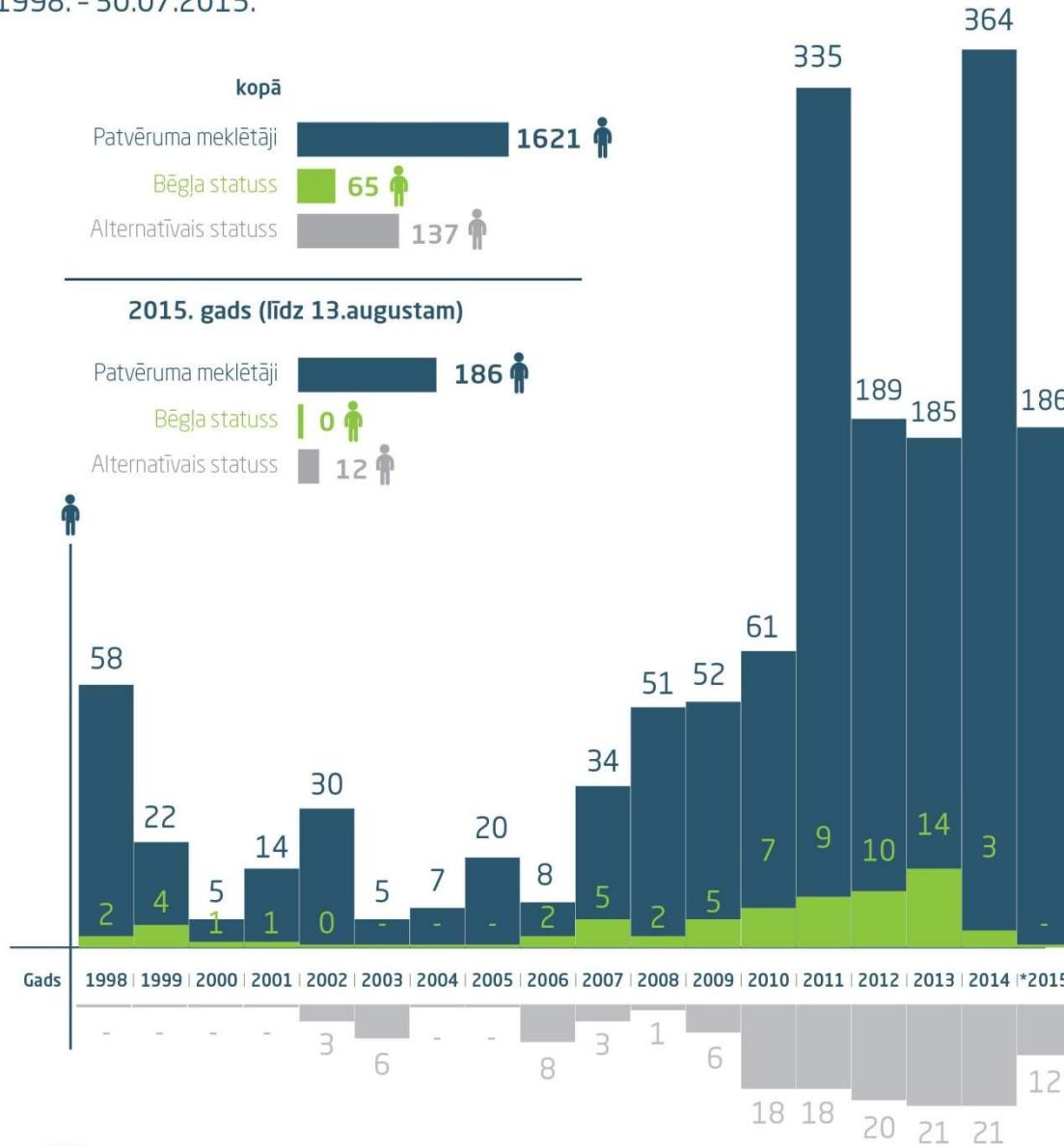
Source: European Commission

BBC

Source: "[Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in graphics](#)", BBC, October 2015, data from UNCHR, IOM, Eurostat, European Commission, Frontex.

# Asylum seekers in Latvia

01.01.1998. – 30.07.2015.



- In 2011 number of asylum seekers increased after Russia's aggression in Georgia, in 2014 – asylum seekers form Ukraine.

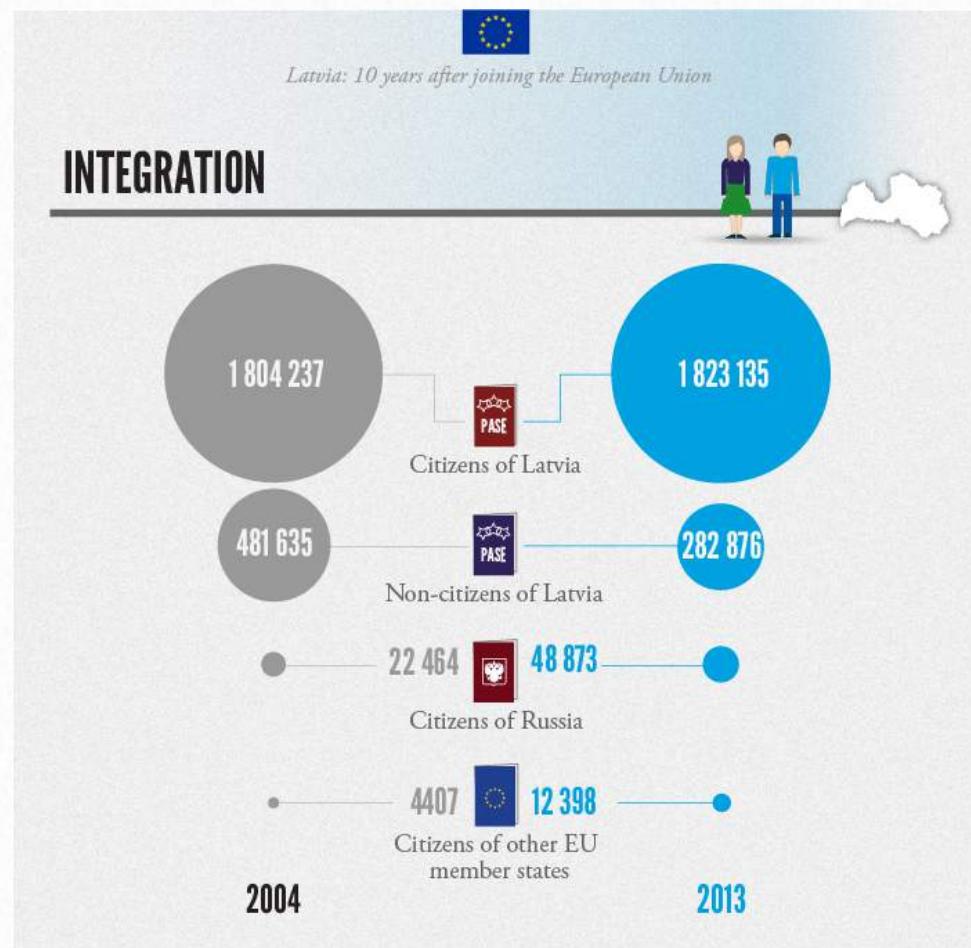
- Highest number of asylum seekers in Latvia from Georgia, Ukraine, Vietnam, Syria and Iraq.

Data in blue – asylum seekers, data in green – persons with refugee status; data in grey – persons having been granted alternative protection status.

Source: ["Patvēruma meklētāji Latvijā"](#) (Asylum seekers in Latvia), State Chancellery, 2015.



# Changing Latvian society



Sources: "[Latvia in the EU - 10 years later. A different Latvia?](#)", PROVIDUS, May 2014; "[Summary: Immigration in Latvia](#)", PROVIDUS, June 2014.

# ACTION PLAN OF LATVIA FOR RECEIVING PERSONS IN NEED OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

MARIA GOLUBEVA, PhD, head of migration  
policy program at PROVIDUS

# Positive features

- Benefit of short-term planning: relatively little ideological bias;
- Concrete, hands-on measures envisaged in most areas;
- Emphasis on labor market integration;
- Steps towards recognition of qualifications even if documents are lost;
- Mentoring support envisaged.

# Shortcomings

- No clear overall institutional responsibility for migration/ integration policy, leading to a fragmented policy field without strong ownership;
- No one-stop agency;
- Some ideological bias in topics to be covered during initial interviews with asylum seekers;
- Some measures are planned without proper understanding of their essence (e.g. intercultural training of social workers et al., mentoring).

# CURRENT ASYUM SEEKERS IN MUCENIEKI: A BRIEF PROFILE

Maria GOLUBEVA, Marta RIKŠA, PROVIDUS'  
migration policy program

# October 2015: 62 asylum seekers

## Among asylum seekers:

**9**

Women aged 18 - 59

**34**

Men aged 18 - 59

**14**

School age children

**5**

Pre-school age children

## Among persons with refugee status

**2**

Women aged 18 - 59

**4**

Men aged 18 - 59

**3**

School age children

**1**

Pre-school age children

# Countries of origin (1 October 2015)

Countries from which asylum seekers have arrived

GEORGIA 7

RUSSIA 1

IRAN 30

IRAN 2

AFGHANISTAN 8

UKRAINE 6

CONGO 2

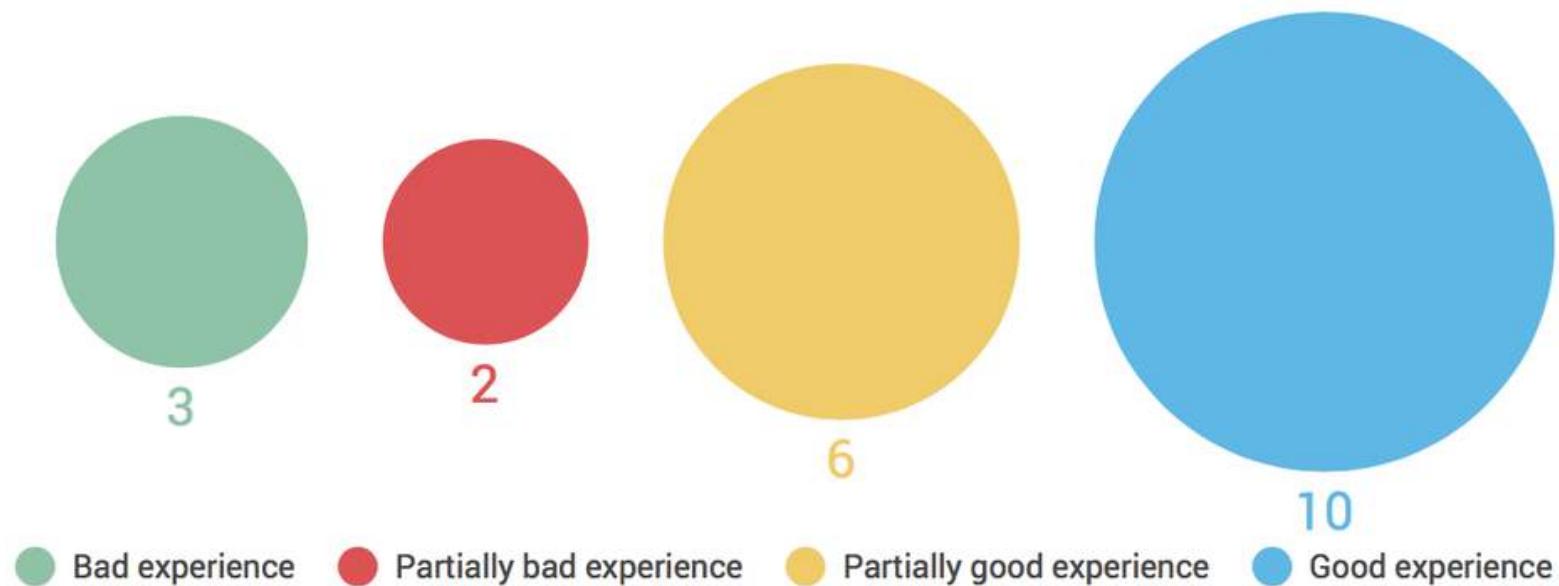
UZBEKISTAN 2

SRI LANKA 1



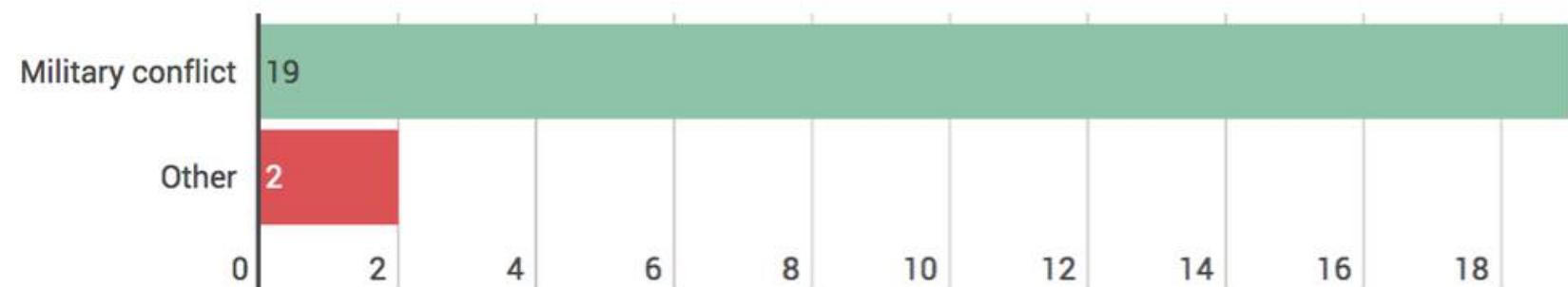
# Asylum seeking in Latvia: mixed experience

Reception of asylum seekers in Latvia



# Most interviewed asylum seekers mention war as reason for fleeing

Reason for leaving



# Asylum seeker's story 1

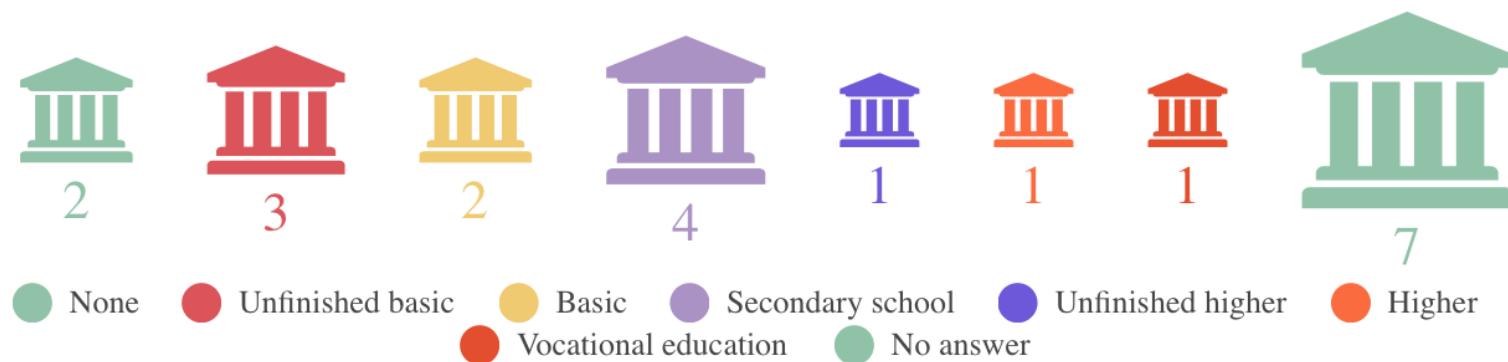
- **Student from Syria:** studied IT in St Petersburg, Russia, one year left till graduation.
- **Reason for seeking asylum:** Syrian passport expired, Syrian consulate in Russia suggested he returns to Syria to renew the passport. Due to fears of conscription, escaped from Russia with several others, crossed Latvian and then Estonian border, seeking to go to Sweden on a ferry. Was detained and sent back to Latvia.

## Asylum seeker's story 2

- **Family from Kirkuk, Iraq:** parents and 6 children
- **Reason for seeking asylum:** First escaped from Iraq under Saddam Hussein, went to Germany where they stayed several years in refugee centre, later sent back. Now decided to leave again due to terror of IS (wife is a Christian), fear of kidnappings.

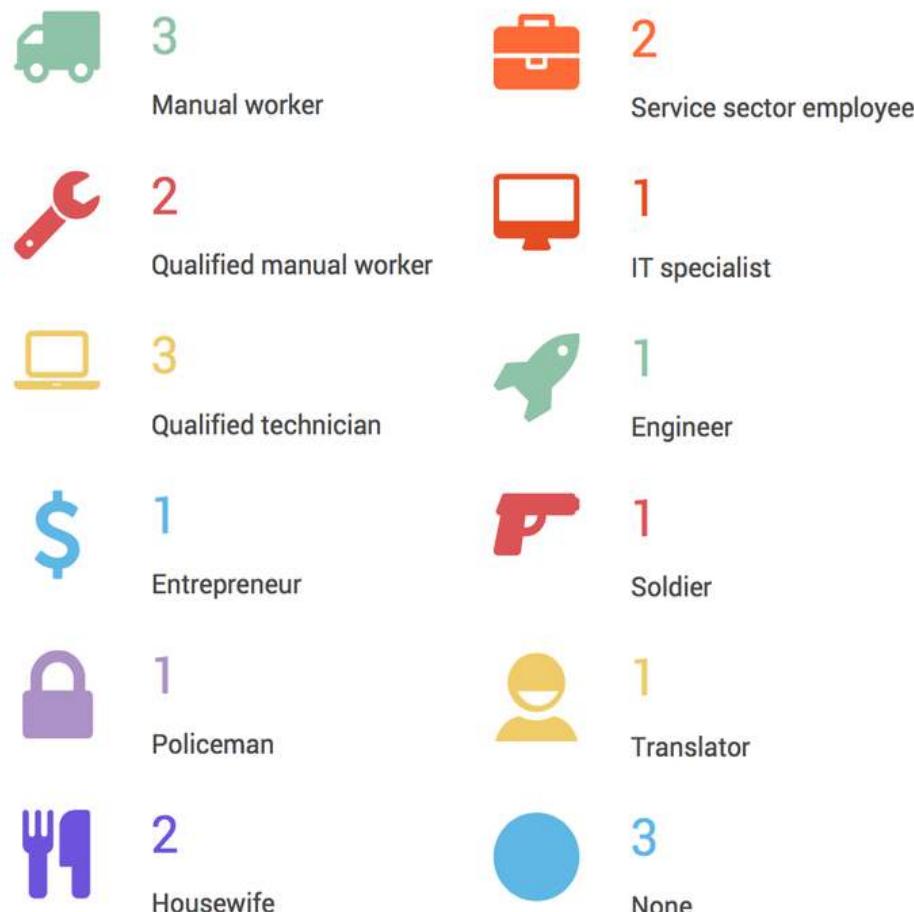
# Asylum seekers - persons with different education background

## Education



# Asylum seekers - persons with diverse professional backgrounds

## Profession





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