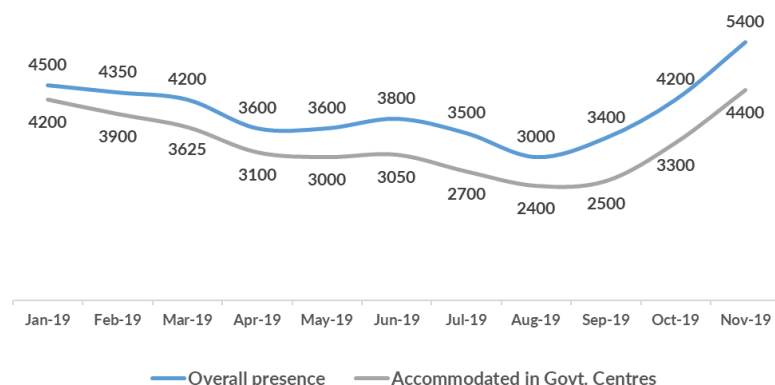


SERBIA UPDATE

- UNHCR and partners profiled **3,871** newly arriving asylum seekers and migrants, of which 41% came from Afghanistan and close to a quarter from Syria, including families, who reportedly reached Serbia fairly quickly transiting Turkey and Greece. Over 80% of new arrivals originate from countries whose nationals enjoy high recognition rates in European asylum procedures.
- While 69% of new arrivals irregularly entered Serbia from North Macedonia, the portion of those coming from Albania grew to 19%. Irregular departures to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) or Croatia decreased, allegedly because of poor reception conditions in BiH and increased use of force by Croatian authorities, leading to growing returns and even new arrivals from BiH to Serbia.
- As a result, the number of asylum seekers and migrants counted at any one day grew to **5,362** at the end of November - surpassing 5,000 for the first time since mid-2017. These included over **960** asylum-seekers and migrants squatting in Belgrade City or near the border with Hungary or Croatia. The authorities transferred over 800 into official centres, including to the Reception Centre (RC) in **Preševo** that was **reopened** on 29 November.
- Occupancy of 17 governmental centres thus increased by 35% to **4,398** at the end of November, leading to the **overcrowding** of three transit centres that house unregistered migrant men (Adaševci, Principovac and Kikinda) and of the reception centre in Bujanovac. UNHCR intensified support to protection-sensitive reception, in line with universal and European treaties and standards which differentiate between irregular migrants and refugees, asylum-seekers or other foreigners that require or request protection.



- UNHCR and partners counselled over **2,600** foreigners at over thirty sites throughout the country on asylum and posted [information on seeking asylum in Serbia](#) on the global UNHCR HELP page. **1,791** registered their intention to seek asylum with the Ministry of Interior (MOI), while **20** lodged new substantive **asylum claims** with the Asylum Office (AO), nine of which were represented by UNHCR project lawyers. In November, the AO adjudicated one recognition and four rejections. UNHCR and partners continued to assist the AO with training, interpretation, cultural mediation, best-interest and psychological assessments.
- UNHCR and partners counselled **over 130** recognised refugees and active asylum seekers on **sustainable local integration**, obtained ID cards for 13 and work permits for four. In close coordination with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, we assisted 115 with [Serbian language classes](#), 49 with cash-based interventions and 37 with vocational training. We supported a refugee family to open a new donut shop in central Belgrade and joined the [opening of Pizza Laganica](#) in Central Belgrade, which employs one refugee and one asylum-seeker.
- On 26 November, the joint UNHCR-UNDP-UNV project enhancing the **inclusion of Roma IDP Youths** hosted a conference on *Transition from Education to Employment*, while the **Regional Housing Programme (RHP)** was praised as a good model for post-conflict solutions at the [Paris Peace Forum \(PPF\)](#).
- UNHCR is grateful to the French Republic for having accepted two vulnerable refugees from Afghanistan, who departed for **resettlement** to France this month.
- UNHCR Serbia compiled and issued monthly updates of its [Statistical Snapshot](#) and [Joint Site Assessments](#). With over 42,000 views, the latter remained a most popular and trusted information product.

- UNHCR and partners identified and referred to Child Welfare Services **431** newly arrived **unaccompanied or separated children** (UASC). **329** UASC benefitted from guardianship under the UNHCR project. Seriously concerned about shortage of safe accommodation, the isolation of UASC in the remote Asylum Centre of Sjenica and their vulnerability when squatting or moving with adults and smugglers, UNHCR and partners conducted numerous **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** activities in many locations and posted leaflets and posters on *Zero Tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* in Arabic, Farsi and Urdu in all governmental centres. We also trained eight **UASC peer educators** on the risks of irregular movements and trafficking, on SGBV, gender norms and LGBTI, who immediately spread their new knowledge with many more UASC throughout the country. On 25 November, UNHCR Serbia launched the **16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence** at an event organised by ADRA and partners which included personal stories of Afghan refugee women.



UASC peer educators, ©UNHCR, November 2019

- Upon request of our Representation in Tirana, we quickly trucked 171 winterised family tents, 13,900 blankets, 17,300 sleeping bags, 12,000 sleeping mats and 17,800 raincoats from our warehouse in Serbia to relief survivors of the **earthquake** that struck Albania on 26 November.
- **1,035** asylum seekers reported **collective expulsion** from neighbouring countries (439 from Romania, 357 from Hungary, 133 from Croatia and 96 from BiH). 51% of them alleged to have been denied access to asylum and 19% **maltreatment** by authorities of these countries. Amongst them were asylum seekers, who were expelled to Serbia outside lawful procedures from Hungary (three) or BiH (two), though they had never been in Serbia before. The terrible danger of irregular movements was again illustrated in the early morning of 11 November, when a dinghy with ten migrants heading from the port of Apatin towards Croatia overturned in the Danube, leading to four missing passengers, feared to have **drowned**.
- Partners of UNHCR Serbia published interesting studies: the Balkan Refugee and Migration Council (BRMC) supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands a [Common Western Balkan Migration Policy: Borders and Returns Regional Policy Paper](#); the Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN) on [Post-Migration Living Difficulties and Mental Health of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Serbia](#) and the Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC), supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), on [Irregular Migration and its Risks](#).

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¹ Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Where a donor has contribution \$10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.

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