



**Monthly Report: September 2023**

**Key statistics**


**Highlights**

**Enhanced protection of economic, social and cultural rights:** After five years of UNHCR partner A11’s advocacy for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR), the National Assembly adopted the Law on Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, making OP-ICESCR part of the national legal framework. Ratification of this international instrument gives the citizens of Serbia the possibility to make individual petitions before the UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights when they are unable to receive it before the national courts.

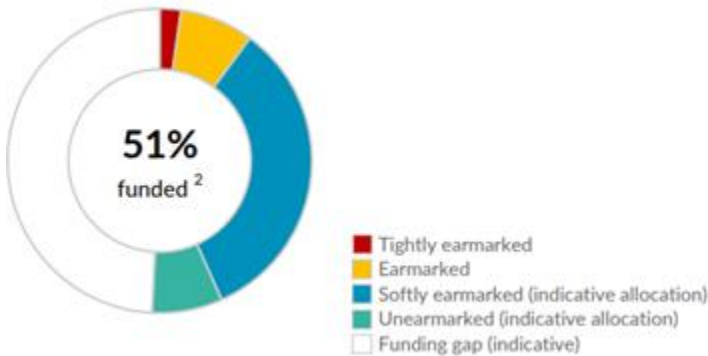
**New arrivals with mixed migration flow – trends and profile:** Between January and September 2023, the authorities\* reported 83,343 new arrivals in governmental centres (compared to 85,661 in the same period last year). According to authorities, the route through Bulgaria is currently the preferred route of new arrivals. UNHCR profiling of new arrivals shows that over 60% continue to arrive from refugee-producing countries.

  
13,036 arrivals in governmental centres

  
2,305 persons sheltered in governmental centres

  
150 applications for asylum in Jan-Sept 2023  
8 persons received international protection in Jan-Sept 2023  
1,387 persons fleeing Ukraine received temporary protection since 24 Feb 2022

**UNHCR SERBIA FUNDING UPDATE 2023**



\* Data on arrivals in governmental centres are provided by the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM)

## #ForRefugees network of companies continues to grow

**Modulor Company joins in #ForRefugees Network:** In September, the construction company Modulor Ltd., with whom UNHCR has had successful cooperation in providing employment opportunities, signed a pledge and officially joined the **#ForRefugees network** of companies which promote refugee integration, launched in June 2023 by UNHCR and IKEA Serbia. Modulor is eager to offer decent employment opportunities, and to help with ensuring accommodation to a refugee with disability from Cameroon. **In the first nine months of 2023, 19 refugees and asylum-seekers were employed, with support from UNHCR, by IKEA, Hilton and Mona Plaza Hotels, Beorol and Impact Hub Belgrade,** and another 38 persons were referred for employment to the said companies and to Hemofarm, Rail Cargo, Mercator, Modulor and Mona Fashion.

## #IBelong - Combatting the Risk of Statelessness in Serbia

**Child, Early and Forced Marriages and Risk of Statelessness:** On 26 September, UNHCR & UNICEF hosted in the UN House in Belgrade the **12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Coalition to End Child, Early and Forced Marriages (CEFM)**, devoted to linkages between statelessness and child marriages, but also the efforts and the results of the national authorities on ensuring birth registration and activities of the civil society organisations on combatting CEFM and statelessness.

In September a total of 18 persons at risk of statelessness were assisted with civil status registration or documentation. In the first nine months of 2023, 104 persons were thus able to register their birth and/or have their Serbian nationality confirmed.

Within the ongoing activity of mapping of persons at risk of statelessness, UNHCR partner Praxis' field staff visited 81 Roma settlements in Serbia and identified 146 such persons, who are now being assessed for the degree of risk and the need for (free) legal assistance.

## Partnerships

**UNHCR network of partners in Serbia:** UNHCR Serbia enjoys close cooperation with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, of Internal Affairs, of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG), as well as with local authorities. Partnership agreements are in place with nine NGO partners (A11 Initiative, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), IDEAS, INDIGO, International Aid Network (IAN), Praxis and Sigma Plus) and a number of academic institutions.

**Support to capacities for social protection:** Partner IDEAS completed the **Competency Framework for Social Protection Staff Working with Refugees and Asylum-Seekers**, which has been accepted for use by the Republic Institute of Social Protection (RISP). IDEAS and UNHCR developed a joint framework for action for improving child protection.

**Support to education:** The Embassy of Italy, UNHCR and UNICEF jointly [celebrated the beginning of the new school year](#) in a reception at the Embassy in Belgrade on 11 September. The guests were addressed by the Italian ambassador H.E. Luca Gori, UNHCR Representative, UNICEF Representative, the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees and Migrants Nataša Milosavljević and a representative of the Ministry of Education. A refugee university student and recipient of DAFI scholarship also spoke and two local children choirs gave their performances. SCRM N. Stanisavljević stated that 27 children from asylum centres in Serbia have begun their school year. Of these, one child is in the pre-school programme, 18 children are attending primary schools, and eight are attending secondary schools. In addition, five young refugees, all DAFI beneficiaries, are continuing their academic studies.

**Cultural mediation:** Following successful completion of the annual **Cultural Mediation Course** organised by the Faculty of Philology of Belgrade University, Crisis Response and Policy Center (CRPC) and UNHCR, in the framework of their tripartite MoU signed last year, 12 selected students of Arabic, French, Spanish, Ukrainian and Russian languages completed their summer internship with CRPC in September. They were thus able to meet and assist refugees in various settings – asylum centres, Info Park Belgrade aid point, etc. - under the supervision of experienced CRPC cultural mediators, developed a deeper understanding of refuge issues and created a community of practice.

**Inclusion through sports:** The Serbian Cricket Federation, the MCC Foundation, the International Cricket Council (ICC), the SCRM and UNHCR jointly enabled the participation of three teams made up of refugees accommodated in Obrenovac AC and Adaševci RTC in the **cricket tournament within the “Lions League”**, on 23 September in Lisičji jarak near Belgrade. Zaher from Afghanistan, who had been playing cricket for 13 years in his country of origin, [won a special award at the tournament](#) as one of its best players. The tournament was attended by the highest officials of MCCF, the ICC, the Serbian Cricket Federation and the UNCHR which provided transport and refreshments for refugee competitors. This event marked the deepening and internationalisation of long-standing cooperation of UNHCR and the Serbian Cricket Federation on inclusion of refugees through sports.

**The finale of “In their Sneakers” Project:** November 2023 will mark the finale of UNHCR's project ***In Their Sneakers***, which began in 2022 as an initiative aimed at sensitising secondary school students in Serbia of the plight of the refugees, their human potential and their potential for integration, and which came about as a reaction to public opinion research showing rise in xenophobia amongst members of this age group. In September, three out of 13 participating secondary schools showcased their

In *Their Sneakers* projects: “Tehnoart” vocational school in Belgrade, which also educates refugee children, staged two exhibitions in Belgrade of artwork inspired by the name of their project *Between the lines. Step forward*, focusing on three countries of origin of refugees - Syria, Afghanistan, and Guinea; students from the “School of Design” organized an [exhibition in the House of King Peter I in Belgrade entitled \*Solidarity and Art\*](#), on 30 September, a group of students of the “Technical School in Trstenik” in Serbia performed in a [play entitled \*Anchor, which they themselves produced\*](#) based on text adapted from the novel *Sea Prayer* by Khaled Hosseini. Apart from UNHCR, which is to proclaim the winning project on 25 November, the play was seen and applauded by parents and teachers, local self-government, and the local Red Cross representatives.

## Local Community Initiatives

**Belgrade Pride Week:** UNHCR and its partners BCHR and CRPC organised on 8 September a Pride Week event at the Human Rights House in Belgrade entitled ***Safe Places for LGBTQIA+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers***. A refugee member of this community shared his life’s story with guests, including other fellow refugees. CRPC also supported participation of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Pride March on 9 September in Belgrade.

**Angling Competition in Sjenica:** On 6 September, partner Sigma plus, SCRM and the municipality of Sjenica jointly organised a fishing competition on the Sjenica Lake Uvac, on which occasion local anglers taught seven asylum-seekers from the centre all of their angling skills and tricks. After the competition, prizes were awarded for the three best competitors and all the participants received thank-you certificates, following which everyone enjoyed some fish stew together.

**Children’s Animated Film Festival Vranje:** [On 12-15 September, in Vranje, twelve refugee children from Ukraine participated in the events around the World Festival of Children’s Animated Film “Golden Snail 2023”](#), organized by the School of Animation from Vranje, and with support of UNHCR’s partner Indigo. The children attended screenings and met and socialized with the peers from Israel, Georgia, and Serbia, and two girls participated in the master class workshops on animation.

**Deli Monday:** On 25 September, UNHCR, CRPC and the secondary School for Hospitality and Tourism in Belgrade organised the third Deli Monday in 2023 at KC Grad (ninth since the inception of this initiative three years ago) in Belgrade. This traditional event that brings the local and refugee youth who showcase their traditions and culinary skills is now a favourite of the diplomatic and the donor community in Belgrade but also the refugees themselves, which on this occasion gathered some 150 visitors.

## Human Interest Stories and External Media

[Parliament ratifies the international treaty allowing for enhanced protection of economic and social rights](#) – press release by A11 Initiative

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UNHCR is grateful for contributions directly to Serbia operation, as well as for the support from donors of unearmarked, softly earmarked, and earmarked funding.