

Bulgaria

December 2024

UNHCR supports the government to provide **essential aid and protection services** to refugees and asylum seekers, with a focus on facilitating **socioeconomic inclusion** and **social cohesion**.

UNHCR assists Bulgaria to strengthen its asylum system in line with international and EU standards. In the second half of the year, following the release of the European Commission's common implementation plan,

UNHCR focuses its support to the Government for the development **national implementation plan** for the **EU Asylum and Migration Pact**.

KEY FIGURES

74,739

Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria with valid registration for temporary protection by 30 December 2024

12,250

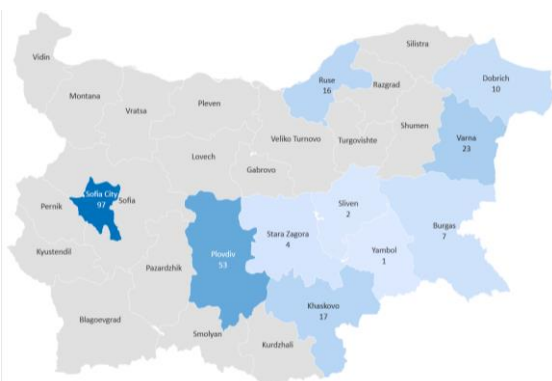
Number of asylum new applications in 2024

2,601

Number of unaccompanied children applying for asylum in 2024

33

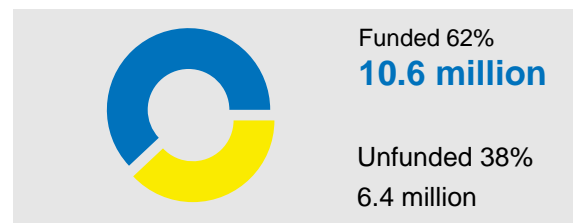
Number of unaccompanied children with valid temporary protection by December 2024



*This map shows partner staff whose costs are supported by UNHCR, which may be for a full time or a part time engagement depending on the specific agreement with the partner

FUNDING (RECEIVED AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2024)

USD 17 MILLION



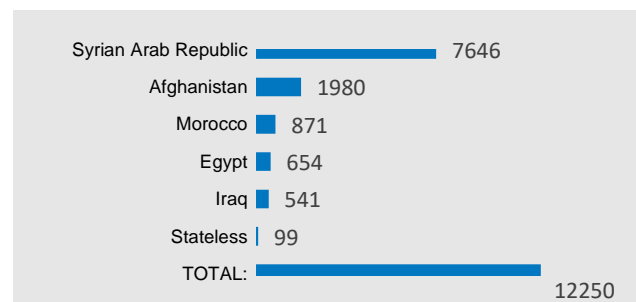
TP REGISTRATIONS IN BULGARIA BY REGION



*This map shows the districts where TP holders are located

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Countries of Origin



Asylum applications registered in 2024
(State Agency of Refugees data)

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

The evolving situation in Ukraine and the changing needs of refugees have led to a realignment of UNHCR's areas of intervention. UNHCR's efforts are accelerating in fostering inclusion through access to socio-economic inclusion opportunities and to national social protection system and promoting community resilience and mobilization.

Prevailing protection gaps with respect to international protection applicants and beneficiaries necessitates reinforcement of UNHCR's work in several key areas. These include facilitating access to territory and status, improving reception conditions, enhancing access to the national social protection system, and bolstering community mobilization and support. Our aim is to create a more supportive environment for protection and inclusion from the moment individuals arrive and throughout their integration process after their status is recognized. Refugees, in particular unaccompanied children and other vulnerable people should have access to protection and solutions regardless of considerations about their assumed intentions.



UNHCR co-organized a panel discussion titled “Power of Hope” at the Powers Summit highlighting successful refugee integration stories.

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Key Highlights

- Bulgaria's Parliament elected Assoc. Prof. Natalia Kiselova, Member of the Parliament from the Bulgarian Socialist Party-United Left as Speaker, ending a prolonged deadlock that had stalled the agenda and work of the Parliament. Following the Speaker's election, President Rumen Radev the parliamentary groups to discuss the potential prospects for formation of a government.
- On Human Rights Day and as part of the 16 Days of Activism, a screening of the film Nice Ladies and a panel discussion were organized by the Embassy of the Netherlands, UNHCR Bulgaria, and Sofia University's Cultural Center. The discussion on MHPSS featured two refugee women from Ukraine and Yemen who now work with UNHCR partners to support refugee well-being.
- The Bulgarian government continued processing asylum applications of Syrian nationals. The State Agency for Refugees (SAR) reaffirmed that the access to the procedure for asylum-seeking Syrian nationals or persons coming from the Syrian Arab Republic has not been suspended.
- UNHCR co-organized a panel discussion titled “Power of Hope” at the Powers Summit, an annual private sector event attended by around 600 participants. The discussion highlighted successful refugee integration stories, featuring a Syrian engineer who arrived in Bulgaria a decade ago and successfully integrated in Bulgaria, and diplomatic community and private sector companies employing refugees.
- The Trust for Social Achievement Equal Opportunities Initiative, in collaboration with UNHCR, provided training to 135 staff members of municipalities, including health mediators, to support the implementation of the amendments to the Civil Registration Act in Plovdiv and Sofia, Bulgaria by raising awareness among vulnerable communities on registration, including access to social services by obtaining ID documents. The program aims at facilitating the undocumented Roma people's access to nationality documentation.

Key Priorities in 2024

- **Access to territory and legal status:** In December, UNHCR partner lawyers conducted 46 monitoring visits, and facilitated access to the asylum procedure of 159 persons detained at immigration detention centers. 11,304 forcibly displaced persons, including refugees from Ukraine, received legal assistance at Compass Protection and Inclusion Centres and reception facilities, and through outreach activities.
- **CBI:** 9,158 unique individuals had been assisted through CBI, with a success rate of 95%. The assistance included support for 8,556 individuals through MPCA and winterization, and 2,611 individuals through educational grants. Additionally, 82 students received university grants.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR provided training for SAR caseworkers on interviewing vulnerable applicants, focusing on persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
- **Child protection:** UNHCR collaboration with institutions to strengthen the national child protection system focused on legal representation, guardianship, and [alternative care arrangements](#).
- **Education:** 70 teachers participated in the Academy for Refugee Teachers on inclusive education in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science.
- **Community Based Protection:** Since March 2024, refugees benefited from 9,310 services were provided at Compass centre in Plovdiv. UNHCR trained new refugee-led organisations on PSEA, risk management and data protection.
- **Inclusion:** Eight RRP partner staff completed a course [Market-based livelihood interventions for refugees and host communities](#) provided by ILO and UNHCR.
- **Working with partners:** UNHCR supports the government to ensure policies and legislation are in line with international standards, and promotes a comprehensive refugee response, grounded in [multi-stakeholder](#), “whole-of-society” approaches that includes refugees, local authorities, international organizations, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders. UNHCR works with [seven partner NGOs](#) to safeguard the rights and well-being of forcibly displaced persons, deliver assistance, and promote refugees’ social protection and access to livelihoods, education and inclusion.
- **External Relations:** In 2024 UNHCR Bulgaria launched a nation-wide campaign called Food for thought. Following a public opinion poll among the Bulgarian population, showing that 54% of the local population does not have an opinion about the refugees, and over 70% have not met a refugee, the campaign was launched with the slogan “*You cannot have an opinion about someone you don’t know as you cannot have an opinion about a meal you have never tried*”. The campaign featured three refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan who shared their stories of resilience.

UNHCR Presence in Bulgaria

Staff:

34 National Staff (UNHCR contract, AWF and UNHCR vacant positions)

11 International Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Sofia

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