

UNHCR SERBIA UPDATE

According to the authorities, 6,254 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants are accommodated in governmental centres at end-August, 18 are placed in specialised institutions for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), 156 in private accommodation (known to UNHCR) and another estimated 2,000 are staying in hostels/hotels or abandoned houses in border areas with Hungary/Romania/Croatia/Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Belgrade city centre. 78 refugees from Ukraine were accommodated in the dedicated Vranje Asylum Centre (AC), and an estimated 3,600 has residence in hotels and privately.

16,723 new arrivals to governmental centres were registered by the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) in 1-28 August period (compared to 13,425 in the whole month of July), with the refugee/migrant influx averaging 4,200 persons per week (compared to 3,000 per week in July 2021).

With increased arrivals, Obrenovac Asylum Centre in Belgrade and Preševo Transit-Reception Centre in the south of the country joined in the group of overcrowded centres in Serbia, together with already overwhelmed centres in the northern and western borders. To preempt ensuing health risks, UNHCR delivered the second batch of 800 anti-scabies creams (1,500 in total) to the SCRM management to be used in affected reception centres.

Asylum: UNHCR and partners counselled 2,112 persons on asylum in the month of August. Asylum Office (AO) of the MoI granted **asylum to one citizen of Ukraine and three citizens of Afghanistan** and **subsidiary protection to two citizens of Congo**. One asylum application was rejected by the AO. **AO has thus far in 2022 granted 17 positive decisions, including granting asylum to six applicants and subsidiary protection to 11 persons.**

Temporary protection (TP) was awarded in August to 74 persons fleeing Ukraine, bringing the total number to **888 persons who have received TP in Serbia since March and as at 31 August.**



Refugees from Ukraine attending Serbian language classes in Vranje AC, ©Sigma Plus, August 2022

Partner Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) published the report [Right to Asylum in the Republic of Serbia for the period January - June 2022](#), which advocates for an adequately regulated legislative framework ensuring durable solutions in practice.

Partnerships/Inclusion: UNHCR liaised with the **GIZ** on including the refugees and asylum-seekers into the **Passport of Competencies project** - a tool for mapping the skills and the competencies of hard-to-employ categories of the society, including the IDPs, in view of re-confirming the UNHCR-GIZ joint commitment to economic empowerment of vulnerable groups contained in the joint MoU.



A lady from Ukraine enjoying the sewing workshop in Vranje AC, ©Sigma Plus, August 2022

In response to the global crises on food, energy, and finance, UNICEF (lead Agency), UNFPA and UNHCR developed a joint programme “Extending Social Protection in Serbia through enhanced shock- responsive policy”. The Joint SDG Fund- Emergency Window approved the funding totalling USD 250,000. The programme focuses on strengthening a shock-responsive social protection system to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the consecutive crises that hit the country, including a targeted cash transfer to the most vulnerable families. The joint programme will be implemented during August-December 2022 and will impact the achievement of global sustainable development goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 5, 10 and 16. It will be implemented in close consultation with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the Red Cross and the World Bank.

Thanks to the “**language parenting**” for the Serbian language of three asylum-seekers in Tutin AC, by UNHCR partner Indigo, they have managed to find seasonal jobs in their local community and enjoy better social interaction with the locals. Partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) provided Serbian language lessons to another 12 adult refugees in Belgrade, and partner Sigma Plus was in charge of regular Serbian classes in Vranje AC with refugees from Ukraine.

(Mental) Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS): Partner International Aid Network (IAN) provided individual psychotherapy and psychiatric interventions, individual and group psychological and psychosocial support to 30 individuals, including 17 UASC, in ACs in Krnjača and Bogovađa. A number of UASC reported having suffered maltreatment and physical abuse by Bulgarian border guards.

UNHCR partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) continued monitoring the public health situation, referring refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) for vaccination and (specialised) medical services and providing some medication and orthopedic devices, focusing on Krnjača AC.



Counselling in the field,
©HCIT, August 2022

Partner Indigo organised 55 workshops in English and Serbian languages, carpentry, music, creative workshops, manicure, locksmiths' and chess workshops, in governmental centres in the southeast and southwest of the country, with 85 participants in total.

Child protection: [SCRM announced](#) that some 100 refugee/migrant children are enrolled to start/continue schooling in the national schools as of 1 September, in seven cities/municipalities in Serbia.

Four UASC were under legal guardianship of partner IDEAS at the beginning of August, and two have meanwhile left the country; nine UASC are in receipt of free legal aid. Under the UNHCR project "Vouchers for the educational needs of UASC and youth within the childcare system in

Serbia", eleven children received cash vouchers in August through UNHCR partner CRPC. CRPC supported the learning needs of nine refugee children with grinds in different school subjects and languages.



UASC in summer camp in Tara Mountain,
©UNHCR, August 2022

Seven UASC and youth accommodated in the centres for social protection, accompanied by their guardians, attended the Eco-Recreational Camp Džanići/Tara on 15-21 August, with support from UNHCR and partner CRPC, engaging in water sports and other recreational/educational activities.

Partners DRC, IDEAS and CRPC supported UASC **peer educators** by organizing cultural activities combined with discussion on challenges of integration: a visit to the Museum of Yugoslavia, a visit to the Botanical Garden "Jevremovac" and attendance of a French movie evening in Kvaka 22 in Belgrade. Women from the AC Krnjača, who participate in DRC women empowerment activities, also took part in these cultural activities. One peer educator was supported in finding a summer job in a café in Belgrade.

Gender-based violence (GBV): Partners IDEAS and DRC were providing free legal aid, information, interpretation, counselling and referring to responsible institutions and service providers, to 16 adult GBV survivors (of which four newly identified) and their families.

DRC organised six workshops and excursions in the framework of women-empowerment activities with women from Krnjača AC.

Statelessness/Roma/IDPs: UNHCR partners Praxis and A11 Initiative visited 20 Roma (IDP) settlements in 12 municipalities around the country and counselled 241 persons on accessing socio-economic rights and personal documents.

DRC organised one return-related meeting in Feketić on 17 August with 12 IDPs participating, who were informed about the criteria they must meet in order to be assisted in return, organization of go and see visits, registration for return, as well as about projects/organizations that provide return support and temporary residence. Four families with 9 family members (originating from Dragaš, Prizren and Kosovo Polje) registered for return to Kosovo¹ in August. DRC also paid visits to IDP

¹ All reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

families residing in Kaluđerica near Belgrade and informed them of overall situation in their communities of origin, conditions and possibilities for return.

In a DRC meeting with RAE IDPs in Mali Idjos municipality in the north of Serbia, those from Đakovica expressed no intention of returning due to security considerations, whereas those from Kosovo Polje and Obilić expressed an interest in go-and-see visits; this group of IDPs owns no property in Serbia and survives on social welfare and recycling.

Praxis met with the representatives of the centres for social welfare (CSW) in Apatin, Pirot, Subotica and Palilula, to exchange knowledge, experience and advice on problems faced by persons at risk of statelessness and the relevant procedures. Three Roma activists from Kikinda, Zrenjanin and Sombor were trained by Praxis on tackling the relevant administrative procedures. **Five persons at risk of statelessness had their Serbian nationality confirmed/granted in August owing to Praxis' efforts.**

Child, early and forced marriages (CEFM): Praxis met with the social protection authorities in Apatin, Pirot and shared their reports and information materials on CEFM and reported one detected case of CEFM to the local CSW in Subotica.

Ukraine Refugee Response: UNHCR finalized the preliminary results of the mapping of needs of Ukrainian refugees on the territory of Serbia (in 15 different municipalities), having interviewed 15 local refugee trustees and 22 Ukrainian families (66 persons) in private accommodation in these municipalities. The SCRM Trustees and the refugees identified the following priority areas of intervention: provision of up-to-date information, legal awareness, health, employment, education and social protection. Other identified needs included: translation services for trustees, school support for children (textbooks and materials), tax exemption or reduction of electricity bills for host families, tickets for public transport and cash assistance. The results were shared with the Inter-Agency Forum on Ukrainian Response at UN level, to which UNHCR is the leading agency, and SCRM.

Partner Sigma Plus organized for six refugee women from Ukraine, accommodated in AC Vranje, to participate and present Ukrainian cousin in the "Dani banice" food festival in Bela Palanka. They prepared "Varenike" and distributed over 150 portions to the festival visitors.

Upon profiling of refugees from Ukraine interested in employment, UNHCR reached out to the City of Vranje's Department of Economy and Economic Development and agreed to work jointly on linking the refugees with the companies in Vranje and neighbouring towns.

"Aster Textile" factory from Niš donated a contingent of fabrics to be turned into curtains in the rooms in Vranje AC during the sewing workshops attended by Ukrainian women and supported by the UNHCR/Sigma Plus.



Women from Ukraine at "Dani banice" food festival, Bela Palanka, ©Sigma Plus, August 2022

UNHCR Serbia is grateful for the support of all the donors who contribute to UNHCR activities, with special thanks to:

Australia | Austria | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway
| Private donors Australia | Private donors Bahamas | Private donors Canada | Private donors China | Private donors Czech Republic | Private donors Denmark | Private donors France | Private donors Germany | Private donors Italy |
Private donors Japan | Private donors Netherlands | Private donors Republic of Korea | Private donors Spain | Private donors Switzerland | Private donors United Kingdom | Private donors USA | Private donors Sweden | Serbia | Spain |
Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | USA

With the support of the following organisations and private sector partners:

IKEA SEE | Microsoft Serbia