

UNHCR Representation to Serbia



Refugee women from Burundi performing at Belgrade Half-Marathon, ©UNHCR, 27 November 2022



In joining in the wider UN system national campaign of **the 16 Days of Activism against SGBV**, UNHCR organised a humanitarian bazaar of handicraft produced by refugee women from Ukraine and Burundi in Belgrade city centre, and a series of women's empowerment workshops in Vranje, Bujanovac and Krnjača Asylum Centres.

CONTACTS:

Dragan Vukotić, External Relations,
vukoticd@unhcr.org
Vera Dragović-O'Donnell, Reporting/IM,
dragovic@unhcr.org

Highlights



In Jan-Nov 2022, authorities reported **110,947** new arrivals to governmental centres (compared to 55,429 in the same period in 2021). According to profiling performed by UNHCR field staff, Syrians make up 37% of the arrivals, followed by arrivals originating from Afghanistan (24%), Pakistan (19%), Morocco (8%) and Burundi (3%). **11,916** persons arrived in governmental centres in November (compared to 14,519 in October and 19,345 in September).

Key Figures (as at end-November 2022)



7,271

Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants counted in Serbia, of which

6,229

accommodated in governmental centres, **over 1,000**

staying outside of governmental centres, and **78**

refugees from Ukraine accommodated in Vranje Asylum Centre (AC).



307

Applications for asylum in 2022

25

Positive decisions in 2022

2

Positive decisions in November 2022

233

Positive decisions since 2008

1,061

Persons fleeing Ukraine received Temporary Protection (TP) in Serbia since 24 February 2022, of which **67** in November.

Access to territory, registration, personal documents and services

Activities of UNHCR and its partners aim at ensuring that refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and persons at risk of statelessness benefit from an improved and systematically implemented legal framework and can thus access rights in line with international standards, that persons in need of international protection have access to territory and asylum procedure and receive protection and assistance in safe reception conditions.

After the financial inclusion workshop for banks organised last month by UNHCR, Raiffeisen Bank informed UNHCR that **refugees and asylum seekers can from now on open accounts in local and foreign currency with the bank without any obstacles**, and two refugees have already done so. UNHCR and partners will announce visits to banks by persons of concern in this first period to make sure that everything goes smoothly.

On 29 Nov, [UNHCR Serbia and the Faculty of Political Science \(FPS\) of the University in Belgrade, signed an MoU on cooperation](#), which envisages a series of lectures by UNHCR on its mandate of refugee protection, project-based cooperation and practical field experience for students.



Dean of Faculty of Political Science Prof dr Dragan R. Simić and UNHCR Acting Representative Stefanie Krause sign an MoU on cooperation, ©FPN, November 2022

Withing the joint UNFPA, UNHCR and UNICEF project **Extending Social Protection in Serbia through Enhanced Shock-Responsive Policy**, financed from the SDG Fund, UNHCR organized a **focus group discussion** with six refugees and asylum-seekers from Iran, Ukraine, Burundi and India, who shared perspectives on quality of life in Serbia, available support and obstacles to inclusion/integration. Collected information will be used to support legislation and decision-making concerning vulnerable groups in Serbia.

UNHCR delivered 15 tablets and laptops, donated and quipped with MS Office 365 software by **Microsoft Serbia**, to Obrenovac AC and Miksalište Aid Point in Belgrade, as well to Bujanovac Reception/Transit Centre (RTC) and Vranje AC for

refugees from Ukraine. The donation will support the refugees' connectivity, digital literacy, and prospects of finding and making use of work and education opportunities. In addition, the Swedish IT company **Insicon** donated, through UNHCR, kitchen utensils and home appliances to **two state institutions specialising in accommodating unaccompanied children, including refugee children**.

UNHCR supported 20 households/51 persons with cash-based intervention in November, including 10 persons who have fled Ukraine. Under the Livelihoods programme of the UNHCR, 34 refugees attended Serbian classes, one was procured a shoemaking course and one was donated a manicure set in order to pursue income-generating activities.

Partner International Aid Network provided individual and group mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as well as psychiatric support, to 78 refugees and asylum-seekers in Vodovodska Institution for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), Vranje and Bogovađa ACs.

Partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) supported eight survivors of GBV in November (of which six newly identified), and organised three womens' empowerment and two health awareness workshops in Krnjača AC.

#IBelong

Over the past decade, Serbia has progressed significantly in statelessness reduction and prevention. Having changed the legislation, the authorities next focused on the harmonization of practice of relevant actors at the local level, resulting in reduction of the number of persons at risk of statelessness from tens of thousands in 2010 to approximately 2,000 today.

In the kick-off of the finale of the global ten-year #IBelong Campaign which started in 2014, the UNHCR and partner Praxis participated in a special feature on the persons at risk of statelessness in Serbia at K1 TV, which also featured a premiere of an [#IBelong Clip with the UNHCR High-Profile Supporter Actress Branka Katić, produced in cooperation with the Ministry for Public Administration and Local Self-Governance \(MPALSG\) and with support of the Serbian Association of Young Volunteers which includes Roma and refugee activists](#).

On 30 November, an online **Round Table on Statelessness was organized for 60 participants - public registrars, social workers, police officers, refugee trustees, and municipal free legal aid providers**, in the

framework of UNHCR's cooperation with the MPALSG and the Ombudsperson's office.

On 18-20 November, partner A 11 Initiative organized [tailor-made training programme for young Roma activists](#), working to support local integration of Roma IDPs in Serbia; 18 participants from 14 municipalities covered various topics relevant to local inclusion, access to economic and social rights, right to adequate housing, access to registration, etc. Partner Praxis visited three informal Roma settlements and counselled supported 99 persons in obtaining personal documents, registering births, etc. **Six persons thus had their Serbian nationality granted/confirmed in November.**

Fair and Fast Asylum Procedures

UNHCR aims to foster development of the national asylum system by working with responsible decision-making authorities to increase capacities through training, exchanges with other countries, support for stopgap measures and policy and legal matters.

UNHCR partner Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT) organised a seminar in Belgrade on **Importance of Interpretation in the Asylum Process**, which featured participation of 26 interpreters used by the Ministry of Interior (Asylum Office) and cultural mediators working with refugees and asylum seekers in Serbia.



Children from the Music Art Project performing at Belgrade Half-Marathon Race, ©UNHCR, 27 November 2022

UNHCR and partners counselled 996 persons on asylum in November. Nine persons signed power of attorney for UNHCR project lawyers to represent them in asylum procedures. Two refugees, an UASC from Afghanistan and a man from Syria, both represented by UNHCR project lawyers, received international protection in Serbia in November. 189 persons are currently in receipt of free legal aid from partner Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR), including 24 refugees from Ukraine.

115 refugees/asylum-seekers benefitted from cultural mediation/orientation provided by partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) in November.

Child Protection

UNHCR supports the authorities to place UASC under guardianship, to receive medical and other care and to be accommodated separately/adequately.

In the scope of a joint project promoting youth activism, UNHCR and UNDP co-organised a **Youth Camp** in Divčibare mountain, **which brought together more than 40 young Roma, refugees, IDPs and local youths** who attended soft skills and art workshops, sport competitions and group discussions on how to improve youth activism and contribute to social cohesion in their local communities.

Joint concert of the INISON Inclusive Choir, which gathers children/persons with disabilities and their teachers, and the Music Art Project's group of young percussionists which includes refugee children, took place in the Novi Sad synagogue on 20 November, under the slogan **Let's get closer to one another**. UNHCR Serbia has been supporting the [Music Art Project](#) for social inclusion and musical therapy since 2016.

14-18 November marked the finale of the [Oasis of knowledge and friendship](#) project, implemented by four schools in the town of Šid, which also educate refugee children from RTC Šid. The project is supported by UNHCR/HCIT, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) and EHO. Local and refugee children engaged in sports, science, arts and choir signing workshops. On the occasion of 16 November, the **International Day of Tolerance**, a [central event](#) of the project took place in Šid when the most successful literary and art works produced by the children were announced, following which the children distributed sweets and messages on tolerance to citizens of Šid. Some 20 teachers/school directors and 200 children participated in these events.

UNHCR supported a young talented refugee from Ukraine under temporary protection with Down Syndrome in enrolling to primary music school Jovan Bandur in Pančevo. He will also be supported with Serbian language lessons and additional flute playing lessons from UNHCR's livelihood budget.

UNHCR and partners also support the inclusion of refugee children into the educational system in Serbia and help their parents navigate the system.

41 refugee (incl. 8 UASC) and 260 IDP Roma children have thus far in 2022 been supported by UNHCR partners Indigo and CRPC in school enrollment, school attendance and learning. In November, 268 non-formal educational activities were organised by UNHCR partners in Bosilegrad,

Preševo Vranje, Niš and Bujanovac RTCs/ACs, in order to strengthen their life skills and maintain their motivation.

With regards to child, early and forced marriages (CEFM), three workshops for schoolchildren were organized by partner Praxis in three primary schools in Pančevo, Smederevo and Niš, with 65 schoolchildren attending.

Durable solutions and opportunities for education and employment

Access to education and financial services, as well as inclusion in activities of everyday life, remain key for refugees trying to find their footing in Serbia. UNHCR conceived and executed a series of undertakings in November, aimed at supporting inclusion and integration.

Within the **Regional Housing Programme (RHP)**, the keys to 40 newly built apartments in the city of Vrsac, built as part of the RHP sub-project 8, were handed over on 29 Nov to refugee families from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

The ceremony, attended by the Mayor of Vršac, a representative of the EU Delegation, Acting Ambassador of Norway, Head of the OSCE Mission in Serbia, UNHCR Acting Representative, a representative of the CoE Development Bank, etc., also marked the handover of the 10,000th key in RHP's ten years' active history.

UNHCR and DRC organised one return-related meeting for IDPs from Kosovo¹ and one Go and See Visit to Kosovo Polje with seven IDPs. Eight IDP families/23 persons were registered for return to Kosovo² in November.

UNHCR partner Sigma Plus facilitated a reunification of a single mother of two from Syria with her husband in Austria. The family was reunited on 20 November.

219 persons received tailored support in integration and accessing rights and services from UNHCR and partners in November 2022.

Sustained **cooperation** was confirmed in a UNHCR meeting **with the College of Health Science in Belgrade, who vowed to continue supporting enrollment of refugees** in a meeting with UNHCR Serbia. In September 2022, the College enrolled a refugee from Iraq who is studying dentistry.

Following job interviews with four vulnerable refugees, facilitated by UNHCR and the **Refugees for Refugees (R4R) programme** pursued by partner BCHR, the Hilton Hotel in Belgrade hired three of them in November, while one is waiting to receive a work permit to begin working for the Hotel. A group of 10 refugees from Ukraine, accommodated in AC Vranje, visited the local shoe factory Lotos, which had contacted UNHCR through the City of Vranje authorities and expressed desire to hire refugees. Pending receipt of work permits, the refugees intend to apply for positions within the factory.

Community Engagement

Inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and persons at risk of statelessness in community activities promotes inclusion and peaceful coexistence. UNHCR focuses on promoting their human capital, and on linking them with the local authorities, schools, youth, cultural centres and municipalities, and on supporting joint projects.



UNHCR, CRPC and Do Good Association organised a Humanitarian Bazaar in KC GRAD Belgrade, @Čini dobro, 30 November 2022

UNHCR joined hands with the Italian Embassy in Belgrade to organise the sixth traditional **Deli Monday** event in Belgrade on 14 November, which this time featured participation of renowned Italian Chef Francesco Nicolai. Together with refugee cooks and the students at the School for Hospitality and Tourism in Belgrade, this **social cohesion event** gathered more than 100 refugees, members of the UNHCR donor community and citizens of Belgrade.

Following the signing of the MoU between UNHCR Serbia and the Belgrade Marathon Ltd. earlier in the year, **25 refugees from Burundi, of which five runners, took part in the half-marathon in Belgrade** on 27 November. UNHCR Serbia was present in the half-marathon with a large stage on which refugees from Burundi performed in indigenous costumes and the Roma and refugee children from the Music Art Project orchestra and choir, supported by UNHCR, also performed alongside professional DJs. This contribution from the refugees and the children gained positive

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

² *ibid*

UNHCR and young artists' association from Belgrade *Šmiranti* from Belgrade produced together a **theatre play "We all come from somewhere, some earlier than others"**, which was premiered on the Studentski Grad cultural centre on 7 November, gathering an audience of over 200 local and refugee youths. The play provides insight into the lives of those who had to abandon their homes, their challenges, fears, and dilemmas, with the key message on the need to ensure safety and protection for each and every one.

UNHCR established **cooperation with the Taekwondo Club Obrenovac**, which included in its membership four young refugees from Obrenovac RTC, three local youngsters from Obrenovac Technical School, which also educates refugees, and the staff of the SCRМ who run the RTC. UNHCR supported the Club by providing sports equipment. This partnership, which ensures inclusion of refugees through sports, will run till end-2023.

On 14 November, **UNHCR Field Unit South was awarded with a Certificate of Appreciation by the City Library in Bujanovac** (host to a RTC which accommodates families and UASC) in recognition of mutual cooperation and UNHCR's support by means of a donation of books, all in marking of the Day of the Bujanovac Library. Children from the local music school and other schools in Bujanovac contributed to the marking of the day by playing music and recited poems on the importance of reading and education. The event was attended by the MP Mr. Šaip Kamberi, representatives of the local government and organizations, and the local media.

Six citizens of Vranje, beneficiaries of the Centre for development of social protection in Vranje visited AC Vranje

Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainian refugees taught them the skills they themselves acquired at Sigma Plus-organised workshops. It is planned that the refugees return these visits soon.

105 creative and recreational workshops were organized by UNHCR partners Indigo, Sigma Plus and CRPC in government centres throughout the country.



A young refugee from Iraq sharing traditional food with visitors to Deli Monday event co-organised by Hospitality and Tourism School in Belgrade, Italian Embassy in Serbia and the UNHCR, @UNHCR, 14 November 2022

UNHCR is grateful for contributions directly to Serbia operation, as well as donors of unearmarked and flexible funding, including from: Australia | Austria | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Serbia | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America

UNHCR appreciates the important contributions of private donors in: Australia | Bahamas | Canada | China | Czech Republic | Denmark | France | Germany | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America



<https://twitter.com/UNHCRSerbia>



<https://www.facebook.com/unhcrserbia>