

# Bosnia and Herzegovina

**2,616** persons arrived irregularly in December, which remained stable compared to the previous month (2,492) and increased by almost eight times compared to December 2021 (336). Top three declared countries of origin are Afghanistan (69%), Cuba (7%), and Congo (4%).

The Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) issued an "Attestation of Expressed Intent to Seek Asylum" (AISA) to **95%** of them (**2,484** persons).

**12** persons registered their asylum claims with the Sector for Asylum (12 cases with persons from Türkiye, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine).

All **8** scheduled Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews were conducted.

**7** decisions\* (5 cases involving 7 persons) were issued, 6 granting subsidiary protection and 1 negative. 13 applications were otherwise closed (8 cases involving 13 individuals).

**1,349** asylum-seekers and migrants were accommodated in reception facilities at the end of December, while between 85-245 persons are estimated to be squatting outside of formal accommodation, mostly in Una-Sana Canton.

Average waiting time\*\*\* for the 12 individuals who registered their asylum claim in December was **28** days.

## KEY POPULATION OF CONCERN AT THE END OF DECEMBER

**22** people awaiting registration of their asylum claims with the assistance of UNHCR / Vaša Prava BiH

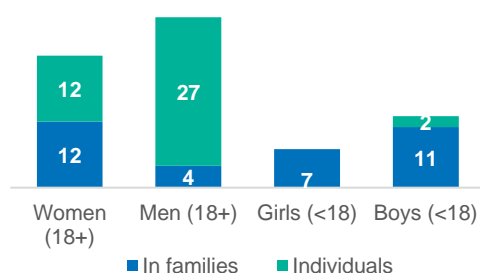
**75** asylum-seekers pending processing and decision

**149** persons under international protection, of which **45** under refugee status and **104** under subsidiary protection

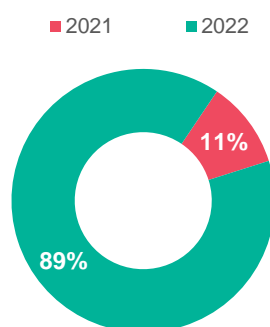
**28** stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness

## ASYLUM CLAIMS PENDING PROCESSING AND FINAL DECISION AT THE END OF DECEMBER: 75

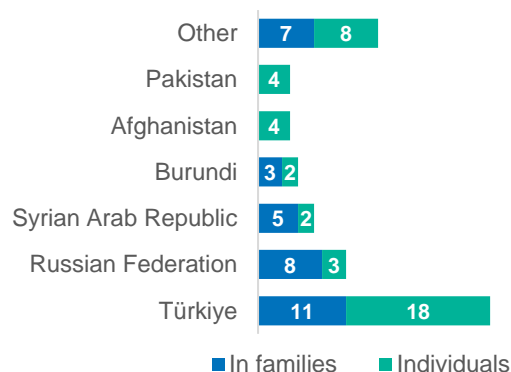
AGE AND GENDER



PER YEAR OF REGISTRATION



TOP-SIX COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

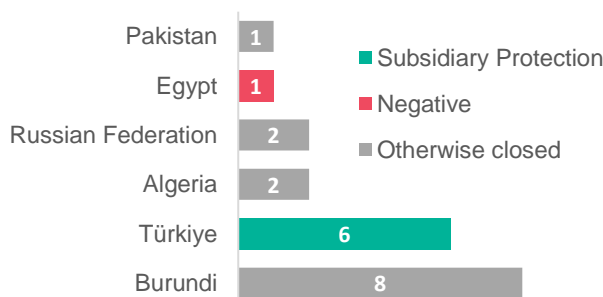


**12** Single adult females

**20** Children, among which **2** unaccompanied or separated children

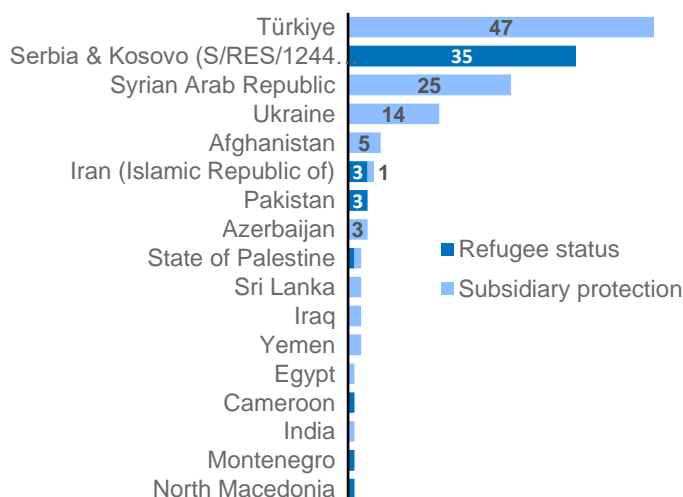
## DECISIONS\* IN DECEMBER

### PER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (ALL INSTANCES)



## PERSONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AT THE END OF DECEMBER

### PER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



\* Decisions are not necessarily final and binding.

\*\* Average processing time (days) from asylum-claim registration to first-instance decision (at case level). Appealed decisions are not included.

\*\*\* Waiting time (days) between AISA issuance and asylum-claim registration date (at case level), excluding registrations conducted in Immigration Centre or prison.

## ASYLUM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN 2022

Despite the fact that the number of persons who received an AISA more than doubled between 2021 and 2022, a decrease in registered asylum claims was noticed: 149 in 2022 compared to 167 in 2021, and 1,572 in 2018. In 2022, the average waiting time to register an asylum claim was 64 days, while it used to be 181 days in 2021. Similarly, the average processing time\*\* of an asylum claim, which used to be 444 days in 2021, decreased to 306 days in 2022. These two improvements are commendable as they allow persons in need of international protection to access the procedure, and thus their rights, more rapidly, and generally make the BiH asylum system more credible and efficient.

Among the 46 positive asylum decisions\* issued in 2022, UNHCR however deplores that none of them granted refugee status, as all consisted in subsidiary protection. Authorities must ensure that persons who meet the legal definition of a refugee are granted refugee status rather than subsidiary protection, as the latter does not allow the person access to family reunification, travel documentation and a path to naturalization. Subsidiary protection is a default option that should only be considered after concluding that the person does not meet the refugee criteria.

## FOCUS ON THE FEDERATION OF RUSSIA

Late December, groups of Russian citizens from Chechnya entered BiH on non-visa regime, allegedly planning to seek asylum in Croatia due to the Russian mobilization for the war in Ukraine announced on 21 September. It was reported that they entered Croatia without issues from Velika Kladusa. Nevertheless, some groups faced issues in entering BiH when arriving via the Sarajevo airport. In this regard, a procedure for considering asylum applications at international airports should be developed, whereby persons denied entry to the territory have, at minimum, access to a lawyer who can advise and counsel them accordingly.

Regarding detected irregular arrivals recorded by the authorities from the Federation of Russia, an increase took place in 2022. While it had always been less than 10 persons per year in the past, it reached 63 persons in 2022, with an increase as of October. Among those Russian nationals, 36 expressed intention to seek asylum in BiH and 15 registered an asylum claim.

According to the [UNHCR Handbook](#), if fear of prosecution and punishment for desertion or draft evasion does not in itself constitute well-founded fear of persecution, one may be considered a refugee – for instance, if it can be shown that they would suffer disproportionately severe punishment for the military offence on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; or that performance of military service would have required participation in military action contrary to their genuine political, religious or moral convictions, or to valid reasons of conscience. Moreover, where the type of military action, with which an individual does not wish to be associated, is condemned by the international community as contrary to basic rules of human conduct, punishment for desertion / draft evasion could be regarded as persecution and lead to granting of refugee status.

### UKRAINIAN NATIONALS STAYING IN BiH: 149 at the end of December

- 12 persons granted subsidiary protection
- 2 asylum-seekers waiting for interview or final decision
- 2 persons issued with an AISA
- 131 persons applied for temporary residence on humanitarian grounds, which allows to stay up to six months but without rights (besides residency)
- 2 persons staying on non-visa regime, which allows to stay for 30 days but without rights

### ASYLUM PROCESSING ACTIVITIES DURING 2020 – 2022

	2020	2021	2022
Applications	245	167	149
Refugee* status	1	5	0
Subsidiary protection* status	31	28	46
Rejected applications*	54	49	28
Otherwise closed*	546	184	162

### ASYLUM PROCEDURE TIMEFRAME at the end of December

#### 64 days

Average waiting time to register an asylum claim\*\*\* for those claims which were registered in 2022

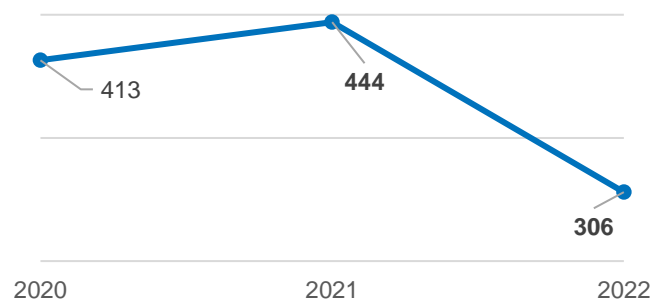
#### 278 days

Average time (days) from registration of asylum claim to RSD interview, for RSD interviews held in 2022

#### 306 days

Average processing time\*\* for first-instance decisions issued in 2022

### AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME\*\* 2020-2022 at the end of December



\* Decisions are not necessarily final and binding.

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\*\*\* Waiting time (days) between AISA issuance and asylum-claim registration date (at case level), excluding registrations conducted in Immigration Centre or prison.

## UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS IN DECEMBER

- **284** persons provided with information related to asylum in BiH
- **55** persons were assisted with free legal aid related to asylum in BiH
- **307** persons were assisted with psychosocial support
- **23** persons attended local language classes as part of educational / vocational / occupational training and for integration purposes
- **1** strategic / priority case of IDPs and returnees was resolved
- UNHCR, in cooperation with its partner the Catholic Relief Services and the Red Cross Society of BiH, concluded the second round of distribution of vouchers to support Ukrainian refugees in purchasing food and hygienic items.
- On 1 December, UNHCR and its partner Vaša Prava BiH organized a roundtable on the topic of free legal aid provision to persons at risk of statelessness and displaced persons and returnees, which brought together free legal aid practitioners, competent ministries from all levels, and selected centres for social work.



UNHCR's and its partner the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative's (BHVI) stand at the Diplomatic Winter Bazaar in Sarajevo, 3 December 2022



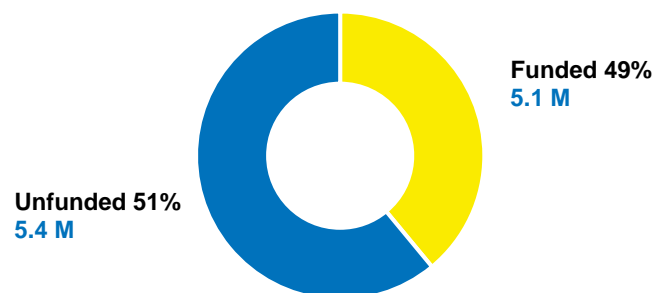
A person of concern to UNHCR enrolled in a three-month cooking vocational training, with support from UNHCR's partner the Catholic Relief Services

## NEWS & EVENTS

- UNHCR, together with its partner the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHVI), participated in the Diplomatic Winter Bazaar in Sarajevo, a yearly charity event organized by the international community. At the event, BHVI presented handicrafts and national dishes made by refugees and asylum-seekers.
- In 2022, UNHCR BiH assisted Giorgio Ghiotto, an Italian documentary director, in making a short documentary "Nihada – Invisible Dreams" about a person from Sarajevo who lives without documents and is at risk of statelessness. The documentary, which premiered at the 28th Sarajevo Film Festival, was featured on UNHCR's website and social media channels in December.
- On 10 December, UNHCR contributed to the celebration of the World Human Rights Day in BiH by facilitating the performance of the theatre play "Game" by the Mostar Youth Theatre in Sarajevo ([Facebook post](#)), which was created based on testimonials of refugees who resided in the Refugee Reception Centre "Salakovac" near Mostar.

## FUNDING UPDATE

Financial requirements: **USD 10.5 million**



UNHCR BiH is grateful for the support of its 2022 donors: [United States of America](#) | [European Union](#) | [Austria](#)

To implement its 2022 programme, UNHCR cooperates with [government partners](#), the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, the Ministry of Security, and the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, as well as [NGO partners](#), the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative, the Catholic Relief Services and Vaša Prava BiH.