

Bosnia and Herzegovina

1,460 persons arrived irregularly in February, a decrease by 18 per cent compared to the previous month (1,781) but an increase by two times compared to February 2022 (715). Top three declared countries of origin are Afghanistan (46%), Morocco (15%) and Cuba (10%).*

801 asylum-seekers and migrants were accommodated in reception facilities at the end of February, while some 100 – 170 persons are estimated to be outside of formal accommodation.

Out of total irregular arrivals in February, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) issued an "Attestation of Expressed Intent to Seek Asylum" (AISA) to **86%** of them (**1,260** persons).*

7 persons registered their asylum claims with the Sector for Asylum (7 cases with persons from Afghanistan, the Russian Federation, Iraq, Croatia, Türkiye and the Islamic Republic of Iran).

6 Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews were conducted.

14 decisions** (7 cases involving 14 persons) were issued, 12 granting subsidiary protection and 2 negative. 11 applications were otherwise closed (5 cases involving 11 individuals).

KEY POPULATION OF CONCERN AT THE END OF FEBRUARY

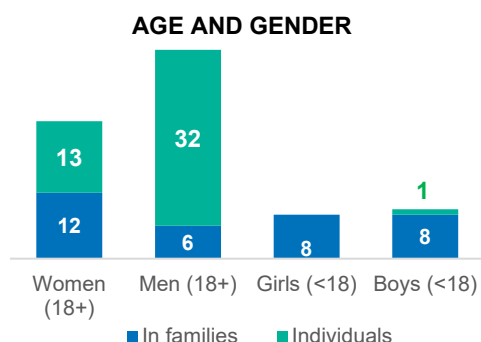
14 people awaiting registration of their asylum claims with the assistance of UNHCR/Vaša prava BiH

80 asylum-seekers pending processing and final decision

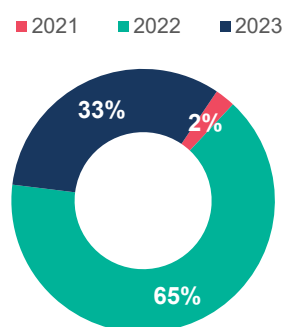
152 persons under international protection, of which **44** under refugee status and **108** under subsidiary protection

28 stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness

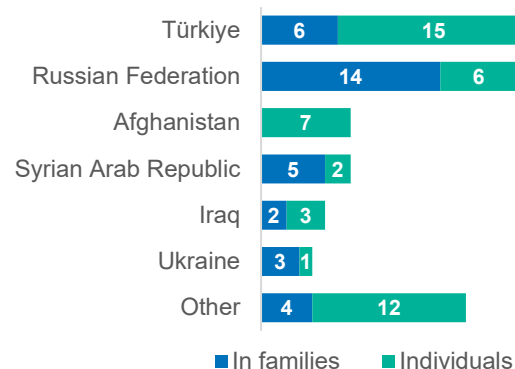
ASYLUM SEEKERS PENDING PROCESSING AND FINAL DECISION AT THE END OF FEBRUARY



PER YEAR OF REGISTRATION



TOP-SIX COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

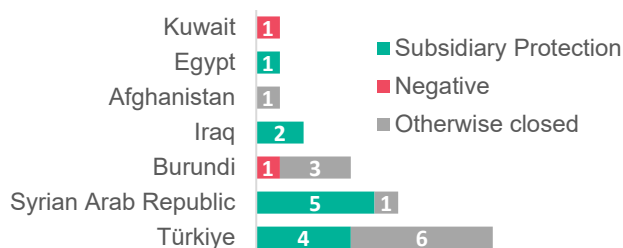


13 single adult females

17 children, among which **1** unaccompanied or separated child

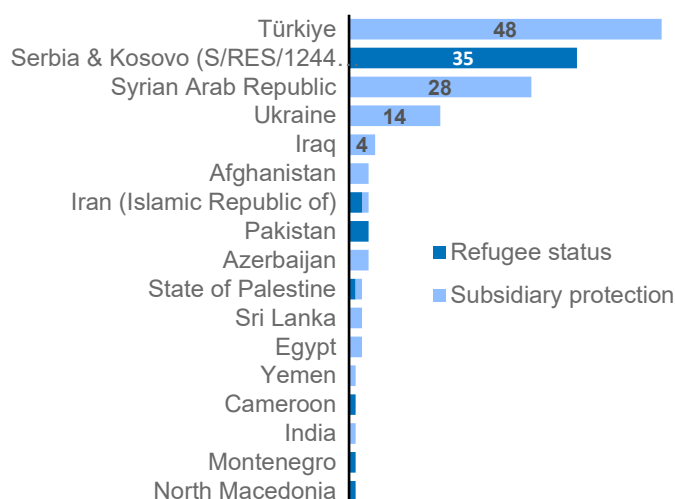
DECISIONS** IN FEBRUARY

PER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (ALL INSTANCES)



PERSONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AT THE END OF FEBRUARY

PER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



* Data based on weekly statistics from the Ministry of Security.

** Decisions are not necessarily final and binding. Figures refer to the number of persons covered by decisions.

*** 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 (at case level), excluding registrations conducted in Immigration Centre or prison.

APPEAL IN THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE

In February, the Court of BiH made a positive judgment in appeal procedure on an asylum case and annulled the negative first instance decision made by the Ministry of Security's (MoS) Sector for Asylum. Despite the Court's positive judgment, the MoS maintained its negative decision. UNHCR considers that the Court's instructions should be better taken into consideration by the MoS, the first instance body, to avoid cases going back and forth between the Ministry and the Court.

UNHCR advocates that for cases of appeal procedure following a negative first instance decision, there should be a hearing of the applicant by a judge who then can decide on the merits of the asylum claim. Currently, the Court of BiH only reviews appeals via written procedures, which denies the applicant the possibility to clarify any misunderstandings, discrepancies or missing information. In addition, the Court does not use its competence as second instance body in the asylum procedure to make a judgement on the merits of a claim, although it has the power to do so. Instead, it intervenes on procedural grounds, returning the case to the MoS, the first instance body. This often results to the same decision as in first instance. Such a direct judgement would save time and efforts for both the authorities and the asylum-seeker, and improve the overall quality and efficiency of the asylum procedure.

ONE YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE

At the occasion of the one-year marking of the start of the war in Ukraine, UNHCR BiH provided information in several media on the situation of Ukrainian refugees in the country, their needs and the assistance provided by the operation. Unlike in most other European countries, refugees from Ukraine do not have the possibility to stay under temporary protection in BiH since the authorities have not adopted this option. Instead, temporary residence on humanitarian grounds has been granted to refugees from Ukraine since the beginning of the war, initially for six months. UNHCR deplores that this status does not provide any other right, and does not apply to third-country nationals. Temporary residence on humanitarian grounds has been extended by another six months on the basis of individual requests. In this regard, UNHCR advocates for temporary protection as a more efficient and adequate response, in line with European Union standards. [Read more.](#)

UKRAINIAN NATIONALS STAYING IN BiH: 165 at the end of February

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

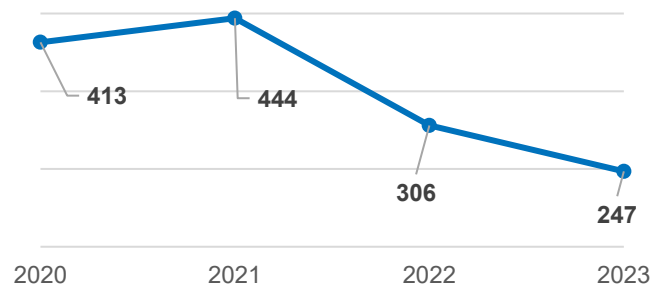
ASYLUM PROCESSING ACTIVITIES DURING 2020 – 2023

	2020	2021	2022	2023
<i>Applications</i>	245	167	149	27
<i>Refugee** status</i>	1	5	0	0
<i>Subsidiary protection** status</i>	31	28	46	13
<i>Rejected applications**</i>	54	49	27	5
<i>Otherwise closed**</i>	546	184	162	14

ASYLUM PROCEDURE TIMEFRAME at the end of February

- 49 days**
Average waiting time to register an asylum claim**** for those claims which were registered in 2023
- 231 days**
Average time (days) from registration of asylum claim to RSD interview, for RSD interviews held in 2023
- 247 days**
Average processing time*** for first-instance decisions issued in 2023

AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME*** 2020-2023 at the end of February



** 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.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS IN FEBRUARY

- More than **300** persons were provided with information related to asylum in BiH
- Some **50** persons were assisted with free legal aid related to asylum in BiH
- More than **100** persons were assisted with psychosocial support
- 64** sessions in social/recreational and occupational therapy activities were organized
- 16** persons attended local language courses
- UNHCR handed over a vehicle to the Red Cross of Čitluk to be used for the delivery of humanitarian goods, medicines, as well as for transporting refugees and domestic patients to the health center in Mostar ([Facebook post](#)). On this occasion, winter clothing and footwear packages were also distributed to refugees from Ukraine ([Facebook post](#)).
- Some 40 information sessions on the asylum procedure were organized in Tuzla as well as in Temporary Reception Centres, including joint sessions with IOM. Majority of participants were from Afghanistan, Morocco, Cameroon, DRC and Iran. Questions were raised with regards to the duration of the asylum procedure, family reunification and possibilities to work in BiH.



Women in need of international protection upon completion of a five-day sewing course in Sarajevo, part of UNHCR's partner the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative occupational therapy activities



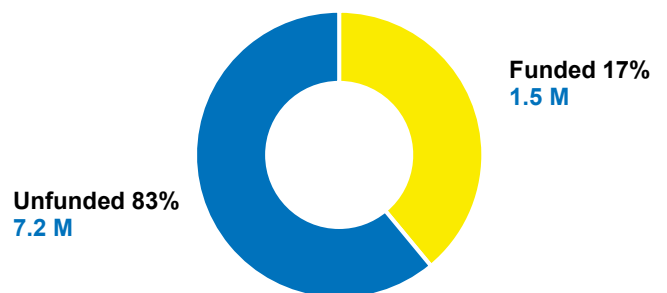
UNHCR Representative, Lucie Gagné, visiting Ukrainian refugees residing in the Čitluk area at the occasion of a distribution of winter clothing and footwear packages

NEWS & EVENTS

- UNHCR published a [video](#) featuring the story of Gatore, an asylum-seeker from Burundi residing in the Temporary Reception Centre Ušivak in Sarajevo. Gatore joined the football club Jaguar where he plays as goalkeeper with other local players, which proves to be a successful example of social cohesion.
- At the occasion of the one-year marking of the start of the war in Ukraine, UNHCR published, among others, an [infographics](#) highlighting the feedback from Ukrainian refugees on the voucher assistance they received in BiH. 73% of those surveyed expressed that their household financial situation significantly improved and were very satisfied with the assistance received. Main remaining needs identified are support to cover health costs, education assistance and material needs (e.g. clothes, household items, firewood and fuel, etc). These results have been taken into account in UNHCR's programming for possible future assistance.

FUNDING UPDATE

Financial requirements: **USD 8.7 million**



UNHCR BiH is grateful for the support of its 2023 donors: [European Union](#)

To implement its 2023 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.