

UNHCR Representation to Serbia



*Presentation of credentials by the new UNHCR Representative in Serbia, Mr. Soufiane Adjali
©MoFA, 24 February 2023*

Highlights:

On 24 February, the First Vice-President of the Government of Serbia and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ivica Dačić, received Mr. Soufiane Adjali, the newly appointed Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Serbia, who handed him the introductory letter on the appointment by the High Commissioner Mr. Filippo Grandi. Minister Dačić pointed out that Serbia sees the UNHCR as an important partner in the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons.

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Highlights



In February 2023, authorities reported 3,782 new arrivals to governmental centres (compared to 5,957 in January 2023). According to data collected by UNHCR and partners, over 40% of all arrivals originate from Syria and Afghanistan, followed by arrivals from Morocco. 92% of all arrivals were men, 3% women and 5% children. 45% of all arriving children were unaccompanied or separated.

Key Figures (as at end-February 2022)



3,060 Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants counted in Serbia, of whom
2,360 accommodated in governmental centres, and
700 staying outside of governmental centres.
74 refugees from Ukraine accommodated in Vranje Asylum Centre (AC).

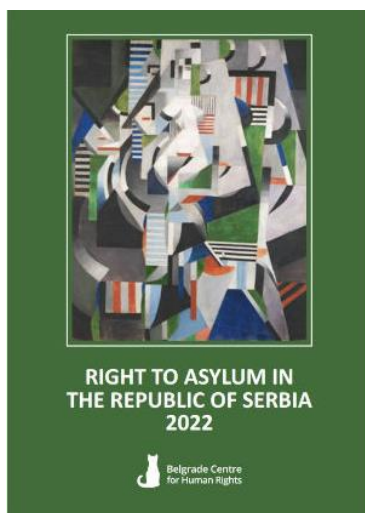


21 Applications for asylum in February 2023
1 Positive decision in February 2023
240 Positive decisions since 2008
1,213 Persons fleeing Ukraine received Temporary Protection (TP) in Serbia since 24 February 2022, of whom **33** in January 2023

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 the international standards, and that persons in need of international protection have access to territory and asylum procedure and receive protection and assistance in safe reception conditions.

As of 6 February, UNHCR partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) started sharing premises with the Info Park, near the park opposite of the Belgrade bus station.



On 28 February, UNHCR legal partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) presented the [Annual Report on The Right to Asylum in Serbia in 2022](#). The main recommendations of the Report are: for the media to respect the journalistic standards and abstain from sensationalism, to include more of humanitarian and integrative narrative in their reporting, and to fight fake news and stereotyping; for the authorities to include the positive narrative on the refugees into education, public debate and transparent migration policies, and to display a consistent protection of refugee and migrant rights.

In terms of cash-based interventions, UNHCR supported 17 households with 40 members in February, and procured a wheelchair for a paraplegic refugee from Cameroon.

Partners International Aid Network (IAN) and Indigo continued identifying vulnerable individuals and groups amongst new arrivals and supported 106 persons (including unaccompanied and separated children - UASC) with psychological/psychiatric and psychosocial support in January.

Partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) **supported** five gender-based violence (**GBV**) **survivors** with information, counselling, legal aid and/or referral to responsible institutions and services and organised nine **women's empowerment workshops** in Krnjača AC and elsewhere in Belgrade, focusing on positive parenting, GBV prevention and personal health.

To promote and inform about available services for refugees from Ukraine, CRPC visited the refugee trustees of the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) in nine refugee-hosting municipalities in Serbia - Loznica, Šabac, Mladenovac, Smederevo, Paraćin, Kragujevac, Gornji Milanovac, Vrnjačka Banja and Kraljevo.

#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.



UNHCR partner Praxis visiting the Roma (IDP) settlement Veliki rit in Novi Sad, ©Praxis, 21 February 2023

UNHCR partner Praxis visited ten informal Roma settlements and counselled/supported 120 persons in obtaining personal documents, registering births, etc. **Eight persons thus had their Serbian nationality granted/confirmed in February**, and nine obtained their personal IDs [lična karta]. Partner A11 Initiative counselled/provided legal aid to 31 Roma IDPs, supporting them in accessing documentation, housing solutions and social welfare.

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 and its legal partners **counselled 667 persons on asylum in Serbia in February**; an additional 66 refugees/asylum-seekers benefitted from cultural mediation/orientation provided by partner CRPC. In 26 cases, UNHCR supplied interpreters for refugees and asylum-seekers, including in the asylum procedure.

Partners IDEAS and BCHR **provided free legal aid/representation in asylum and akin procedures to 90 persons in February**.

On 21 February, BCHR attended a **public hearing on the draft Law on Foreigners and the draft Law on Employment of Foreigners**, having first submitted written comments. Proposed amendments should have the effect of persons under temporary protection and humanitarian residence automatically having access to the labour market, with no need to obtain work permits.

Child Protection

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

UNHCR and its local partners identified 18 UASC, from Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco and Somalia, 61% of whom arrived through Bulgaria. All the identified children were assisted, provided with psychological first aid and referred to the authorities/partners for specialized assistance.

UNHCR-supported inclusive, creative workshops "Art connects" started at the Technical School in Obrenovac, and the refugees from Obrenovac AC joined their peers from the School's Creative Section. These workshops will take place once per week till 9 May, when handicrafts produced during workshops will be displayed in a Humanitarian Bazaar, marking the School Day.

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

Forty-one children and youths (including 11 from Ukraine) were supported through supplementary lessons in school subjects procured by UNHCR and its partners. Six UASC were in receipt of cash vouchers which serve to buy transport tickets and school supplies.



Carpentry workshops implemented by partner Sigma plus are ongoing in Tutin AC, @Sigma plus, Feb 2023

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.

In February, partner BCHR obtained 14 work permits for refugees from Ukraine accommodated in Vranje AC, who were also advised to refer to the National Employment Service Branch in Vranje to explore the available vacancies.

BCHR also filed an official request to the Agency for Qualifications on behalf of a woman from Ukraine under temporary protection and residing in Vranje AC for a recognition of her diploma of vocational specialist studies.

The UNHCR and the BCHR integration team made a home visit to a refugee from Iraq, single mother of one, and jointly created her personal integration plan. Three other refugees were provided with health insurance cards in February.



Serbian language lessons in Vranje AC, @Sigma plus, Feb 2023

A total of 97 beneficiaries, including 36 from Ukraine of which 11 children, were attending Serbian language lessons supported by UNHCR in February. **247 persons received tailored support in integration and accessing rights and services** from UNHCR and partners.

In February, the DRC organised one return-related meeting in Kragujevac in the Office of the Local Refugee Trustee, with the total of 14 IDPs participating. Three IDP families with 10 family members were registered to return to Kosovo¹ on this occasion.

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.

The initial phase of the Project *In their Sneakers*, implemented by the Ministry of Education and the UNHCR Serbia, has been finalised with the selection of



The traditional Deli Monday festival brought together refugees from Iran and Serbian youngsters in preparing and presenting their national dishes, ©CRPC, Feb 2023

13 secondary schools from across Serbia, which have expressed their readiness to take part in the 2023 cycle of the Project.

The School for Hospitality and Tourism in Belgrade, the CRPC and the UNHCR organised another, seventh in a row traditional monthly *Delicacy Monday*, hosted by KC Grad in Belgrade. More than 100 visitors enjoyed dishes and desserts from Iran and Serbia, prepared by the School's students and the refugees.

On 3 February, seven refugee women from Ukraine visited an exhibition in Vranje *"Two Faces, One Life"*, occasioned by the World Cancer Day and organized by the Society of Oncology Patients of the City of Vranje. The exhibition had the main goal of promoting preventive health examinations, and the women refugees also made new friendships with the local women present at the exhibition opening.

Partner CRPC provided input to the Serbia Chapter of the [ILGA Europe's Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia 2023](#), and organised on 22 February, together with BCHR a SOGI panel *"Refugees into the community"* in the Pride Info Centre in Belgrade, where LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers and local activists discussed the challenges they face in their inclusion, integration and everyday life.


See also:

"A Refugee in the Service of Refugees" – the story of Yuliya – a doctor from Ukraine who now works in a small medical centre in Vranje Asylum Centre and tries to address the ailments of refugees accommodated in the centre.

UNHCR is grateful for contributions directly to Serbia operation, as well as donors of unearmarked and flexible funding, including from: Belgium | Denmark | European Union | Germany | Ireland | Netherlands | Norway | Serbia | Sweden | Switzerland

UNHCR appreciates the important contributions of private donors in: Germany | Luxembourg | Netherlands | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United States of America



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