

# UNHCR Representation to Serbia



*UNHCR partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) threw a New Year's party for refugee women from Krnjača Asylum Centre. Babies were invited too!, ©DRC, 30 Dec 2022*

## Key milestones in 2022:

- 12,093** persons counselled on asylum
- 196** persons provided with legal aid/representation
- 92** persons supported in local integration
- 1,236** persons received mental health and psychosocial support
- 973** unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) newly identified and supported
- 131** refugee and **290** Roma IDP children supported in school enrollment, attendance, and learning
- 71** persons at risk of statelessness had their citizenship granted/confirmed

### CONTACTS:

**Dragan Vukotić**, External Relations,  
[vukoticd@unhcr.org](mailto:vukoticd@unhcr.org)  
**Vera Dragović-O'Donnell**,  
Reporting/Information Management,  
[dragovic@unhcr.org](mailto:dragovic@unhcr.org)

## Highlights



In 2022, authorities reported **129,679** new arrivals to governmental centres (compared to **60,407** in 2021). According to official statistics, arrivals from Afghanistan make up 36% of all arrivals, followed by arrivals from Syria (29%), Pakistan (12%), Morocco (8%) and India (4%). 92% of all arrivals were men, 3% women and 5% children. 38% of all arriving children were unaccompanied/separated.

## Key Figures (as at end-December 2022)



**4,102** Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants counted in Serbia, of which **3,530** accommodated in governmental centres, and **over 550** staying outside of governmental centres. **83** refugees from Ukraine accommodated in Vranje Asylum Centre (AC).



**320** Applications for asylum in 2022  
**30** Positive decisions in 2022  
**5** Positive decisions in December 2022  
**238** Positive decisions since 2008  
**1,115** Persons fleeing Ukraine received Temporary Protection (TP) in Serbia since 24 February 2022, of which **54** in December

## 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.

On 16 December, UNHCR donated to the Ministry of Interior **computer and IT equipment that will facilitate** their work on the ground and improve the procedures of **registration and support to refugees and asylum-seekers**. UNHCR also donated building material, home appliances and computers, bedlinen, mattresses and blankets to the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), for the use in reception/asylum centres and TV sets and computers to Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA) for the use in homes for unaccompanied children in Niš and Belgrade. The value of all donations in December amounts to 155,000 USD.



*UNHCR partner HCIT field staff visiting privately accommodated refugees from Ukraine in Subotica in the north of Serbia, ©HCIT, December 2022*

Partner Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT) field teams supported 11 families/32 refugees from Ukraine in need, hosted privately in Vojvodina, with 17 hygiene packages. [An information leaflet for refugees from Ukraine was produced by HCIT and CRPC in Ukrainian, English, Serbian and Russian languages.](#)

UNHCR supported 38 households/80 persons with cash-based interventions in 2022.

Partners International Aid Network and Indigo continued identifying vulnerable individuals and groups amongst new arrivals and supported 1,236 persons (including UASC) with mental health and psychosocial support (**MHPSS**) in 2022.

Partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) **supported** 33 gender-based violence (**GBV**) **survivors** in 2022 with information, counselling, legal aid and/or referral to responsible institutions and services, and organised 80 **womens' empowerment workshops** in Krnjača AC and elsewhere in Belgrade, 30 of which focused on the personal health and wellbeing component and others focusing on cultural et al. integration.

## #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.

On 13 December, **UNHCR in Serbia marked the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the #IBelong Campaign** with a conference and workshop for practitioners and Roma activists, which featured participation of the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Serbia's Ombudsman and UNHCR Acting Representative, who are also parties to a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation to eradicate statelessness by end-2024.

UNHCR premiered a [video](#) on risks from statelessness on K1 TV, featuring UNHCR High Profile Supporter actress Branka Katic, and co-produced with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

UNHCR partner Praxis visited informal Roma settlements on 41 occasions in 2022, and counselled/supported 783 persons in obtaining personal documents, registering births, etc. **71 persons thus had their Serbian nationality granted/confirmed in 2022, 60 obtained their ID Cards and 215 obtained various other mandatory personal documents.** 58 IDPs received in-depth counselling on integration issues.

Partner A11 Initiative counselled/provided legal aid to 525 Roma (IDPs) in 2022, during 20 field visits throughout the country, 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.

On 12 December, the Law Faculty of the University in Belgrade and the UNHCR organised a **Conference on International Refugee Protection**. The attendees – students of the Law Faculty - were welcomed by the Faculty Dean Prof. dr Zoran Mirković and the Acting UNHCR Representative Stefanie Krause, with a keynote lecture on international refugee protection from the Director of the International Institute for Humanitarian Law in San Remo Mr. Claudio Delfabro. On this occasion 10 student teams from the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Political Science presented their papers relating to Refuge Law

UNHCR, its legal partner the Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) and the Judicial Academy organised on 14 December a **Round Table „Asylum Procedure and Extradition Procedure – The Interrelation “**. The event was attended by judges, prosecutors, representatives of the Ministry of Justice,



*Two refugee families were reunited in Austria, following a concerted effort of a number of state and international actors in both Austria and Serbia, ©CRPC, December 2022*

Judicial Academy trainees and the representatives of the civil society. In December, the BCHR continued to participate in the process of amendments to a set of laws related to asylum procedure and the legal position of foreigners, and organised a meeting with the authorities where recommendations for the protection of SGBV and LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum-seekers were presented.

On 21 December, partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) presented the publication

**"Information on available services and resources for LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers, refugees and other people we work with"**. The booklet, intended for LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers, provides integrated information about the services available and the service providers in Serbia. It has been translated into English, Arabic, Persian, French, Russian, Ukrainian and Spanish.

Legal partner BCHR provided **legal representation** in asylum procedures/substantive legal aid to 196 persons in 2022. Six nationals of Syria represented by BCHR were given subsidiary protection in Serbia in December. Another 27 refugees from Ukraine were represented by BCHR in asylum/temporary protection procedures in 2022, and 92 were supported through integration counselling and/or integration intervention.

UNHCR and its legal partners **counselled 12,093 persons on asylum in Serbia in 2022**; an additional **2,039 refugees/asylum-seekers benefitted from cultural mediation/orientation** provided by partner CRPC in 2022, including 182 refugees from Ukraine.

Acting UNHCR Representative Stefanie Krause participated in the panel of The Economist magazine's annual conference **"World in 2023"**, held on 14 December in the Serbian Parliament, together with the Serbian Government Ministers. She reminded of the record number of **103 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide**, and of the concerted political will and action required to resolve their problems.

## Child Protection

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

**In 2022, UNHCR and its local partners identified 973 UASC**, mainly originating from Afghanistan and Syria and arriving increasingly through Bulgaria. All identified children were assisted, provided with psychological first aid and referred to the authorities/partners for further, specialized assistance.

**Peer education:** In 2022, UNHCR/DRC began organizing weekly meetings of UASC in the social cafe Kafe 16 in Belgrade. One of the outcomes of these meetings was a successful professional recording of an original rap song by a seventeen-year-old boy from Iran, who also got his first opportunity to perform publicly at a local rap music festival on 24 December. Support for the recording and performance itself was provided by Music Studio PI.

**131 refugee** (incl. eight from Ukraine) **and 290 IDP Roma children** were **supported** by UNHCR partners Indigo and CRPC in 2022 **in school enrollment, school attendance and learning**. In December, 285 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. Nine UASC are currently in receipt of cash vouchers which serve to buy transport tickets and school supplies.

When it comes to child, early and forced marriages (CEFM), partner Praxis organised eight workshops in schools throughout Serbia for 172 children. Four cases of child marriage were detected by Praxis in 2022 and reported to the authorities.

### 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.



*Four refugees DAFI scholars in 2022/2023, ©UNHCR, December 2022*

UNHCR Serbia marked the **30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of DAFI – Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative and the second year of its implementation in Serbia**, in an event at the UN House in Belgrade on 5 December. Four students, the first non-Yugoslav refugees enrolled in state universities in Serbia, were granted DAFI scholarships in the academic year 2022/2023. The DAFI programme is financed mainly by the Federal Republic of Germany.

### Responsible Companies as Examples of Good Practices of Refugee Integration in Serbia”.

Following joint efforts by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) and the UNHCR, two refugees - a single parent with elementary school education from Iraq and a paraplegic refugee from Cameroon – received their **Passports of Competencies** for refugees, which is intended to enhance the employability of refugees with little or no formal education/employment by outlining in more formal format the skills and the experience that they DO have.

UNHCR and partners CRPC, HCIT, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Austrian Embassy in Serbia enabled in December a reunification of two single mothers with children with their husbands in Austria. **A total of six families were thus reunified through joint efforts with family members abroad in 2022.** A refugee man from Burundi residing in Serbia is currently supported in reuniting with his wife who had stayed behind in Burundi.

Partner DRC counselled 194 IDPs who expressed interest in return, and **155 persons returned to Kosovo in 2022<sup>1</sup>.**

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



*Women from Ukraine donated a handmade "friendship throw" to the Safe House in Vranje, ©UNHCR, Dec 2022*

### 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,

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

cultural centres and municipalities, and on supporting joint projects.

On 5 December, UNHCR, its partner IDEAS and the Swiss Development Cooperation Office in Belgrade organised a [roundtable on media reporting on refugees](#) where the jointly developed **handbook “Change the Story - Ethical Reporting on Refugees and Asylum-seekers”** was launched. The roundtable tackled the topics of understanding key concepts that are important for understanding forced migration, abuse of language in reporting (excessive use of hyperbole, inadequate expressions, platitudes...), depersonalization and dehumanisation of refugees in the media, discriminatory reporting, hate speech, the populists’ abuse of media, protecting the identity and the privacy of a person at risk, the role of the Press Council as a self-regulatory body and the responsibility of the media. More than 30 journalists attended the roundtable, while more than 150 persons, including journalists from the region, watched the roundtable live on the YouTube channel of the Media Centre in Belgrade.

[On 8 December, a fashion show was organised in Vranje AC, featuring the handicraft designed and made by the refugees from Ukraine](#) in workshops supported by UNHCR/Sigma Plus. A Friendship Throw [blanket] made by eight Ukrainian refugee women was donated to the Safe House in Vranje.

**UNHCR, the Belgrade School for Hospitality and Tourism and the CRPC signed an MoU on 9 December**, the objective of which is to formalize the cooperation between the parties to the MoU and improve the understanding of the refugee situation among students and academics, to support intercultural exchange and strengthen the overall support to the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers. **On 20 December, CRPC and UNHCR also signed an MoU with the Technical School in**



**UNHCR Acting Representative Stefanie Krause with the winners of the “In their sneakers” project competition, pupils of the Mathematical High School in Belgrade**  
 ©UNHCR, December 2022

**Obrenovac**, which has been hosting refugee students and supporting social cohesion in the municipality of Obrenovac that is home to a major asylum centre.

On 11 Dec, in the grand finale of the one-year Project by UNHCR Serbia **“In their sneakers”**, UNHCR Serbia presented the winners of the competition of the same name, which included secondary schools from around Serbia, intent on fighting the increased anti-refugee and migrant sentiment. The awarding ceremony took place in the Mathematical High School in Belgrade, which also won the first prize for a Serbian language learning app for refugees, followed by a school from Bujanovac and a school from Sombor. Special prize went to IT High School from Belgrade for developing a board game which increases empathy towards refugees. The award ceremony and the project gained almost unprecedented media coverage.

More than 300 refugees and double the number of members of the refugee-hosting communities in Serbia participated in social cohesion activities organised by UNHCR and its local partners in 2022.

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