

# UNHCR Representation to Serbia



*Refugee women visiting the National Museum ©DRC, January 2023*

## Highlights:

At a joint press conference over research performed in the scope of “**Extending Social Protection to Families in Serbia with Enhanced Shock-Responsiveness**” - joint project of UNFPA, UNHCR and UNICEF - the UNHCR Community-Based Protection Officer stated that the **improved access of forcibly displaced, internally displaced and stateless persons to personal documents, healthcare, social protection and assistance is of paramount importance**, and called on all the stakeholders to ensure they do not be left behind.

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## Highlights



In January 2023, authorities reported **5,957** new arrivals to governmental centres (compared to **11,160** in December 2022). According to data collected by UNHCR and partners, over **50%** of all arrivals originate from Syria and Afghanistan, followed by arrivals from Morocco. **94%** of all arrivals were men, **2%** women and **4%** children. **65%** of all arriving children were unaccompanied or separated.

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



**3,689** Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants counted in Serbia, of whom **3,034** accommodated in governmental centres, and **650** staying outside of governmental centres. **73** refugees from Ukraine accommodated in Vranje Asylum Centre (AC).



**21** Applications for asylum in January 2023  
**1** Positive decision in January 2023  
**239** Positive decisions since 2008  
**1,184** Persons fleeing Ukraine received Temporary Protection (TP) in Serbia since 24 February 2022, of whom **69** 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.



*Serbian lessons in Sjenica Asylum Centre, ©Sigma plus, January 2023*

UNHCR partners Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) and Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT) distributed 2,000 [information flyers](#) for refugees from Ukraine in 23 municipalities in Serbia. The information leaflet has been produced in Ukrainian, English, Serbian and Russian languages.

UNHCR supported 17 refugee households/43 persons with cash-based interventions in January.

Partners International Aid Network (IAN) and Indigo continued identifying vulnerable individuals and groups amongst new arrivals and supported 136 persons (including unaccompanied and separated children - UASC) with psychological and psychosocial support in January.

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

**#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 visited six informal Roma settlements and counselled/supported 68 persons in obtaining personal documents, registering births, etc. **Eight persons thus had their Serbian nationality granted/confirmed in January.** Partner A11 Initiative counselled/provided legal aid to 24 Roma IDPs, supporting them in accessing documentation, housing solutions and social welfare.

A11 Initiative [submitted a report](#) to the Human Right Committee in advance of the List of Issues prior to reporting in relation to the Republic of Serbia, and **participated in preparation** of [the report](#) submitted by the Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with United Nations Human Rights mechanisms. A 11 Initiative`s contribution to the report of the Platform is focused on the Law on Social Cards, while the individual report covers, inter alia, the issue of access to parental and children allowance for Roma children, exclusion of undocumented persons from state aid for mitigating consequences of the pandemic and access to health care for undocumented women and children.

## 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 586 persons on asylum in Serbia in January**; an additional 81 refugees/asylum-seekers benefitted from cultural mediation/orientation provided by partner CRPC. **In 206 cases, UNHCR supplied interpreters for refugees and asylum-seekers, including in the asylum procedure.**

**Five persons gave power of attorney for legal representation** to UNHCR legal partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) in January. **Partners IDEAS and BCHR represented 96 persons in asylum procedure.** One person, represented by BCHR, was granted temporary stay in Serbia on humanitarian grounds in January. Two persons under subsidiary protection in Serbia received work permits in January thanks to representation by HCIT.

## 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 44 UASC**, from Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan and Morocco, two thirds 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.

On 16 January, HCIT distributed New Year's gifts to 45 children (UASC and children traveling with families) accommodated in Šid RTC. The gift bags contained toys, cosy blankets and sweatshirts, candies and sweets and school supplies.



*Distribution of New Year's parcels to UASC accommodated in Šid RTC, @HCIT, January 2023*

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

Fourteen children and youths were supported through supplementary lessons in school subjects procured by UNHCR partner CRPC, and another four children and 45 adults received non-formal education directly from CRPC and partner Sigma plus. Eight UASC were in receipt of cash vouchers which serve to buy transport tickets and school supplies.

## 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.

## Four job interviews facilitated by UNHCR in January resulted in employment of two refugees and one IDP, in Hotels Mona and Hilton and in Mercator store in Belgrade.

A total of 77 beneficiaries, including 37 from Ukraine, were attending Serbian language lessons supported by UNHCR in January. **247 persons received tailored support in integration and accessing rights and services** from UNHCR and partners.

Partner DRC counselled and registered five families/11 IDPs who expressed interest in return **to Kosovo**<sup>1</sup>.

## 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.



*Women from Krnjača Asylum Centre visiting the National Museum in Belgrade, @DRC, January 2023*

UNHCR Serbia and the Ministry of Education initiated the 2023 annual cycle of the **"In their sneakers" campaign**, aimed at building empathy for refugees amongst secondary school students. More than 100 schools responded positively to the invitation from the Ministry to participate.


On 31 January, partner DRC organized a visit to the National Museum in Belgrade for 12 refugee women from Krnjača AC who enjoyed the permanent collection of the museum that represents a huge chronological span from the Palaeolithic period to 20<sup>th</sup> century art.

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

**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

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