

Bosnia and Herzegovina

1,960 persons arrived irregularly in March, an increase by one third compared to the previous month (1,460) and by almost two times compared to March 2022 (1,010). Top three declared countries of origin are Afghanistan (39%), Morocco (16%) and Cuba (8%).*

1,325 asylum-seekers and migrants were accommodated in reception facilities at the end of March, while some 150 persons are estimated to be outside of formal accommodation.

Out of total irregular arrivals in March, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) issued an "Attestation of Expressed Intent to Seek Asylum" (AISA) to **91%** of them (**1,781** persons).*

15 persons registered their asylum claims with the Sector for Asylum (9 cases with persons from the Russian Federation, Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan).

4 Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews were conducted.

6 decisions** (5 cases involving 6 persons) were issued, 1 granting refugee status, 3 granting subsidiary protection and 2 negative. 10 applications were otherwise closed (7 cases involving 10 individuals).

KEY POPULATION DATA AT THE END OF MARCH

3 persons awaiting registration of their asylum claims with the assistance of UNHCR/Vaša prava BiH

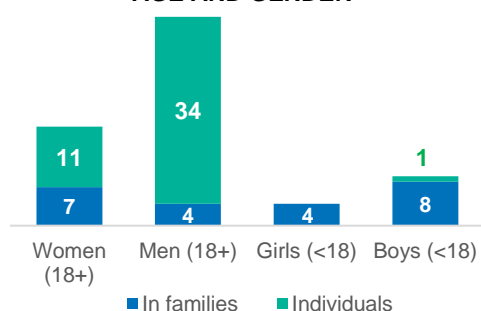
69 asylum-seekers pending processing and final decision

156 persons under international protection, of which **45** under refugee status and **111** under subsidiary protection

28 stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness

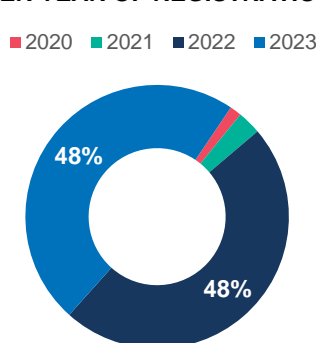
ASYLUM SEEKERS PENDING PROCESSING AND FINAL DECISION AT THE END OF MARCH

AGE AND GENDER

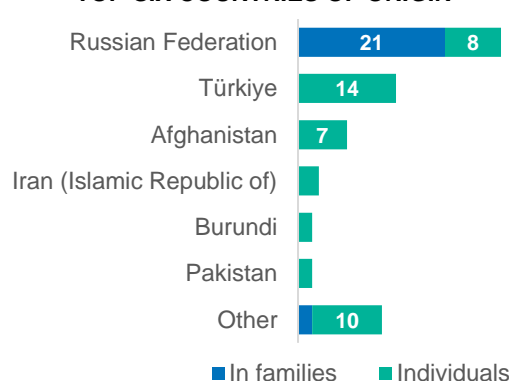


11 single adult females
13 children, among which **1** unaccompanied or separated child

PER YEAR OF REGISTRATION

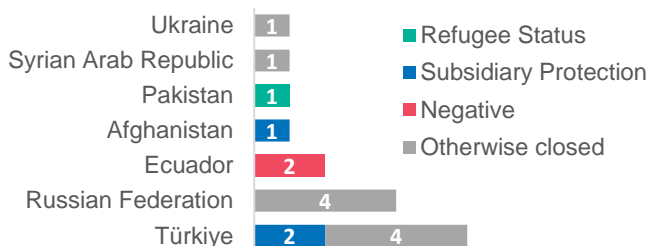


TOP-SIX COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



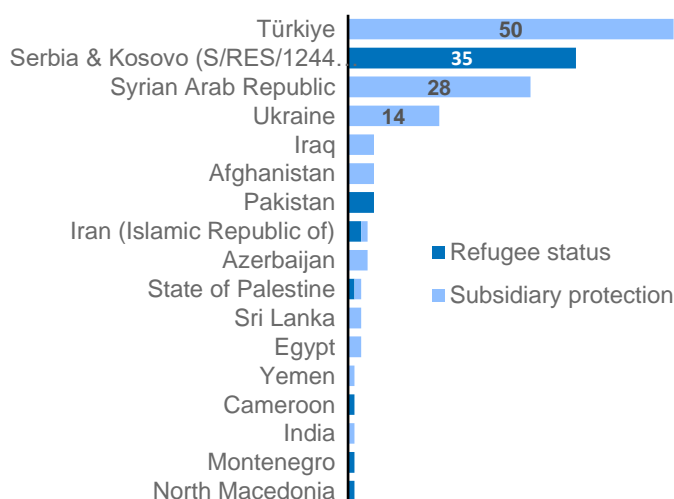
DECISIONS** IN MARCH

PER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (ALL INSTANCES)



PERSONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AT THE END OF MARCH

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.

ASYLUM IN THE CONTEXT OF READMISSIONS AND RETURNS

A high increase in the number of readmissions from Croatia to BiH was noted in the second half of the month, with persons admitted to the Temporary Reception Centres Lipa and Borići. UNHCR and its partner Vaša prava BiH conducted interviews with persons readmitted to assess their profiles, the protection situation and identify possible international protection needs. Interviews were conducted with some 50 persons, showing a variety of profiles and countries of origin among those readmitted, including from refugee-prone countries. Preliminary findings underlined various protection concerns and procedural gaps, notably as regards interpretation and unaccompanied children.

In this context, UNHCR BiH recalls that access to the asylum procedure should be ensured at any point in time for persons in need of international protection and who wish to pursue asylum in BiH. Many asylum-seekers face obstacles in reinitiating the asylum procedure. The fact that an asylum-seeker has attempted or effectively moved onward but was returned to BiH should not affect his or her right to treatment in conformity with international refugee law. Thus, those who are readmitted to BiH from Croatia, who wish to seek asylum and pursue it in BiH should be able to access the asylum procedure.

AIRPORT PROCEDURE

Late March, a new case of asylum-seeker denied entry to BiH at the Sarajevo International Airport occurred. As the person was risking indirect *refoulement* and had fear of return to the country of origin, UNHCR and its partner intervened with the authorities and the individual was enabled to access to the territory and asylum. This new infringement on refugee law occurred after the practice at Sarajevo airport had improved in the last months of 2022.

UNHCR recommends that a procedure for access to asylum at international airports is enhanced and that all procedural safeguards, such as access to information, interpretation and legal aid are ensured. Currently, there is no adequate mechanism in place to ensure that individuals with potential international protection needs are properly identified and channeled to the asylum procedure upon arrival at one of the country's international airports. As a result, some persons wishing to apply for asylum are denied access to the procedure, which is contrary to the country's international obligations. Persons denied entry to the territory must have, at minimum, access to a lawyer.

UKRAINIAN NATIONALS WHO ARRIVED AFTER 24 FEBRUARY 2022 STAYING IN BiH: 166 at the end of March

- 13 persons granted subsidiary protection
- 1 asylum-seeker waiting for interview or final decision
- 0 persons issued with an AISA
- 150 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

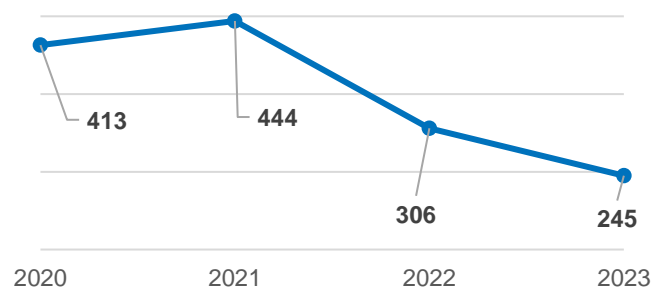
ASYLUM PROCEDURE TIMEFRAME at the end of March

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

ASYLUM PROCESSING ACTIVITIES DURING 2020 – 2023

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Applications | 245 | 167 | 149 | 42 |
| Refugee** status | 1 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| Subsidiary protection** status | 31 | 28 | 46 | 16 |
| Rejected applications** | 54 | 49 | 26 | 7 |
| Otherwise closed** | 546 | 184 | 162 | 24 |

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



** 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 MARCH

- More than **300** persons were provided with information related to asylum in BiH
- Some **80** persons were assisted with free legal aid related to asylum in BiH
- More than **300** persons were assisted with psychosocial support
- 1** case of stateless and at risk of statelessness resolved
- 3** strategic / priority case of IDPs and returnees resolved
- To mark International Women's Day on 8 March, a cultural event was organized for 23 women in need of international protection from Ukraine, Iraq, Türkiye, Sri Lanka and Iran. This workshop aimed to foster local integration by bringing together refugees and local women. It also promoted a part of BiH's cultural heritage through the performance of folk songs.
- Some 50 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, Pakistan, and Iran. Questions were raised regarding the duration of the procedure and the rights and obligations in case of a positive decision.



Launch event and presentation of the UNHCR BiH Participatory Assessment 2022 in Sarajevo



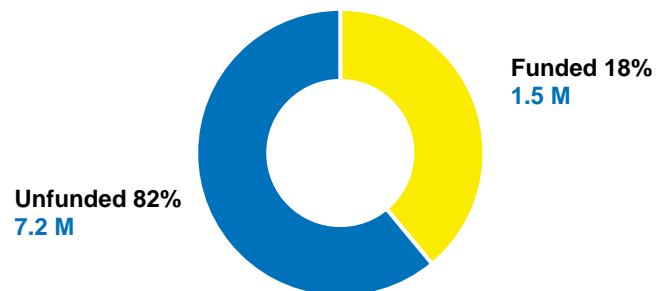
Traditional table to celebrate the Persian New Year Nowruz in Temporary Reception Centre Ušivak, organized by asylum-seekers

NEWS & EVENTS

- On 22 March, UNHCR BiH presented its [Participatory Assessment 2022 Report](#) through a launch event organized in Sarajevo. The event was attended by BiH authorities, international organizations, civil society organizations, the media as well as asylum-seekers and refugees. Last year, UNHCR BiH organized focus group discussions with 129 beneficiaries to identify their main concerns around protection and integration in the country. Based on their feedback, the report highlights challenges with regards to asylum and integration in BiH, and provides with a number of recommendations. A regular part of UNHCR's programming, the Participatory Assessment exercise is an opportunity for UNHCR and others to assess the existing programmes in the country and adjust future initiatives in line with refugees' feedback, ensuring they receive the support necessary for a safe and dignified life.

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.