

# Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

September 2023

BiH is faced with a mixed movements situation, with high numbers of refugees and migrants (26,298<sup>1</sup> so far this year) – the majority transiting through the country.

In this context, UNHCR cooperates with the BiH authorities to improve the efficiency of the asylum procedure.

In September, 20 persons (15 cases) registered their asylum claims with the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security.

## KEY INDICATORS

### 207 days

average waiting time between asylum-claim registration and first-instance decisions issued in 2023 (at case level and excluding appealed decisions). While average processing time exceeds the Law on Asylum's requirement to make a decision within six months, besides derogations, it dropped by a third compared with 2022 (306 days), and by half compared with 2021 (444 days).

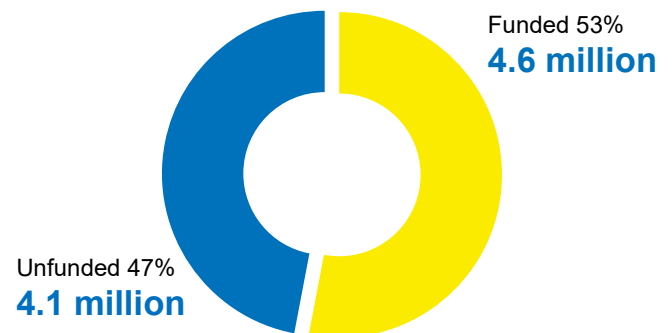
### 4 unaccompanied or separated children

are among the 102 asylum-seekers in BiH, pending processing and final decision on their claim.

## FUNDING (AS OF SEPTEMBER 2023)

### USD 8.7 million

requested for Bosnia and Herzegovina



UNHCR BiH is grateful for the support of its 2023 donors:  
European Union | United States of America

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Persons under international protection	164
Asylum-seekers	102
Others of concern	2,593
Stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness	30

## TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Persons under international protection		Asylum-seekers	
Türkiye	56	Russian Federation	49
Serbia and Kosovo*	33	Türkiye	17
Syrian Arab Republic	27	Afghanistan	9

\*S/RES/1244 (1999)



Promotion of the picture book "Magic Sight" with the Bajkologija publishing house on 28 September in Sarajevo

# Operational Context

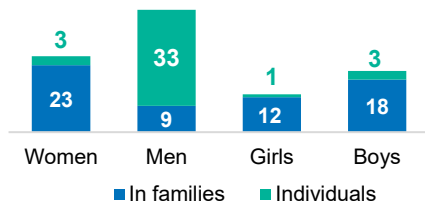
## Mixed Movements Situation

4,734<sup>1</sup> persons arrived irregularly in September, an increase by one third compared to the previous month. Top three declared countries of origin are Afghanistan (51%), Morocco (23%) and Pakistan (4%)<sup>1</sup>. Out of total arrivals in September, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) issued an "Attestation on Intention to Seek Asylum" (AISA) to 95% of them (4,495 persons)<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the month, 2,689 migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees were accommodated in reception facilities.

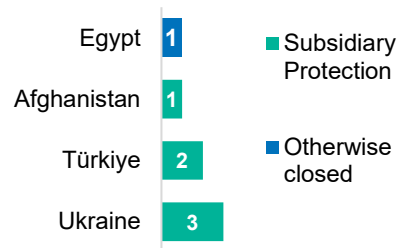
## Asylum Overview

In September, 20 persons (15 cases) registered their asylum claims with the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security (MoS). Six (6) decisions<sup>2</sup> (four (4) cases) were issued, all granting subsidiary protection. At the end of the month, 11 persons were waiting for the registration of their asylum claims with the assistance of UNHCR and partners.

### Age and gender of asylum-seekers



### Decisions<sup>2</sup> in September



### 196 Ukrainians in BiH

- 17 persons under subsidiary protection
- 4 asylum-seekers
- 2 persons issued with an AISA
- 173 persons applied for temporary residence on humanitarian grounds, which allows to stay up to six months but without rights (besides residency)

### Asylum processing in 2023 so far

- 108 applications
- 2 refugee status<sup>2</sup>
- 35 subsidiary protection status<sup>2</sup>
- 12 rejected applications<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data based on weekly statistics from the Ministry of Security.

<sup>2</sup> Decisions are not necessarily final and binding. Figures refer to the number of persons covered by decisions.

## Update On Achievements<sup>3</sup>



### PROTECTION

#### Achievements and Impact

- **480** persons provided with information on asylum system and procedures in BiH through focus group discussions and initial individual counselling
- **59** persons assisted with free legal aid asylum-related cases
- **1** case at risk of statelessness resolved
- **1** strategic / priority case of IDPs and returnees resolved
- Following sessions in Bijeljina, Zvornik and Tuzla organized in previous months, UNHCR, together with the SFA, IOM, OSCE, UNICEF and UNDSS, held workshops for the local police in Banja Luka and Bihać. In September, some 50 officers learned about mixed migration, the asylum procedure in BiH, child protection, human trafficking, and smuggling.

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- **Overreliance on subsidiary protection** rather than refugee status remains an issue of concern to UNHCR, not least as the latter enables access to more rights and durable solutions. Of the 35 persons who were granted subsidiary protection in 2023 in BiH, 16 were from Türkiye and seven from Afghanistan – two of main countries of origin of asylum-seekers in the country. No asylum-seeker from these nationalities has ever been granted refugee status in BiH. This diverges from the practice in EU+ countries (EU Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland). For example, in July 2023, the EU+ recognized 52% of Afghans claiming asylum as refugees, and granted subsidiary protection in only 11% of instances. For Türkiye, 24% of claimants were recognized as refugees, while only 1% were granted subsidiary protection<sup>4</sup>. For both nationalities, when individuals were found in need of international protection, refugee status was overwhelmingly granted in EU+ countries. Regarding persons from the Russian Federation, who represent the largest share of pending claims in BiH, the EU+ granted refugee status to 31% of them, and subsidiary protection to 2% of them in July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Data provided based on information available to date.

<sup>4</sup> <https://euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-asylum>



*Workshop for police officers in Bihać focusing on the asylum procedure, child protection, human trafficking and smuggling*



## EDUCATION

### Achievements and Impact

- With the start of the school year, UNHCR and its partners intensified their support for the inclusion of forcibly displaced children in the regular education system in BiH, which is a crucial step towards integration. Assistance provided included pedagogical support and mentoring for parents and children, provision of supplies, support with the nostrification of diplomas, etc.



## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

### Achievements and Impact

- **2,631** persons assisted with psychosocial support
- **33** persons attended local language classes, as part of their integration process.
- Increased interest for vocational training activities was noticed among persons under international protection in BiH. Five persons are currently preparing for, or undertaking, skills-development courses, such as driving, sewing, language, and graphic design programmes.

## Working in partnership

- To implement its 2023 programme, UNHCR works with the **BiH authorities** to support access to a fair and efficient asylum procedure, end statelessness and ensure that solutions are found for those in need of international protection. Currently, UNHCR cooperates with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, the Ministry of Security's Sector for Asylum and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees.
- UNHCR also collaborates through partnership agreements with three **civil society** partners, i.e. Vaša prava BiH for the provision of legal aid, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative for the provision of psychosocial support, and the Catholic Relief Service for assistance related to the integration of persons under international protection.
- In partnership with Bajkologija, the first children's bookstore in BiH, UNHCR promoted "Magic Sight" by author Ane Bjørn – a children's book that explores the power of imagination through the perspective of a refugee girl. A reading and promotion event was organized in Sarajevo on 28 September, as part of the UN campaign "12 days of peace". In coming months, a series of similar workshops will take place in 12 primary schools across the country.
- UNHCR, together with the BiH authorities, the EU Delegation, Frontex, EUAA and IOM met in Sarajevo for the first National Steering Committee meeting of the phase III of the programme "EU Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management Systems in the Western Balkans". UNHCR presented its upcoming activities, recalling that a strong asylum component is crucial for effective migration management, and thanked BiH authorities for confirming participation at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.

## External / Donor Relations

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