

# Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

October 2023

BiH is faced with a mixed movements situation, with high numbers of refugees and migrants (28,661 so far this year) – the majority transiting through the country.

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

In October, 14 persons (12 cases) registered their asylum claims with the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security (MoS).

## KEY INDICATORS

### 18 positive decisions<sup>2</sup>

In October, the Sector for Asylum of the MoS issued 19 decisions (8 cases) – the highest number of monthly decisions this year. Of them, 18 are granting subsidiary protection (7 cases) to persons from Türkiye and the Russian Federation.

### 22 judges and asylum officials trained

On 19 October, a joint EUAA-UNHCR workshop took place in Sarajevo on qualification for international protection. 22 judges and asylum officials from BiH, North Macedonia and Montenegro learned more about the different criteria for granting refugee or subsidiary protection status.

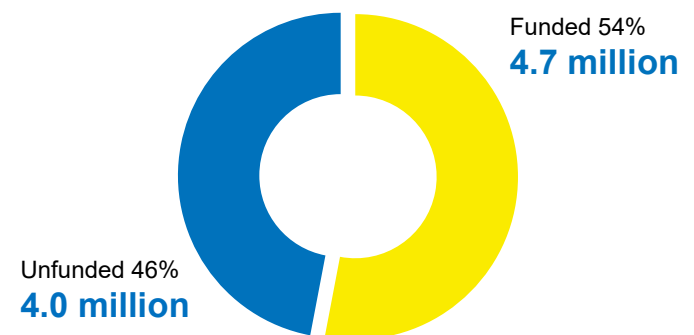


Provision of information on asylum in BiH in Temporary Reception Centre Blažuj. Photo: Vaša prava BiH

## FUNDING (AS OF OCTOBER 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	161
Asylum-seekers	108
Ukrainians in refugee-like situation <sup>4</sup>	178
Stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness	29

## TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Persons under international protection	Asylum-seekers
Türkiye 56	Russian Federation 51
Serbia and Kosovo* 32	Türkiye 18
Syrian Arab Republic 27	Afghanistan 12

\*S/RES/1244 (1999)

# Operational Context

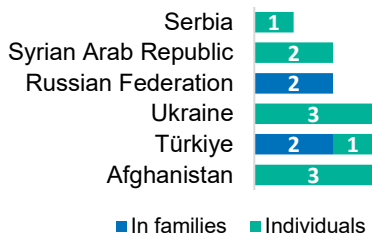
## Mixed Movements Situation

In October, 3,487<sup>1</sup> persons arrived irregularly in BiH, which is ¼ less compared to the previous month. Top three declared countries of origin are Afghanistan (44%), Morocco (19%) and Pakistan (6%). Out of total arrivals in October, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) issued an "Attestation on Intention to Seek Asylum" (AISA) to 91% of them (3,172 persons). At the end of the month, 1,621 migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees were accommodated in reception facilities. The Asylum Centre Delijaš was mostly empty in 2023 and the few asylum-seekers accommodated stayed over short period of time (in average 20 days). However, the average length of stay of the five asylum-seekers that were present in the Centre by end October increased to 48 days.

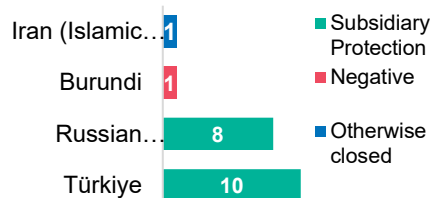
## Asylum Overview

In October, 14 persons (12 cases) registered their asylum claims with the Sector for Asylum of the MoS; 10 (8 cases) of them were represented by UNHCR's legal partner Vaša prava BiH. 19 decisions<sup>2</sup> (8 cases) were issued, 18 granting subsidiary protection (7 cases) and one negative. One application was "otherwise closed". At the end of the month, 11 persons were waiting for the registration of their asylum claims with the assistance of UNHCR and partners.

### Registrations per country of origin in October



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



### Asylum procedure timeframe at the end of October

**212 days**

Average processing time from asylum-claim registration to first-instance decisions (at case level) issued in 2023. Appealed decisions are not included.

### Asylum processing in 2023 so far

- 122 applications
- 2 refugee status<sup>2</sup>
- 53 subsidiary protection status<sup>2</sup>
- 12 rejected applications<sup>2</sup>
- 35 otherwise closed<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.

<sup>4</sup> Persons from Ukraine who applied for temporary residence on humanitarian grounds, which allows to stay up to six months but without rights (besides residency)

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



### PROTECTION

#### Achievements and Impact

- **328** persons provided with legal information on asylum in BiH through individual and group counselling
- **65** persons assisted with free legal aid in asylum-related cases
- **1** case at risk of statelessness resolved
- **2** strategic / priority cases of IDPs and returnees resolved

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR BiH delegation attended the OSCE-UNHCR regional conference on preventing statelessness and accessing civil documentation in South-Eastern Europe, held in Skopje on 17 October. The BiH delegation, composed of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Interior, the RS Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Government and UNHCR's legal partner Vaša prava BiH, pledged to complete known pending 29 statelessness cases by the end of the #IBelong campaign in 2024. UNHCR advocates for the establishment of a sustainable prevention mechanism to avoid new cases, notably through governmental free legal aid.



### CHILD PROTECTION

#### Achievements and Impact

- On 26 October, UNHCR contributed to UNICEF's training on case management on child protection in Bihać, presenting the [UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines](#). The training aimed at strengthening capacities of the Centres for Social Welfare in the Una-Sana, Sarajevo, Herzegovina-Neretva and Tuzla Cantons, to enable further engagement in prevention and response services related to refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking children. UNHCR also intervened in the State-level Child Protection Working Group on 31 October on the topic of Best Interest Determination for unaccompanied and separated children.

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR monitors the situation of asylum-seeking children in BiH and welcomes the practice by the Sector for Asylum of the MoS prioritizing the processing of their asylum

---

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

applications, due to their vulnerability. UNHCR identified the need for these children to go through formal Best Interest Procedures to evaluate adequate durable solutions. UNHCR is coordinating with the authorities, UNICEF and other relevant actors to offer support for quick action.

- Enhancing the capacities of the social service workforce, particularly related to case management (including best interests' assessment/determination), legal guardianship, safeguarding and gender-based violence, is key for effective child protection for local, refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking children.



## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

### Achievements and Impact

- **1,377** persons assisted with psychosocial support
- **156** persons (**62** families) from Ukraine received cash-based assistance in the form of vouchers to support their basic needs for the period September – October.
- There is increasing interest in **language learning** among persons in need of international protection in BiH. The second semester of language ended, successfully completed by over 90% of students. Meanwhile, a new semester has already started to ensure continuity in learning.
- On 12 October, after Sarajevo and Tuzla, UNHCR and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees held in Bihać a **workshop on the integration** of persons under international protection in BiH. Some 50 government officials from entity, cantonal and municipal levels discussed good practices and remaining challenges in the integration process. Participants agreed on the need for continuous education of service providers and staff of institutions serving persons under international protection.



Persons in need of international protection who successfully passed their local language exam. Photo: Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative

## 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 Sector for Asylum of the MoS 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 the children's bookstore Bajkologija, **workshops** took place in five **schools** in the Una-Sana and Sarajevo Cantons to present the picture book "Magic Sight" by Ane Bjørn, which explores the power of imagination through the perspective of a refugee girl. Six additional workshops will take place by the end of the year.
- UNHCR partnered with the NGO Artolution in Bihać and implemented **social cohesion activities through art**. Six collaborative and preparatory workshops took place for 35 participants, including refugee children, as well as children from the local and migrant communities, to decorate a primary school with a mural.



*Mural painted by refugee, asylum-seeking, migrant & host community children on a school building as part of the UNHCR-Artolution project in Bihać. Photo: Project Assistant Artist, Ervin Kadic*

## External / Donor Relations

### CONTACTS

**Nolwenn Gernigon**, Associate External Relations and Reporting Officer,  
bsnsa@unhcr.org - gernigon@unhcr.org, Tel: +387 33 290 431, Cell +387 62 990 136

**Neven Crvenković**, Associate Communications Officer,  
bsnsa@unhcr.org - crvenkov@unhcr.org, Tel: +387 33 290 401, Cell +387 61 173 756

### LINKS

[Regional portal](#) - [UNHCR BiH page](#) - [Twitter/X](#) - [Facebook](#)