

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

3,257 persons arrived irregularly in December, an increase by 31% compared to the previous month. **90%** of them were issued an “Attestation on Intention to Seek Asylum” (AISA).¹

Top three declared countries of origin are the Syrian Arab Republic (51%), Morocco (17%) and Afghanistan (11%).¹

The number of irregular arrivals in 2023 (**34,409**) is the highest ever recorded in a year by the BiH authorities, exceeding the 2019 peak (29,196).¹

2,638 asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants were accommodated in reception facilities at the end of December.

The Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security (MoS) registered the asylum claims of **9** persons and conducted **4** Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews.

6 decisions were issued, 5 granting subsidiary protection and 1 negative.² 4 applications were otherwise closed.²

SELECTED POPULATION DATA AT THE END OF DECEMBER

57 persons who are represented by UNHCR/Vaša prava BiH waiting for the registration of their asylum claim

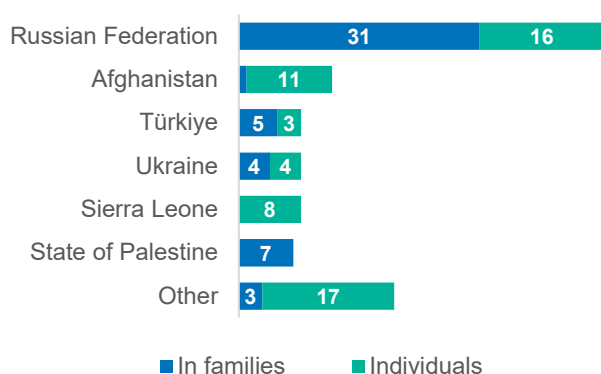
110 asylum-seekers with claims pending processing and final decision

175 persons under international protection, of whom **45** under refugee status and **130** under subsidiary protection

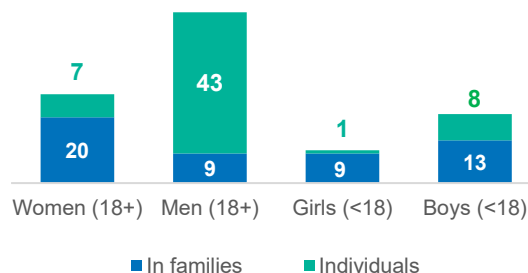
22 stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness

ASYLUM-SEEKERS AT THE END OF DECEMBER

TOP-SIX COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



AGE AND GENDER

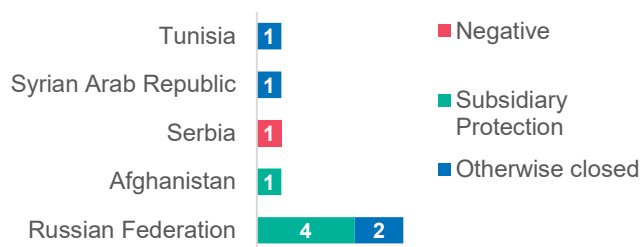


7 single adult females

31 children, among which 9 unaccompanied or separated children

DECISIONS² IN DECEMBER

PER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (ALL INSTANCES)

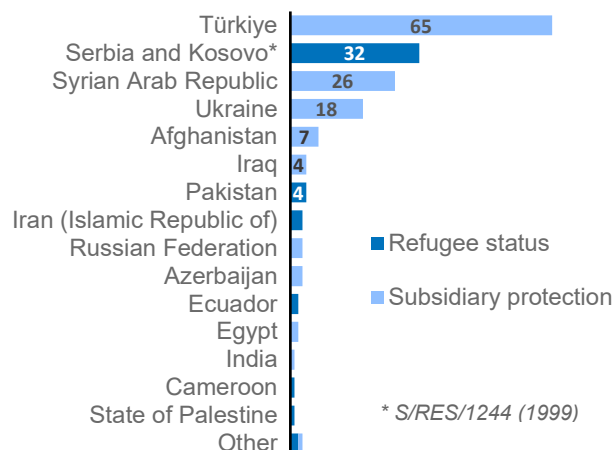


¹ Data based on weekly statistics from the Ministry of Security.

² Decisions not necessarily final and binding. Figures refer to the number of persons covered by decisions.

PERSONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AT THE END OF DECEMBER

TOP-FIFTEEN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



* S/RES/1244 (1999)

END-YEAR ASYLUM ANALYSIS

UNHCR cooperates with the BiH authorities and the civil society to strengthen the identification and referral of persons in need of international protection, facilitate access to the asylum procedure and enhance asylum processing. Although the BiH authorities recorded the highest number of yearly irregular arrivals in 2023 (34,409)¹, exceeding the 2019 peak (29,196)¹, asylum applications remained stable compared with previous years.

In 2023, almost every aspect of the asylum processing has improved. The average time to register an asylum claim decreased considerably to 41 days, while it was 181 days in 2021 and 64 days in 2022. The average processing time from registration to first-instance decision dropped by almost a third in 2023 (211 days) compared with 2022 (306 days), and more than half compared with 2021 (444 days). While processing time remains excessive, this significant reduction is a welcome development. The overall fastening is commendable as it allows persons in need of international protection to access the asylum procedure, protection, and their rights more rapidly.

The number of decisions (excluding suspensions) issued in 2023 remained stable compared with 2022, but the proportion of positive decisions increased compared with negative decisions. In addition, the number of claims suspended is much lower compared with previous years, suggesting that as processing time decreases, fewer people are abandoning the procedure prior to receiving a decision. Both the higher number of positive decisions and fewer suspensions may be explained by the fact that persons in need of international protection are better identified and prioritized in the asylum procedure, as well as by the new profiles of applicants, including those impacted by the Ukraine situation. Regarding the type of positive decisions, while no refugee status was granted in 2022, four persons received this status in 2023, which is a positive step. However, there is still a major overreliance on subsidiary protection as currently in BiH, only refugee status warrants access to family reunification, travel documentation and a path to naturalization.

UKRAINIAN NATIONALS WHO ARRIVED AFTER 24 FEBRUARY 2022 STAYING IN BiH: 210 at the end of December

17 persons granted subsidiary protection

8 asylum-seekers waiting for interview or final decision

185 persons applied for temporary residence on humanitarian grounds, which allows to stay up to six months but without rights (besides residency)

ASYLUM PROCESSING ACTIVITIES FROM 2021 – 2023

	2021	2022	2023
Applications	167	149	147
Refugee status ²	5	0	4
Subsidiary protection status ²	28	46	63
Rejected applications ²	49	26	11
Otherwise closed ²	184	162	41

² Decisions not necessarily final and binding. Figures refer to the number of persons covered by decisions.

ASYLUM PROCEDURE TIMEFRAME at the end of December

41 days

Average waiting time between AISA issuance and asylum-claim registration date for those claims that were registered in 2023 (at case level), excluding registrations conducted in Immigration Centre or prison.

169 days

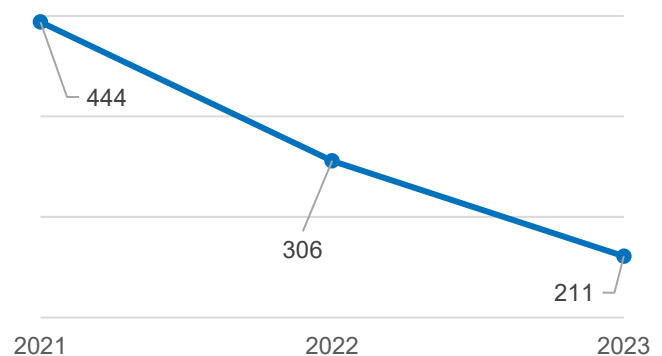
Average time from registration of asylum claim to RSD interview (at case level), for RSD interviews held in 2023.

211 days

Average processing time from asylum-claim registration to first-instance decisions issued in 2023 (at case level).

Appealed decisions are not included.

AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME 2020-2023 at the end of December



ACHIEVEMENTS IN DECEMBER

Data provided based on information available to date.

- **333** persons provided with legal information on asylum in BiH through individual and group counselling
- **149** persons assisted with free legal aid in asylum-related cases
- **1,573** persons assisted with psychosocial support
- **47** persons attended local language classes as part of their integration path
- **3** cases of stateless and at risk of statelessness resolved
- The latest round of voucher distribution for Ukrainian refugees in BiH was concluded in December. Since the start of the programme in 2022, 189 persons have received cash-based assistance. Through eight distributions across 28 municipalities, essential support was provided to cater for basic needs, including food and hygiene items.
- A self-defense course for forcibly displaced women was organized as part of the 2023 campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence". The five participating women from India and Ukraine were provided with tools for building self-confidence and having greater control over their lives.



Football match bringing together children from local clubs and children from marginalized groups @Communis



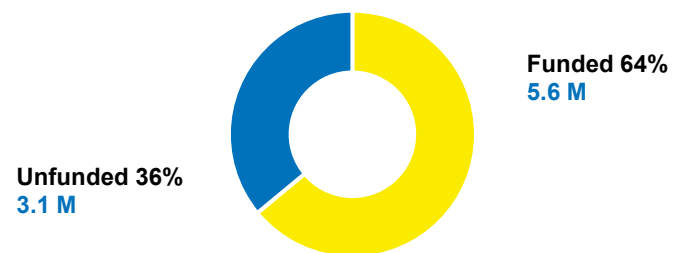
Handicrafts and traditional cuisine prepared by forcibly displaced persons in BiH, at the Diplomatic Winter Bazaar @Communis

NEWS & EVENTS

- On 8-9 December, in Sarajevo, social integration activities through football were organized with the National Football Association of BiH, with support from the UEFA. Children from local football clubs played with children from vulnerable groups, including from refugee, asylum-seeking, and migrant families. 20 coaches from local football clubs and physical education teachers were trained on the FOOTBALL3 methodology of playing without referees. A total of 20 children from migrant and forcibly displaced families, along with their parents, participated in the event.
- In December, the children's bookstore Bajkologija held four workshops in elementary schools in Kalesija, Sapna, Međugorje and Sarajevo to present the picture book "Magic Sight" by Ane Bjørn, which explores the power of imagination through the perspective of a refugee girl. These workshops concluded a series of 12 workshops organized throughout the country, as part of a project supported by UNHCR, attended by 140 children from local communities as well as migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee families. All school libraries and children received copies of the book.

FUNDING UPDATE

Financial requirements: **USD 8.7 million**



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UNHCR is also grateful for the generous contributions from the private sector and individuals.

UNHCR BiH is grateful to the donors to its 2023 programme.

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