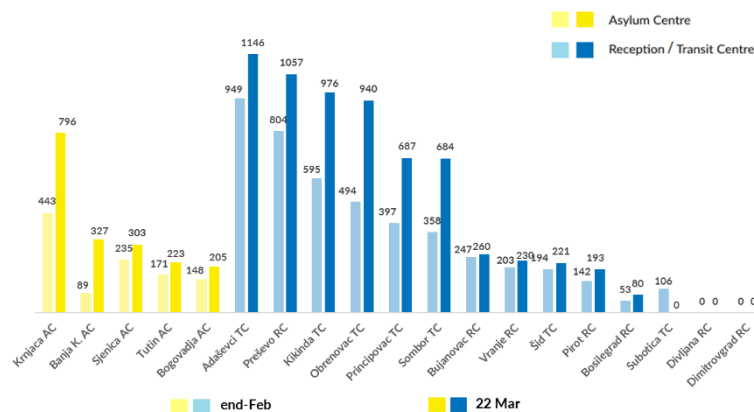


SERBIA SPECIAL WEEKLY UPDATE

- No COVID-19 infection among refugees, asylum-seekers or migrants has been reported yet.
- On 17 March, the Government adopted a *Decision on the temporary limitation of movement of asylum seekers and irregular migrants accommodated in asylum and reception centres*, which allows for exits from centres only with special permits. As of 18 March troops were deployed around the centres to enforce this decision.
- At the same time, law-enforcement authorities gathered over 2,000 migrants from public spaces and transported them to the nearest governmental centre – regardless of whether the centre is designated by law as an Asylum Centre (AC) or a Reception/Transit Centre (RTC).
- On 21 Mar, authorities moved all 100 resident of Subotica RTC to other RTC, whereupon Subotica RTC was handed to the army to be used for the isolation of Serbian citizens as/if needed.
- As a result, the occupancy of all remaining 16 governmental centres (with a total capacity of 5,640 hard-shelter places) increased from 5,912 one week ago to **8,328** today. Residents comprise 3,641 citizens of Afghanistan, 1,481 of Syria, 916 of Pakistan, 610 of Bangladesh, 379 of Iraq, 328 of Iran, 255 of Morocco, and 718 from 42 other countries; 6,846 are adult men, 401 adult women and 1,081 children, including 543 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).



- The UNHCR office and programme remained open and fully functioning as did those of our ten partner organizations. Personal contact was managed through the smooth introduction of remote and on-line communication, counselling and services as per business continuity plans.
- 31 foreigners were counselled on asylum in Serbia by partners Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) or Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT). With land and air borders closed and increased controls of green borders, irregular entry or exit reduced significantly. Numbers, if any, will be included in our next monthly report.
- Partner Indigo continued to support the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) with cultural mediation, identifying UASC with psychological aid and support, organizing outdoor activities and workshops in the RTCs of Bujanovac, Preševo, Piroć and Vranje and the UASC home in Niš. Partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) finished its COVID-19 prevention and awareness activities in the five ACs. Partner Sigma Plus quickly upgraded its [online platform for learning the Serbian Language](#) to also allow asylum-seeking and migrant children currently unable to access formal education to use it. Partner Psychological Innovation Network (PIN) prepared guidelines on priorities in protection of refugees' mental health during the COVID-19 situation and formed a mobile field team of psychologists and interpreters that is on-call to be deployed upon request of the SCRM or UNHCR.
- Guardians remained in 24/7 contact with UASC and are preparing to visit them in their homes this week. UNHCR decided to donate 12 computers to the five specialized institutions to allow UASC to continue their education online.
- UNHCR stayed in touch with all asylum seekers and refugees in private accommodation, quickly reassessed their needs and transferred financial assistance for April for those with and for April and May to those without bank accounts. The Livelihood Committee is on standby to receive and quickly process new requests from asylum-seekers or refugees who lose their work or employment due to COVID-19 related developments.
- The SCRM added video messages to all COVID-19 prevention posters and activities in six languages that had been rolled out in all AC and RTC over the last three weeks, increased hygiene measures, created separated sections for new arrivals where possible, maintained medical screening and reviewed existing isolation rooms in centre clinics. Partner BCHR produced an information leaflet in six languages informing all AC and RTC residents of the legal aspects of the current state of emergency and the related measures imposed on them. Some tensions, likely related to confinement, still affected especially the RTCs housing migrant men, causing some incidents amongst them.

- To decrease the risk of COVID-19 spreading to and amongst refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, UNHCR continued to offer support to the Government to increase shelter capacities, decongest centres and provide safe separate accommodation to irregular migrants in RTC and resident asylum seekers or UASC in AC, specialised or private accommodation.
- Of special concern to the SCRM and UNHCR became the situation in **Banja Koviljača Asylum Centre (AC)**, which only recently had been turned into a facility housing only (91) asylum-seekers in substantive procedures, when law-enforcement moved 236 migrant men, newly gathered at the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina into this AC. Tents had to be placed outside the main building to accommodate these new arrivals, causing the hygiene et al situation in this small AC to deteriorate. UNHCR is assisting the SCRM to address the situation.



Notwithstanding the COVID-19 situation, UNHCR assisted this refugee to secure employment with a reputable construction company, ©UNHCR, March 2020

- Partner A11 Initiative - in cooperation with the UN Human Rights Team and the Association of Coordinators for Roma Issues - mapped urgent, emergency-related needs of **internally displaced persons**, accommodated in informal settlements and unofficial collective centres, and [called on the Government of Serbia to take immediate action to protect the most vulnerable citizens during the emergency caused by the corona virus pandemic](#), refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, internally displaced persons and Roma.
- Partner [BCHR called on state authorities](#) to ensure that all emergency law measures abstain from derogation of human and minority rights guaranteed by the Serbian Constitution and international treaties.
- Together with authorities and partners, UNHCR assessed new needs emerging from the current situation, and quickly designed and started implementing tailored programmatic responses. Interested donors are welcome to request information about these additional needs and activities, which are regularly updated to be reflected also in global or national UN/UNHCR emergency reports or appeals.
- A new car as well as a first batch of hygiene materials were donated to the SCRM, part of substantive procurements that UNHCR Serbia has initiated upon the request of authorities in charge of the protection and care of refugees, asylum-seekers and UASC in Serbia.
- UNHCR Serbia continued to daily coordinate its plans and activities with authorities, the UN Resident Coordinator, UN sister agencies and partners, including by actively participating in coordination mechanisms such as the COVID WG and the Contingency Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) of the UN Country Team in Serbia.

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United States of America 4.4 million | Canada 2.3 million

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¹ Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Where a donor has contribution \$10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.

² Due to their earmarking at the region or sub-region, or to a related situation or theme, the other softly earmarked contributions listed are those which can potentially be used for Serbia. Where a donor has contributed \$2 million or more, the total amount of the contributions is shown.