

## UNHCR SERBIA UPDATE

As at 31 July, **7,275** refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants are present on the territory of Serbia (comp. to 6,313 at end-June), including **5,719** in governmental centres, 13 in specialised institutions for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), 156 in private accommodation (known to UNHCR) and 1,387 staying in hostels/hotels or abandoned houses in border areas with Hungary/Romania/Croatia. 88 refugees from Ukraine were accommodated in the dedicated Vranje Asylum Centre (AC), and an estimated 4,000 had registered residence in hotels and privately.

**13,425** new arrivals to governmental centres were registered by the authorities in July 2022 (compared to 10,039 in June). In the first half of 2022, **34,155** new arrivals have been registered in governmental centres (including 266 from Ukraine). Arrivals originating from Afghanistan remain the most numerous group (32%), followed by those from Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, etc.

In the last weeks of July, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) recorded a refugee/migrant influx of some 3,000 persons per week, compared to 1,000 per week in the same period in 2021.

Meanwhile, the pressure in the Reception Centres in the North and North-West of the country is increasingly high, with overcrowding resulting in the emergence of health risks caused by lack of hygiene and social distancing, coupled with the poor health condition of new arrivals. In response, UNHCR purchased a contingent of 1,500 anti-scabies creams and the first batch of 700 has been forwarded to the SCRM management of affected reception centres.

Departure of the Representative: The outgoing UNHCR Representative to Serbia, Francesca Bonelli, engaged in farewell meetings with the key UNHCR's governmental counterparts - Aleksandar Vulin, the Minister of Interior, Darija Kisić, the Minister of Labour, Employment, Veterans' Affairs and Social Affairs, Marija Obradović, the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Vladimir Cucić, Commissioner for Refugees and Migrants, as well as the international partners and supporters of UNHCR. The meetings took place in a cordial atmosphere, and the fruitful cooperation that the Government of Serbia has had with the UNHCR for years was underlined. Stefanie Krause remains the Acting Representative of UNHCR in Serbia.



Counselling of refugees from Ukraine, Vranje AC  
@BCHR, July 2022

**Asylum:** UNHCR and partners counselled 1,199 persons on asylum in the month of July. Asylum Office (AO) of the MoI granted **asylum to one citizen of Burundi and subsidiary protection to one citizen of Afghanistan and one national of Cameroon (both of whom represented by UNHCR project lawyers)**. Two asylum applications were rejected by the AO. Temporary protection (TP) was awarded to persons fleeing Ukraine, including two nationals of Russian origin and 96 nationals of Ukraine, bringing the total number to 817 persons who have thus far received TP in Serbia since the March. **AO has thus far in 2022 granted 11 positive decisions, including granting asylum to two applicants and subsidiary protection to nine persons.**



Carpentry workshop at Bosilegrad RTC,  
@Sigma plus, July 2022

In July, UNHCR monitored the hearings of two asylum seekers from Burundi, conducted by the Asylum Office in Krnjača Asylum Centre. The monitoring is being implemented as part of the Quality Assurance project of the asylum procedure in the Republic of Serbia initiative by the UNHCR and marks the continuation of this positive practice agreed upon by the asylum authorities.

**Inclusion/partnerships:** In continued efforts to enlarge the network of partnerships with the private sector in Serbia, UNHCR met with **UniCredit Bank** representatives. Parties agreed that UNHCR would be informing the refugee-employing companies of the possibility to avail of the bank's new credit line, intended for SMEs that employ vulnerable groups, and that UniCredit would inform its corporate clients of the possibility to train and/or employ refugees and refer them to UNHCR as the link between the refugees and the private sector. Furthermore, UNHCR clarified the refugees' statutory rights and shared the relevant documents that invite the banks to facilitate the opening of bank accounts by refugees in Serbia, enabling their financial inclusion.

Following last year's integration breakthrough when four refugees from outside the region of former Yugoslavia enrolled in university education in Serbia and earned a DAFI scholarship, a refugee girl from Iraq succeeded in enrolling in Medical School in Belgrade in July and became the **fifth DAFI refugee scholar in Serbia**.

In partnership with Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, UNHCR and partner CRPC engaged four volunteers, students of French and Arabic languages, who worked as cultural mediators/interpreters for refugees in July.

**Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS):** In July, partner International Aid Network (IAN) provided 94 refugees throughout the country, on 149 occasions, with group/individual psychological/psychiatric support. On 27 July, IAN team visited the AC in Vranje, in order to provide information on MHPSS services and support available, and distributed hygiene packages to all 87 refugees from Ukraine in the centre. During the visit, IAN team provided group psychological support and individual psychological/psychiatric intervention for three beneficiaries.

**Child protection:** UNHCR and partners identified 105 UASC in July, originating from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco and Egypt. UASC were referred to local centres for social welfare for guardianship and for medical assistance, since many suffer from scabies/trauma.

Partners Indigo, Sigma Plus and CRPC provided individual support in terms of formal and informal education to 32 children and UASC (including support to learning the Serbian language), and organized over 260 non-formal educational activities, recreational and PSS workshops in the centres across the country. Partner IDEAS is directly providing guardianship to two UASC accommodated in specialized institutions and free legal aid to nine UASC at present.



Manicure workshop for Ukrainian refugee women at Vranje AC, @Sigma plus, July 2022

**Gender-based violence (GBV):** Partner DRC assisted five refugee GBV survivors with information, counselling and referring to responsible institutions and service providers. Partner IDEAS provided free legal aid to 7 GBV survivors and their families (13 persons in total) and supported them in opening up bank accounts to receive cash assistance.

DRC organized a total of five workshops with 20 refugee women in Krnjača AC, focusing on their empowerment and psychosocial wellbeing.

**Statelessness:** UNHCR's partner Praxis organized a roundtable discussion on the progress made in eliminating statelessness, and on the remaining challenges concerning birth registration, citizenship and personal documents. UNHCR reiterated its position that, notwithstanding commendable progress made in fighting statelessness, the looming threat of a potential new surge in the number of persons at risk of statelessness remains as long as the possibility of statelessness is not eradicated. The conference took note of the Serbian authorities' commitment, through the MoU with UNHCR, to resolve all remaining issues, and to eradicate statelessness before the end of the #IBelong campaign (end-2024). **Eighteen persons had their Serbian nationality confirmed/granted in July owing to Praxis' efforts.**

Following their intervention from May 2022, UNHCR partner A 11 Initiative received a notice from the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, concerning the refusal of certain public notaries to certify powers of attorney for persons without documents, informing that the Ministry of Justice and the Chamber of Notaries will be issuing a formal Instruction to all notaries public on the procedure for verifying the signatures of persons who do not possess identification documents. A 11 Initiative and Praxis visited seven municipalities in Serbia hosting Roma IDPs and provided counselling and assistance to 214 persons in need of personal documentation and/or access to housing solutions and social protection.

**Child, early and forced marriages (CEFM):** Partner Praxis identified three cases of (Roma) child marriage in July and reported these to the authorities for follow-up.

**Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** Partner DRC organized one informative return-related meeting in July, for 13 IDPs, and 3 IDP families were registered for return to Kosovo.



Focus group discussion on asylum at Šid RTC,  
@UNHCR, July 2022

UNHCR facilitated a visit of the Head of Cooperation at European Union Delegation in Serbia at the Salvatore Centre in Bujanovac, last collective shelter of IDP Roma in South Serbia and at the premises where the EU funded Social Housing project will be implemented by the Municipality in the coming two years. OSCE and Coordination Body of Ministry of Local Governance attended the visit as well.

**Ukraine Refugee Response Coordination:** UNHCR continued to convene the coordination mechanism among UN agencies involved in the Ukrainian crisis response, established in March 2022, which meets monthly to exchange information on the data, actions and activities that are taken by UN and its partners in support of the government and the Ukrainian refugees. A mapping of Ukrainians at private accommodation, their needs in terms of services and rights, is currently taking place, with contribution of all the actors sitting in the forum. Refugee Trustees from 10 municipalities at a country level, have been consulted in this context, and a questionnaire on priority needs is being applied among the Ukrainian families living with host families in Serbia

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