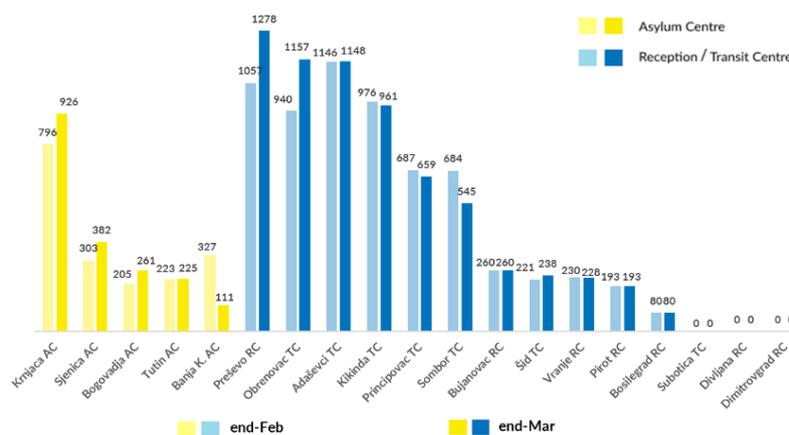


## SERBIA SPECIAL WEEKLY UPDATE

- As testing became more widely available and applied, **no** refugee, asylum-seeker or migrant was confirmed as infected with COVID-19.
- The Government of Serbia adopted a **Decision on the Status of Foreigners in the Republic of Serbia during the State of Emergency**, which places on hold the taking of biometric data from foreigners until the end of the emergency. This Decision also extends the validity of all personal documents of foreign nationals, including asylum-seekers and refugees, automatically until the end of state of emergency, while it also implies that the receipt of new applications for asylum in Serbia may also be placed on temporary hold. **Twenty-six** foreigners were counselled on asylum in Serbia by partners Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) or Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT).
- The Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) launched a [Coronavirus Pandemic Daily Bulletin](#) and continued strengthening hygiene and social distancing measures in all centres accommodating asylum-seekers and migrants. It also transferred migrants out of Asylum Centres (AC) and between Reception and Transit Centres (RTC), thus reducing health risks to registered asylum-seekers.
- To relieve confinement, the SCRM opened shops in ACs and RTCs and began distributing protective masks, gloves and hand-sanitizer to asylum-seekers and migrants. Residents of Šid, Adaševci and Sombor Reception/Transit Centres, volunteered to disinfect their centres as reported also in an [article published on SCRM website](#).



- UNHCR partner BCHR issued a [public statement](#) condemning the Protest against Accommodation of Migrants in School Recreational Centre Čardak in Deliblato, which calls on authorities to safeguard solidarity with asylum-seekers and migrants in these challenging times. With Čardak transferred from the SCRM to the Army for use of COVID-19 patients instead of migrants, the SCRM increased temporary shelter capacities in existing centres, identifying and preparing new sites to alleviate the overcrowding of existing RTC.
- The occupancy of all current 16 governmental centres (with a total capacity of 5,640 hard-shelter places) rose from 8,328 one week ago to **8,652** today. Residents comprise 3,701 citizens of Afghanistan, 1,618 of Syria, 925 of Pakistan, 634 of Bangladesh, 368 of Iraq, 330 of Iran, 266 of Morocco, and 810 from 42 other countries; 7,149 are adult men, 393 adult women and 1,110 children, including 540 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).
- Data of authorities and UNHCR confirm that with reinforced Southern and Eastern borders and boundaries this increase of asylum-seekers and migrants was caused mainly by some 100 asylum-seekers and migrants expelled into Serbia from Hungary and some 200 irregularly moving from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia – both groups including families and individuals, who had never been to Serbia before.
- All migrants encountered in Belgrade streets and elsewhere were escorted to the nearest official governmental centre. In absence of clients, Miksalište Aid Point in Belgrade was placed on hold as of 27 March. The MSF clinic situated across the road from Miksalište closed on the same day.
- UNHCR and UNDP together with civil society organisation representing or working with internally displaced persons and Roma communities consolidated a joint needs-assessment and prepared the procurement and delivery of life-saving hygiene and humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable and marginalised amongst them living in informal settlements of unofficial collective centres.
- UNHCR Serbia issued a COVID-19 [Communication](#).

- The UNHCR office remained open and its programme fully functioning as did those of our eleven partner organizations. Risk of infection of persons we care for was reduced, WHO guidelines, UN standards of duty of care, as well as national emergency law restrictions were fully adhered to but successfully mitigated by enhanced tele-working, -conferencing and -counselling activities.
- UNHCR and partners delivered additional amounts of liquid soap and blankets as well as legal, psycho-social and other counselling services, [Serbian language](#) and other education classes, cultural mediation and interpretation to refugees, asylum-seekers and UASC, confined in governmental centres or private accommodation.
- Partner Indigo continued to support authorities with cultural mediation, identifying UASC, providing UASC with psychological aid and support, organizing outdoor activities and workshops in the RTCs of Bujanovac, Preševo, Pirot and Vranje and the UASC Home in Niš.



*Families staying in Šid Reception/Transit Centre assist enhanced hygiene measures, ©SCRM, 17 March 2020*

- In addition to the WHO et al COVID-19 prevention information already distributed widely over the last months, UNHCR partners produced leaflets with information on the state of emergency and how it affects persons we care for in English, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish and Pashto languages and distributed them in all governmental centers, as well as to the Border Police and Police Departments.
- In close coordination with authorities and the United Nations Country Team in Serbia, UNHCR and partners continued to assess urgent additional needs deriving from the COVID-19 situation. UNHCR Serbia identified foreseeable savings in its 2020 budget and reallocated them to cover some most immediate needs. For urgent local fundraising, UNHCR Serbia developed information, which interested donors can obtain from [cvetkovi@unhcr.org](mailto:cvetkovi@unhcr.org).
- The Council of Europe European Committee of Social Rights published its 2019 ECOSOC Report which finds the situation in [Serbia](#) not to be fully in line with the provisions of the Charter relating to rights of migrants to work and accommodation, the right to family reunification and the right to legal assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 contributed \$10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.

<sup>2</sup> 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.