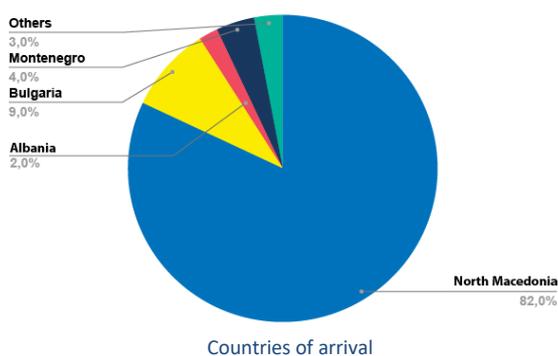


UNHCR SERBIA UPDATE

As at end-November, **5,619** (decrease by 9%) **refugees and migrants are in the territory of Serbia**, of which 4,617 are accommodated in 13 operational governmental centres across the country, 25 in specialised institutions for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), 127 in private accommodation and 850 staying rough outside the centres.

6,136 newcomers to governmental centres were registered in November (vs. 6,570 in October). Arrivals came mainly from North Macedonia (82%, increase by 6%), Bulgaria (9%, decrease by 4%), Montenegro (4%, increase by 1%), Albania via Kosovo (2%, decrease by 2%), and smaller percentages from Turkey (air), Russia (air), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Croatia.

November saw **4,163** (increase by 25% comp. to October) **pushbacks** from neighbouring countries to Serbia (78% from Hungary, 21% from Romania and 1% from Croatia). **Nationals of Syria make up 51% of all the pushbacks**, mainly men but also families, **and 17% of all pushed back persons are single men and families from Afghanistan**.



A Syrian family of 6 members (mother and 5 children), who had been accommodated in Bosilegrad Reception Centre were successfully reunited with husband/father, a refugee in Austria, on 30 November. This reunification is the result of a joint effort of the Austrian Embassy in Belgrade, Austrian Red Cross, Ministry of Interior and the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), ICRC Western Balkans Delegation, the UNHCR and its partners Sigma plus and Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC).



Opening of Integration Corner in Bosilegrad with Mayor Vladimir Zaharijev, @UNHCR, Nov 2021



Tree planting with refugees and the USA Ambassador to Serbia H.E. Anthony Godfrey, @Politika, Nov 2021

On 13 November, a van transporting 24 refugees, all unaccompanied boys, aged 10-17, from Afghanistan and Syria, overturned in Serbia's eastern city of Pirot, when the Serbian driver of the van lost control of the vehicle in trying to avoid a police checkpoint. Two of the refugee boys sadly lost their lives imminently, another perished later in hospital. UNHCR is watching over the remaining two hospitalized unaccompanied/separated children (UASC) and 19 UASC who have been accommodated in Krnjača Asylum Centre following the accident, providing cultural mediation, counselling, psychological and psychiatric assistance, transportation to medical facilities, etc. in conjunction with the authorities.

UNHCR legal partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) published a periodic report [Right to Asylum in the Republic of Serbia for July-September 2021](#). In addition to analysing the individual cases of asylum-seekers that BCHR represented before Serbian courts and the challenges in integration of refugees and asylum-seekers in Serbia (e.g., the bureaucratic

impediments to school enrolment), the Report invites the Serbian asylum authorities to pay special attention to asylum applications by persons originating from Afghanistan.

In November, the Asylum Office (AO) of the Ministry of Interior (Mol) of Serbia made no recognitions but rejected seven applications for asylum. Three hundred and ninety-one persons expressed intention to seek asylum in Serbia in November, and nine submitted actual applications. Eight hundred and forty-nine asylum-seekers newly arrived in governmental centres in November, and 838 absconded from them. **By end-November, the AO has granted subsidiary protection to six and refugee status to seven persons in 2021.**

UNHCR and partners counselled 804 persons on asylum in November; 23 persons gave power of attorney to UNHCR project lawyers for representation in asylum procedures; 16 refugees received ID cards and three work permits with support from UNHCR.



Decorating the walls of Technical School in Obrenovac, @UNHCR, Nov 2021

On 25 Nov, the **Integration Corner/Library** was ceremonially opened in **Bosilegrad** by the mayor of Bosilegrad, UNHCR and local partner staff, in the presence of SCRM, local officials and representatives of local schools attended by refugee children, CSOs active in Bosilegrad and the refugees. UNHCR emphasized the importance of this Integration Corner and readiness to support more activities which aim at refugee inclusion in this municipality. [Bosilegrad is also officially part of the UNHCR global project of Cities #WithRefugees.](#)

UNHCR finalized and submitted to the Ministry of Interior comments on amendments to Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection (regarding exclusion from refugee status and subsidiary protection, UASC, asylum procedure applicable in the Transit and Border Zones, establishing pathway to permanent residence, etc.) and Law on Foreigners (regarding integration and permanent residence).

Acting on the formal complaint of UNHCR partner NGOs - Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) and A 11 Initiative - [the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality determined](#) that Raiffeisen Bank a.d. Belgrade had violated the provisions of Article 6 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of the Republic of Serbia when it refused to open accounts for persons originating from Iran, who had been granted asylum in Serbia, quoting internal bank procedures as

impediment to doing so. In the decision, the Commissioner stated that **it is not possible to exclude in advance the possibility of opening bank accounts for certain categories of persons solely based on their citizenship/the country of origin.** This is a second such decision of the Commissioner for Equality in proceedings on complaints against banks, following a similar decision against Banca Intesa from July 2021. UNHCR and its partners continue monitoring the implementation of these decisions in practice.

[Ceremonial delivery of keys to 15 apartments for ex-Yugoslav refugees in Bor \(51 persons\), under the sub-project 4 of the Regional Housing Programme \(RHP\) in Serbia](#), took place on 16 November.

UNHCR Serbia supported the Bujanovac municipality to officially submit on 15 Nov a project proposal for a housing solution that would bring about closure of the last collective centre in Serbia named Salvatore, located in Bujanovac municipality. Should the project proposal be successful, it will merit funding to the Municipality from the European Union channeled through a UNOPS-led call for proposals.

On 19th November ended the successful five-day [study tour to Italy of a seven-member delegation from Serbia](#), led by **UNHCR Serbia and consisting of staff members of Ministry of Interior Asylum Office, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the SCRM, involved in the system of asylum in Serbia.** The delegation from Serbia met with the asylum authorities in Italy and visited some of the reception facilities in the vicinity of Rome, witnessing a different, more decentralised system of first instance asylum decisions involving local courts. The study tour was made possible thanks to the support of the Embassy of Italy in Belgrade, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation's Organization "The MAECI" and the UNHCR.

UNHCR identified and lodged the cases of the first two refugees in Serbia to access certification of previous academic qualifications through **Council of Europe's European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR).** Council of Europe Office in Belgrade, the UNHCR, the national ENIC/NARIC centre, the Agency for Qualifications and UNHCR partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights are working together to advance the certification process.

Following UNHCR advocacy, the first four non-Yugoslav refugees enrolled in tertiary education, DAFI scholarship-holders, were **included into the national free health care scheme provided by the Institute for Students' Health in Belgrade, and**

provided with **ISIC- international student identity cards**, which give them access to student canteens, discounted shopping and public transportation, and insurance by UNIQA.

UNHCR and partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC), in partnership with **Manpower Group**, organized **Skills for Employment and Career Counseling Training for seven refugees and asylum-seekers** from Ukraine, Burundi, Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq, where they learned how to prepare a CV, get ready for a job interview, and to develop job search strategies and techniques.

Within the framework of the EU Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, partners Indigo, International Aid Network (IAN), Sigma Plus and CRPC implemented 260 individual and group psychological/psychiatric counselling, PSS workshops, creative, recreational and educational workshops in the centres country-wide. **Some 30 students regularly attended Serbian lessons procured by the UNHCR.** Partner DRC organized **four women empowerment workshops** in Women's Safe Space in Krnjača Asylum Centre for nine women asylum-seekers, and a participatory assessment with another five.



Premiere of *What They Took With Them* film with Serbian actors, Yugoslav Film Archive, Belgrade, @SCRM, 30 Nov 2021

UNHCR Serbia marked the 70 Years of the Refugee Convention and 45 years of presence and work in Serbia with **the premiere of What They Took With Them video in the Serbian language**, produced by a group of eminent actors led by **UNHCR High Profile Supporter for Serbia Branka Katić**. The premiere, attended by representatives of refugees, Serbian authorities, civil society, arts community, academia and media, sent out a strong message of support to inclusion and integration of refugees and the UNHCR mandate, picked up in outright positive fashion by an array of national media outlets.

On 24 November, with the support of UNHCR and the US Embassy in Belgrade, [refugees from Burundi and Iran, together with UN volunteers, planted white ash seedlings in Zvezdara Forest in Belgrade](#), and made the capital greener and healthier for all who live and live there. The initiative was organized in partnership with the organization "Plant your shade", with the consulting support of the Public Utility Company "Zelenilo-Belgrade". H.E. Anthony Godfrey, US Ambassador, Vladimir Cucić, Commissioner for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia, as well as Andreja Mladenović, Assistant Mayor of Belgrade, also took part in this action.

During the month of November which focused on social cohesion, UNHCR and partners CRPC and Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), schools and municipal organisations organised a series of events such as [painting the walls of Technical High School in Obrenovac](#), jointly visiting the Belgrade zoo, a number of historical sites in Belgrade and the Museum of Science and Technology, [visits to City Museums of Kikinda](#) and Subotica as well as [planting pine trees in Preševo](#) in the south, which altogether involved almost 70 local youngsters and their refugee peers.

With support from UNHCR, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights organized a [webinar on Statelessness and Refugee Law](#) on 2 November, featuring participation from 42 representatives of concerned international and non-governmental organisations. The Webinar analysed the position of stateless persons who are also refugees, with reference to the general legal status of stateless persons, as well as presentation of individual examples from legal practice.

Partners A11 Initiative and Praxis visited 13 informal Roma (IDP) settlements in six Serbian municipalities, and provided counselling and support to 205 individuals in accessing housing and social protection, as well as personal documentation. **Ten persons had their Serbian nationality granted or confirmed in November** owing to efforts of Praxis - legal partner of UNHCR.

UNHCR Serbia is grateful for the support of:

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Norway | Private donors Australia | Private donors Germany |
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