

# UNHCR SERBIA UPDATE

**3,236** new arrivals to governmental centres were registered by the authorities in February (compared to 2,795 in January). Arrivals originating from Afghanistan remain the most numerous group, followed by those from Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, etc. 71% transited through North Macedonia, 19% through Bulgaria and 10% arrived in Serbia from other countries.

As at 28 February, **4,630** refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants are present on the territory of Serbia, including 3,745 in governmental centres, 30 in specialised institutions for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), 135 in private accommodation and 720 staying in hostels/hotels or abandoned houses in border areas with Hungary/Romania/Croatia.

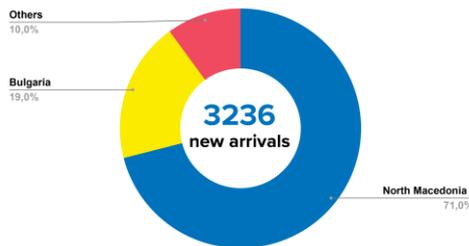


Figure 1: Countries of arrival



Figure 2: Number of refugees and migrants in Serbia's territory

February saw **2,508** (increase by 84% comp. to January) **pushbacks** from neighbouring countries to Serbia (86% from Hungary, 11% from Romania and 3% from Croatia). **Nationals of Syria make up 47% of all the pushbacks, Afghans make up 30%**, and nationals of India come third with 6% of all pushbacks.

On 4 February, the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the United Nations in Serbia signed the [2021-2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(UNSDCF\)](#). The Framework is the blueprint to support the country and achieve the joint ambitions of national development priorities, Agenda 2030 and the EU accession agenda. The three strategic priorities of cooperation focus on: 1) the green transformation, 2) social protection/demographic resilience, and 3) rule of law, human rights, gender and good governance.

In light of the situation in Ukraine and refugee arrivals in neighbouring countries, UNHCR **activated the Refugee Coordination Model** in conjunction with the UN agencies in Serbia and its implementing partners. UNHCR Country Representation offered assistance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and established a specialised [Ukraine HELP line](#), along with referral lines. UNHCR Legal partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) has put together a [video on the asylum procedure in Serbia, sub-titled in Ukrainian and Russian languages](#). All planning and activities are coordinated with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), who have expressed readiness to activate additional capacities for reception of Ukrainian refugees, currently on stand-by.

In order to replenish the stock of the SCRM, UNHCR delivered in their warehouse a contingent of 5,480 thermal blankets, in total value of 28,020 USD.

UNHCR Representative was interviewed by the national broadcaster [RTS TV](#) and [NewsMax Adria](#) on the refugee situation caused by the war in Ukraine, when she offered assistance to the authorities in ensuring reception and protection, noting the particular vulnerability of unaccompanied and separated children and the UNHCR presence inside Ukraine assisting the internally displaced persons (IDPs), notwithstanding the current security difficulties.

847 persons were counselled on asylum by UNHCR and partners, 220 were counselled on integration, 103 received language lessons, 48 educational support, 128 were supported through cultural mediation, etc. Seven UASC were under guardianship supported by UNHCR.



UNHCR counselling in Adaševci Reception/Transit Centre, @UNHCR, Feb 2022

On 23 February in a press conference in Belgrade, the UNHCR and its partner BCHR presented the “[Right to Asylum in Serbia in 2021](#)” Report, published by the BCHR annually since 2012. During 2021, positive developments in the asylum system were noted, including the first instance body in terms of deciding on the asylum requests of particularly vulnerable categories of asylum-seekers. The report also calls for more systemic protection solutions, continuous efforts on improvement of public attitudes towards refugees and migrants, opportunities for local citizens to meet with the displaced persons and for the forcibly displaced to take part in public discussions.



UNHCR & CRPC organized a Career Day with the students of Faculty of Philology, @UNHCR, Feb 2022

On 23 February, UNHCR signed an MoU with the Faculty of Philology of the University in Belgrade, with the objective to improve the understanding of refugee situation among students and academics, to facilitate multicultural exchange and to strengthen cultural mediation and employment skills of Faculty’s students, through provision of job-specific joint courses. The cooperation was kickstarted by joint organization of a **Career Day in the Faculty of Philology**, where 14 students of different language departments learned about the importance of cultural sensitivity in working with the refugees, and were introduced to the opportunities of working in cross-cultural contexts of the UNHCR, the UN system and the CSO sector.

Partner CRPC published a handbook “[Standards on Cultural Mediation in Protection](#)”.

On 23 February, UNHCR Head of Field Unit South provided a **briefing to newly deployed Frontex contingent of border guards on refugee situation in Serbia, the referrals system and the standards of international protection.**

Human rights lawyer from Serbia – Nikola Kovačević – who won the Nansen Refugee Award for Europe in 2021, collaborated with UNHCR Serbia to create a [video-clip](#) in which he invited nominations for Nansen Award for 2022.

On 18 February, the Director of Novi Sad Cultural Capital of Europe 2022 Foundation, a representative of World Press Photo Foundation from the Netherlands and the UNHCR Representative opened an exhibition “[\(Un-\) Inhabiting – Migration Stories in 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#)” on the central city square of Novi Sad, featuring 28 stories of refugees and migrants, composed of photos which have in the past received the World Press Photo Annual Award. UNHCR Representative thanked the city of Novi Sad for continuing to cherish the legacy of a multicultural city welcoming of refugees.

UNHCR distributed a **Call for Applications for the second round of paid three-month internships for refugees with IKEA Serbia**. Application deadline is mid-March, and tentative start of internships is the first half of April. UNHCR pre-identified 36 refugees for the internship, out of which 15 will be selected.

Following a UNHCR Serbia meeting with the German branch of the **Tzu Chi Foundation**, it was agreed that the Foundation would support, starting from 21 February, the Branko Pesic School of Further Education in Zemun, Belgrade, which include refugee and local children from disadvantaged populations. The support will initially consist of pastries and tea for 200 elementary school children and 100 persons who attend functional education for adults, without discriminating amongst them in terms of migratory status.

On 21 February, partner A 11 - Initiative for Economic and Social Rights participated in the online Briefing for Serbia with the members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and participated in presentation of three alternative reports prepared for the 71st session of the CESCR, concerning the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). A11 and BCHR submitted to the CESRS short inputs/statements for all three reports, covering the key issues relevant for local integration of IDPs and Roma IDPs, and also the issues of relevance to integration of refugees and asylum-seekers.

**Statelessness/child, early and forced marriages (CEFM):** On 10 February, [the Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Government, the Deputy Ombudsman and the UNHCR Representative signed the third MoU on continuing cooperation towards eliminating outstanding problems in access to personal status-related rights, and prevention of the risk of statelessness.](#)

Given the results achieved since 2012, the UNHCR and the authorities expressed confidence that Serbia could be one of the countries to eradicate statelessness and fulfil the objectives of the global UNHCR [IBelong campaign](#). The Minister and the Deputy Ombudsman thanked UNHCR for the support and hitherto cooperation and pledged to continue fighting statelessness over the next 1,000 days (i.e. the end of #IBelong campaign), or until the risk of statelessness, especially among the members of the Roma community, is eliminated.

In February, partners A11 - Initiative for Economic and Social Rights and Praxis provided free legal aid, information and counselling to 121 Roma IDPs and persons at risk of statelessness, to enable them to access housing and social welfare, as well as personal document. **Seven persons had their Serbian nationality thus granted/confirmed, and 23 received personal documents in February.**



UNHCR HPS Branka Katic visiting the informal Roma settlement Čukarička suma near Belgrade, @UNHCR, Feb 2022

UNHCR Serbia High-Profile Supporter (HPS) actress Branka Katic engaged in the Office efforts of promoting the fight against statelessness in Serbia by undertaking this year's first visits to informal Roma settlements in Čukarička šuma in Belgrade and Veliki rit in Novi Sad.

Partner Praxis published the report "[2021 Annual Report on Child Marriages in Serbia with special focus on the practice of public prosecutor's offices](#)".



**Refugees from former Yugoslavia:** On 10 February, 12 refugee families from BiH and Croatia received the keys to their village houses in the municipality of Vrbas, under the sub-projects 8 and 9 of the Regional Housing Programme (RHP) in Serbia. The event was attended also by UNHCR and EU Delegation representatives.

**Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA):** Partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) supported 12 sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors in February, including one newly identified, with information, counselling, and referral. One person was referred to UNHCR partner IDEAS for legal representation, and another one was accommodated in a Safe House in Belgrade on 28 February. DRC also identified one victim of human trafficking amongst SGBV survivors.

When it comes to women's empowerment activities, DRC organized two interactive health awareness workshops on Breast cancer early detection by Breast self-examination in Krnjača AC for eight female refugees from Burundi. In addition, refugee women were informed on the importance of regular gynaecological examinations for early detection of cervical cancer.

Partner CRPC contributed to annual ILGA-Europe's LGBTI+ Enlargement Report for 2021, focusing on the position of LGBTI+ persons in mixed migration. This report is a part of ILGA-Europe's submissions to EU Accession Progress Reports of the European Commission.

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