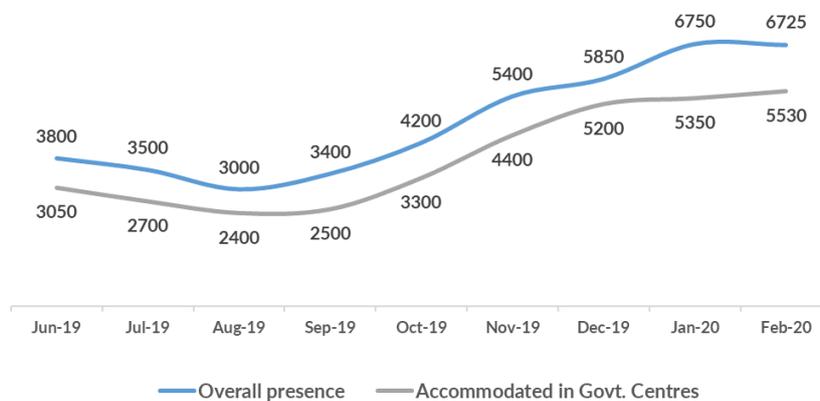


## SERBIA UPDATE

- UNHCR and partners counselled over **3,300** foreigners at over thirty sites throughout the country on asylum. **400** registered their intention to seek asylum with the Ministry of Interior (MOI), while **18** lodged new **asylum claims** with the Asylum Office (AO). In February, the AO adjudicated **seven recognitions** and six rejections.
- UNHCR partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) presented its annual report [Right To Asylum in the Republic of Serbia 2019 and Complementary Forms of International Protection in the Republic of Serbia](#) in Belgrade's Media Centre on 28 February, with analysis and recommendations concerning access to the asylum procedure, asylum authorities' practice, asylum seeker accommodation, situation of UASC, situation of SGBV survivors and integration, and a special supplement on the CAT decision on Ayaz v Serbia.
- In a worrying new development for Serbia, well-known right-wing extremists spread fake news on alleged violent crimes committed by migrants and organised four small local gatherings (two in Belgrade and one each in Sombor and Kikinda). BCHR identified 16 articles/video clips of such fake news and, on 24 February, issued a [statement condemning threats to asylum seekers and migrants](#).



- UNHCR and partners counselled **over 55** recognised refugees and active asylum seekers on **sustainable local integration** and obtained ID cards for **eight**. In coordination with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) **44** were supported through cash-based interventions and **two** with specialised training.
- UNHCR partner Sigma Plus developed an [online platform for learning the Serbian language](#), for those asylum seekers/refugees without an immediate access to a teacher.
- On 21 February, **six** refugee households received apartments that had been newly constructed under the **Regional Housing Project (RHP)** in the town of Malo Crniće, in the presence of the First Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), the Mayor and representatives of the OSCE and UNHCR.
- UNHCR and partners identified and referred to Child Welfare Services (CWS) **218** newly arrived **unaccompanied or separated children** (UASC). Government centres accommodated around **440** UASC at end-February (including 172 in Sjenica AC, 143 in Bogovada AC and 80 in Krnjača AC). UASC Peer Educators were trained on **access to education**.
- On 19 February, UNHCR and Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs showed **donor representatives the child protection practices and challenges** at visits to Zmaj and Jesuit Refugee Service Pedro Arrupe homes for UASC, followed by a visit to the UASC Institution in Niš on 28 February.
- On 11 February, UNHCR partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre, discussed asylum claims based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity at a **seminar on LGBTI+ Persons in Migration** which it hosted together with the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Equality.
- UNHCR partner A11 Initiative, presented a report [Second-order rights: Social rights in light of austerity measures \(2012-2020\)](#) on the economic and social challenges faced by Roma and IDPs, warning that one in four citizens of Serbia is at risk of poverty.

- UNHCR and partners profiled **2,633** newly arriving asylum seekers and migrants. Over 70% had fled so-called refugee-producing countries: 42% are from Afghanistan, 21% from Syria, including families and 37% from other countries. While 66% irregularly entered Serbia from North Macedonia, the portion of those coming from Albania grew to 30%, while only 1% arrived from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and 0.7% from Bulgaria.
- The number of asylum seekers and migrants counted at any one day remained stable at **6,724** at the end of February, recalling the level of presence of springtime of 2017. These included almost **1,100** asylum-seekers and migrants squatting in Belgrade City or near the border with Romania, Hungary, BiH or Croatia. Authorities reacted by transferring over **1,200** into official centres, including the Reception Centre (RC) in **Preševo**.



UNHCR supported 9 UASC and 2 guardians to join a youth winter camp in Kopaonik, ©UNHCR, February 2020

- Occupancy of 17 governmental centres again increased by 5% to **5,628** at the end of February, leading to **overcrowding** of four transit centres that house unregistered migrant men (Adaševci, Kikinda, Principovac and Sombor) and of the reception centre in Bujanovac.
- Hungarian authorities admitted **14** asylum-seekers into territory and procedures through the so-called “transit zones” but expelled to Serbia **22** asylum-seekers, including 21 whose asylum claims had been rejected while in detention in the “transit zone”, plus one foreign national who had never been to Serbia before.
- **1,143** asylum seekers reported **collective expulsion** from neighbouring countries (858 from Romania, 151 from Croatia, 102 from Hungary and 32 from BiH). 28% of them alleged to have been denied access to asylum and 49% **maltreatment** by authorities of these countries.
- UNHCR Serbia compiled and issued February 2020 updates of its [Statistical Snapshot](#) and [Joint Site Assessments](#). With over 44,000 views, the latter remained a most popular and trusted information product.

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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.