

UNHCR SERBIA UPDATE

As at end-June, **5,062** (decrease by 9%) **refugees and migrants are in the territory of Serbia**, of which 4,117 are accommodated in 19 governmental centres across the country, 41 in specialised institutions for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), 124 in private accommodation and 780 staying rough outside the centres. **4,111** newcomers to governmental centres were registered in June (comp. to 3,182 in May). Arrivals came mainly through from North Macedonia (80%), Bulgaria (12%), Albania (4%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2%) and a handful from Turkey, Montenegro and Croatia. More than 49% of all arrivals originate from Afghanistan and 28% from Pakistan, followed by [in order of predominance] Somalia, Syria, Bangladesh, Morocco, etc. June saw **1,034** (decrease by 12%) **pushbacks** from neighboring countries to Serbia (67% from Hungary, 23% from Romania, 8% from Croatia and 2% from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)). Nationals of Syria make up 41% of all the pushbacks, mainly men but also a couple of families, pushed back from Hungary, Romania and Croatia.



Standing ovations for the refugee theatre play, Yugoslav Drama Theatre, Belgrade, @UNHCR, 21 June 2021



Visit of the UNHCR High Profile Supporter, Actress Branka Katić, to Preševo Reception Centre, @UNHCR, 25 June 2021

European Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration **Ylva Johansson** arrived in Serbia on **16 June** for a **two-day visit**, primarily to [launch the Frontex-Serbia Status Agreement and deploy 44 Frontex police officers from 14 EU countries at Gradina, Serbia-Bulgaria border](#). Johansson praised Serbia's treatment of refugees and migrants and their inclusion in the national Covid vaccination.

The positive trend of recognitions in Serbia in the second quarter of 2021 continued in June with the Asylum Office (AO) of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) granting subsidiary protection to a national of Afghanistan. **By end-June, AO has granted subsidiary protection to four and refugee status to one person in 2021.** In June, 161 expressed intention to seek asylum in Serbia and five submitted actual applications.

UNHCR and partners counselled over 550 persons on asylum, of which seven gave power of attorney for representation in asylum procedure to UNHCR project lawyers and two underwent psychological assessments by UNHCR partner Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN) for the purpose of asylum procedure. Eight refugees received ID cards and 15 received work permits in June owing to efforts of UNHCR's legal partner Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR).

In June, Serbia signed up for the European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR) which makes use of public authorities, institutions such as Universities and to employers to better assess refugees' skills and help refugees access the job market or to be admitted to further studies in the host country.

The number of asylum centers will increase to 7 based on the decision by the Serbian **Government to assign Obrenovac and Vranje reception/transit centres as asylum centres and functioning as such as of end-June.** Having in mind the stable presence of refugees/migrants of just above 5,000, the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) placed on standby Pirot, Vranje, Dimitrovgrad and Bujanovac reception centres in the south (-east).

UNHCR partner Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT) submitted to the MoI, the SCRM and the OSCE Mission in Serbia, an **Initiative to amend the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Serbia** to enable for the naturalization of persons awarded asylum in Serbia. Partners BCHR and A11 Initiative submitted a **complaint to the Commissioner for Equality regarding the biased treatment of refugees in the process of opening bank accounts in Serbia.**

In June, HCIT successfully reunited a woman from Palestine and her daughter with the husband who has been granted international protection in the Netherlands.

Twenty refugee schoolchildren were supported by UNHCR and partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) through "cash for education" and coverage of public transportation costs, continuous cultural mediation and interpretation. One supported refugee youth graduated from secondary school successfully. **Three UASC benefitted from guardians provided by UNHCR through partner IDEAS and two of them received a temporary residence in Serbia on humanitarian basis.** Sixty-eight refugees and asylum seekers attended Serbian language lessons in June.

Partner Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN) organised a **training “Impact of trauma on the mental health of children and adolescents - Consequences of migration on the mental health of children and youth”** - delivered by a mental health expert from the Institute of Mental Health on 11 June. PIN and other two UNHCR partners Indigo and International Aid Network (IAN) provided support to mental health of refugees and asylum-seekers through 135 individual and group psychological/psychiatric interventions, including emergency interventions, and interceded on behalf of a vulnerable UASC who attempted suicide.

Partners IAN, CRPC and Sigma Plus invested complemented the a/m efforts on improving the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers in government centres and in private accommodation by organizing four integration workshops and 332 educational, recreational, psychosocial, and social cohesion workshops.

[UNHCR Representative met with the Kosovo¹ Minister for Communities and Returns Mr. Goran Rakić](#), who thanked UNHCR and partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) for supporting the voluntary return of Serbian internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Kosovo, and encouraged greater interest of IDPs (still counting over 196,000) to return.

Partners Praxis and A11 Initiative visited 25 Roma (IDP) informal settlements in 18 municipalities in Serbia and provided legal counselling/assistance to 237 persons, including on access to housing, social welfare and registration. **Eight persons thus had their nationality granted/confirmed in June**, nine obtained ID cards and 13 other personal documents with the help of Praxis and A11. Praxis [published a case study](#) about an unnamed 13-year-old boy from Doljevac, which depicts the problems that often occur in the proceedings for determination of personal name before social welfare centres.

Praxis gave a workshop for schoolchildren in “Vožd Karadorđe” primary school in Leskovac, concerning **child, early and forced marriages (CEFM)**, which was attended by 11 children. The school agreed to integrate CEFM workshops into their future workplans.

Annual Belgrade Marathon took place on Sunday 6 June featuring four UNHCR staff runners. **A team composed of refugees**, including nine UASC, the DRC and UNHCR staff [volunteered to distribute mineral water bottles to the marathon runners](#), all cheering the runners together. Refugees were equipped with runners and sports clothes donated by Decathlon Serbia company.

A wide range of activities supported **World Refugee Day (WRD) 2021**, including partners and persons of concern promoting refugees’ strength and resilience. On 14 June, **UNHCR Serbia officially launched the High Profile Supporter (HPS)**, eminent actress **Branka Katić**, along with the national premiere of the video [„The Lost Dreams”, a version of the global UNHCR video with narration of Branka Katic, subtitled in English](#), thus marking the beginning of WRD 2021 campaign and the campaign of **marking 45 years of UNHCR in Serbia**. [UNHCR Serbia produced a video which provides a retrospect of its work in Serbia and the region since its establishment in Serbia 45 years ago](#).

On 18 June, partner BCHR organised an [interactive discussion on refugee integration and durable solutions](#), as a final event of the #MilJudiZajednoMožemoViše [#Togetherwecandomore] campaign and the Week of Multiculturalism, also to mark WRD, and premiered of a [film which tells the story of the integration journey of a Syrian refugee in Serbia](#).

The WRD 2021 and the 45 years of UNHCR in Serbia were crowned with a [unique event of a professional theatre play by nine refugee women and girls from Krnjača Asylum Centre in Belgrade on 21 June](#). The play, promoting inclusion and debunking racism and xenophobia, gathered an audience of 200 persons in **Belgrade’s Yugoslav Drama Theatre**, including the Minister of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs Ms. Darija Kisić-Tepavčević, who provided a keynote speech, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government Ms. Marija Obradović, the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees Mr. Vladimir Cucić, United Nations Country Team Heads of Agencies and staff, the diplomatic corps, government and (I)NGO partners, etc. **The refugee women actors received a standing ovation** from the Belgrade audience. Guests were gifted with soaps made and hats painted by refugees.

A number of local events marking WRD 2021 were organized in Belgrade, Preševo, Bosilegrad, Kruševac, Novi Sad and Loznica, including photo exhibitions, a culinary festival featuring local and refugee women exchanging recipes, sporting events with local and refugee youth, etc. **The Law Faculty in Belgrade marked the 45 years of UNHCR Serbia and 15 years of the UNHCR-supported Legal Clinics in Refugee Law** by a special event, and under the framework of the European Union-funded Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey – Phase II programme.

Several buildings, bridges and fountains in Belgrade and Novi Sad were coloured in UNHCR blue, in honour of the WRD 2021.

Coalition for the Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children from Abuse and Neglect, made up of UNHCR’s NGO partners, issued a [press statement](#) on WRD, inviting the authorities to enhance the accommodation schemes and services aimed at supporting UASC.

Under the joint UNDP-UNHCR project supporting Roma and refugee volunteers, a two-day workshop was held in Belgrade on 11-12 June, tackling issues of assertive communication and hate speech amongst others. Partner IDEAS conducted two workshops for UASC residing in Bogovađa AC concerning “Possibilities for regulating the legal status in Serbia” and “Nonviolent Communication”.



Local and refugee women demonstrating culinary skills for WRD in Bosilegrad, @UNHCR, June 2021

UNHCR Serbia is grateful for the support of:

Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Ireland | Netherlands | Norway | Private donors Australia | Private donors Japan | Private donors Republic of Korea | Private donors Spain | Russian Federation | Serbia | Sweden | Switzerland | United States of America

With the support of the following organisations and private sector partners:

IKEA SEE, UniCredit Bank

¹ All reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.