

# Albania

February 2021

Over the past three years, Albania witnessed a stark **increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving** as part of mixed movements, putting a strain on asylum and border management systems

Albania, UNHCR and IOM are advancing towards **differentiated, high-quality pathways and procedures to address and efficiently manage mixed movements** and resource allocation.

Albania adopted a **new law on asylum** in February 2021, reinforcing the framework for integration of refugees and further aligning the asylum system with international and EU standards.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees	<b>129</b>
Asylum-seekers	<b>17</b>
Stateless people	<b>1,031</b>
Other persons of concern (PoCs)*	<b>2,078</b>

\*This category includes persons who have expressed their intention to seek asylum without having formally lodged an asylum application.

## TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Refugees	Asylum-seekers	Other PoCs
Kosovo* <b>65</b>	Syria <b>6</b>	Syria <b>797</b>
Syria <b>14</b>	State of Palestine <b>6</b>	Afghanis tan <b>337</b>
China <b>12</b>	Morocco <b>2</b>	Iraq <b>327</b>

\*All designations of Kosovo are without prejudice to positions on status and are in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99.

Data source: UNHCR 2020 Mid-Year Statistical report and [datafinder](#)

## HIGHLIGHTS

**11,970**

Individuals arrived in the context of mixed movements in 2020, including an increasing number of women and children

**70% and 42%**

70% of new arrivals and asylum-seekers declare to be from countries with high protection rates and 42% of asylum requests were lodged by women and children.



Refugees and asylum-seekers have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, notably in relation to household income and access to reliable livelihoods.

## Statelessness

UNHCR worked closely with the Parliament on the adoption of a new Law on Citizenship in July 2020, with strong safeguards to prevent statelessness, fulfilling one of Albania's pledges at the 2019 ExCom **High Level Segment** on Statelessness.

## COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

**Inclusion of persons of concern:** UNHCR and IOM have implemented the EU-funded project "**Addressing COVID-19 challenges within the Migrant and Refugee Response in the Western Balkans**" to enhance authorities' preparedness to respond to the pandemic and prevent transmission of COVID-19. UNHCR and IOM have successfully advocated for inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the national vaccination.

**Communication with Communities:** As of December 2020, **738 sessions informed 405 refugees** and asylum-seekers in Tirana about COVID-19 and health advice. For many, this has been the only source of information on the pandemic. At the border, UNHCR's partners have provided similar information to 8,570 new arrivals.

The **EU (IcSP) funded project** will continue until June 2021.



### Congolese refugee found home in Albania

"Albania is like a second home to me. Albanian people have extended a warm welcome to me and my little son".

**See more stories on:**

UNHCR Albania [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

## Key Priorities

- The Ministry of Interior, UNHCR and IOM work on ensuring **differentiated and effective pathways and procedures to address mixed movements**. This will require more and better reception capacities and services at borders and would streamline pathways on the basis of protection needs or profile and vulnerability of the arriving people, as well as their intention to remain in the country, with a focus on local integration.
- **Access to territory:** UNHCR and partners monitor arrivals at the border and pre-screening procedures. Since the re-opening of borders in June 2020, a few people have been provided access to the asylum procedure, while the majority of arrivals have been returned to Greece. UNHCR is continuously engaged with the authorities to effectively restore access to the asylum procedure.
- UNHCR leads an SDG Norway-funded project implemented by six UN Agencies, to enhance the capacity of border authorities to address the situation of persons with specific needs by improving referral mechanisms and respective services.
- **Asylum procedures:** In July 2020, UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** aimed at enhancing operational cooperation in the realization of **Albania's pledges made at the December 2019 Global Refugee Forum (GRF)**. UNHCR will support the implementation of the new Law on Asylum, ensuring that the asylum procedures, including an accelerated procedure, are fair and efficient.
- In the context of the EU-funded **IPA II project** "Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey", UNHCR will roll out the Quality Assurance Initiative, aimed at improving the quality of the national asylum system. UNHCR will work with the Government of Albania to implement the pledges made at the 2019 GRF, including the **commitment to strengthen the quality of decision-making in the field of asylum**. Cooperation with EASO will be reinforced in the context of the first EASO-Albania Roadmap on strengthening the asylum system.

- **Integration:** To expand opportunities for durable solutions and in line with UNHCR's multi-year strategic priorities, UNHCR is developing a Local Integration Strategy in Albania, which includes a stakeholder mapping and an Action Plan to set policy priorities and deliverables over several years.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR's main government counterpart is the Ministry of Interior, specifically the Directorates for asylum, border management and citizenship. UNHCR cooperates with other line Ministries, particularly the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, to improve integration prospects through inclusion of persons of concern in national systems.
- **External Engagement:** Key partners include the EU Delegation, the diplomatic community, UN agencies and civil society. As part of the UN Country Team, UNHCR contributes to the UN-Albania Programme of Cooperation, ensuring that needs of persons of concern are addressed through sustainable development. Albania is one of eight countries to pioneer UN's "Delivering as One" reform.

## Statelessness

- The majority of people at risk of statelessness in Albania are entitled to nationality. However, they experience difficulties in realizing this right. Population groups identified as at risk of statelessness include Roma and Egyptian minorities, as well as children of Albanian diaspora returnees.
- In recent years Albania has taken significant steps towards reducing the risk of statelessness. Fulfilling a **pledge made at the 2019 ExCom High-Level Segment on Statelessness**, Albania adopted the Law on Citizenship in July 2020, securing an unrestricted safeguard to citizenship to all children born in Albania who would otherwise render stateless.

## UNHCR Presence in Albania

### Staff:

14 National Staff

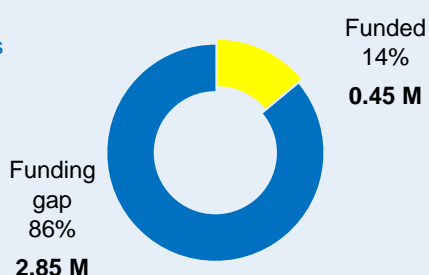
03 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Branch Office in Tirana

1 Field Unit in Korca

## Financial information as of 28 February 2021

 Financial Requirements  
**3.3 M**


UNHCR is grateful to the major donors of unearmarked contributions\* to the 2021 global programmes (USD, as of 28 February 2021):

Norway 80 M | Sweden 66.9 M | Netherlands 36.1 M | Denmark 34.6 M | Germany 22.1 M | Switzerland 16.4 M | Ireland 12.5 M | Belgium 11.9 M

\*Unearmarked contributions allow UNHCR for critical flexibility in how best to reach populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Above are donors of USD 10 million or more.

UNHCR Albania is also grateful for 2021 contributions from:

Norway through UN Albania SDG Acceleration Fund