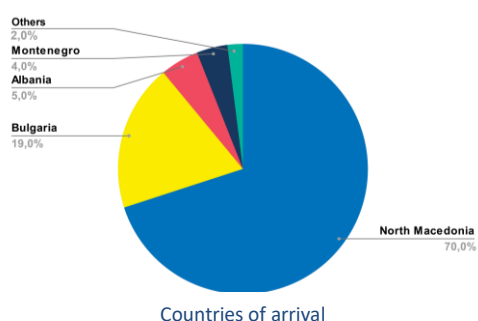


UNHCR SERBIA UPDATE

As at end-September, **6,228** (increase by 23%) **refugees and migrants are in the territory of Serbia**, of which 5,016 are accommodated in 13 operational governmental centres across the country, 26 in specialised institutions for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), 127 in private accommodation and 1,059 staying rough outside the centres.

8,978 newcomers to governmental centres were registered in September (vs. 7,101 in August). Twenty-eight percent of all arrivals originate from Afghanistan.

September saw **1,980** (decrease by 19%) **pushbacks** from neighboring countries to Serbia (74% from Hungary, 23% from Romania and 3% from Croatia). Nationals of Syria make up 53% of all the pushbacks, mainly men but also families, and 17% of all pushed back persons are young men and unaccompanied boys from Afghanistan.



Number of refugees and migrants in the territory of Serbia

[Nikola Kovačević \[video\]](#), a 32-year-old independent human rights lawyer from Belgrade, who tirelessly supports asylum-seekers and refugees, assisting them during the asylum procedure and in cases of collective expulsions/pushbacks, was [named UNHCR regional winner of Nansen Award for Refugee Assistance for Europe in 2021](#). This is the first time that this award was given to someone from Serbia.



UNHCR and Embassies of Switzerland and Norway announce the regional Nansen Award winner Nikola Kovacevic at press conference in Belgrade, ©UNHCR, 29 Sep 2021



EQPR event in Belgrade with two young refugees recently enrolled in Belgrade University, ©UNHCR, 14 Sep 2021

In September, the Asylum Office (AO) of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) of Serbia made two recognitions, granting asylum to two applicants originating from Iraq (represented by UNHCR project lawyers); six applications by nationals of Jordan and Cuba were rejected in September by the AO. Three hundred and forty persons expressed intention to seek asylum in Serbia in September, and 20 submitted actual applications. 1,307 asylum-seekers newly arrived in governmental centres in September, and 1,256 absconded from them. By end-September, the AO has granted **subsidiary protection to six** and **refugee status to five persons in 2021**.

UNHCR and partners counselled over 1,000 persons on asylum, of which 13 signed power of attorney over to UNHCR project lawyers; 11 refugees obtained ID cards and four obtained working permits in September.

UNHCR Serbia and [BeIDocs](#) 2021 International Documentary Film Festival joined hands in promoting two films featured in this year's ongoing festival: "[This Rain Will Never Stop](#)" – about a refugee from Syria who joins the volunteers of Red Cross in conflict-ridden Ukraine, and "[Silent Voice](#)" – featuring the story of a young LGBTI asylum-seeker from Chechnya who had lost his voice due to severe trauma.

On 14 September, the Council of Europe Office in Serbia and the UNHCR organized a [Briefing on the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees \(EQPR\) implementation in Serbia](#), with participation of Ambassador Drahoslav Štefánek, Special Representative of the CoE Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Serbia, Head of the Council of Europe (CoE) Office, UNHCR Representative and Representative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Serbia. Two refugees recognized in Serbia, recently enrolled at the University in Serbia, participated in this [event](#) by providing testimonies of their experience.

[Serbia and its ENIC/NARIC Qualification Agency are now one of the eleven participating European countries in the EQPR, determined on enhancing educational and employment opportunities for refugees.](#)

On 13 September, a round table on [Challenges and possibilities for inclusion and integration of refugees in Serbia was organized by partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre \(CRPC\) in Pirot](#), and in Obrenovac, Belgrade on 29 September. Presentations were given by the local Mayors, the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA), Swiss Embassy, IOM and UNHCR. This multi-stakeholder approach provided copious exchange on inclusion and integration, including challenges such as issuance of official ID card and health insurance.

[The town of Bosilegrad acceded to Cities #WithRefugees initiative and agreed to establish an Integration Centre within the municipal building, to be available to the public, the refugees and the asylum-seekers.](#) Cities of Sombor and Bosilegrad participated in online conference *Cities and their contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees*.

Following the completion of *Skills for Employment* paid three-month internship of refugees with [IKEA Serbia](#), seven refugees signed contracts of employment with IKEA.

In close cooperation with UNHCR Greece and Greek MoI, on 20 September, UNHCR Serbia organized a **Seminar on Access to Citizenship and Naturalisation**, featuring participation of practitioners of the AO, Directorate for Foreigners and Directorate of Administration of the Serbian MoI, as well as the SCRM. Greek government General Secretariat for Citizenship and UNHCR Greece colleagues presented the topical legislation in Greece concerning naturalisation of persons awarded international protection, statistics, solutions and experiences of refugees in Greece. UNHCR Serbia presented international standards in access to citizenship and naturalisation, and a legal expert from the Law Faculty in Belgrade proposed the possible way forward for Serbia.

UNHCR and partner CRPC supported three LGBTI asylum-seekers from Tunisia in participating in Belgrade Pride Parade on 18 Sep.



Delicacy Monday social cohesion event, Belgrade, ©CRPC, 27 Sep 2021

On 27 September, UNHCR, its partner CRPC, GRAD Cultural Centre and Hospitality and Tourism Vocational School organized a **Delicacy Monday** social cohesion event in Belgrade, where refugees from Iran and Afghanistan prepared their national dishes together with Serbian students who prepared local ones. The event attracted some 60 participants from the diplomatic corps, the academia, and the (I)NGO sector, received good media attention and promoted inclusion and integration.

Eighty refugees and asylum-seekers benefitted from Serbian lessons in governmental centres and online, provided by partners CRPC and Sigma Plus.

Partners CRPC and Indigo supported over 170 refugee and Roma IDP schoolchildren with school supplies, bus tickets and clothes, also with cultural mediation, applying for available secondary school-level scholarships, etc.

Partners Danish Refugee Council, International Aid Network and Indigo organised over 235 psychosocial support, recreational, non-formal educational and interactive health workshops in asylum and reception centres throughout the country.



Asylum counselling in Bogovađa Asylum Centre,
©UNHCR, Sep 2021

Partner IDEAS trained 17 child protection workers (guardians) from Niš, Preševo and Loznica on motivating UASC to maintain personal and space hygiene and integration of refugee schoolchildren.

The 4th **Statelessness Round Table** was organized by UNHCR Serbia on 21 September, in cooperation with Ministry for Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG) and the Office of the Ombudsperson. The Round Table gathered some 100 participants - registrars, police officers, social workers, health workers from maternity wards, municipal free legal aid providers and local trustees of the SCRM. Focus was put on birth registration of newborn children in situations where the parent(s) lacks personal documents. **Participants agreed to jointly implement the**

2020 Instruction, issued by four competent Serbian ministries (MPALSG, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Veteran Affairs and Ministry of Interior), **which regulates birth registration in cases of undocumented parents.**

UNHCR partners A11 Initiative and Praxis visited 15 Roma (IDP) settlements in six municipalities and provided free legal counselling and assistance to 123 beneficiaries, in accessing social assistance and (birth) registration. **Three persons thus had their Serbian nationality granted/confirmed in September.**

With regard to child, early and forced marriages (CEFM) activities, the [workshops](#) for school children were organized by partner Praxis in primary schools “Jovan Cvijić” in Kostolac and “Jovan Jovanović Zmaj” in Srpski Krstur. A total of 49 pupils attended these workshops. The schools agreed to introduce CEFM workshops into regular curriculum.

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