

UNHCR SERBIA UPDATE

3,182 newcomers to governmental centres were registered in May (comp. to 4,344 in April). Arrivals came mainly through North Macedonia (78%), Bulgaria (12%), Albania (6%), Montenegro (4%) and a handful from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey. More than 35% of all arrivals originate from Pakistan and 35% from Afghanistan, followed by [in order of predominance] Bangladesh, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, etc. May saw 1,186 (increase by 3%) **pushbacks** from neighboring countries to Serbia (59% from Hungary, 29% from Romania, 8% from Croatia and 4% from BiH). Nationals of Syria make up 42% of all the pushbacks, mainly men but also families, pushed back from Hungary, Romania, and Croatia.



Two refugees in Krnjača AC were provided with tablets in support of their accessing online learning, @CRPC, May 2021



Dean of the Faculty of Applied Arts Goran Čpajak and UNHCR Representative Francesca Bonelli signed a MoU on cooperation, @UNHCR, Belgrade, 24 May 2021

As at end-May, **5,603** (decrease by 9%) **refugees and migrants are in the territory of Serbia**, of which 4,550 are accommodated in 19 governmental centres across the country, 39 in specialised institutions for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), 124 in private accommodation and 890 staying rough outside the centres.

In May 2021, the Asylum Office (AO) of the Ministry of Interior **granted subsidiary protection to two persons** (one of whom represented by UNHCR project lawyers), whilst rejecting three applications. One hundred and twelve foreigners expressed intention to seek asylum in Serbia, and 19 submitted actual asylum applications. **AO has thus far in 2021 granted refugee status to one and subsidiary protection to three persons.**

UNHCR and partners counselled over 660 persons on asylum, of which two 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. Twelve refugees received ID cards and four received work permits in May owing to efforts of UNHCR legal partner Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR). BCHR published the periodic report [Right to Asylum in the Republic of Serbia - January-March 2021](#).

On 5 May, a **vulnerable refugee from Iran departed on resettlement to France**, having first received Covid immunization in Serbia. **UNHCR is most grateful to the French authorities for accepting this person.**

On 25 May, **UNHCR Serbia and Faculty of Applied Arts of the University in Belgrade signed a MoU on cooperation** in enrolment of talented refugee students and enabling their access to available scholarships. The two partners are already **preparing two former UASC from Afghanistan, recognised refugees in Serbia, to enroll in Faculty of Applied Arts and begin their studies in October this year.**

Also on 25 May, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government signed a Memorandum on Cooperation with the Serbian Red Cross, to distribute over 12,000 hygiene family packages to the most vulnerable citizens in 179 substandard settlements in 29 cities and municipalities in Serbia, in addition to ongoing campaign on promotion of Covid-19 immunization by UNHCR and UNDP in informal Roma settlements. This a/m new segment of joint Covid-19 response will benefit from financial support from the GIZ, the Open Society Foundation, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and the UNHCR as partners in this humanitarian initiative.

Eleven refugees and asylum-seekers from Syria, Burundi, Iran, Sudan, South Sudan and Libya (including four women) began their three-month internship with IKEA Serbia last week. The refugees will be receiving salaries and benefits akin to those of IKEA staffs, will contribute to the diversity of the IKEA team in Serbia, strengthen their capacities, improve their Serbian skills and gain longer-term employment. **This project is a joint UNHCR-IKEA success and a milestone that sets an important example for refugee integration in Serbia.**

Partners Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC), BCHR and Sigma Plus **supported the local integration** of more than **130** asylum-seekers and refugees through identifying **employment opportunities, learning equipment provision, non-formal education, cultural orientation, Serbian lessons, and support to childcare system.** Seventeen (UASC) children were in receipt of “**cash for education**” and monthly bus tickets. Four schoolchildren received continuous **cultural mediation** support. Thirty-seven households/59 persons are currently supported through **cash-based interventions (CBI)** by UNHCR.

Partners International Aid Network (IAN), Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN) and Indigo provided **individual, tailored psychological/psychosocial support** to 116 adults and children (UASC) and organized 40 PSS and 76 non-formal educational workshops at government centres and UASC Homes throughout the country, as well as for privately accommodated persons in Belgrade.

On the occasion of World Day of Cultural Diversity, the youth offices from the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac in the south, together with young refugees from the Preševo Reception/Transit Centre (RTC), organized a [trip to the countryside](#) where they exchanged their traditions and customs. On the same occasion, partner IDEAS issued a [statement](#) highlighting xenophobia that spreads mostly by Internet, and the role of educational institutions in preventing racial, religious and ethnic hatred and intolerance.

Partners Praxis and A11 Initiative conducted field visits to six municipalities throughout the country which host **Roma (IDP) informal settlements** and provided information, counselling, and/or legal assistance to a total of **148** persons. **Ten persons had their nationality granted/confirmed in May** owing to activities of these UNHCR partners and 18 additional personal documents were obtained.

After a long time of suspension due to COVID-19 situation, UNHCR offices of Serbia and Skopje organized a cross border mission to exchange information and practices on the trends of arrivals and departures from North Macedonia to Serbia, profiling of as well as modalities applied by respective offices regarding community based activities.

Owing to cross-border cooperation of UNHCR offices in Belgrade and Podgorica, an undocumented person from Serbia was supported in obtaining a Serbian ID and passport, legalize her stay in Montenegro and the status of her children with another undocumented person from Montenegro, and hopefully pave her way to a Montenegrin nationality.

On 18 May, under the auspices of EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), UNHCR and partner IDEAS organised a conference "[US and Them: deconstruction of fear; rise of xenophobia towards refugees and migrants in public space](#)". The panelists included representatives of the Commissioner for Equality, the media and human rights experts.

Partner DRC organized two workshops for 12 female asylum-seekers (Farsi and Arabic speakers) accommodated in Krnjača AC, themed *Position of women, minors and other vulnerable categories of population in asylum proceedings* and *Status and rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Serbia - legislation and practice*.

Partner IDEAS conducted workshops for 23 UASC accommodated in Bogovađa AC and Niš Home for UASC, themed "Child rights and obligations", which also tackled the issues of the right to asylum and residence in the Republic of Serbia.

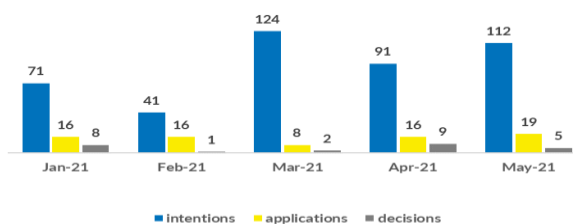
UNDP-UNHCR project for improvement of **social inclusion of young Roma adults and young refugees** continued in May with a workshop for peer educators and refugee youth in Vrdnik on 7-9 May.

With regard to child, early and forced marriages (CEFM) activities, workshops for 57 schoolchildren were organized by partner Praxis in three primary schools in Smederevo, Subotica and Niš. These primary schools agreed to introduce a CEFM workshop into the regular curriculum for the upcoming 2021-2022 schoolyear.

Refugees for Refugees (R4R) - a pilot BCHR project, involving the exchange of experiences between integrated refugees and asylum seekers who need additional support in integrating in Serbian society - marked during May some progress. The project is ensuring adequate support and motivation, familiarisation with the local culture and acceptance of the new social environment to asylum seekers. Information regarding employment, education, health care, easier navigation through new system of social rules and values, as well as high-quality and meaningful leisure activities is main core of this community activity.



Asylum intentions/applications/decisions



Refugees in Pirot RTC acquiring Serbian language, @Sigma plus, 21 May 2021

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