

## SERBIA MONTHLY UPDATE

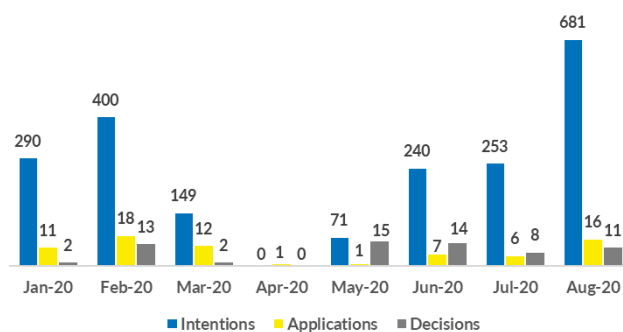
In more than **110** field visits and remotely, UNHCR and partners **counselled over 400 foreigners** on seeking asylum in Serbia, **provided information to over 2,000** new arrivals and **supported the integration of 129** asylum seekers and refugees. Two new asylum-seekers gave UNHCR project lawyers power of attorney to represent them in substantive asylum procedures. Partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) obtained 17 ID cards and 11 work permits for asylum-seekers.

BCHR published a periodic report [Right to Asylum in the Republic of Serbia in January-June 2020](#). The Report provides analysis of access to the asylum procedure which has been negatively impacted by Covid-19 related state of emergency and border closures and a comprehensive overview of public discourse on refugees/migrants in the first six months of 2020.

According to Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), only four cases of Coronavirus infection have been confirmed among the refugee/migrant population since the beginning of the pandemic, and all successfully recovered.

Another four casualties amongst the mixed migration flow were unfortunately recorded in August: three men drowned while attempting to cross irregularly into Hungary over Tisza river using boats, and one received fatal stabbing wounds in a brawl with other migrant men in downtown Belgrade. The number of reported casualties since the beginning of 2020 amounts to 12 (of which 11 drownings).

Asylum intentions/applications/decisions



Six hundred and eighty-one **intentions** to seek asylum were registered in August (compared to 253 in July) and **16 persons applied for asylum**. The **Asylum Office (AO) adjudicated on 11 asylum applications** in the first instance, **granting refugee status to one, subsidiary protection to two persons and rejecting eight asylum applications**. By end-August, AO granted international protection in Serbia to 16 persons (nine were granted asylum and seven subsidiary protection) in 2020.

The number of foreigners that **newly arrived** in Serbia and were profiled by UNHCR **rose by 26% to 4,044** (from 3,203 in July); 88% arrived from North Macedonia, 6% from Bulgaria and 5% from Albania (through Kosovo<sup>1</sup>), etc.

The number of residents in Asylum (AC) or Reception/Transit Centres (RTC), slightly increased from 4,233 at the beginning to **4,325** at the end of the month. They comprised 1,577 citizens of Afghanistan, 1,190 of Syria, 318 of Pakistan, 276 of Bangladesh, 183 of Iran, 119 of Iraq, and 662 from 47 other countries. 3,641 are adult men, 217 adult women and 467 children, including 141 UASC. The number of foreigners observed staying rough outside centres increased by 100 to **920**, mainly in Belgrade and border areas. Five reception/transit centres accommodating mainly single men remain overcrowded.

The number of recorded **collective expulsions** from neighbouring countries **decreased by 20% counting 2,213 in August (comp. to 2,754 in July)**: 1,409 from Romania, 568 from Hungary, 138 from Croatia and 98 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many victims alleged denial of access to asylum procedures or mistreatment by officials of these countries.

Following several months of restrictions, as of 22 August the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs allowed visits to homes for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), under strict rules for distancing, monitoring and hygiene.

UNHCR partners IDEAS, Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) established a [Coalition for protection of refugee and migrant children from abuse and neglect](#). The work of the Coalition will be focused on improvement of identification of child survivors and provision of legal protection as well as capacity building of frontline workers. Partner BCHR **submitted a criminal complaint** against a security staffer in Bogovada AC who allegedly slapped an UASC accommodated in the Centre and informed the Ombudsperson of the incident.

UNHCR kept regular contact with **113 refugees** and asylum-seekers in **private accommodation**, of whom **73** qualified for financial support, including **45** who had lost their income due to the COVID-19 situation.

UNHCR delivered an **equipment package** to *Ishtar* restaurant - a recently opened business ran by an Iraqi refugee and approved five new requests by asylum-seekers for **Serbian language courses**. A total of 19 persons of concern accommodated in government

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

centres were attending language classes supported by UNHCR, including 10 children (of which 3 UASC). The joint Integration Team of SCRM and UNHCR met following a month's summer break and will continue to meet with newly recognized refugees as of 1 September in order to develop their individual integration plans.

CRPC created a handout leaflet with contact information on [Information about Covid-19 for refugees in Serbia](#) joint Fb Page of UNHCR partners and translated it into Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi, Pashto, Urdu and English.

Partner Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN) supported 120 beneficiaries accommodated in Banja Koviljača AC, Šid RTC, Padinska Skela detention centre, Vodovodska and Zmaj UASC institutions through **individual and group psychosocial counselling** and supported 73 beneficiaries through **workshops on self-reliance and integration**.

UNHCR Covid-related deliveries surpassed the value of **203,640 USD** with the delivery of 800 bed linen sets (donated by IKEA) and 500 scabies creams delivered to Reception/Transit and Asylum Centres in Serbia.



Meeting with RAE IDPs in Mladenovac, ©UNHCR, August 2020

On 28 Aug, UNHCR organised a Return-Related Informative Meeting with internally displaced persons (IDP) in Mladenovac when six Roma IDP families in the "container settlement" were provided with information on the UNHCR project related to IDP return to Kosovo<sup>2</sup>, implemented by DRC and the on-going housing project in Kosovo<sup>3</sup> RRK V, implemented by IOM.

Government of Serbia adopted the Revised Action Plan for Chapter 23 which includes amendments of the by-laws - *The Instruction on administering registry books and forms of registry books* and the *Rulebook on the procedure for the issuance of birth notification and form of the issuance of birth notification in a health care institution* - that had been preventing timely birth registration of children born from *sans papiers* parent(s), following the advocacy efforts and inputs to the Action Plan submitted by UNHCR partner Praxis.

Praxis visited 18 Roma settlements in August and identified 26 cases in need of free legal aid; 11 procedures were successfully solved in August and **8 persons had their nationality granted or confirmed in August**, while 19 personal documents were obtained. Partner A11 Initiative supported 11 Roma IDPs in accessing housing and social protection solutions, documentation, etc.

In the scope of **Regional Housing Programme/SRB5** sub-project, keys to **64 apartments** were delivered to refugee families in Temerin on 27 August.

UNHCR facilitated the AFP story on unaccompanied and separated children in Serbia: [Childhood packed in a rucksack: young refugees at risk in the Balkans](#).

IOM/UNHCR issued a Press Release on [Addressing Covid-19 Challenges within the Migrant and Refugee Response in the Western Balkans](#) joint project financed by the European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

Newly arrived UNHCR Representative Francesca Bonelli [presented her credentials](#) to Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić and officially assumed her position on 27 August.

#### UNHCR Serbia is grateful for the support of:

Canada | Czech Republic | Denmark | France | Germany | Italy | Netherlands | Norway | Private donors Australia | Private donors Italy | Private donors Japan | Private donors Republic of Korea | Private donors Spain | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Serbia | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America

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IKEA SEE, UniCredit Bank, Unilever

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> ibid