

SERBIA MONTHLY UPDATE

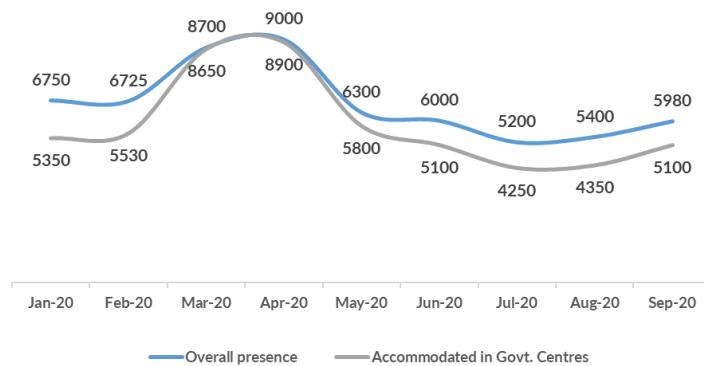
Three hundred and eighty-two intentions to seek asylum were registered in September (compared to 681 in August) and 19 persons applied for asylum (comp. to 16 in August). The Asylum Office (AO) adjudicated on one asylum application by rejecting it. Twelve asylum-seekers gave Power of Attorney to UNHCR project lawyers in September for representation in asylum procedure. By end-September, AO granted international protection in Serbia to 16 persons (nine were granted asylum and seven subsidiary protection) in 2020.

1,244 refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (incl. 135 Roma) received legal and asylum counselling in over 260 field visits and 92 focus-group discussions undertaken by UNHCR and partners.

Partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) launched an online campaign [#proveri_vest](#) which aims to present facts refuting the fake news relating to refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in Serbia.

Five new cases of Covid-19 amongst the refugees/migrants have been reported, all recovering successfully, bringing the total number of cases recorded since March to seven (0.1% of the total refugee/migrant population present in the country).

On 1 Sep, the body of a 16 y.o. boy from Libya was pulled out of the Sava River in Belgrade city centre by the police; further details remain unknown. On 16 Sep, UNHCR partner NGO was informed by two men from Afghanistan that another two of their compatriots drowned in Drina river, when the whole group was being made to swim back to Serbia by the BiH border police earlier that day. This brings the total number of casualties in 2020 thus far to 15, of which 13 drownings.



The number of observed arrivals decreased by 32% to 2,730 (from 4,000 in August): 85% arrived from North Macedonia, 8% from Albania (through Kosovo¹), 5% from Bulgaria, etc.; 56% originated from Afghanistan, 16% from Pakistan, 12% from Syria, 6% from Bangladesh, etc.; 82% were adult males, 3% women and 14% children, including 250 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) (comp. to 172 in August). At the same time, the number of persons pushed back from neighbouring countries in September – counting 3,115 – not only exceeds the number of arrivals in September but is also the highest monthly number of pushbacks recorded since UNHCR Serbia began monitoring pushbacks in the spring of 2016. Lower number of observed arrivals and high number of pushbacks may also imply that a significant number of new arrivals remains undetected and proceeds towards the western EU borders shortly upon arrival to Serbia. Twenty-one percent of all pushbacks from neighbouring countries reported denial of access to asylum and 19% reported physical abuse, mistreatment, extortion, et al.

The number of residents in Asylum (AC) or Reception/Transit Centres (RTC), increased by 17% to 5,064 at the end of the month. They comprised 2,020 citizens of Afghanistan, 1,498 of Syria, 232 of Bangladesh, 219 of Pakistan, 183 of Iran, 161 of Iraq, and 751 from 49 other countries. 4,336 are adult men, 202 adult women and 526 children, including 174 UASC. With the colder weather, the number of foreigners observed staying rough outside governmental centres decreased by 16% at the end of the month to 780, mainly in border areas and in Belgrade.

On 24-25 Sep, UNHCR/IDEAS and the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs organized a seminar for field workers, guardians and regional coordinators from seven cities and towns across Serbia, on "[Strengthening child protection of refugee children in Serbia](#)".

UNHCR and partners Danish Refugee Council (DRC), IDEAS and Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) conducted four [workshops for UASC Peer Educators](#) in September, in Belgrade and Bogovada AC, where the issues of the asylum procedure and the legal framework in Serbia, and also the damaging practices of irregular movement were discussed. On 25 Sep, 11 UASC (Peer Educators) and three young adult asylum-seekers joined the second day of the [Roma UN Volunteers Summer Camp](#) in Vrdnik in

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

Fruška Gora - a four-day workshop organized within joint UNHCR-UNDP project, and promoted friendships and synergies between the two vulnerable groups - young Roma and UASC.

Serbian Commissioner for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) V. Cucić informed that **400 refugee/migrant children started attending schools Serbia-wide in September**, adding that they were very well received in most schools. UNHCR approved **cash-based support** for 67 refugees/asylum-seekers in private accommodation for October 2020 and a one-off financial support for 11 refugee children (7 families) to facilitate the purchase of books, school materials, etc. Thirteen elementary school children will be supported by UNHCR in mastering the Serbian language and through learning support in other school subjects till end-2020. An asylum-seeker from Burundi will benefit from advanced photography course in Belgrade and one asylum-seeker from Iran will receive a laptop to support her learning and preparations for entry exam for Law Faculty in Belgrade University. UNHCR partner Sigma plus provided **intensive on-site Serbian lessons** to 74 adult students in four government centres and to another 31 students through Sigma plus [online platform](#) for learning the Serbian language. UNHCR/IDEAS guardians enrolled three UASC into local schools and began procuring school necessities, also distributed cash cards to 16 elementary and high school UASC children under "**Cash for Education**" project; partner CRPC provided four children and families with continuous cultural mediation in their schools and provided UASC in Bogovada AC with lessons in Serbian and English languages, and partner Indigo organized almost 400 non-formal educational, recreational and PSS activities in the centres in the south and east of the country.



Delivery of keys to refugees for apartments in Kruševac, ©UNHCR, 17 Sep 2020

On 30 Sep, partner BCHR organized a webinar on "**Recognizing Refugee qualifications**", featuring presentations by Council of Europe and NARIC Italy, and attended by 46 representatives of state institutions, IGOs and NGOs. One refugee from Sudan was supported by BCHR to obtain a seasonal job and one refugee from Burundi gained a more permanent **employment**. One client from Libya succeeded in becoming a member of the medical chamber and is being supported in looking for work. Ten ID Cards and seven works permits were received by asylum-seekers and refugees in September thanks to BCHR's efforts.

Of the 20,000 soap bars **Unilever donation** to UNHCR, 19,040 were delivered to SCRM, 240 will be distributed to UASC Homes and 720 to refugees in private accommodation. The value of Covid-19 related UNHCR procurements in March-September surpassed USD 207,000.

In the scope of **Regional Housing Programme**, keys to **40 apartments** were delivered to refugee families in Kruševac on 17 Sep.

Partner Praxis organised six workshops related to **child, early and forced marriages** with **101 Roma schoolchildren** from primary schools in Niš, Kragujevac, Lazarevac, Novi Sad, Obrenovac and Bačka Palanka. Praxis also resolved 12 legal procedures in September and helped eight persons at risk of statelessness to obtain/confirm their citizenship, helped 12 persons obtain personal documents and reimbursed the costs of obtaining ID Cards for 102 persons.

UNHCR and UNDP jointly produced the story "**Roma youth for Roma community during the COVID-19 pandemic**". Partner IDEAS created an [informational leaflet for children on human trafficking and exploitation](#) and [information leaflet for UASC on asylum in Serbia](#). UNHCR Serbia compiled and produced the [UNHCR Fact Sheet September 2020](#), [UNHCR Serbia August 2020 Statistical Snapshot](#), [Serbia Update August 2020](#) and [Site Profiles for August 2020](#).

UNHCR partners updated on a daily basis the [joint Fb page on COVID-19](#) information, and translated relevant information into Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Kurdish and Pashto.

UNHCR Serbia is grateful for the support of:

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