

Bulgaria

February 2023

UNHCR has supported the government to provide essential aid and key protection services as **1 million refugees from Ukraine** transited Bulgaria since the start of the war.

UNHCR has expanded its support to **50,400 remaining** in the country as of February 2023, providing assistance and protection, and livelihoods inclusion and integration opportunities.

UNHCR is assisting Bulgaria to strengthen its asylum system in line with international and EU standards, amid **an increase in arrivals of Afghan and Syrian asylum seekers**.

UNHCR POPULATION STATISTICS AS OF MID-2022*

Refugees	144,921
Asylum-seekers	10,132
Stateless persons	1,129

Top three countries of origin*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Ukraine	119,450	Afghanistan	6,244
Syrian Arab Republic	22,226	Syrian Arab Republic	2,451
Iraq	1,102	Morocco	544

*UNHCR 2022 Mid-Year Trends and UNHCR [data finder](#)

UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION RESPONSE

As of mid-February, **152,500 refugees from Ukraine** were registered for temporary protection in Bulgaria.

Safe Space, Protection and Support Hubs: UNHCR and partners have established 6 Blue Dot Hubs that provide a safe space, support, and referrals for health care, legal, education and psychosocial support. **64,320** people have received support at the Blue Dots so far.

Communication with Communities: UNHCR is improving community-based protection, outreach, and communication with communities by strengthening outreach channels, drawing on experience in participatory exercises with refugee and host communities. Part of the digital communication with communities is the local [Help page](#).

Support to the most vulnerable: UNHCR and its partner, the Bulgarian Red Cross, are providing cash assistance through the Cash for Protection programme to the most vulnerable households of refugees from Ukraine.

HIGHLIGHTS

Refugee Empowerment

UNHCR has supported the establishment of a Refugee Advisory Board (RAB) to provide a platform for refugee participation in policy-making processes. In 2023, UNHCR is training 15 newly selected members.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

UNHCR and partners work with authorities to prevent and mitigate SEA risks, and to ensure a robust complaints mechanism. This includes establishing PSEA focal points, joint risks assessments, partner capacity- building, and community outreach about trafficking and SEA risks.

Humanitarian Relief Items

73,116 refugees from Ukraine have received humanitarian support through relief items, such as blankets, kitchen sets, hygienic kits, and other essentials through UNHCR and partners in 2022. The distribution campaign is ongoing.

ABANDONED HOSPITAL REVIVED AS A HOME FOR REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN BULGARIA



Nata Ellis, a tech entrepreneur originally from Odesa living in Bulgaria, saw the potential of a deserted hospital in her adopted city of Plovdiv to become a shelter for refugees forced to flee the war in Ukraine. Watch the full story [here](#).

Key Priorities

- **Access to territory and procedure:** UNHCR and partners regularly monitor borders and immigration detention centers to ensure that asylum seekers can access territory and fair and efficient procedures, and to provide information and legal assistance.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR supports Bulgaria in enhancing the quality of asylum procedures and building the capacity of authorities to ensure fair and efficient asylum procedures. UNHCR also provides translated guidance materials and summaries of European and national asylum case law, for use by administrative and judicial authorities.
- **Integration:** UNHCR promotes the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and advocates for a State-led integration programme. UNHCR works with local authorities, employers, social partners and refugees to help with job-matching, start-ups, access to education and financial inclusion.
- **Child protection:** UNHCR advocates for early identification, access to adequate reception, care and services within the national child protection system for asylum-seeking and refugee children, including unaccompanied and separated ones. UNHCR guides and capacitates relevant stakeholders.
- **GBV:** UNHCR works with State, humanitarian partners and community members to raise awareness and enhance capacity to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. UNHCR advocates for women's empowerment and published a [video](#) during the 16 Days of Activism against GBV.
- **MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support):** UNHCR and partners provide psychological first aid and psychosocial support to asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR works with

government and humanitarian partners to further expand MHPSS support to people fleeing from war zones, facing psychological distress, and suffering.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports Bulgaria's government to ensure policies and legislation are in line with international standards, and promotes a comprehensive refugee response, grounded in multi-stakeholder, "whole-of-society" approach that includes local authorities, international organizations, civil society partners, the private sector, media, and refugees themselves.
- UNHCR works with nine partner NGOs to safeguard the rights and well-being of people forced to flee, deliver assistance, and promote refugees' social protection and access to livelihoods, education opportunities and economic inclusion.

Statelessness

- Bulgaria acceded to both Statelessness Conventions in 2012 and has had a statelessness determination procedure in place since 2017.

UNHCR Presence in Bulgaria

Staff:

16 Local Staff

9 International Staff

Offices:

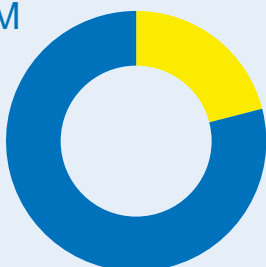
1 Country Office in Sofia

Financial information (February 2023)

Financial requirements

USD 19.4 M

Funding gap
79%
15.4 M



Funded
21%
4 M

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