

## UNHCR SERBIA UPDATE

**3,931** newly registered persons were noted in March (comp. to 2,273 in February). Most new arrivals transit through North Macedonia, but also through Albania, Bulgaria and Montenegro. The main countries of origin of arrivals to Serbia remain Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria, with nationals of Somalia and Eritrea also in the top five main nationalities of arrivals.

Month of March saw **2,121** (5,956 in February) **pushbacks** from neighbouring countries to Serbia (47% from Romania, 44% from Hungary, 5% from Croatia and 4% from Bosnia and Herzegovina). Nationals of Syria make up 50% of all the pushbacks, followed by nationals of Afghanistan, Morocco, Libya, Palestine, etc. Pushed-back persons are mainly younger men, a few women and a dozen children (mainly unaccompanied boys from Afghanistan).

One more case of Covid was identified among refugees/migrants, hospitalized but stable, bringing the total number of cases since the start of the Covid epidemic to **32** (including two casualties, both with co-morbidities).

On 26 March, **Serbian authorities began a campaign of vaccination of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants accommodated in 19 governmental centres across the country. Serbia became amongst the first countries in Europe to start vaccinating both refugees and asylum seekers in the centres and those accommodated privately.** Five hundred and fifty refugees and migrants in government centres expressed interest in vaccination and **309** have been vaccinated by end-March. Additional **32** privately accommodated refugees have also been vaccinated against Covid. To promote vaccination, Batut Institute for Public Health, UNHCR, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) and WHO sensitized the refugees and migrants in terms of health promotion and protection from Covid.



Vaccination against Covid in Krnjača Asylum Centre in Belgrade, @UNHCR, 26 March 2021



Joint health promotion activities of UNHCR and DRC in Tosin bunar informal Roma settlement, Belgrade, @UNHCR, 19 March 2021

The number of residents in Asylum (AC) or Reception/Transit Centres (RTC), again slightly decreased compared to end-February to **4,460** at the end of March 2021. They comprised 1,754 citizens of Afghanistan, 888 of Syria, 317 of Pakistan, 206 of Somalia, 188 of Bangladesh and 1,107 from 50 other countries. 3,797 are adult men, 256 adult women and 407 children, including 74 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). **A total of 5,463 new refugees and migrants were counted to be present in the country at end-March**, including those staying outside of governmental centres. The authorities continued systematically gathering refugees and migrants staying outside the centres, in downtown Belgrade and in border areas, and transferring them to official centres with vacant places.

In March 2021, the Asylum Office (AO) of the Ministry of Interior granted refugee status to none, whilst rejecting two applications. One hundred and twenty-four foreigners expressed intention to seek asylum in Serbia. Eight submitted actual asylum applications. **No persons have been awarded international protection in Serbia thus far in 2021, except two unaccompanied children were awarded temporary residence on humanitarian grounds.**

UNHCR Representative met with the Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development Mr. Branko Ružić, agreed that access to **tertiary education for refugee students should be envisaged and promoted by the national system of education**, and agreed on organising jointly a competition for secondary students in Serbia on the topic of refugee inclusion.

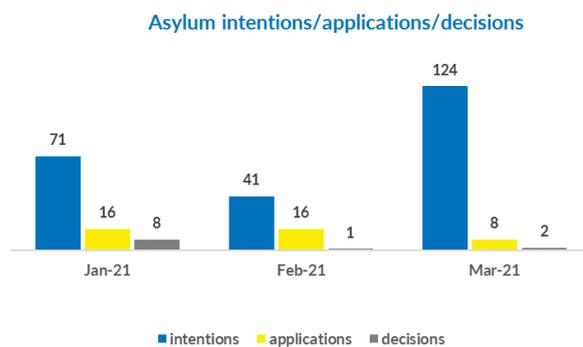
UNHCR's partner IDEAS completed the [Guidelines for identification and status determination procedures of UASC](#) and published ["Them and us - \(de\)construction of fear"](#) report, dealing with xenophobia in the Serbian society.

**Over 750 persons were counselled on asylum in Serbia in March by UNHCR and partners**, and 12 opted for signing a power of attorney to UNHCR project lawyers. Partner Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN) performed two psychological assessments in March, one for the purpose of asylum procedure and one for the purpose of criminal proceedings.

To support their well-being, partners Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Indigo and International Aid Network (IAN) organized 180 creative, educational and occupational, as well as recreational workshops with refugees and asylum-seekers singles, families and children in centres across the country. PIN, Indigo and IAN specifically aimed at promoting mental health through 31 PSS workshops and 120 group and individual counselling session with adults and children in governmental centres and specialised institutions for UASC.

Thirty-nine households/64 persons are currently being supported by UNHCR through cash-based interventions. Eighty-four refugees and asylum seekers were supported in opting for local integration through support to accessing education, finding private accommodation, finding employment, assistance in communication with state institutions, learning equipment provision, access to vocational trainings, etc. Cultural mediation support was provided to three elementary and one secondary-school pupil. **Twenty refugees received ID cards and five received work permits in March** through interventions of partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR).

BCHR managed to have a high school diploma of a girl from Burundi recognized by Serbian ENIC/NARIC. As part of **Refugees for Refugees** programme implemented by BCHR, a specialized training for refugee peer supporters was organized on 19 March when they were introduced to their duties and activities and necessary legal knowledge. UNHCR and partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) met with **National Employment Service (NES)** on 29 March and agreed on collaboration in ensuring access to vocational trainings for refugees via NES.



Non-formal educational workshop in Bosilegrad RTC, @Indigo, March

UNHCR corporate partner **IKEA SEE issued a call for applications for re-skilling programme for refugees and asylum-seekers in Serbia**, in order to enhance their employment prospects.

On the 10th anniversary of the Syrian crisis, Serbia's public service broadcaster RTS featured a 20 min [interview with UNHCR Serbia Representative](#), who highlighted the fact that the Syrian conflict has produced 6.6 million refugees from Syria worldwide and 6.7 million internally displaced persons within Syria.

On **International Women's Day (IWD)**, to celebrate women from all walks of life, their achievements and contribution, the UN in Serbia (UNHCR, UNFPA, OHCHR, UNV, RCO) organized "[Women's Day Coffee Jamming](#)". The event gathered four Serbian women, proven community leaders within UN agencies' projects and an Iranian refugee painter who is teaching the children and adults in the Krnjača AC to paint. Partners IAN, Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), Indigo and DRC organized celebrations of IWD and Nowruz in centres across the country and ensured small gifts packages (containing hygiene items, PPE and makeup) for female participants in different workshops organized to promote women's rights and gender equality.

With regards to **child, early and forced marriages**, on 11 March, a workshop was organized by partner Praxis at elementary school "Dušan Radović" in Novi Sad. The workshop was attended by 16 Roma and non-Roma children, who were given promotional material (bags, postcards and brochures) after the workshop.

Partners A11 and Praxis engaged in visits to 14 Roma informal settlements and provided 190 persons with counselling and assistance in accessing the right to housing, personal documents, social and financial assistance. Praxis obtained 26 personal documents for Roma (IDPs) and **six persons had their nationality confirmed or granted in March thanks to Praxis' efforts**.

Sixteen refugee families from BiH and Croatia received keys to apartments in Kikinda under **Regional Housing Programme (RHP)** SRB5 component and 12 families received purchased houses in Grocka near Belgrade under SRB9 component of RHP.

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