

Bosnia and Herzegovina

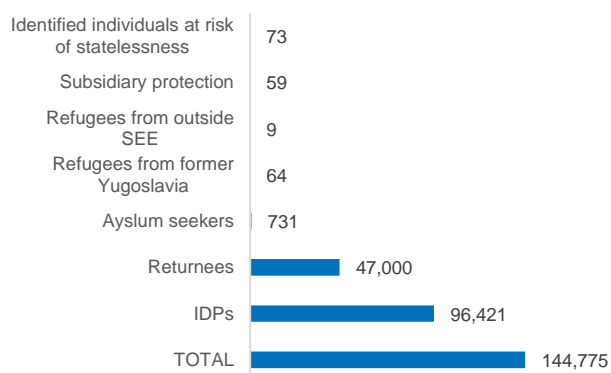
31 December 2019

During 2019, BiH authorities registered total irregular arrivals to the country of **29,196** refugees and migrants which represents a **21% increase** compared to **2018** when 24,067 people arrived in the country.

Effective access to asylum remains a key challenge in BiH. While 95% of all irregular arrivals 'express intention to seek asylum', **less than 3% (784 people)** chose or managed to register as asylum seekers and register their claims with the Sector for Asylum.

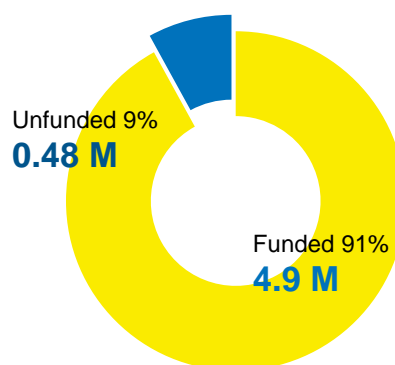
In 2019, there were **44 positive decisions** (41 subsidiary protection 3 refugee status), **35 negative decisions**, and **988 cases suspended** (asylum procedure suspended primarily due to onward movement / change in residence which was not registered).

POPULATION OF CONCERN IN THE COUNTRY



FUNDING (2019)

USD 5.38 M



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 20 National Staff
- 5 International Staff
- 3 IUNV
- 2 EU Aid Volunteers
- 9 ICs
- 6 Interns

Offices:

- 1 Country Office in Sarajevo
- 1 Field presence in Banja Luka
- 1 Field Unit in Bihac



UNHCR Protection Liaison Assistant and asylum seeker in TRC Borici, Una-Sana Canton PHOTO: UNHCR/A.Gabellone

Highlights

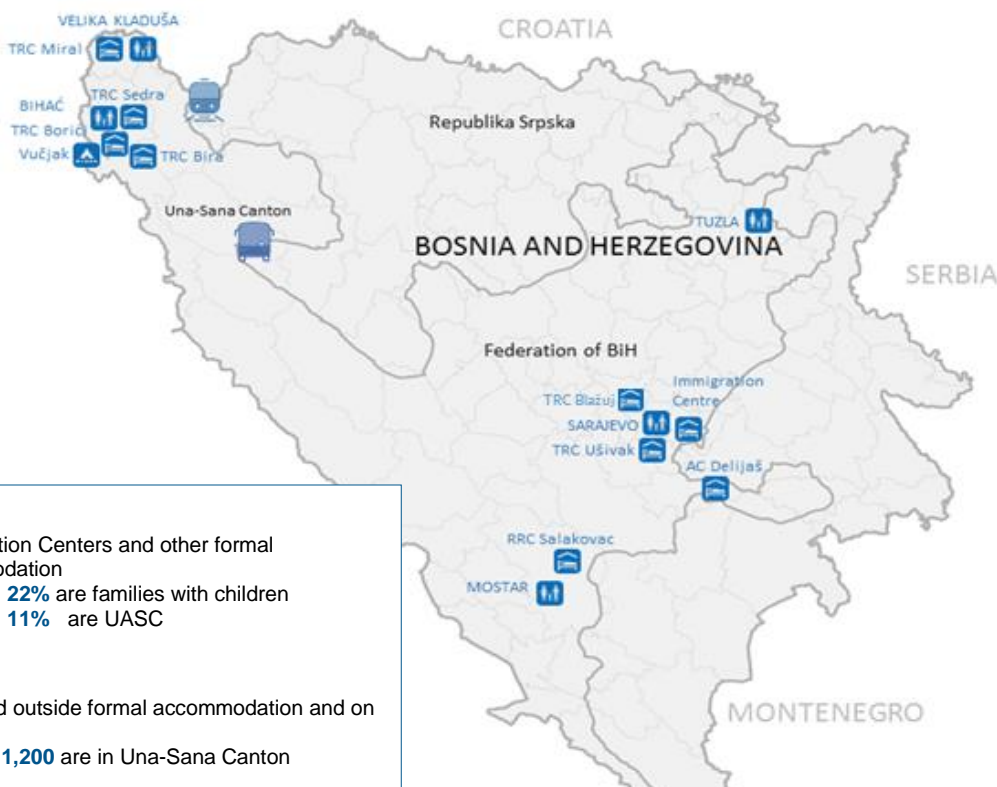
- BiH delegation comprising the representatives from the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and Ministry of Security took part at the Global Refugee Forum. On December 16, they officially submitted the pledges to GRF announcing measures for a more efficient asylum system, including prioritization of cases that are distinctly well founded, the addition of quality check mechanism in refugee status determination procedures as well as enhancing integration as the solution for refugees, persons granted subsidiary protection and beneficiaries of the Regional Housing Programme.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR works with authorities at the State, Entity/Brčko District BiH and local levels, the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman, and with international bodies including the Office of the High Representative, participating in its Board of Principals, the OSCE Mission, the Council of Europe, and with local international missions including the Delegation of the European Union.
- UNHCR is an active member of the United Nations Country Team, collaborating on joint initiatives and projects within the framework of the UNDAF and in the context of supporting the Sustainable Development Goals, and improving human rights in the country for all UNHCR's persons of concern.
- UNHCR collaborates with national and international NGOs/CSOs including, among others: Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHWI), Vaša prava BiH (VP BiH), Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Red Cross Society of BiH (RC).

Main Activities and Who We Help:

- UNHCR works to **support access to the asylum system and rights**, including **solutions**, on behalf of **asylum-seekers and refugees in the mixed movement context in BiH**;



5,341

In Reception Centers and other formal accommodation
 Of which, **22%** are families with children
 Of which, **11%** are UASC

1,800

Estimated outside formal accommodation and on route
 Of which **1,200** are in Una-Sana Canton

Map of key locations in the mixed movement response.

- On behalf of persons who **lack proof of their nationality** (mostly Roma) or are stateless and therefore struggle to realize their fundamental human rights and access the basic services most people take for granted; and
- On behalf of IDPs and returnees - people **forced to flee** their homes as a result of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Asylum-Seekers and Refugees

- UNHCR is a longstanding partner of the Ministry of Security's Sector for Asylum, and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees on issues related to asylum and international protection in BiH.

- Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a substantial increase in mixed movement arrivals in 2018 (over 24,000) and 2019 (over 29,000) as compared to 2017 with only 755. This has both overwhelmed reception capacity dedicated for asylum seekers and presented challenges to the integrity of the asylum system, as many of the irregular arrivals to BiH are planning their onward movement towards destinations in Western Europe and the EU. One key concern is the high percentage of overall arrivals who may move onward, who express an intention to seek asylum with the Service for Foreigners Affairs. Obtaining attestation on expressed intention to seek asylum remains the entry point to the asylum system as well as a requirement for accommodation in all official reception centres.

- Given the need to support the BiH authorities to respond to international protection needs within this new mixed and onward movement context, UNHCR has scaled up and reallocated resources to strengthen support for identification and access to the asylum procedure and rights for persons seeking international protection in BiH within this new operational context.

- UNHCR has enhanced outreach capacity and partner presence in Tuzla, Mostar and in 2018, establishing a Field Unit in Bihac, Una Sana Canton.

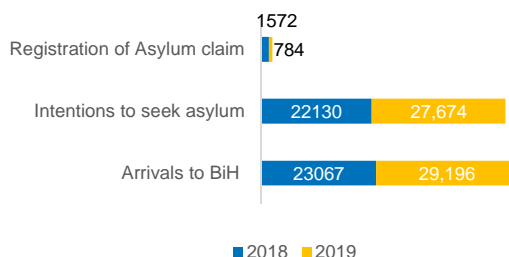
- In Sarajevo, UNHCR runs a drop-in information centre for asylum seekers, which is open during working hours and is also used by the Sector for Asylum for asylum registration and interviews.

- UNHCR continues to support free legal aid, and psychosocial support and protection outreach activities inside and outside reception centres throughout BiH (VP BiH, BHWI and DRC).

- In support of its core international protection mandate, UNHCR plays a leading role in the UN and interagency response, working closely with IOM and other actors, both in reception centres and urban locations, supporting overall coordination, including of protection (in support of referral pathways for asylum seekers and vulnerable individuals) as well as for information management (including harmonization of tools facilitate a coordinated protection response).

- UNHCR supports the Ministry of Security's Sector for Asylum and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees to hire expert and support staff, and with the running of their respective reception centres. UNHCR also supports and works closely with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, Border Police, and the judiciary.

Irregular Arrivals to BiH vs. Intentions to Seek Asylum vs. Registered Asylum Claims, Jan 2018 – 31 Dec 2019



1,572

Asylum claims registered by MoS in 2018

784

Asylum claims registered by MoS by 31 Dec 2019

3

Refugee status granted in 2018 and 2019

16

Subsidiary protection status granted in 2018

41

Subsidiary protection status granted in 2019

731

People currently in the process

319

Asylum seekers observed in the country, known to UNHCR through site lists and direct contact

Persons Lacking Proof of Nationality and at Risk of Statelessness

- UNHCR's work to assist persons lacking proof of nationality and those identified and stateless focuses on supporting authorities at the State and local levels to strengthen mechanisms which will ensure identification, prevention, reduction and protection of persons at risk of statelessness

or stateless persons. UNHCR supports birth registration and issuance of nationality documents through the work of Vasa Prava BiH, a free legal aid NGO, until these persons are fully supported by local free legal aid offices where they exist, to ensure that individuals are assisted to register birth and nationality in municipal books.

- UNHCR works closely with the BiH authorities to address remaining issues related to statelessness and risk of it, as well as to develop a designated statelessness determination procedure and supports the commitments made by the BiH delegation at the High Level Segment on Statelessness to end statelessness by 2024 within the UNHCR Global Action Plan to End Statelessness.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Returnees and Refugees from the former Yugoslavia

- UNHCR's principal engagement is advocacy and work with authorities at all levels, operational partners and civil society stakeholders to support the BiH authorities led by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) in resolving the remaining priority problems of displacement under the Revised Strategy for Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), including for the selection of vulnerable beneficiaries for major housing projects.
- In support of this goal, UNHCR supports the work of Vasa Prava BiH, a free legal aid NGO which provides support to vulnerable IDPs and returnees in accessing their rights and works in close cooperation with local free legal aid providers and civil society actors.
- Along with active participation in the work of the Consultative Working Group for the implementation of the Revised Strategy of Annex VII, UNHCR monitors work of the State Coordination Team entrusted by the BiH Council of Ministers to coordinate and monitor implementation of the key aspects of the Annex VII of the DPA;
- One key area of advocacy and focus is supporting the sustainability of local integration and return. This includes, inter-alia: access to employment, social welfare, social housing, health care, pensions, security, housing and infrastructure, including electricity, water, and access roads. UNHCR supports free legal aid to individuals and supports the coordinated efforts of key stakeholders at the State, Entity/Brčko district BiH and local levels. Support provided by UNHCR and OSCE to the national authorities at different levels in adoption of the legislation regulating non-profit social housing will improve sustainability of durable solutions and significantly upgrade housing and integration security for IDPs, returnees and refugees.
- The office remains engaged in the Regional Housing Programme, which provides reconstruction assistance and social housing, and is involved in other durable solutions projects. UNHCR also continues to monitor projects designed to close collective centres and provide new improved living conditions to vulnerable IDPs and returnees, facilitating solutions either in their place of origin or in their place of displacement. UNHCR works to promote adoption by national actors of a systematic and data-driven, evidence-based selection methodology for provision of assistance to IDPs and returnees.
- Together with the OSCE and OHR, UNHCR observes the work of the Commission for IDPs and Refugees, a state level body in charge of approving reconstruction and return related programmes.

External / Donor Relations

UNHCR is grateful for the support of the | [United States](#) | [European Union](#) | [Switzerland](#)

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