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| **Bosnia and Herzegovina** |
| 18 June 2021 |
| A total of 6,093 asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants arrived in the country since January 2021. Since the start of the mixed movement surge in January 2018, 75,506 arrivals have been recorded as of 13 June 2021.  | UNHCR is part of a working group established by the authorities to develop, by June 2021, a new BiH Strategy on Migration and Asylum and a 2021-2025 Action Plan. | UNHCR provides training to the responsible authorities to enhance their capacity to identify and refer asylum-seekers and people with vulnerabilities among new arrivals, but also to prioritize cases for registration of claims with strong asylum profiles. |
| population of concern in the country | funding (2021 – as of 1 JUNE) |
|  | USD **10.3** M |
| **ASYLUM STATISTICS** | UNHCR PRESENCE |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| Applications | 1,572 | 785 | 244 | 54 |
| Recognized refugee | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Subsidiary protection | 16 | 41 | 31 | 3 |
| Rejected applications | 45 | 35 | 54 | 20 |
| Suspensions\* | 741 | 1,059 | 546 | 100 |

*\*There is a 15-day deadline for appeal, and in almost all cases, the decisions are binding and closed.*  | **Staff:**27 National Staff5 International Staff4 UNOPS LICA1 IUNV1 JPO1 Intern | **Offices:**1 Country Office in Sarajevo1 Field Unit in Bihac1 Field Unit in Tuzla  |
| **TOP-TEN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN THE COUNTRY** | *UNHCR/Vaša prava launched a 24/7 free counseling**line to facilitate access to information and legal counsel* *for asylum-seekers. PHOTO: UNHCR.* |

Who We Help

* Within the mixed movement context in BiH, UNHCR works to support access of asylum-seekers and refugees to the asylum system and secure their rights, including the identification of durable solutions.
* We work 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
* We work on behalf of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees - people forced to flee their homes because of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Working with Partners

* UNHCR BiH closely cooperates with its partners to implement the following activities: The Ministry of Security – MoS (AC Delijaš, registration and RSD), the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees – MHRR (RRC Salakovac, local integration and individual support to refugees).
* UNHCR is increasing its support in 2021 to the Service for Foreigners’ Affairs (SFA) to enhance their first-line response capacity and supports authorities with trainings on asylum processing and reception centre management.
* UNHCR supports free legal aid, psycho-social support, community-based protection, and protection mainstreaming, inside and outside reception centres in partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina Women’s Initiative and Vaša Prava BiH. These partnerships ensure the provision of protection services during the asylum process, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.
* As of 2021, UNHCR established a new partnership with the INGO Catholic Relief Services to focus on the effective integration of refugees.
* UNHCR plays a leading role in the UN/inter-agency response to the mixed movement in BiH, with a focus on asylum. UNHCR supports the overall coordination, including protection (in support of referral pathways), as well as information management. UNHCR also collaborates with other UN agencies in the realization of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
* UNHCR maintains a strategic dialogue with key donors and actors, including the EU Delegation and the American, Austrian, Italian and Danish Governments to ensure a shared understanding of UNHCR’s vision for solutions in BiH, in the context of the region. To this respect, UNHCR’s further engagement with regional projects such as the IPA Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans is an important tool.

Asylum-Seekers and Refugees

* Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a substantial increase in mixed movement arrivals in2018 (over 24,000),2019(over 29,000),and 2020 (over 16,000) as compared to 2017 with only 755, amounting to nearly 70,000 arrivals between 2018 and 2020. The significant decrease in the number of people arriving in 2020 in comparison to 2019 is due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of the borders consequently.
* In 2021, 6,093 asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants arrived in the country in the first half of the year (up until 13 June). The number of arrivals from January to mid-June increased 12% compared to the same period in the previous year. Comparing the arrivals from May 2021 to May 2020, there is an increase of 278%. Both comparisons show a significantly increased number of arrivals due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of the borders in April 2020. However, the number of arrivals in May 2021 (1,937) is lower than the number of people arriving before the Covid-19 pandemic (2,603 in 2019 and 2,242 in 2018). It is too early to conclude that the number of arrivals since 2017 is reducing - disregarding the low number of arrivals during the Covid-19 pandemic - and UNHCR will continue closely monitoring the trends in arriving persons on the move.
* One key concern is the high percentage of overall arrivals who intend to move onward but who express a formal intention to seek asylum with the Service for Foreigners’ Affairs, thus heavily burdening the asylum system and hindering access for those genuinely interested in seeking international protection in BiH. Obtaining an attestation on expressed intention to seek asylum (AISA) serves as the entry point to the asylum system. However, it is also a requirement to access accommodation in all official reception centres and legally regularize one’s stay in the country, contributing to its misuse, with more than 93% of arrivals declaring their intention to seek asylum while very few actually do.
* UNHCR works to improve access to asylum for those in need by enhancing the capacity of the authorities to early identify and refer individuals who are interested in asylum in BiH and are likely in need of international protection. We work to improve the quality and efficiency of the asylum procedure (through the regional roll-out of the Quality Initiative) and capacity building and support to the Ministry of Security (staffing and training for asylum and registration officials as well as strategic support in the working group for the new Migration and Asylum Strategy).
* In support of BiH’s GRF pledges, we assist the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees to enhance solutions for refugees, persons granted subsidiary protection, and beneficiaries of the Regional Housing Programme.
* UNHCR supports free legal aid, psychosocial and SGBV support, and protection mainstreaming activities inside and outside reception centres throughout BiH (in partnership with VP BiH and BHWI).
* UNHCR supports the Ministry of Security's Sector for Asylum and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees to hire expert and support staff to support asylum-processing and with the management of their respective reception centres. UNHCR also supports and works closely with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, Border Police, and the judiciary.
* UNHCR supports efforts by partner organisations to mitigate the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as directly support several persons of concern with protection-sensitive accommodation, food and hygiene parcels, and ICT equipment for online schooling of children. UNHCR also supports authorities with asylum processes to mitigate challenges related to the pandemic.
* UNHCR works with the authorities to strengthen the legal framework on asylum, reception, and integration and to address gaps in the implementation of existing laws.

Persons Lacking Proof of Nationality and at Risk of Statelessness

* BiH is a party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons by succession in 1993 and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness by accession in 1996. It has no specific designated statelessness determination in place apart from on basis for temporary residence on humanitarian grounds, in the asylum procedure and in the procedure of revising BiH citizenship. Among other things, the country pledged during the High-Level Segment in 2019 to improve birth registration of all children regardless of the status of their parents through enhanced legislation and practice, which is partially achieved through amended Law on Extrajudicial Procedure in Federation BiH while realising other BiH pledges is still pending.
* UNHCR works with BiH authorities towards the country’s commitments at the High-Level Segment to end statelessness by 2024. UNHCR provides free legal aid for individuals at risk of statelessness and engages in advocacy and support to line authorities

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

* Following the country’s GRC pledges, sustainability of return or integration is also the focus of UNHCR in BiH. The office remains engaged in supporting the realisation of Annex VII DPA with legal support for access to rights in addition to a role in the Regional Housing Programme, which provides reconstruction assistance and social housing for vulnerable returnees, refugees from Croatia, and IDPs. As a part of this programme, UNHCR monitors the selection process of these people through its active monitoring role in the First and Second Instance Commissions, as well as providing information on related progress, risks, and concerns to the steering/technical and donor committees. In addition, UNHCR monitors and advocates for access to the sustainability measures, such as basic infrastructure (e.g. electricity, water, sewage, road) and economic sustainability.

External / Donor Relations

* UNHCR actively works to improve protection for PoCs by fostering public awareness and donor interest. UNHCR also engages in joint messaging on human rights issues with UNCT and other international actors, including the European Union, to advance its advocacy towards improving the asylum system and access to rights.

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