

Bulgaria

September 2024

UNHCR provides protection and inclusion support to **3.2 million refugees from Ukraine** who have passed through Bulgaria since the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine.

UNHCR has expanded its support with assistance and protection, and facilitating their **socioeconomic inclusion** through various programs aimed at improving access to education, employment and essential services.

UNHCR supports Bulgaria to **strengthen its asylum system** amid increasing arrivals of **Syria and Afghanistan asylum-seekers** and ahead of the implementation of the **EU Pact on Asylum and Migration**.

POPULATION STATISTICS (as of mid-2024)*

Refugees	94,549
Asylum-seekers	4,167
Stateless people	1,010

Top three countries of origin*

Refugees	Asylum-seekers
Ukraine 66,255	Syria 2,626
Syrian Arab Republic 31,004	Afghanistan 866
Iraq 627	Egypt 117

*UNHCR Mid-Year Statistical Report 2024 and UNHCR data finder

UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION RESPONSE

As of 31 August 2024, **66,255** refugees from Ukraine were recorded in Bulgaria.

Reception: UNHCR monitors the reception conditions in collective accommodation centres, including through participatory assessment.

Protection assistance: UNHCR and partners provide legal aid and counselling, community-based MHPSS and referrals to national services at Compass community centres.

Cash assistance: UNHCR cash assistance program support the most vulnerable refugees including those with disabilities, older people or single women with child care duties.

Support to the most vulnerable: UNHCR scaled up its support in protecting children, preventing and gender-based violence and communicating with refugee communities.

Coordination: UNHCR led an inter-agency assessment of the needs of refugees from Ukraine to help inform the government and organizations on how to address their needs.

Socio-economic inclusion: UNHCR-led protection and inclusion working group focus on housing and livelihood solutions. Additionally, UNHCR also launched the Refugee Employment Platform.

HIGHLIGHTS

Community-based protection

In February 2024 UNHCR, and its local partners, launched the **Compass network** of community centers for protection and inclusion in six cities.

Socio-economic inclusion

A UNHCR supported innovative refugee employment platform supported was launched on 27 February with the aim to connect refugees with employers, fostering self-reliance and economic empowerment within refugee communities. UNHCR established new partnerships with the private sector.

Child protection

In April, UNHCR and the Council of Europe organized a **roundtable** on unaccompanied children, focusing on alternative care and legal guardianship.



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“FOOD FOR THOUGHT” CAMPAIGN TELLS THE STORIES OF REFUGEES IN BULGARIA

On World Refugee Day, UNHCR launched a **national campaign**, aiming to foster solidarity with refugees. The stories and home recipes of refugees Sara and Khaled from Afghanistan and Oleksandra from Ukraine were presented at a pop-up restaurant - supported by the renowned Syrian Chef Imad Alarnab.

Key Priorities

- **Access to territory and legal status:** UNHCR and partners regularly conduct border monitoring as well as reception centre and detention centres monitoring to ensure asylum-seekers can [access fair and efficient procedures](#) through [information, legal counselling, and assistance](#).
- **Asylum procedures:** Aiming to ensure fair and efficient procedures, UNHCR supports the Government in enhancing the quality of the asylum system through [capacity-building activities](#) for authorities. UNHCR also monitors international protection procedures and provides guidance and recommendations.
- **Child protection:** UNHCR engages institutions at state and municipal level as well as NGOs to strengthen the national child protection system, focusing on early [identification, access to adequate reception](#), representation, guardianship, as well as [alternative care arrangements](#) for asylum-seeking and refugee children at risk. UNHCR also provides education and child protection services through partners. In July 2024, UNHCR organized a series of meetings between national child protection authorities in Bulgaria, the EU Asylum Agency and the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum.
- **Socio-economic inclusion:** UNHCR fosters refugee [socio-economic inclusion](#), collaborating with local stakeholders on job-matching, employability, and small business initiatives. Additionally, on 27 February, UNHCR launched a [Refugee Employment Platform](#), as part of a regional initiative, to facilitate employment.
- **Education:** UNHCR will continue to support children's inclusion into the national school system through language, inclusive education and psychosocial support. Together with the Ministry of Education and Sciences, UNHCR promotes enrolment into the school system by removing institutional, sociocultural, and economic barriers.

UNHCR also supports development of preparatory classes language courses. UNHCR also works with authorities and academic institutions to promote access to tertiary education and diploma recognition.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports the 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. This approach includes participation from refugees, local authorities, international organizations, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders. In 2024, UNHCR has partnership agreements with [seven NGOs](#). UNHCR, and its partners, aim to safeguard the rights and well-being of people forced to flee, deliver assistance, promote refugees' social protection as well as access to livelihoods, education and inclusion.
- **External engagement:** UNHCR works with partners to showcase the positive impact and contributions of refugees on their host communities, and to promote awareness, solidarity, and inclusion.

Statelessness

- Bulgaria has acceded to both the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions on Statelessness, and introduced a statelessness determination procedure in 2017, granting stateless status to 161 people so far. Following pledges at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness in 2019, the Government has improved the quality of statelessness determination procedures and included stateless people in the 2021 Census.

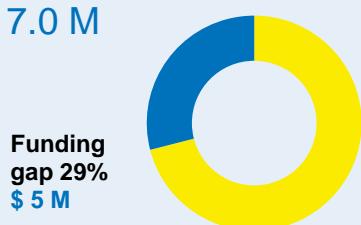
UNHCR Presence in Bulgaria

Staff:	Offices:
33 National Staff	1 Country Office in Sofia
10 International Staff	

Financial Information (as of 30 September 2024)

Financial requirements

\$ 17.0 M



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