

Bulgaria

February 2025

UNHCR provides protection and inclusion support to **refugees from Ukraine** who have passed through Bulgaria since the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, of which some 75,250 are currently present in the country.

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 Syrian and Afghan asylum-seekers, ahead of the implementation of the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum**.

POPULATION STATISTICS (as of mid-2024)*

Refugees	94,545
Asylum-seekers	4,166
Stateless people	1,010

Top three countries of origin*

Refugees	Asylum-seekers
Ukraine 72,250	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 February 2025, **75,250 refugees from Ukraine** were recorded in Bulgaria.

Reception/Accommodation Centre Monitoring: UNHCR monitors reception conditions in collective accommodation centres, including through participatory assessment.

Cash assistance: UNHCR cash assistance supports refugees including those with disabilities, older people and single women with childcare duties. More than 9,000 people benefited from cash assistance in 2024.

Protection and Inclusion: UNHCR continues to prioritise empowerment, integration, and social cohesion through its Compass Network of Protection and Inclusion Centres, providing assistance through language classes, MHPSS, counselling and community outreach activities. Since the establishment of the centres in April 2024, 9,310 refugees benefited from services. UNHCR trained refugee-led organisations on Protection, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), risk management and data protection.

Coordination: Following inter-agency planning processes, the **2025-26 Refugee Response Plan** has been launched, and UNHCR continues the **refugee coordination model** in Bulgaria.

HIGHLIGHTS

High-level forum engages key stakeholders to advocate for refugee inclusion

In November 2024 UNHCR co-hosted a High-Level Forum on refugee integration, bringing together policymakers, businesses, academia, refugees and civil society to advocate for social-economic inclusion of refugees in Bulgaria.

Increased school enrollment

With the new school year, a significant increase of refugee students' school enrolment was. 70 teachers participated in the Academy for Refugee Teachers on inclusive education organized by UNHCR and the Ministry of Education and Science, 2,611 children received cash assistance and 830 children benefited from educational support activities.



UNHCR's Representative met with Bulgarian President Rumen Radev © Office of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria

UNHCR and the President of Bulgaria Discuss Refugee Protection

UNHCR Bulgaria met with President Rumen Radev to mark over 30 years of collaboration and discuss ongoing refugee protection efforts. The meeting focused on Bulgaria's role as an EU external border country, preparations for the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, and the need for coordinated

Key Priorities

- **Access to territory and legal status:** UNHCR and partners conduct border monitoring, reception centre and detention centre monitoring to ensure asylum-seekers can [access fair and efficient procedures](#) through [information](#), [legal counselling](#), and [assistance](#). In collaboration with the Fundamental Rights Officer of Frontex and the Fundamental Rights Agency, UNHCR supports establishing a national independent monitoring mechanism under the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. 7,828 asylum-seekers were identified in detention and assisted to access procedures.
- **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](#). State Agency for Refugees officials were trained on interviewing and fact finding in the cases of specific need individuals. In 2024, procedures were monitored in 500 cases, including in the cases of 32 children with a view of quality assurance. 5,178 legal consultations were also provided to refugees in 2024.
- **Child protection:** UNHCR engages institutions at state and municipal level and NGOs to strengthen the national child protection system, focusing on early [identification](#), [access to adequate reception](#), representation, guardianship, [alternative care arrangements](#) for asylum-seeking and refugee children at risk. An expert meeting on Alternative care and Guardianship was convened as part of annual UNHCR consultations with civil society and communities. In November 2024, UNHCR trained partners and child protection authorities on identification, referral and case management.
- **Socio-economic inclusion:** UNHCR fosters refugee [socio-economic inclusion](#), collaborating with local stakeholders on job-matching, employability, and small business initiatives. In 2024, 3,128 people benefited from employment support. UNHCR will further develop a [Refugee Employment Platform](#), as part of a regional initiative, to facilitate employment.

- **Advocacy:** UNHCR implemented national awareness raising campaign “Food for thought” to address the familiarities between cultures and to enhance social cohesion between refugees and host communities. UNHCR submitted official comments to the National Implementation Plan of the EU Pact, and comments to sub-legislative amendments concerning higher education opportunities for beneficiaries of Temporary Protection.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports the government to ensure policies and legislation are in line with international standards, and promotes a comprehensive refugee response. UNHCR is working together with [7 partners and 9 civil society](#) organisations to support displaced and stateless populations.
- **External engagement:** UNHCR signed two MoUs with the Ministry of Education and Science and Blagoevgrad Municipality to facilitate institutional engagement. A Letter of Understanding was prepared with the company Lessafre, supporting livelihood opportunities for refugees through private sector engagement.

Statelessness

- Bulgaria has acceded to both the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions on Statelessness, and introduced a statelessness determination procedure in 2017.
- In 2024, UNHCR and partners provided training to 135 municipal civil servants, including health mediators, to support the implementation of the amendments to the Civil Registration Act. Activities were focused on raising awareness on registration, including access to social services by obtaining ID documents. The program aims at facilitating the undocumented Roma people’s access to nationality documentation.

UNHCR Presence in Bulgaria

Staff:

33 National Staff

11 International Staff

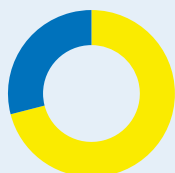
Offices:

1 Country Office in Sofia

Financial Information (as of 31 January 2025)

Financial requirements

\$ 14.5 M

 Funding
gap 86%
\$ 12.48 M

Funded 14%
\$ 2.02 M

UNHCR is grateful for the support from our top government donors in 2024 and 2025:

Australia | Belgium | Denmark | France | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Netherlands | New Zealand | Norway | Republic of Korea | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sweden | Switzerland

UNHCR is also grateful for the generous contributions from the private sector and individuals.