

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

February 2023

2022 was characterized by **high numbers of irregular arrivals (27,429)***, particularly in the second half of the year, reverting to pre-COVID-19 levels.

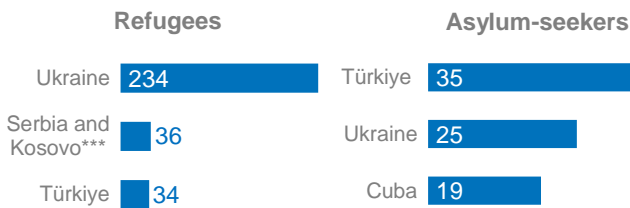
UNHCR advocates with the authorities for the early identification among all persons crossing into BiH irregularly of those **genuinely interested in seeking asylum**, and in particular the most vulnerable persons, to prioritize their asylum cases.

To support these efforts, UNHCR established a **new partnership with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs** for capacity-building and engagement of profiling assistants.

UNHCR POPULATION STATISTICS AS OF MID-2022**

Refugees	349
Asylum-seekers	134
Stateless persons	48
Internally displaced persons	96,305
Others of concern	1,662

Top three countries of origin**



*Cumulative data based on weekly statistics shared by the Ministry of Security

**UNHCR 2022 Mid-Year Trends and UNHCR [data finder](#)

***S/RES/1244 (1999)

UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION RESPONSE

As of mid-February, **152** refugees from Ukraine were present in BiH.

Temporary residence on humanitarian grounds has been granted to refugees from Ukraine since the beginning of the war, initially for six months. This status does not provide any other right and does not apply to third-country nationals. It has been extended by another six months on the basis of individual requests. UNHCR continues to advocate for temporary protection as a more efficient and adequate response.

Asylum procedure: Out of the 31 refugees from Ukraine who registered an asylum claim in BiH since 1 March 2022, 12 were granted subsidiary protection. No negative decisions were issued. At the end of January 2023, there were 4 Ukrainian asylum-seekers awaiting processing and final decision in BiH.

Assistance: UNHCR, in cooperation with the Catholic Relief Service and the Red Cross societies, completed two rounds of voucher assistance for 126 refugees from Ukraine. The vouchers covered the period from August to December 2022. A third distribution round is under preparation.

HIGHLIGHTS

No refugee status was granted in 2022

All 46 positive asylum decisions (not all final and binding) issued in 2022 granted subsidiary protection. In BiH, subsidiary protection does not provide access to family reunification, travel documentation nor a path to naturalization. Thus, UNHCR advocates for the authorities to ensure that persons who meet the legal definition of a refugee are granted refugee status rather than subsidiary protection.

UNHCR welcomes shorter asylum waiting times

The average waiting time to register an asylum claim was 64 days in 2022, almost three times less than in 2021. Similarly, average time from asylum-claim registration to first instance decision (at case-level and excluding appealed decisions) decreased by 30% compared to 2021. UNHCR and partners follow-up on individual cases to sustain this positive trend.



TO LIVE WITHOUT A NATIONALITY IS TO LIVE A LIFE IN THE SHADOWS

23-year-old Eldin from Sarajevo was at risk of statelessness, since his father never acknowledged paternity. He obtained documentation in 2022 with the support of UNHCR and its partner Vaša prava BiH. [Read more here.](#)

Key Priorities

- **Access to territory:** At any point in time, access to the asylum procedure should be ensured. Following several cases of individuals denied access to territory and asylum at the Sarajevo international airport, UNHCR and partners intervened on individual cases as well as directly with the authorities, which led to improved practice.
- **Access to asylum:** To enhance early identification and prioritization of persons genuinely interested in seeking asylum in BiH, and of vulnerable people, UNHCR organized a training for the Service for Foreigner's Affairs (SFA) at the end of 2022, focusing on registration, interview techniques and harmonized approaches.
- **Detention monitoring:** When there are cases of unaccompanied children detained, UNHCR intervenes with the authorities and advocates for alternative care arrangements in line with [UNHCR Detention Guidelines](#). UNHCR also generally supports capacity-building on best interest procedures.
- **Integration:** The perception of BiH as a country of possible permanent solutions, and not just of transit, has been improved with examples of successful integration. Persons granted international protection were better placed at the center of the integration process and in the development of their integration plans, via early involvement and improved tailoring.
- **Capacity-building:** To strengthen the authorities' capacities to provide free legal aid, UNHCR organized a round-table with representatives of free legal aid offices funded by various levels of government. Focus was put on the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in free legal aid provided by their offices.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR works with government partners, i.e. the Ministry of Security, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees and the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, as well as with NGO partners, i.e. Vaša prava BiH, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative and the Catholic Relief Services. UNHCR also supported the Red Cross societies at state, entity and local levels.

Internally Displaced Persons

- UNHCR is engaged in supporting realization of Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement. In November 2022, 20 displaced and returnee families received the keys of new housing units in Goražde, constructed under the Regional Housing Programme.

Statelessness

- BiH is a party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons by succession in 1993 and to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness by accession in 1996. Under the Law on Foreigners, it is possible to determine statelessness in the procedure upon application for temporary residence on humanitarian grounds.
- Since the start of the #iBelong campaign in 2014, 875 persons obtained documents with support from UNHCR, assisting them in confirming their nationality. As of early 2023, only 28 pending cases were left. To end statelessness and prevent new cases, UNHCR advocates with authorities to enforce the basic premise that all children must be registered immediately upon birth, without administrative impediments.

UNHCR Presence in BiH

Staff:

29 National Personnel
 7 International Personnel
 1 Intern

Offices:

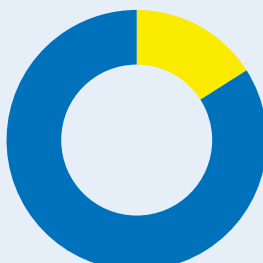
1 Country Office in Sarajevo
 1 Field Unit in Bihać
 1 Field Unit in Tuzla

Financial information (February 2023)

Financial requirements

USD 8.7 M

Funding gap
 83%
 7.2 M



Funded
 17%
 1.5 M

UNHCR is grateful for the support from our top government donors of unearmarked, softly earmarked and earmarked funding:

[Belgium](#) | [Denmark](#) | [European Union](#) | [France](#) | [Germany](#) | [Ireland](#) | [Italy](#) | [Japan](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [Norway](#) | [Sweden](#) | [Switzerland](#) | [United Kingdom](#) | [United States of America](#)

As well as for the generous contributions from private individuals and the private sector.