# Bulgaria

February 2026

UNHCR provides protection and inclusion support to **refugees from Ukraine** who have fled to Bulgaria since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine, of which some 84,190 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 employment and essential social services.

UNHCR supports Bulgaria, being EU external border country to **strengthen its asylum system** ahead of the implementation of the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.**

## POPULATION STATISTICS (as of mid-2025)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Refugees | **102,596** |
| Asylum-seekers | **2,850** |
| Stateless people | **833** |

### Top three countries of origin*

**Refugees**

| | |
|---|---|
| Ukraine | 67,875 |
| Syrian Arab Republic | 32,291 |
| Iraq | 596 |

**Asylum-seekers**

| | |
|---|---|
| Syria | 1,884 |
| Afghanistan | 449 |
| Morocco | 158 |

**UNHCR Refugee Data Finder*

## UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION RESPONSE

As of 31 January 2026, 84,190 refugees from Ukraine were recorded in Bulgaria. UNHCR advocates for effective access o refugees to their rights under EU law, based on findings from Protection Monitoring Data and Socioeconomic Insights Survey.

**Humanitarian Support and Integration Programme:** UNHCR supports vulnerable refugees from Ukraine to access humanitarian support, and monitors conditions in collective accommodation centres, including through participatory assessment.

**Protection and Inclusion:** UNHCR continues to prioritise protection services for vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied children, people with disabilities, and older individuals, through its Compass Network of Protection and Inclusion Centres in Burgas, Dobrich, Plovdiv, Sofia and Varna, where more than 32,000 refugees benefited from services in 2025. Many services have been terminated as of 2026 due to lack of funding, pending the establishment of a municipality-run assistance model that UNHCR is actively advocating for.

**Coordination:** UNHCR continues to lead the coordination of the 2025-26 Refugee Response Plan with 19 partners while maintaining the refugee coordination model in Bulgaria.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### UNHCR strengthens protection at Bulgaria's borders by judicial capacity-building

Between January - June 2025, UNHCR together with the Council of Europe, conducted several trainings of judges, prosecutors, and legal practitioners to strengthen the application of the European Convention on Human Rights in cases involving vulnerable asylum-seekers, unaccompanied and separated children.

### UNHCR with the support of the British Embassy gathers private sector to address refugee employment

In 2025, UNHCR and the British Embassy in Sofia organized public forum with private sector, business associations, and refugees to discuss access to employment and innovative funding schemes in support of refugee entrepreneurs.



*Refugees, members of civil society and institutions discuss how to improve the well-being of forcibly displaced people in Bulgaria. © UNHCR/Nikolay Stoykov*

### UNHCR gathered local stakeholders to review the implementation progress of GRF pledges

UNHCR in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria gathered refugees, civil society and institutions to reflect the progress on Bulgaria's pledges at the GRF ahead of the GRF Progress Review 2025. As the government marked progress in the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees from Ukraine, and targeted measures to increase alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied children, civil society and refugee communities called for wholistic integration policies.

## Key Priorities

- **Access to territory and legal status:** UNHCR and partners conduct border monitoring, reception and detention monitoring. In collaboration with Frontex FRO and EU FRA, UNHCR supports establishing a national independent monitoring mechanism under the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. In December, UNHCR and Frontex FROM organised a workshop on vulnerability screening for 43 Government officials.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR supports the Government in enhancing the quality of the asylum system as well as in processing individual cases. UNHCR provided technical recommendations to the Government on the national implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and responded to requests by administrative courts. In November, UNHCR trained asylum caseworkers on the best interest principle in asylum procedures.
- **Protection for forcibly displaced people at risk:** UNHCR engages institutions and NGOs to strengthen the national child protection system, focusing on early identification, access to adequate reception, representation, and guardianship for asylum-seeking and refugee children at risk. In May, UNHCR, Council of Europe, and the National Institute of Justice held a high-level judicial training on safeguarding the rights of UASCs and other vulnerable asylum-seekers. UNHCR and partners provide regular MHPSS activities for unaccompanied and separated children at reception centres, alongside group awareness and individual counselling sessions for adults.
- **Socioeconomic inclusion:** UNHCR collaborates with local stakeholders on job-matching, employability, and small business initiatives. In 2025, 6,592 forcibly displaced people benefited from employment support.
- **Protection from violence and trafficking:** The Council of Ministers adopted the 2025 National Programme on preventing and combating human trafficking, mandating UNHCR support on identification, protection, and capacity building for forcibly displaced people. In 2025, UNHCR and partners delivered anti-trafficking training for refugees and co-organized a national capacity-building training for state officials to strengthen identification, referral and support for trafficking survivors.
- **Advocacy:** UNHCR extended its parliamentary advocacy efforts meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament to discuss the protection of unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR advocated for safeguards for fair process of family reunification in the Law on Foreigners with MPs, and its community-based protection model was referred to at the new National Strategy on Migration. UNHCR advocated for access of refugees with temporary protection to higher education in collaboration with universities. UNHCR also marked progress in the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people, safeguarding their rights by signing two MoUs with the Ombudsperson of Bulgaria and the National Institute of Justice.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR is working together with 6 funded partners, 3 refugee-led organisations (RLOs), as well as 10 civil society organisations. UNHCR and its partners had to significantly downscale and/or terminate activities for 2025 and ahead of 2026, leading to a reduction of support available for refugees to access.

## External engagement

- Through engagement with the civil society sector, government and national managing authorities of EU and international donor funding programmes, UNHCR is seeking options for diverse and project-based funding of its activities and services.

## Statelessness

- UNHCR advocates for the lifting of Bulgaria's reservations to the 1954 Convention on access to identity documents and employment, and works with local organisations to prevent statelessness among the Roma population through monitoring and advocacy on the Civil Registration Act.

## UNHCR Presence in Bulgaria

**Staff:**

17 National Staff

2 International Staff

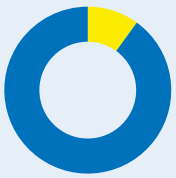
**Offices:**

1 Country Office in Sofia

## Financial Information (as of 28 February 2026)

**Financial requirements**

$ 10.7 M



**Funding gap 90%**
**$ 9.6 M**

**Funded 10%**
**$ 1.1 M**

UNHCR is grateful for the support from our top government donors in 2026:

**Australia | Belgium | Denmark | Germany | Ireland | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland**

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