BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FACT SHEET

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

February 2026

UNHCR's engagement in BiH focuses on **protecting the rights** of forcibly displaced and stateless people, and empowering them to build a better future.

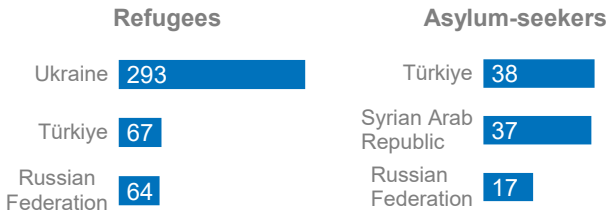
UNHCR prioritizes **sustainable responses** by working with government institutions and partners to identify durable solutions and foster long-term impact for asylum-seekers and refugees.

As UNHCR's operational footprint in BiH gradually reduces, its focus shifts to strengthening the efficiency of the asylum system, alongside intensified **advocacy** efforts.

UNHCR POPULATION STATISTICS (as of mid-2025)*

Refugees	**532****
Asylum-seekers	**178**
Stateless people	**12**
Others of concern	**3,713**

Top three countries of origin



**UNHCR Refugee Data Finder*
***References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)*

Protecting forcibly displaced and stateless people in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Supporting refugee integration through employment

UNHCR cooperates with employment bureaux in BiH to facilitate access to the labour market for people under international protection. In September 2025, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, the Federal Employment Agency and the Employment Service of the Sarajevo Canton, in cooperation with UNHCR and its partner Catholic Relief Services.

Through this agreement, unemployed refugees gained improved access to public employment programmes on an equal footing with BiH citizens. This means greater opportunities for refugees to gain skills, find work, and contribute to their communities. The agreement reflects a shared commitment to work together and create long-term solutions that advance refugee inclusion.

HIGHLIGHTS

Protection monitoring shows persisting high international protection needs

In 2025, UNHCR and partners in BiH interviewed 430 people under regional protection monitoring: 71 per cent reported leaving their country due to generalized violence and insecurity, threats to their life, or discrimination. In this context, UNHCR and its partner Vaša prava BiH provide legal counselling on asylum and international protection in BiH.

Strengthening legal capacities

UNHCR and partners continued enhancing the capacities of legal practitioners and future lawyers in BiH. In January 2026, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UNHCR, Vaša prava BiH, and three public free legal aid offices, to strengthen coordination in providing legal aid to forcibly displaced and stateless people.



Kateryna, a 30-year-old refugee from Ukraine, at her workplace in Sarajevo © UNHCR/Vanja Cerimagic

A HOME, A JOB, A NEW BEGINNING: KATERYNA'S INTEGRATION STORY

Learn more about Kateryna's journey towards stability in BiH. With support from public employment schemes, she found a job as an IT administrator and is building a new life.

Key Priorities

- **Access to the asylum procedure:** Ensuring fair, timely, and efficient access to the territory and to the asylum procedure, including at the international airport, is one of UNHCR's key area of work in BiH. Thus, timely profiling of individuals in need of international protection and interested in seeking asylum in BiH, as well as provision of information on asylum in the country is essential.
- **National asylum system:** UNHCR supports the BiH authorities in delivering on their commitment to strengthen the efficiency of the asylum system, as pledged at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum. This support focuses on enhancing institutional capacity, and is complemented by provision of free legal aid to asylum-seekers and refugees.
- **Inclusion and livelihoods:** UNHCR promotes initiatives that foster the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in BiH, in cooperation with the authorities, civil society and the private sector. In 2025, these included vocational training, language learning, self-reliance grants, and support throughout the job-seeking process. By creating livelihood opportunities, these efforts not only empower people to rebuild their lives with dignity but also strengthen the social and economic fabric of host communities.
- **Employment for asylum-seekers:** Under the Law on Asylum, asylum-seekers must wait nine months from the registration of their claim before being able to access the formal labour market, limiting self-reliance and increasing risks of dangerous onward movement. UNHCR advocates for reducing the waiting period to three months to facilitate faster integration and help address labour shortages in BiH.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR collaborates with **government partners**, mainly the Ministry of Security (Sector for Asylum), the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, and the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, to improve early identification of people with international protection needs, strengthen the efficiency of the asylum system and support inclusion efforts.
- Through **formal partnerships**, UNHCR works with two partners in 2026: the Ministry of Security (Sector for Asylum) and the NGO Vaša prava BiH.
- UNHCR cooperates with authorities at all levels, United Nations agencies, the European Union and other international organizations, Red Cross societies, NGOs, the private sector and the general public to raise awareness about refugee protection and to improve conditions for those in need of international protection.

Statelessness

- BiH has acceded to both the 1954 and the 1961 UN Conventions on Statelessness. As per the Law on Foreigners, it is possible to determine statelessness under the procedure for temporary residence on humanitarian grounds.
- Together with the authorities and its legal partner Vaša prava BiH, UNHCR works to resolve all known cases of statelessness and to prevent new ones from emerging. In 2025, eight individuals have had their cases resolved through free legal aid. While new cases were identified in the course of 2025, at the end the year, only 17 people are known to remain stateless or at risk of statelessness.

UNHCR Presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Staff:	**Offices:**
12 National Staff	**1** Country Office in Sarajevo
3 International Staff	**1** Field Unit in Bihać

Operating under the coordination of the UNHCR Representation for Central and South-East Europe, based in Budapest.

Financial information (28 February 2026)

** Information relates to UNHCR's Representation for Central and South-East Europe, which covers the Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and Kosovo.*

Financial requirements

$ 24 M



Funded 27%
$ 6.6 M

Funding gap 73%
$ 17.4 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.