



INFORMATION ON INCLUSION INTO SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

For persons granted asylum
in the Republic of Serbia



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REGIONAL SUPPORT TO
PROTECTION-SENSITIVE
MIGRATION MANAGEMENT
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS
AND TURKEY
PHASE II



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Belgrade, 2020



This brochure has been created through joint efforts of UNHCR and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia and is funded within the framework of the Regional IPA II project Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey Phase II



The Commissariat for refugees, as a specific organisation within the state administration, was founded by the Law on Refugees in 1992 to deal with the protection, repatriation and integration of refugees as stipulated by this Law and administrative affairs related to them.

With the adoption of the Law on Migration Management in 2012 it continues work as the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration in accordance with the jurisdiction established by this and other laws. The Commissariat deals with a wide range of activities.

Its basic activity is to assist refugees from the 1991-1995 wars, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Kosovo and Metohija, tracing missing persons from the wars in the former SFR Yugoslavia, dealing with the problems of returnees under the agreement on readmission, providing accommodation to migrants from Asia and northern Africa and dealing with the integration of persons granted international protection.

The scope of work ranges from registration to granting refugee status, registering of needs on the ground to provision of financial and other assistance and provision of accommodation to the most vulnerable. At the same time, the Commissariat manages five asylum centres and 14 private centres, cares for returnees under the agreement on readmission, integration of refugees and persons granted asylum, recommends policies and legal solutions in the sphere of migrations and monitors the implementation of such measures in practice.

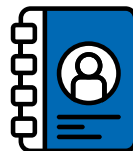
The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration is a member of governmental bodies and commissions dealing with issue of significance for migrations, closely collaborating with numerous state institutions, ministries, local self-governments, etc. Furthermore, it has developed regional and international cooperation with international organisations and institutions, donors, domestic NGOs, civil associations and media. The Commissariat has a network of trustees in 181 municipalities throughout Serbia.



The UN General Assembly established the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 14 December 1950.

UNHCR opened its Office in Belgrade in 1976 at the invitation of the SFRY government. In the early days the UN Refugee Agency provided international protection, refugee status, integration and resettlement to refugees fleeing from Eastern Europe and Africa. UNHCR cooperates with state authorities of the Republic of Serbia in order to improve the situation and provide durable solutions to persons who are under the mandate of UNHCR in the country. Since 1992 the UN Refugee Agency has provided more than 500 million euro for protection and integration programmes for refugees, IDPs and stateless persons in Serbia.

INTEGRATION OF PERSONS GRANTED ASYLUM



Integration is a process in which the receiving state offers different programmes and activities that enable easier and faster inclusion into the new milieu. The integration programme lasts 1 (one) year and is intended for those granted asylum in the Republic of Serbia. Without your active cooperation in the programmes, integration cannot fully succeed.

The authority responsible for integration in the Republic of Serbia is the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (hereinafter Commissariat).

Once asylum is granted contact the Commissariat where an integration advisor will be assigned who will assist you in the integration into the Serbian society.

Taking into account your previous knowledge, skills, capacities and wishes, the integration advisor will, together with you, prepare a plan of activities to assist in the integration process (personal integration plan).

In this brochure you will find detailed instructions and additional information.

COMMISSARIAT FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRATION

Narodnih heroja 4, 11070 Beograd
Telephone 011 311 72 72
Fax: 011 311 72 72
Cell phone: 064 838-2536
Email: integracija@kirs.gov.rs

Working hours with clients:
Monday -Friday 7:30 – 15:30

YOUR RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS



YOUR RIGHTS (presented in the brochure)

- Complete and timely information on rights, opportunities and obligations
- Right to stay in the Republic of Serbia
- Right to personal identification documents
- Right to temporary accommodation
- Right to assistance in the integration into the social, cultural and economic life in the Republic of Serbia
- Right to social welfare
- Right to financial assistance in cases of special social and health needs
- Right to healthcare
- Right to free primary and secondary education
- Free access to the job market
- Right to family reunion

YOUR OBLIGATIONS

- If asylum has been granted, you are obliged to honour the Constitution, laws, regulations and official documents of the Republic of Serbia
- Primary school attendance (for children)
- Serbian classess attendance organised by the Commissariat
- Reporting to the authorities any changes that can impact the realisation of rights and obligations:
 - Change of residence address
 - Change of personal name
 - Change of marital status
 - Employment status
 - Received financial social benefits and any other income

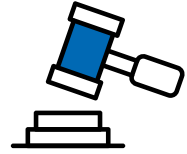
You are obliged to report any changes to your integration advisor within 15 days. You are obliged to report to the Asylum Office any change of residence address within three days of moving into new location through your attorney.



Belgrade Centre for Human Rights
lawyer providing legal advice to asylum
seekers in Krnjaca

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1. FREE LEGAL AID



Representation in the asylum process and free legal aid for realising rights listed in the Brochure are provided by organisations such as:

1. Belgrade Centre for Human Rights

Kneza Milosa 4
11000 Beograd
Tel: +381 11 308 52 28, +381 64 824 55 08
bgcentar@bgcentar.org.rs

2. Asylum Protection Centre

Misarska 16
11000 Beograd
Tel: +381 11 323 30 70, +381 11 407 94 65
sediste@apc-cza.org

You may also address other NGOs and, in accordance with their capacities, they will assist you or refer you to other organisations and institutions.

Once granted asylum, you should, by yourself or through your attorney, contact the Commissariat in order to be provided with an integration advisor. Your integration advisor will inform you about your rights and obligations and will continue working with you or your attorney on realising the rights listed in this Brochure.

2. RIGHT TO STAY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



Upon receiving decision granting you asylum or subsidiary protection, you have the right to stay in the Republic of Serbia.

The Asylum Office does not provide a certificate that you have the right to stay in the Republic of Serbia, but the decision granting you asylum/subsidiary protection and your identification card prove your right.

You have the right to choose your address of residence, but you are obliged to inform the Asylum Office and the Integration Advisor in the Commissariat of any changes. You are obliged to personally or through your attorney, if you have one, provide information about your residence address or any change of address within 3 days. The address of residence is entered into your refugee ID card, while in the case of a change of address a new ID card is issued with the new address.

3. DOCUMENTS



IDENTITY CARD

Person over 15 years old granted asylum in the Republic of Serbia is issued an ID card by the Asylum Office.

In order to obtain an ID card once asylum has been granted you are obliged to submit a request to the Asylum Office together with two 2.5x3.5 cm photographs and the current address of residence. You can submit the request personally or through your attorney.

ID card is valid for a period of 5 years for persons granted asylum or 1 year, with possibility of extension, for persons granted subsidiary protection. A new ID card is issued every time the address of residence is changed. **You must always carry your ID card with you.**

In case you lose your ID card or it is stolen, you are obliged to immediately, or within 3 days, report this to the Ministry of Interior, your integration advisor and your attorney.

PERSONAL ID NUMBER FOR FOREIGNERS

Upon receiving decision granting you asylum you have to submit a request with the Asylum Office for your personal ID number for foreigners that you will need to realise other status rights.

In that sense, you have to personally, or through your attorney, submit a request with the Asylum Office for a personal ID number stating the reason why you need it.

PASSPORT

The Law on asylum and temporary protection provides refugees with the right to a passport, while persons granted subsidiary protection can be given a passport only in exceptional cases of a humanitarian nature. In accordance with the current legislature the necessary conditions have not been fulfilled for the issuing of passports. Once these conditions have been fulfilled passports will be issued to refugees granted asylum. You can obtain further information on travelling outside of Serbia at the Asylum Office.

BANK ACCOUNT

Once you have obtained a personal ID card and a personal ID number for foreigners you can choose any bank to submit a request to open your personal bank account. You can then obtain a bank card with which you can take cash from an ATM or pay for services. For other bank cards or services you have to address your request with the bank directly.

DRIVERS LICENCE

A regulation prescribes the procedure how to obtain a drivers licence in the Republic of Serbia. If you do not have a drivers licence and wish to obtain a Serbian drivers licence or if you have a drivers licence from your country of origin and wish to drive a car in Serbia, please contact the nearest traffic police station at your place of residence for further information.

If you have a valid drivers licence from your country of origin you can request the issuance of a Serbian drivers licence. However, you cannot change your foreign drivers licence into a Serbian one if it is invalid, annulled, withdrawn or cancelled by the issuing authority. In that case you will have to take a driving test again.

You can take a driving test in any driving school in Serbia. You have to pay for a driving test. Each driving school has its own system, classes, tests and prices vary.

4. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION



The Commissariat can provide temporary accommodation for you.

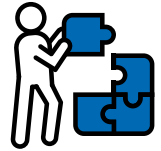
You can use temporary accommodation for a maximum of 12 months from the moment you were granted asylum or subsidiary protection.

If all the temporary accommodation facilities are full, the Commissariat can provide financial assistance for this purpose for a period of 12 months.

In case a larger number of persons applies for temporary accommodation at the same time, priority is given to families with larger number of minor children, single parent families with minor children, families with pregnant women, larger families, families whose member is a survivor of torture, rape or other types of psychological, physical or sexual abuse and families faced with difficulties to work (older persons, persons with special needs, etc.).

In order to be eligible to apply for temporary accommodation you are obliged to take classes of Serbian language which the Commissariat will organise for you and your family members. For more details related to temporary accommodation please directly contact your attorney or integration advisor.

5. ASSISTANCE IN INTEGRATION



You and your family shall be provided with assistance for inclusion into the social, cultural and economic life in the Republic of Serbia for a period of one year from the date you were granted asylum.

PERSONAL INTEGRATION PLAN

On the basis of your needs, knowledge, capacity and ability, the Commissariat, with your involvement, will prepare a personal integration plan. Personal integration plan contains the plan and programme of activities for the next 12 months. This can help you in the inclusion into the economic and social life in the Republic of Serbia. Together with you, the Commissariat will determine the goals and steps by which you can achieve them in the most efficient way. You will actively participate in the creation of the plan and you are expected to work closely with your integration advisor in this regard. The Commissariat can connect you with other relevant institutions and NGOs.

The personal integration plan is created for a period of 12 months and can be revised every 6 months, or more often if necessary. The personal integration plan is drafted in Serbian and it can be explained to you in a language that you understand.

SERBIAN LANGUAGE LESSONS

You are obliged to apply with the Commissariat for Serbian language and letter lessons within 15 days upon being granted asylum or subsidiary protection. You can apply personally or through your attorney. The integration advisor will refer you to a language school where your knowledge of Serbian will be tested in order for the school to evaluate your prior knowledge. Based on this test you will be referred to an appropriate group. You will receive all the necessary material in the school.

The cost for Serbian language lessons is covered by the Commissariat up to 300 school classes for those persons who do not attend regular school classes. In addition to these 300 hours, if you are employed and your work requires higher education, you can be granted another 100 hours. If you attend regular school, in addition to the regular Serbian language in school, you may be granted another 140 hours of Serbian language classes. If you are over 65 years old, the Commissariat will provide you with a 100 hour



Successfully completed Serbian language course

© UNHCR

programme tailor-made for you. This course will enable you to learn Serbian that is sufficient for everyday communication.

If you attend classes of Serbian language, the Commissariat can reimburse you for public transport costs if your classes are not held in your place of residence.

If a job opportunity appears while you are attending Serbian language classes, the timetable of the classes can be adapted to your working hours.

The school registers your attendance and if you do not attend classes according to the set timeframe without a valid reason, the Commissariat does not have the obligation to provide you with new or additional classes of Serbian language.

INTRODUCTION TO SERBIAN CULTURE, HISTORY AND CONSTITUTIONAL ORGANISATION

If you are granted asylum, you can be included into a programme to introduce you to Serbian culture, history and constitutional organisation that lasts 30 hours per year.

Serbian culture classes are provided by the Commissariat. The classes include both theory lectures and visits to important sights, museums and institutions. This is a very useful programme for all persons wishing to live in Serbia. There are no exams at the end of the programme.

If you do not have a valid reason for not participating in this programme within the given timeframe, the Commissariat does not have the obligation to provide you with new or additional classes.

Serbian history and culture class

© UNHCR



6. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



TYPES OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

1. **You have the right to receive financial social assistance** (individual or family), **if your income that you acquire through work, property ownership or from other sources is lower than the amount of the financial social assistance, i.e., if you do not have enough means of subsistence.** The financial social assistance is provided once a month and it is the basic financial assistance socially vulnerable persons in the Republic of Serbia receive, and the amount is the same for all. You can obtain information on how to receive this assistance from the integration advisor in the Commissariat or from your attorney.
2. The Commissariat can provide you with *one-time cash assistance* in special cases of social or medical needs. The amount of the cash assistance is determined by the Commissioner. You can obtain information on how to receive this assistance from the integration advisor in the Commissariat or from you attorney.y.
3. Having in mind that you have the right to temporary accommodation, for a maximum period of 12 months, and if all the accommodation facilities are full, the Commissariat will provide you with financial assistance for temporary private accommodation. The amount of this assistance is defined by a Regulation and it is the same for all. You can obtain information on how to realise this assistance from your integration advisor or from you attorney.

7. HEALTHCARE



If you are granted asylum or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Serbia, you have the right to healthcare in accordance with the regulations on healthcare for foreigners. Healthcare is provided to foreigners the same as for citizens of the Republic of Serbia. The healthcare costs for those granted asylum or subsidiary protection are covered from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, while the realisation of the right to healthcare is under authority of the Ministry of Health.

The healthcare system in the Republic of Serbia is divided into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. Healthcare is free of charge at the primary level, while medical services at the secondary and tertiary level are free of charge only if a doctor made the request at the primary level.

You and your family will be referred to a primary healthcare institution depending on your residence address. If you or any family member have health problems, you will first go to that primary healthcare institution. When needed, doctors from the primary healthcare institution will send you to other institutions. The only exception is if you are in a life-threatening situation when you should call an ambulance by dialing 194, or you go directly to the nearest emergency ward.

In the Republic of Serbia there is medicine that is free of charge and medicine that you have to pay for. This applies to all citizens.

If you or your family member were denied access to healthcare, please contact your attorney or integration advisor.

In the Republic of Serbia there are obligatory and voluntary health insurances.

Obligatory health insurance provides employed and other citizens in Serbia the right to healthcare and the right to financial reimbursement for certain medical situations. This practically means that if you are unemployed the Republic of Serbia covers your healthcare costs within the framework of primary healthcare. Those employed, together with their employer, pay for obligatory health insurance, thus covering healthcare costs for them and their families.

Voluntary health insurance is a type of collective and individual insurance which can be additionally concluded independently from the obligatory insurance. The voluntary health insurance can be concluded as an individual private insurance (both in state and private health institutions) as well as for surgical interventions and/or for severe illnesses and consequences of such illnesses. You fund the insurance premium for voluntary insurance yourself.

8. EDUCATION



Minors and adults granted international protection have equal rights as citizens of the Republic of Serbia in the sphere of preschool, primary, secondary and higher education.

KINDERGARTENS

Preschool education is conducted by both state and private kindergartens. Children can be enrolled into kindergartens once they are over 1 year old. **Preschool education for children from 5.5 to 6.5 years of age is compulsory.**

You can enroll your children into a kindergarten throughout the year. If there are more applications for enrollment above the capacity of the kindergarten, a commission will decide on the priorities.

To apply for enrollment into kindergarten you need to submit the following documents:

1. A pediatrician's certificate on the health situation of the child.
2. A certificate of the parents' employment or a certificate from the National Employment Service that you are registered but unemployed.
3. Birth certificate (a photocopy is also valid, regardless of the date of issue), or a copy of the ID card for persons granted asylum in the Republic of Serbia.

Parents who are beneficiaries of financial social assistance in accordance with the regulations related to social protection are exempted from all kindergarten costs. A third child is also exempted from all kindergarten costs. In this regard where a certificate is provided by the municipal administrative body after submitting a decision from the local Centre for Social Work that you are receiving financial social assistance.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary education in the Republic of Serbia is obligatory and lasts 8 years.

Parents are obliged to enroll their children into primary school from the age of 6.5 to the age of 7.5, at the beginning of the school year. Primary education is free of charge.

The deadline to submit the request for enrollment of the child is 1 February of the calendar year so that the child can start attending school on 1 September. The school year lasts until mid-June next year.

If a child over 7 years old has not been enrolled into the first grade due to illness or other valid reasons, it can be enrolled into first or other appropriate grade after passing an examination. The examination is carried out by a team of school teachers, pedagogues and psychologists, always bearing in mind the best interest of the child.

Detailed information and documents needed for enrollment can be obtained in the Commissariat or from your attorney.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

All pupils who completed primary education and pass the final exam can enroll into secondary school. In the Republic of Serbia, secondary education consists of gymnasiums, secondary specialised schools and art schools. Secondary schools are free of charge but are not obligatory.

Minors granted asylum in the Republic of Serbia who do not have proof of prior education can be enrolled after taking an exam with a special commission consisting of professionals.

Those wishing to enroll into secondary school can apply every year in May. The school organises discussions with future students where they can obtain information about the curriculum. There is a ranking system for enrolment that is a combination of points from how successful the pupils were in primary school and points from the final exam. All pupils who completed primary education must pass the final exam that is held in June every year.

BELGRADE SCHOOL PUTS YOUNG REFUGEES ON TRACK FOR SUCCESS

Firash and Asadi attempted to reach Western Europe, but Serbia enabled them to finish school

Authors: Helen Womack and Mirjana Milenkovski in Belgrade

Firash and Asadi* are taking their school leavers' exams. "It's a bit stressful, yeah, but that's normal," says Firash. "It's good," says Asadi. "I will get the documents I need to prove I am educated." For these two young asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Serbia has provided the stability they needed to finish their education.

One school in particular -- Branko Pešić Elementary School -- has played a key role in helping not only these two lads but some 300 refugees and migrants since 2016. Indeed, the school has done such valuable, pioneering work to integrate refugees into the mainstream curriculum that its principal, Nenad Ćirić, has been nominated this year for UNHCR's prestigious Nansen Award.

"The worst thing that can happen to a child is to be confined to a place with no activities, nothing to challenge the mind," says Mr. Ćirić, explaining why he took refugees out of their asylum centres and included them alongside Serbian kids in his school. "We were painfully aware that they (the refugee youngsters) were in no way to blame for what was happening in their countries."

He had the blessing of the Ministry of Education to lead the way in this, as he and his staff had considerable experience dealing with marginalised children, including Roma. The Branko Pešić model is now used as a basis for national guidelines for inclusion of refugee children and has been rolled out to other schools in towns with refugees.

Serbia is hosting some 3,600 new refugees, migrants and asylum seekers and around 400 children among them are attending mainstream schools. "Until recently, many refugees perceived Serbia only as a transit country," says UNHCR's representative in Serbia, Hans Schodder. "Nevertheless, Serbia has achieved comprehensive enrolment of school-age refugee children and developed innovative methods to support them."



Unaccompanied children at a geography class in Primary School Branko Pešić

© UNHCR/Helen Vomak

At Branko Pešić, teachers sacrificed their summer holidays to brainstorm ideas for adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of refugees, the majority of whom were unaccompanied Afghan minors. UNHCR began bussing the youngsters into school from their accommodation at the Krnjača asylum centre.

“At first, these kids had no notion of the Serbian language,” says Mr. Ćirić. “Usually it is only the children of diplomats who are in that position. In addition, we did not have methods for teaching Serbian as a foreign language. These had to be developed.”

Farsi and Arabic-speaking interpreters, paid by ADRA, began working in the classrooms, translating subjects such as geography and history, while extra Serbian lessons were arranged to give the refugees intensive language training.

With maths, it was a bit easier. Says maths teacher Dušica Marsenić: “Maths is a specific language that you can recognise, provided you have some education.”

The problem was that some 30 per cent of the refugee children had had no education at all in their home countries and were illiterate in their mother tongues. In some cases, they learnt to read and write for the first time in Serbian.

"We had youngsters who had travelled 5,000 km to reach Serbia," says Mr. Ćirić, "but they didn't know the points of the compass." To avoid humiliating the teenagers, staff placed them not with small kids but in higher classes and gave them maximum individual attention.

Illiteracy was not an issue for either Firash or Asadi but frustration and disappointment were psychological barriers to initial progress. Both had been trying to reach Western Europe and were pushed back to Serbia from Croatia and Hungary respectively.

"I was sad, confused and tired," says Firash.

"I was feeling bad, feeling unlucky," says Asadi...

Asadi has family in Germany and has not given up hope of joining them eventually. But Firash, responding to his teachers' investment of time and energy in him, has applied for asylum in Serbia and hopes to settle in Belgrade.

He came from Kabul, where his father was a policeman, making the family vulnerable to threats from the Taliban. He reached Serbia two years ago after a rough journey through Iran, Turkey and Bulgaria.

"When I started at this school," he says, "honestly I didn't understand anything and I was just passing the time. But I saw it could be good to learn Serbian and I made an effort. Now I am starting to get something out of it. I can speak, understand and help myself."

Firash, who has had a guardian under a UNHCR scheme, is living at the Jovan Jovanović Zmaj Home for Children (of the City Centre for Social Work). He earns some money by working at a car wash and an Arab fast-food restaurant. He hopes to go into hairdressing while also perhaps studying languages.

But he is afraid his asylum application may be rejected and he will no longer be able to continue his education. "Others will choose for me," he says apprehensively.

What if he had a choice himself? "My choice is clear," he says. "I want to live in Belgrade, one hundred per cent."

**Names have been changed for identity protection*

HIGHER EDUCATION

Studying is carried out at state and private higher education institutions within universities (faculties, art academies, higher specialised schools). In order to enroll into a higher education institution you have to pass an entrance exam. School year begins on 1 October and ends on 30 September of the following year.

You can find detailed information on the site of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, every faculty and your integration advisor can also provide it..

If you are an illiterate adult, you also have the opportunity to apply for assistance to enroll into literacy programmes for adults. Your integration advisor can provide further information in this regard.

VALIDATION OF PREVIOUS EDUCATION

The procedure to validate previous education obtained abroad differs depending on the purpose.

ENIC/NARIC Centre is an organisational unit of the Qualifications Agency that carries out the procedure of validation of foreign school documents. This procedure is carried out in accordance with provisions of the Law on National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia, if an international agreement does not anticipate otherwise.

Documents can be submitted in the ENIC/NARIC Centre within the Qualifications Agency in Majke Jevrosime str. 51.

Information by phone: every working day from 12:00 to 14:00. Contact phone: 011/ 7455 724

Email: emina.najdanovic@azk.gov.rs

- Validation of primary and secondary education on phone: 011/ 7455 724
- Validation of higher education documents with the purpose of employment on phone: 011/ 3345 746 or 011/7455 723

The Commissariat will bear the costs of validating education documents and determining of professional qualifications from the country of origin.

9. EMPLOYMENT AND WORKWORK



EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM

In order to be employed in Serbia you need to possess a personal working permit that allows you free access to the labour market. This permit is not linked to the employer but to the individual and is issued for the period of granted protection, with the possibility of extension.

In order to obtain a working permit you must submit an application with the National Employment Service with a photocopy of your ID card that was issued after being granted asylum, as well as a certificate of the personal registration number for foreigners.

Issuing of the working permit is not free. If you are especially financially vulnerable, you can contact your attorney or integration advisor to look into the possibility to exempt you from paying the administrative tax.

NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

The National Employment Service is a state service dealing with the employment of citizens and non-citizens of the Republic of Serbia and has offices in all cities and municipalities in Serbia. This service connects employers with persons seeking employment. In order to be a participant in this process and be able to realise certain rights it is necessary to register with the National Employment Service.

Each applicant must personally apply with the local National Employment Service office in the place of his/her residence.

Necessary documents for submitting application:

1. Filled out request for issuing of a personal working permit;
2. Foreigner's passport or ID card, if possible (photocopy and original for inspection);
3. Permission for permanent residence or temporary stay of foreigners (photocopy and original for inspection);
4. Payment receipt for administrative tax;
5. Proof of status recognition for foreigners: refugee status or status of specific category of foreigner;
6. Validated diploma (if possible).

After applying with the National Employment Service you will be invited for an individual interview by an employment councillor where you will be informed about your rights and obligations, services that the National Employment Service can provide and about conditions and possibilities of employment. Your obligation is to report every 3 months to your employment advisor.

Depending on market needs, the National Employment Service organises various training or retraining courses that could be useful until you validate your diploma, or if its validation is not possible or you wish to undergo training **for a new occupation in order to find work more easily**.

Afsaneh displaying her handicrafts at the night market

© UNHCR



SMART MOVES AND TRUE LOVE BRING SYRIAN REFUGEE SUCCESS IN SERBIA

Mawaheb Seraj, a refugee from Syria, used his head and followed his heart to find a new life in Serbia. Never unemployed throughout his long journey, he has secured a good job in a global company. He has married a Serbian artist, the woman of his dreams. And the cat he carried with him has learnt to live with her dog in a happy household in Belgrade.

“I know I am lucky,” says Mawaheb, 31, acknowledging that integration into a new society is usually not so easy for refugees. A combination of smart thinking and true love has brought him stand-out success.

Mawaheb left Aleppo in 2012 because of the war. He had studied computer programming at university in Aleppo and this equipped him well as he went in search of safety and opportunity. In Turkey for 18 months, he was ready to sweep the streets but it did not come to that. Instead, he picked up online work with a Japanese company that paid his bills.

He was not happy in Istanbul, though; something was calling him to Serbia. “I met some Serbian travellers in Turkey,” he says. “I felt at ease with them. They shared my mentality – enjoying the simple stuff in life, without needing much money.”

Twice he applied for a tourist visa to Serbia and on his second attempt he got one. But there was the question of what to do with his cat Fidel, whom he had inherited from flat mates in Istanbul.

“It might sound silly to people who do not own pets,” he says, “but having an animal is a responsibility. It is like having a child.”

Alone, he could have taken the cheaper sea route via Greece. “I would only have needed a backpack,” he says. “But I could not abandon Fidel.” So he put the now seven-year-old white cat in a pet carrier and flew with him to Serbia.

“For a cat, moving is very simple,” he says. “You do the tests and injections, get the papers, and that is it. For me as a human, it has been a lot more complicated.”



Mawaheb and Ida in their home

© UNHCR

Soon after arriving in Serbia, Mawaheb filed for asylum. “I was reluctant to do this because I was afraid I would be put in a refugee camp,” he says. But lawyers reassured him that since he was working – still online with the Japanese company -- and paying tax, he could arrange his own life. He could afford to rent a flat in Belgrade.

Once he had full refugee status, he was eligible to apply for jobs in the Serbian capital. He now does complicated computer programming for IPS Energy, a global company that finds digital solutions for the energy industry. He has been in the job for four months and with his specialist skills, earns a good salary.

“We had a standard selection,” says Ivan Petkoski, Manager of IPS Energy Serbia. “We scouted out some 20 candidates, shortlisted four and chose Mawaheb. He was the best fit because of his skills and previous work. We saw he was a fast learner and compatible with our team. Where he came from was irrelevant. We recruited him purely on merit.”

Mr. Petkoski was surprised how well Mawaheb spoke Serbian, although this was not a requirement for the job in which computer language and English are the essentials.

"It is my good luck to be a programmer," says Mawaheb. "I know that other educated refugees like doctors and lawyers have to learn the local language and modify their qualifications. But I was able to start from zero, literally, and support myself, with no help."

The secret of his good Serbian probably lies in his chance meeting two years ago in a park with a beautiful woman who was out walking her Jack Russell terrier.

"It was a cold day and I was walking Lulu," recalls Ida, 34, a costume designer and illustrator, relaxing at home with Mawaheb after his day at the office. "From the moment we met, we were together all the time. We felt we knew each other. We talked about history, everything... we had a lot of conversations."

"You know how it goes," says Mawaheb, "you have a coffee and then you think, *Oh, my God, I want to have a coffee with this person every day."

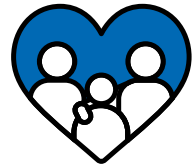
The couple had a Serbian civil wedding, followed by a ceremony in a mosque. Sadly Mawaheb's family back in Syria could not attend and have not yet met Ida. He hopes that when he gets a travel document, he and Ida will be able to go to Lebanon to see them.

Love with Ida may have been plain sailing but relations between cat Fidel and dog Lulu were initially tense, so much so that the pets had to be kept in separate flats.

But now all are joined together in a spacious, airy, rented flat, decorated with Ida's paintings. Lulu has just had a litter of six puppies and Fidel mostly keeps out of the way, sitting in his box in the bathroom.

When in the mood, cat and dog run merrily round the flat together. "They are totally fine now," says Mawaheb. "Fidel sensed that Lulu was having the puppies and he became very respectful and protective."

10. FAMILY REUNION



Family reunion entails a complex procedure so that you can obtain detailed information from your integration advisor.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE IN SERBIA



ADULTHOOD

In the Republic of Serbia a person reaches adulthood on his 18th birthday. However, some rights can be realised before adulthood:

At the age of 16, a child can:

- Marry (only with court permission).
- Confirm paternity.
- Obtain a drivers license for a motorcycle.

At the age of 15, a child can:

- Become employed and manage the means and property he/she earned.
- In case his parents are divorced, he/she may choose the parent he/she wants to live with in case he/she is capable of reasoning.
- Decide by him/herself on personal relations with the parent that he/she does not live with in case he/she is capable of reasoning.
- Give consent on medical treatment if he/she is capable of reasoning.
- Decide on which secondary education school he/she wishes to enroll, if he/she is capable of reasoning.

WORKING CAPACITY OF MINORS

A person under 18 can be employed with the written consent of parents, foster parent or guardian if such work does not jeopardise his/her health, moral and education, i.e., if such work is permitted by the law. **Persons under 18 can be employed only based on the findings of the competent health institutions that establish the capability to work in relation to the offered employment and health risks thereof.**

MARRIAGE

There are two types of legally recognised partnerships between a man and woman – marriage and extramarital union. Citizens of the Republic of Serbia predominantly marry as adults. In exceptional cases minors over 16 may marry with court permission where the court evaluates that a person has reached physical and mental maturity to be able to exercise rights and obligations in marriage. There are two types of legally recognised partnerships between a man and a woman – marriage and extramarital union.

Marriage is regulated by law as a partnership between a woman and a man and they can be married only if both sides voluntarily agree. In the Republic of Serbia both partners are equal and the marriage's duration and divorce are based on equality of man and woman.

Blood relatives cannot marry. A marriage is null and void if one or both persons do not enter voluntarily and if it was not concluded before a state body – a registrar. There are two types of legally recognised partnerships – marriage concluded by a registrar and extramarital union which is legally equal to marriage. **A woman has the right to freely decide on birth..**

According to the law, the religious rite of concluding marriage in a religious facility is a traditional rite and a marriage concluded in this way is not legally recognised by state institutions.

MONOGAMY

The Republic of Serbia permits registration of marriage only with one partner.

CIRCUMCISION OF GIRLS/GENITAL MUTILATION

Circumcision of girls in the Republic of Serbia is punishable by law as infliction of grievous bodily harm. This is regulated by the Criminal Law and entails a prison sentence.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

If somebody in your family treats unequally other members, humiliates or physically abuses them, sexually abuses them, restricts freedom of movement, threatens, forces to work or prevents them from work or in any other way violates their rights, that person will be punished by the law. **According to the law, everybody has the right to be protected from family violence.**

If you wish to report family violence, the call is free of charge and the number of the SOS line is:

0800 100 007

Autonomous Women's Centre

<https://www.womenngo.org.rs/>

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



The Republic of Serbia is a central-European, Balkan state on the river Danube course. The surface area of the Republic of Serbia is 88,499 km².

Territorial organisation:

Two autonomous provinces were formed in the territory of the Republic of Serbia: Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija. The Republic of Serbia consists of local self-government units: municipalities, towns and the city of Belgrade.

Capital:

Belgrade (1,659,440 citizens according to the 2011 census).

Other larger towns:

Novi Sad, Nis, Kragujevac, Novi Pazar, Subotica, Krusevac and Leskovac.

Climate: moderately continental.

Official currency Serbian Dinar.

Official language:

The official language is Serbian and the letter is cyrilic. Latin letter is also official. National minorities have the right to use their language and letter as official language in those areas that they inhabit.

Population:

The total population is 7,186,862 citizens (According to the 2011 census). The majority of the population are Serbs (83,3%), followed by Hungarians, Roma and Bosniacs. The Republic of Serbia is a multinational state in which there live 21 national minorities. The Constitution and law guarantee equality of all citizens while the status and additional rights of national minorities are regulated by the Constitution and laws.

Religion:

The majority, 84,6%, of the population are Orthodox Christians, 5% are Catholics and 3% are muslims.

STATE SYMBOLS

Flag:



Coat of Arms



Anthem

The national anthem of the Republic of Serbia is „God of Justice” whose text was written by Jovan Djordjevic and the music composed by Davorin Jenko.

„God of Justice, Thou who
saved us when in deepest
bondage cast, hear Thy Serbian
children’s voices, be our help as
in the past“.

National Day 15 February

Political system:

The Republic of Serbia is a parliamentary republic. The authority is divided into three branches – legislative, executive and judicial.

Authorities:

The National Assembly is a representative body and the bearer of constitutional and legislative authority.

The president of the Republic of Serbia represents the country at home and abroad, promulgates laws, commands the army, etc. The president is elected in direct elections for a period of 5 years. The government has executive powers and is accountable to the national assembly. Courts are independent in their work and are obliged to uphold the Constitution, laws, other general acts, verified by international treaties and general principles of international law.

HOLIDAYS

State Holidays

- 1 and 2 January, New Year
- 15 and 16 February, Visitation of the Virgin, Serbian National Day
- 1 and 2 May, Labour Day
- 11 November, WWI Peace Day

Religious Holidays

- 7 January, Christmas Day
- Easter Holidays, Good Friday, first and second day of Easter
- Orthodox Christians, the first day of the family patron saint
- Catholics and members of other Christian religious communities, Christmas day, Good Friday and 1st and 2nd day of Easter
- Members of the Muslim community: first day of Eid-al-Fitr and first day of Eid-al- Adha.
- Members of the Jewish Community: first day of Yom Kippur.

Holidays that are celebrated but are working days

- 27 January, school holiday, St Sava patron saint day.
- 22 April, remembrance day for Holocaust victims, genocide and other fascism victims in WWII.
- 9 May, Victory Day.
- 28 June, Vidovdan.
- 21 October, remembrance day for Serb victims in WWII.

USEFUL CONTACTS AND ADDRESSES

Police	192
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Firefighters	193
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Ambulance	194
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Emergency ward (0-24)	Pasterova street Tel: (+381 11) 3618-444
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Airport Belgrade	Aeroport Belgrade Belgrade 59, 11180 Belgrade Tel: (+381 11) 209 400 Flight timertable: Tel: (+381 11) 209 4444; Website: http://www.beg.aero/lat/
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Belgrade bus station	Zeleznicka 4, 11 000 Београд Tel: (+381 11) 26 36 299
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Belgrade railway station:	Website: http://www.srbvoz.rs/korisnickiservis.html/
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Commissariat for Refugees and Migration Republic of Serbia	Narodnih Heroja 4, 11 070 Novi Beograd Tel: (+381 11) 311 72 72 E-mail: kirs@kirs.gov.rs Web: http://www.kirs.gov.rs
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City Social Welfare Centre	<p>Ruska 4, 11 000 Beograd Tel: (+381 11) 2650-329, 2650-542, 2650-093 E-mail:office@gcsrbg.org Web:http://www.gcsrbg.org</p>
Protector of Citizens	<p>Deligradska 16, 11000 Beograd Tel: (+381 11) 2068 100 E-mail:zastitnik@zastitnik.rs Web:http://www.ombudsman.rs</p>
National Employment Service	<p>Kralja Milutina 8, 11000 Beograd Tel: (+381 11) 2929 800 E-mail: pisarnica.Beograd@nsz.gov.rs Web:www.nsz.gov.rs/live/mreza/direkcija</p>
UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)	<p>Bulevar Zorana Djindjica 64 Tel: (+381 11) 4155 424 E-mail:srbbe@unhcr.org Web:www.unhcr.rs</p>
Belgrade Centre for Human Rights	<p>Kneza Milosa 4, 11 000 Beograd Tel:(+381 11) 3085 328, E-mail:bgcentar@bgcentar.org.rs Web:http://www.bgcentar.org.rs/</p>
International Organisation for Migrations (IOM)	<p>Skendergegova 3, 11 158 Beograd Tel: (+381 11) 3282-075 E-mail:iombeograd@iom.int Web:https://serbia.iom.int/</p>
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	<p>Sindjeliceva 18, 11111 Beograd Tel: (+381 11)344-35-74; (+381 11) 308-66-88 E-mail:administration@drc.org.rs Web:https://www.drc.org.rs/</p>

