

Albania

September 2021

In the past three years, Albania witnessed a stark **increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving** in mixed movements, putting a strain on asylum and border management.

Albania adopted a **new law on asylum** in February 2021, further aligning the asylum system with International and EU standards, and reinforcing the framework for integration of refugees.

The GoA, UNHCR and IOM are advancing towards **differentiated, pathways and procedures to address mixed movements**, to ensure efficient management and resource allocation.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

Refugees	115
Asylum-seekers	0
Stateless persons	1,031

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN*

Refugees

Kosovo**	57
China	<20
Syria	<10

*Data source: *rounded figures as per* UNHCR 2020 Global Trends Report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

**References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)".

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Inclusion: UNHCR and IOM have implemented the EU-funded project "**Addressing COVID-19 challenges within the Migrant and Refugee Response in the Western Balkans**" to enhance authorities' preparedness responding to the pandemic; prevent COVID-19 transmissions and protect the most vulnerable persons. UNHCR and IOM have successfully advocated for inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the national vaccination.

Communication with Communities: As of 31 August, **19 information sessions with 37 refugees** and asylum-seekers had conveyed updates on the COVID-19 situation and life-saving health advice. For many refugees and asylum-seekers, this has been the only source of information on the pandemic. At the border, UNHCR's partners have been providing similar information to 6,453 new arrivals.

HIGHLIGHTS

6,453 individuals transited

through Albania in mixed movements from January to August 2021. Women and children represent 20 per cent of all arrivals. 80 per cent declare to be from countries with generally high protection recognition rates (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq), while only 1 per cent have been referred by the authorities to the asylum procedure.

Access to territory and asylum

UNHCR remains engaged with authorities on the restoration of access to the territory and asylum procedure. Since the reopening of borders in June 2020 after the COVID-19 related hiatus, many arrivals were returned to Greece without screening for international protection needs or for specific vulnerabilities.

Education access improved

Albania lifted procedural barriers for refugee and asylum-seeker children to access public schools



On the occasion of World Refugee Day 2021, a Syrian refugee child presented a drawing to Ms. Evis Kushi, Minister of Education, Sports and Youth, following the decision to waive country of origin documentation requirements for refugee and asylum-seeker children to access primary and secondary public schools.

See more stories on: UNHCR Albania [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

Key Priorities

- The Ministry of Interior, UNHCR and IOM are engaged in advancing towards **differentiated, higher-quality pathways and procedures to address mixed movements**. Such a differentiated approach will require increased reception capacity and services at borders and would streamline pathways on the basis of expressed protection needs or migration profile, vulnerability and intention to remain in the country, with a focus on the integration of refugees.
- **Access to territory:** UNHCR and partners monitor the arrivals at the border and pre-screening procedures. UNHCR leads a Norway-funded six-UN Agency SDG project to increase the capacity of Border and Migration Police, and border service providers to improve referrals and services to address the situation of persons with specific needs.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior are implementing a **Memorandum of Understanding** aimed at enhancing operational cooperation in pursuit of the **Albania's pledges at the Global Refugee Forum**. UNHCR is supporting the implementation of the new Law on Asylum.
- In the context of the EU funded regional **IPA II project**, UNHCR rolled out a Quality Assurance Initiative. UNHCR's engagement will complement the pledges made at 2019 GRF, including a **commitment to strengthen the quality of asylum decision making**. Coordination with **EASO** is reinforced in the context of the first EASO-Albania Roadmap on strengthening the asylum system.
- **Integration:** To overcome the legal and administrative barriers for employment and enhancing skill development for refugees and asylum-seekers, UNHCR is implementing an agreement with ILO.

- UNHCR has also supported the Government for the **issuance of biometric ID cards for refugees** and other foreigners residing in Albania to facilitate their access to government services. An improved system is currently being piloted.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR's main government counterpart is the Ministry of Interior, specifically the Directorates responsible for asylum, citizenship and border and management. UNHCR increasingly cooperates with other line Ministries, to improve inclusion of persons of concern in national systems.
- **External Engagement:** Other key external partners are the EU Delegation, Diplomatic Missions, UN agencies, and civil society.

Statelessness

- The majority of persons at risk of statelessness in Albania are entitled to nationality. However, they experience difficulties in having it confirmed. Population groups identified as at risk of statelessness include Roma and Egyptian minorities and children of Albanian diaspora returnees.
- In recent years, Albania has taken significant steps towards addressing the risk of statelessness. Fulfilling a **pledge made at the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness**, Albania has adopted the Law on Citizenship in July 2020 providing an unrestricted safeguard to citizenship to all children born in Albania who would otherwise be stateless.

UNHCR Presence in Albania

Staff:

15 National Staff
 3 International Staff

Offices:

1 Branch Office in Tirana
 1 Field Offices in Korca

Financial information (28 September 2021)

Financial requirements

USD 3.3 M



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