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Call for Expression of Interest

Partnership in support of the operational delivery of 2027 – 2030 UNHCR Strategy in Serbia

HCR/SRB/2026/001

1 Timeline

Posted	Sep 11, 2026
Clarification Request Deadline	Sep 25, 2026
Application Deadline	Oct 9, 2026
Notification of Results	Nov 9, 2026
Start Date	Jan 1, 2027
End Date	Dec 31, 2027

2 Locations

- A Serbia
 - a Sumadijski okrug

3 Sector(s) and area(s) of specialization

- A Protection
 - a Legal assistance and access to justice

4 Issuing Agency

UNHCR

5 Project Background

Operational Context Serbia remains a transit country on the Western Balkans route towards the European Union while also hosting refugees from Ukraine, beneficiaries of international protection, refugees from the former Yugoslavia, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and persons at risk of statelessness. In 2025, more than 9,000 new arrivals were registered in government reception facilities, down from nearly 20,000 in 2024 due to strengthened border controls and anti-irregular migration measures. Most arrivals were adult men from Afghanistan, Egypt and Türkiye, while unaccompanied and separated children represented around 16 per cent of arrivals. Only a small proportion sought asylum, and recognition rates remained low. This trend continued in the first half of 2026, with over 2,200 new arrivals recorded. By the end of July 2026, Serbia hosted 1,738 beneficiaries of international protection, including 1,465 individuals from Ukraine under temporary protection and 273 refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection from various countries of origin. Serbia also continues to host approximately 24,800 refugees from the former Yugoslavia and nearly 194,000 IDPs from Kosovo¹, many of whom face persistent displacement-related vulnerabilities. Although Serbia's asylum framework is broadly aligned with international and European standards, significant

challenges remain. Access to territory and asylum procedures, particularly at borders and airports, requires further strengthening. Enhanced border management and anti-smuggling measures may negatively affect access to protection and increase risks of refoulement if safeguards are not consistently applied. Interpretation services, legal aid and the quality of asylum procedures continue to rely substantially on international support. Refugee inclusion is supported by a generally favourable legal framework, particularly regarding employment and access to rights. However, language barriers, difficulties in obtaining documentation, limited recognition of qualifications, and gaps in social protection continue to hinder integration and self-reliance. Refugees often face obstacles in securing housing, sustainable employment and access to public services. Hate speech, xenophobia and negative narratives towards refugees and asylum-seekers have also increased, underscoring the need for continued efforts to promote social cohesion. Statelessness remains a concern, particularly among Roma communities, IDPs and persons lacking civil documentation. Around 1,100 individuals remain at risk of statelessness. While progress has been made in birth registration and documentation, legal assistance, advocacy and cooperation with authorities remain essential to prevent and reduce statelessness. Strategic Framework for Action UNHCR's strategy in Serbia for 2027-2030 focuses on strengthening access to territory and asylum procedures, improving legal assistance, promoting refugee inclusion and self-reliance, and preventing and reducing statelessness. Serbia's EU accession process provides an important opportunity to further align national systems with international and European protection standards and strengthen national ownership. UNHCR will support protection-sensitive border management through monitoring, evidence generation, advocacy and capacity-building. Engagement with government institutions, the judiciary, legal professionals and academic institutions will contribute to stronger national capacities in refugee protection and statelessness. UNHCR will further advance refugee inclusion through cooperation with national and local authorities, civil society, refugee-led organizations, the private sector and development actors. Priorities include improving access to employment, documentation, housing, social protection and community-based services, while promoting participation, social cohesion and self-reliance. UNHCR will also continue advocating for universal birth registration, access to personal documentation, and the prevention and reduction of statelessness. The organization will support durable solutions for refugees, including facilitated naturalization, and promote solutions-oriented approaches for vulnerable displaced populations. Partnerships with civil society organizations will remain central to providing legal assistance, community engagement and outreach to vulnerable groups throughout Serbia.

6 Expected Results

The 2027 – 2030 UNHCR Strategy for Central and South-East Europe is structured around four outcome areas: ■ ensure access to the territory, credible identification, differentiated procedure and effective referral of people with vulnerabilities and specific needs. ■ authorities consistently deliver quality asylum decisions in a timely manner and ensure access to sustainable free legal assistance. ■ national legal and policy frameworks for asylum and statelessness are in line with international standards and effectively implemented; and ■ authorities proactively invest in socio – economic inclusion and self – reliance of forcibly displaced and stateless persons To achieve the key objectives under these four outcome areas, UNHCR is seeking experienced partners to support the implementation of the following areas of work. Organizations may apply for one or more Areas of Work, according to their mandate, expertise, and operational capacity. Area of work #1: The systematic provision of clear, accurate and accessible information upon arrival, including on rights and obligations, asylum procedures, available services and referral pathways. Counselling and information services will be delivered in appropriate languages and formats, including interpretation and tailored communication for persons with specific needs. In Serbia, partners should focus on providing information, counselling and interpretation services for asylum-seekers, refugees and persons in mixed movements; identifying and referring persons with specific needs; conducting community outreach and protection monitoring. Area of work #2: Provision of free, accessible and quality legal information and counselling to enable individuals to understand their rights and obligations, available procedures, and options for review or appeal. Legal counselling will be delivered in appropriate languages and formats, including through individual consultations, group sessions and referral based support, with due attention to age, gender and diversity considerations. Where required, UNHCR will facilitate or support access to legal representation and legal aid, particularly at key procedural stages. In Serbia, partners should focus on providing legal information, counselling, assistance and representation throughout asylum, temporary protection, residence and naturalization procedures, as well as support related to civil documentation, access to rights and judicial engagement addressing systemic protection challenges. Area of work #3: Data collection and sustained advocacy for improved national legislation and implementation, policy and legislative analysis, and judicial engagement. In Serbia, partners should focus on protection monitoring, evidence generation, data collection and analysis, policy and legislative advocacy, judicial engagement, and documentation of protection concerns affecting refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. Area of work #4: Statelessness prevention and reduction through advocacy, legal assistance in statelessness cases, monitoring of birth registration practices and resolution of pending cases. In Serbia, partners should focus on legal assistance related to birth registration, civil documentation, nationality and legal identity; support to persons at risk of statelessness. Area of work #5: Provision of information and targeted, need-based integration assistance to refugees facing immediate or structural barriers to inclusion through counselling and referrals; administrative support and community engagement activities. Refugees will also be supported, where relevant, to acquire nationality, permanent residency or access naturalization and other legal stay procedures that enable durable inclusion. On an exceptional basis, where gaps in national systems persist, UNHCR may also support the direct delivery of timebound support such as language classes and vocational training and emergency support to mitigate severe protection risks to the most vulnerable, while continuing advocacy for inclusion in national services. In Serbia, partners should focus on supporting refugee inclusion through provision of information on rights and durable solutions and services.

7 Indicative Budget

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8 Other Information

Submission guidance: The purpose of the Call for Expression of Interest (CEI) is to solicit interest from existing or prospective partner NGOs interested in supporting UNHCR in the implementation of its 2027 – 2030 Strategy and contribute with complementary resources (human resources, knowledge, funds, in-kind contribution) in order to achieve common and agreed objectives. To operationalize its 2027-2030 Strategy, UNHCR is seeking the support of partner organizations with significant technical expertise in key areas of the planned response. Activities carried out by partners will complement relevant actions carried out by UNHCR. Selected partners will sign a Partnership Framework Agreement (PFA) with UNHCR for the duration of the Strategy (2027-2030). In case of available funding, the selected partner(s) will be invited later in the year to submit a detailed project proposal outlining the proposed cost and activities for 2027 (or a shorter period) and, upon agreement, sign a Project Workplan with UNHCR for the first year. Subject to performance, need and funding availability, partnerships may be considered for renewal for subsequent years of the strategy (2028, 2029, 2030). Partners interested in collaborating with UNHCR to achieve its strategic objectives should submit a Concept Note outlining its mandate, strategic vision and core activities. The proposed approach and intervention must demonstrate clear vision, technical expertise and respect for good programming principles. The applicant should also put forward its reach and presence as well as demonstrated operational capacity to deliver the proposed intervention. The criteria used for review and scoring of the proposal are outlined in the Selection Criteria section below. UNHCR reserves the right to accept a proposal as a whole or in part. Conclusion of a Project Workplan with UNHCR is subject to availability of funds. The selection of a partner through this Call for Expression of Interest does not constitute a commitment on behalf of UNHCR to conclude a Project Workplan with the selected partner. UNHCR may select to fund all or parts of the proposed activities. UNHCR may select no partner, one partner or multiple partners for any given intervention. Other information: Organizations that are interested in applying in the CEI are required to register on the UN Partner Portal, at <https://www.unpartnerportal.org/registration> and submit their application via the UN Partner Portal. Newly registered NGOs should initiate the PSEA self-assessment online via the UN Partner Portal. Organizations that are already registered in the UN Partner Portal <https://www.unpartnerportal.org> must ensure that their profiles are fully completed/updated and relevant documents uploaded (inter alia HR, Procurement, Anti-fraud, Code of Conduct, PSEA and other internal controls and governance documents). Legal status in Serbia is a requirement for all applicant organizations as follows: • Legal registration at the location of the NGO's Headquarters. • Authority to operate in Serbia, if registered in another country. • Authority to operate a bank account in Serbia. IMPORTANT: Only duly signed Concept Notes submitted through the UN Partner Portal will be accepted for review. To ensure a fair and transparent process, no submissions to UNHCR individual e-mail addresses will be accepted as this may lead to disqualification of the proposal. Queries will be accepted only via the UN Partner Portal from 11 September to 25 September 2026. UNHCR will publish replies to all queries (anonymously) on the UN Partner Portal. Processing of personal data: Partner Data Protection and Information Security Self-Assessment should be completed by the partner at the country level and submitted with the concept note. As a data controller, the partner is accountable for the implementation of data protection standards. The concept note should describe the measures ensuring adherence to the data protection principles, procedures and mechanisms envisaged for providing information to the data subjects, receiving and processing data subject rights request, complaints and independent redress.

9 Selection Criteria

Name	Description	Weight
Sector expertise and experience	The required specific skills, sector specialists, accesses and stakeholder engagement, implementation track record, knowledge, material and human resources required to deliver the strategy and proposed activities. Knowledge of relevant protection, humanitarian and programming principles and the approach to Age, Gender, Diversity (AGDM).	25
Project management	Ability to effectively deliver project objectives with robust organizational structure, clear accountability mechanisms and sound financial, human resources and procurement policies and management systems. Positive audits and project implementation track record. Demonstrated ability to comply with UNHCR partnership requirements including PSEA, data protection and environmental considerations. Engagement in coordination fora.	30



Cost effectiveness	Evidence of procedures/systems that ensure maximum resources are directed to project outcomes while also ensuring that resources are also directed to activities that ensure project risks are being appropriately managed.	10
Other	Strategic vision and mandate: Clear organizational focus and vision for the upcoming period; robust theory of change and strategic approach; clear alignment between UNHCR and partner objectives; strong organizational mandate; demonstrated knowledge and engagement with relevant stakeholders to achieve the expected change: 25 ; Community relations: Ongoing programme in the area of operation; local knowledge; local presence; feedback and complaint mechanisms for affected communities; approach to the participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the Programme Cycle: 10	35

10 Attachments

Description	URL
Call for Expression of Interest	Download the document here

11 Concept Note Template

[Download the document here](#)

12 For more information on this partnership opportunity, and to apply, please visit

[UN Partner Portal](#)