



Prepared by Local Democracy Agency, Subotica [www.lda-subotica.org](http://www.lda-subotica.org)

City of Subotica on the Balkan route of migrations

Townlab project, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020

The International Refugee Day is an opportunity to remind that 618,000 people received refugee status due to the Balkan conflicts in 1990-s. There are still 25,794 persons in the status (17,670 from the Republic of Croatia and 8,124 from Bosnia and Herzegovina), as well as the fate of 196,995 internally displaced persons from Kosovo\*.

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❖ Migrants in Serbia:

Covid 19 pandemic made the life of migrants in Serbia and other Balkan countries more difficult

On March 15, when the pandemic was proclaimed all the migrants in Serbia, those in centers, those in border areas of the country with the intention to cross the border, as well as those who were trying to enter Serbia at that time, are housed in the centers while their protection in confinement secured by the Serbian Army

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## Asylum centres in Serbia

April 2020 :  
about 8,800 people  
accommodated in  
20 reception and  
asylum centers, of  
which more than  
1,100 are children..





Covid19 lockdown measures:  
Migrants and refugees are confined in camps 24 hours a day by the decision of the government and are not allowed to leave them, "for protection against the spread of infectious diseases".

With the end of the state of emergency, the legal basis for the engagement of the Serbian Army in the protection of the centers is abolished,

## ❖ Changing attitudes during the pandemics:

The government's policy towards migrants is approved by 30% of citizens, 32% do not approve, while 30% do not have an opinion

38% of the respondents think that borders with EU should be open and that migrants should not stay in Serbia longer time

37% think that migrants should stay permanently, but with no special encouragement or support measures

In recent years, although the number of those staying in Serbia has not changed much, and few asylum applications have been submitted and/or approved, but the myth of migrants as enemies has been built by various right wing/nationalistic groups

Local groups active in Subotica.

Recent reports show that too long stay in one place, limited movement, overcrowding and worsened hygiene and other living conditions increase nervousness and tension, there were a couple of incidents in some centers.

The largest number of migrants are patiently waiting for all this to pass, and during that time they are trying to help themselves and others.

Some help maintain enhanced hygiene and disinfection in the centers, others sew and donate cotton masks, and a group of migrant medical workers in Bujanovac sent a letter to the public to help Serbia fight the coronavirus.

“The virus does not differentiate between citizens and refugees. For humanity, we stand shoulder to shoulder with you in the fight against the coronavirus ”

## Recommendations by Civil society:

Shortening the deadline for acquiring the right to work (which is now 9 months from the submission of the asylum application).

A more efficient approach to the asylum procedure, enabling the registration and submission of asylum applications without delays.

Exemption from payment of republic administrative fees for issuing and extending personal employment permits for asylum seekers and persons who have been granted the right to asylum.

Preparing employers to work with the new workforce - asylum seekers and asylum seekers, including raising the awareness of employers and employees about their cultural and other specifics and needs.

Appointing a mentor or fellow facilitator to new employees during initial stages in the work process.

Developing specific or existing working procedures and rules for employers



## Migrants in Subotica

Some 100 migrants in asylum centre over the past couple of months

- ❖ For the past few weeks, migrants moving outside reception centers in Serbia have been in the spotlight of the domestic and foreign public for trying to reach the European Union without documents. There was also an incident on the border with Hungary, due to which the Kelebija crossing was closed for some time. Migrants from the Reception Center in Subotica did not join the protests in Kelebija.

Hungary has two asylum centers next to the Horgos and Kelebija crossings, which receive applications for legal asylum in that country. All migrants who want to submit a request are waiting at the Reception Center in Subotica.



Migrants at the border crossing with Hungary,  
February 2020



## Children playing and learning together

Elementary school and volunteers of the Office for Youth and Migrants who are currently staying at the Reception Center in Subotica, together arranged a children's playground in the Zoo in Palić ( 2019)



Exhibition of young migrant artists Subotica, late 2019

Local civil society activities



## Old Railway station Subotica

Groups of migrants stay at this station, in whose waiting room they occasionally warm up or hide in abandoned wagons. The number of migrants has increased in Subotica, Sombor and Kanjiža, near the Serbian-Hungarian border.

Thank you for your attention!

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Border  
Line  
Serbia-  
Hungary

