



# **Info brochure on access to socio-economic rights for asylum seekers in the Republic of Serbia**

**March, 2023**

# Everyone has the right

to seek asylum from persecution. If you are afraid to return to your country of origin, because you believe you will be persecuted or you will suffer serious harm and violation of your rights because of your race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, you have the right to seek asylum in the Republic of Serbia. A national asylum system is in place to determine who qualifies for international protection.

An asylum-seeker is someone who has requested asylum, but his/her request has yet to be processed.

Asylum, as defined by the legislation of the Republic of Serbia, is the right to residence and protection granted to a foreign national who has been granted refuge or subsidiary protection.

This brochure provides information for all those applying for asylum. It explains how and why you can apply for asylum in the Republic of Serbia as well as your rights and responsibilities throughout the application process. In particular, it describes how to access economic and social rights such as access to work, healthcare, education, housing, and social protection.

## What are the benefits of applying for asylum?

By applying for asylum in the Republic of Serbia you will have a legal status here. During your asylum process you will be protected from deportation, and you will have a legal right to live and work here.

## What rights does an asylum seeker have in the Republic of Serbia during the asylum procedure?

According to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, asylum seekers in the Republic of Serbia can freely exercise the following rights:

- residence and freedom of movement in the Republic of Serbia
- accommodation and food in the reception/asylum centres
- social assistance in case you are not provided with accommodation in reception, asylum, or transit centres
- healthcare
- free primary and secondary education
- information and free legal aid
- freedom of religion
- labour market access (only when you have been in the asylum procedure for at least 9 months or longer)
- ID card



**Please note that seeking asylum is free of charge!  
There are no costs involved in applying for asylum.**

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# Personal Documents

## Identity card

If you are an asylum seeker in the Republic of Serbia, you are required to apply for your asylum-seeker identity card (ID). This ID is an essential document for accessing your rights and to prove your identity. The ID is valid only on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, and you cannot use it for traveling/crossing a border.

### You must submit the following information to obtain an ID:

- two colour photographs in ID Card format (3cm x 3.5cm)
- your home address
- information about your landlord (residence address, ID card number, phone number, Unique Citizen Registration Number - JMBG)

You must notify the Asylum Office as soon as possible whenever you move/change your home address. You will then be given a new ID, for which you must provide the same data as you did when applying for the first ID.

For asylum seekers the ID card is valid for six months. You must be aware of the validity period of your documents and notify the Asylum Office or your lawyer accordingly in order to apply for a new ID when one expires.

During the asylum procedure you will have an asylum seeker's ID. If granted asylum, you will need to apply for a new ID.

Lawyers from NGOs may assist you in obtaining an ID.

## What is a Foreigner Registration Number (EBS)?

A Foreigner Registration Number (EBS – Evidencioni broj za strance in Serbian) is an identification number for non-citizens in the Republic of Serbia. The asylum office is required to issue a Foreigner Registration Number to all individuals in the asylum procedure and to those granted status.

Each asylum seeker receives a unique number, which they keep during the asylum procedure. When asylum is granted, you must apply for a new EBS number.

In the Republic of Serbia, a Foreigner Registration Number (EBS) is a 13-digit number, and its function is similar to that of the national identification number for Serbian nationals. It is used to identify people in various private transactions such as banking and employment, access to healthcare or education, and is also extensively used for online identification purposes.

## How to open a bank account in the Republic of Serbia

In order to open a bank account, you must have a Foreigner Registration Number and a valid ID card, both issued by the Asylum Office. Besides this, you'll need to fill out certain application forms provided by the bank or to submit evidence of the reason why you are opening an account (e.g. an employment contract). The procedure can vary slightly from bank to bank, but the necessary documents are usually quite similar.

Based on whether you receive money transfers from abroad in a foreign currency or employment income from within the Republic of Serbia in Serbian Dinars - RSD, there are two types of bank account that can be provided by the bank: a foreign currency account or

a current (checking) account. Additionally, depending on how long you have legally stayed in the Republic of Serbia, the bank may open for you a resident or non-resident account.

Make sure to read the terms and conditions and become familiar with the fees before opening a new bank account. While most services have a price, opening an account is typically free. Most accounts have a small monthly charge for account maintenance, which is on average 150-350 RSD a month depending on the bank.

If a bank refuses to open a bank account for you owing to your status as an asylum seeker or denies you the opportunity to do so without providing a reasonable explanation as to why, contact the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, whose lawyers may be able to provide you with support.

### Belgrade Centre for Human Rights

Address: Kneza Miloša 4, Belgrade

Telephone: (+381 11) 3085 328

E-mail: [bgcentar@bgcentar.org.rs](mailto:bgcentar@bgcentar.org.rs)

# Right to work

## Personal Work Permit – Procedure

As an asylum seeker you have the right to apply for a personal work permit nine months after your asylum application was submitted and while the final decision on your application is still pending.

Holders of personal work permits are entitled to employment, self-employment and unemployment-related rights.

As a person in the asylum procedure, you have the right to a personal work permit which has the same expiry date as your ID. The personal work permit is valid for six months and can be extended as long as you are an asylum seeker.

The National Employment Service is the agency that issues work permits. The first stage in the process of getting a work

permit is getting a Foreigner Registration Number (EBS), which the Asylum Office provides upon request. To request a personal work permit, you must fill out a form which is in Serbian (Cyrillic alphabet), provide a photocopy of the asylum request, a photocopy of your ID, and a confirmation of your status, and pay a fee. However, if you are accommodated in an asylum centre run by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia, you are not required to pay a fee.

### National Employment Service

Address: Gundulićev venac 23-25, Belgrade (if you are resident in Belgrade)

Telephones:  
(+381 11) 29 29 100, 29 29 000

Opening hours: from 8:00 to 14:30

Under Serbian law, your employer is required to register you and pay your income taxes, and to provide you an employment contract.

If you are seeking employment, you may register in the Register of Unemployed Persons with the National Employment Service, which will support you in searching for employment.

To start your own business or to be self-employed, you must register with the Business Registers Agency (APR), where you will be given further information on taxes and account keeping.

### Business Registers Agency (APR - Agencija za privredne registre)

Address: Brankova 25, Belgrade (if you are resident in Belgrade)

Central telephone: (+381 11) 20 23 350

Opening hours: from 9:00 to 15:00

### Vocational training

Check which vocational training you can attend near you. Vocational training aims to provide you with skills for (self-)employment – it will add to your education, and can help you develop skills in a wide range of occupational fields. Different kinds of vocational training lead to professional development, upskilling and reskilling of adults.

Your participation in official, nationally recognized qualifications and diploma programmes takes place in a safe learning environment, it supports your social integration and promotes greater independence.

# Right to education

Education in the Republic of Serbia is divided into preschool (predškolsko), primary school (osnovna škola), secondary school (srednja škola) and tertiary education levels.

## Primary education

Primary education is obligatory for all children and free of charge. It takes eight years and consists of two educational cycles. Children are admitted to the first grade of primary school when they are not younger than six and a half and not older than seven and a half years old.

In the Republic of Serbia, parents are obliged by law to enroll their children in primary school and to make sure they attend it regularly. According to the law, asylum seekers' children must have access to school as soon as possible, but no later than three months after submitting their asylum application to the Republic of Serbia.

Children with proof of prior education are enrolled in primary and secondary schools in accordance with their age and education level. Children who lack such proof undergo a test by a panel known as the Preliminary Knowledge Test Team. This team may include an interpreter, a foreign language teacher, a pedagogical assistant, the child's parent (or temporary guardian in case the child is unaccompanied or separated) and other individuals who know the child well.

When they first enroll, children must undergo a comprehensive medical check-up and must be vaccinated. The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration or NGOs may assist you in this process.

Serbia, you are not required to pay a fee.



## Secondary education

Secondary education is not mandatory, but it is free of charge in public schools. It is intended for those who have completed the primary education cycle. Secondary schooling consists of four years of general education or two to four years of vocational education.

At secondary vocational schools, students receive secondary vocational education that prepares them for employment in a range of fields such as agriculture, forestry, geology, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, the graphic industry, textiles, construction, transport, hydrometeorology, commerce, economics, health, art or personnel services).

### What types of secondary school are there?

- Gymnasiums (academically oriented schools)
- Vocational schools
- Art schools
- Mixed schools (gymnasiums and vocational or art schools sharing a building)
- Schools for adult education
- Schools for students with disabilities

You can obtain further information on how to enroll your children in school from the staff of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration.

### Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia

Komesarijat za izbeglice i migracije Republike Srbije

Address:  
Narodnih heroja 4,  
Novi Beograd

Telephone:  
(+381 11) 3117272

E-mail: [kirs@kirs.gov.rs](mailto:kirs@kirs.gov.rs)

## Tertiary Education

Tertiary education in the Republic of Serbia is ensured by independent higher education institutions that provide basic studies, specialist study programmes and master studies.

### In Serbia, there are two types of college:

- Colleges for academic studies, providing academic study programmes in the professional, artistic and scientific fields

- Colleges of applied studies, providing applied study programmes and preparing students for the labour market.

Both types of college offer a first cycle and some type of second cycle of higher education.

According to the law, asylum seekers may enroll in tertiary education under the same conditions as foreigners, which means that they must pay for their studies.

## Validation of refugees' foreign school certificates

If you have a previously acquired diploma, it may be accepted in the Republic of Serbia for employment and schooling purposes. Qualifications for employment and education purposes are provided by the Qualifications Agency, the ENIC/NARIC Centre. Your foreign qualification documents must be originals and you must provide a translation certified by a court interpreter.

You must also fill in an electronic application, which is available on the Qualifications Agency ENIC/NARIC Centre website, and submit a copy of an ID document, as well as a brief resume in Serbian and English describing your education, together with the fee payment slip.

### Qualifications Agency, ENIC/NARIC Centre

Address:

Majke Jevrosime 51,  
11000 Beograd,  
Republika Srbija

Telephone numbers:

(+381 11) 334 5746, (+381 11) 745 5723

E-mail: [agencija@azk.gov.rs](mailto:agencija@azk.gov.rs)

Opening hours:

Monday - Friday from 12:00 to 14:00

## What is the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees - EQPR?

The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is a document providing an assessment of qualifications at the upper secondary school level and above, based on available documentation and a structured interview. It also presents information on the applicant's working experience and language proficiency. The

document provides reliable information for integration and facilitates employment and admission to further studies.

It is a specially developed assessment scheme for refugees and asylum seekers, even for those who cannot fully document their qualifications.

ENIC/NARIC Centre website, and submit a copy of an ID document, as well as a brief resume in Serbian and English describing your education, together with the fee payment slip.

### Who can apply for EQPR?

Anyone who has completed or partially completed studies at the level of upper secondary school or above, even with insufficient or missing documentation, may apply for an EQPR. An EQPR should be accepted in any European country. In the Republic of Serbia, the EQPR project was initiated in early 2021.

# Right to health care

You can get a medical checkup at state hospitals or in facilities in centres of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration.

When you visit a state hospital, bring with you your ID card issued by the Republic of Serbia Asylum Office and your Foreigner Registration Number (EBS) Certificate.

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) can provide additional information on how to access health-care and medical procedures.

## Danish Refugee Council

Address: Sindelićeva 18

Telephone: (+381 63) 741 888 9

**If you have a job with an employment contract, the employer is obliged by law to cover the mandatory health insurance.**



# Right to housing/ accommodation

## Support for Housing

Everyone has the right to appropriate housing in security, peace and dignity. In the Republic of Serbia, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration provides asylum seekers with free housing and access to essential services. However, you are always required to respect the laws of the Republic of Serbia as well as the house rules of the accommodation facilities.

After submitting your asylum request, you may leave the accommodation facilities of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, and move to a private home address.

If you have been granted asylum and you have no income while living at a private address, you are entitled to housing assistance provided by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration.

## Right to social assistance

If you are an asylum seeker living at a private address and you have no income, you are eligible to apply for state social assistance.

You cannot receive this form of assistance while staying at an asylum centre.

You can apply for monthly social assistance at the social welfare centre of the municipality where you have your official address, by submitting a copy of your ID and proof of no income.



# Other issues of relevance to integration

## Serbian Language Courses

The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and other civil organizations organize Serbian language classes. If you are granted asylum, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration will provide you Serbian language classes free of charge and you will be obliged to attend them.

Please note that Serbian is the official language in use in the Republic of Serbia and is of key importance for your integration here. It is therefore advisable that you start learning the language as soon as possible to make the integration process as smooth as possible.

## Registration of births

When a child is born on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the birth record is filed in the municipality of the hospital where the child was born. The child will hold the same citizenship as his/her parents. Only one parent needs to complete the birth registration if the parents are married, have the same nationality, and share the last name. Otherwise, both parents must be present.

## Driver's license

**If you are an asylum seeker in the Republic of Serbia you may swap your driver's license from your country of origin for a new driver's license issued by the Republic of Serbia. When applying to replace a foreign driver's license with a Serbian license, you must provide the following documents together with the application:**

- a valid foreign driving licence and its translation certified by a court translator
- proof of identity, documents proving your asylum seeker's status
- proof of payment of the fee
- a medical certificate confirming you are fit to drive, issued within the past six months.

You must also provide a Foreigner Registration Number (EBS number in Serbian) certificate and a status certificate issued by the Asylum Office. The procedure for exchanging your driving licence with a Serbian one is not complicated, but collecting the required documents may be time-consuming.

Lawyers from NGOs may assist you in obtaining an ID.

## Vehicle registration

To register your vehicle you must provide your status certificate issued by the Asylum Office, together with the standard requirements set out by the traffic police. The Serbian language is used in all applications.

## Public transport - BusPlus Info

Belgrade city public transport consists of a network of buses, trolleybuses and tram routes run by the city transport company GSP Belgrade, and by private bus companies.

### Single tickets can be bought:

- in public transport vehicles, from the driver or conductor, if available
- at kiosks marked with a ticket sales notice
- at GSP points of sale.

You may also buy a public transport (BusPlus) card. Both non-personalized cards, which are used to buy single-journey tickets at kiosks, and personalized monthly cards, are available.

If you are unemployed, you are entitled to a cheaper card, but you must bring your National Employment Service certificate. You can choose either because the monthly ticket cost for both employed people and foreigners is the same.

When purchasing a monthly ticket, pay attention to which transport zones you need. A map showing which zone your address belongs to is located at the following link:

[https://www.busplus.rs/busplus\\_zoniranje/prikaz\\_zona.php](https://www.busplus.rs/busplus_zoniranje/prikaz_zona.php)

**The BusPlus system applies to all public transport vehicles (GSP Belgrade, private carriers, Lasta and Bg Voz).**

### New purchasing terminals have been installed at the following locations:

- Masarikova 5 - Palata Beograđanka
- Skender begova 47, JKP GSP
- Bulevar Mihaila Pupina 165d - Poslovna zgrada Lukoil Srbija
- Deligradska 10
- Republic Square- TC Republic Square

## Pro bono legal support

Throughout the entire asylum process, you have the right to appropriate information about the process. During the asylum process, you have the right to free legal support and the presence of your legal representative. Free legal assistance can be provided by Belgrade Centre for Human Rights.





INITIATIVE FOR  
ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL RIGHTS



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