

Country profile: SERBIA



Country facts

Capital:
Belgrade

Main country facts:
independent since June 5, 2006

Population:
over 7 million

Urbanization:
56 percent live in cities

Life expectancy:
74 years

Unemployment rate:
19 percent

Population living below poverty line:
8.8 percent

Habitat facts

When started:
partnership with a local organization launched in 2011

Highlights:
Memorandum of understanding for the first housing unit signed with local authorities in May, 2011.

Families served:
N/A

Housing solutions:
Construction of social housing units for vulnerable groups

Habitat for Humanity in Serbia

In Serbia, Habitat for Humanity is starting to work through a partnership with a local non-profit organization, the Housing Center. The Center focuses on improving housing conditions for socially vulnerable groups. It has been active since 2004, has 18 founders, and relies on a network of partners and associates – mainly architects, engineers and social workers.

The housing need in Serbia

Serbia remains in transition following the changes to a market based economy and 20 years of armed conflicts caused by unresolved political issues after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. Emerging from a prolonged period of conflict, the country has the largest number of refugees and internally displaced people in Europe making up almost 10 percent of the population.

The existing housing stock in Serbia is insufficient to meet the housing needs. Houses are often overcrowded and largely unaffordable. Average housing prices are more than 17 times an average annual income.

As the housing sector is not seen as a political objective, the Serbian government has developed neither a system of affordable social housing nor an adequate housing policy. No mechanism that can assist the vulnerable in solving their housing needs has been established. Vulnerable groups usually live in inadequate and very frequently dilapidated collective centers.

How Habitat addresses the need

Habitat for Humanity is starting its work in Serbia by partnering with the Housing Center. This cooperation is based on two Habitat competences: volunteer mobilization and volunteer management. Habitat will be assisting the Housing Center in developing a local volunteer program. It will be transferring knowledge related to recruiting, training and managing volunteers at the construction site. Habitat has engaged local volunteers together with homeowners in building and renovating homes since its founding in 1976. Habitat's international volunteering program has been in operation since 1989 and operates in more than 60 countries.

Construction of social housing in supportive environment

The project in Serbia has two main components: the construction of social housing, and creation of the supportive environment. A total of 44 housing units for 132 people will be constructed. These units will be placed in three locations. The buildings and apartments will be owned and maintained by municipalities. The beneficiaries are refugees living in collective centers or inadequate housing. It also includes other vulnerable groups, like single mothers, elderly persons, victims of gender violence and Roma.

This €1 million project is mainly supported from the European Union funds. Around 10 percent of the funding comes from partnering non-profit organizations, among them Habitat for Humanity.

What is a supportive social environment

A Supportive Environment is not only a form of housing support, but also an instrument for achieving social inclusion and a way for many families to step out of the vicious cycle of poverty. It is composed of activities provided by the local families and social centers. Vulnerable people or refugees start living in the newly constructed social units alongside local families. They share everyday activities and develop good neighborly relationships. In addition to that, municipal social centers provide these people with training opportunities and support to start independent lives.

“Having a place to live is a fundamental human right. Lack of housing is both a cause and effect of poverty and social exclusion worldwide,” says representative from the Housing Center.



DONATE

Support Habitat for Humanity in Serbia by donating through www.habitateurope.org/donate.

Choose to **designate your gift to SERBIA.**

CONTACT

Lucija Popovska
Program Director
Habitat for Humanity
Europe&Central Asia
e-mail: lpopovska@habitat.org
tel: +421 911 045 812

Barbora Fričová
Marketing Specialist
Habitat for Humanity
Europe&Central Asia
e-mail: bfricova@habitat.org
tel: +421 911 045 836

Habitat for Humanity International is a global charity dedicated to eliminating poverty housing. Since its foundation in 1976, Habitat has built and renovated more than 400,000 houses worldwide, providing simple, decent, affordable shelter for 2 million people.

In Europe and Central Asia Habitat for Humanity International works with families in need in 23 countries, building and repairing houses, offering housing microfinance services, improving water and sanitation, working on disaster response and advocating for affordable housing. In this region, Habitat has served more than 11,000 families together with volunteers and homeowners. Find out more at www.habitateurope.org.