APC/CZA (**Centar za zaštitu i pomoć tražiocima azila/Asylum Protection Center)** is a nongovernmental, non-profit, independent organization, specialized in protecting asylum seekers, persons granted protection and exiles, forced to migrate to Serbia. Founded in December 2007 by a group of young refugee protection professionals (lawyers, psychologists, pedagogues, political sciences and social workers) with experience gained in the EU countries, with a shared goal of protecting persons fleeing persecution, building and improving Serbian asylum system, fighting xenophobia, discrimination and prejudices towards migrants, working on integration and building and advocating for dialogue, interaction and respect of human rights of the beneficiaries in the local communities and Serbian society at large.

APC/CZA has been providing legal, psycho/social, integration/interaction aid and humanitarian aid to asylum seekers/persons granted protection all over Serbia via APC/CZA mobile teams and local APC/CZA offices in Southern, Central to Northern Serbia (especially in and around all asylum and all reception/transit camps in areas of Belgrade, Loznica, Sjenica, Tutin, Lajkovac, Valjevo, Presevo, Vranje, Bujanovac, Nis, Dimitrovgrad, Sombor, Sid, Adasevci, Principovac, Belgrade, Subotica, Kikinda, etc.) for more than 10 years and as such recognized in the Strategy of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for Managing Migration (The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 59/2009). APC/CZA has been conducting research and various types of advocacy. APCCZA has been working intensively with local/nationa/regional/foreign media. APCCZA has been providing trainings for young legal/psychological/social work professionals and has been running internship and volunteer programs for local and foreign students and volunteers. APCCZA has the network of more than 140 volunteers who wish to help refugees in Serbia. APC/CZA provides direct focused humanitarian aid, developed initially as a side activity, in response to the particular gravity of the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe in 2015.

APC/CZA has been ECRE (European Council of Refugees and Exiles) member since 2011 and IDC (International Detention Coalition) member since 2015, member of Serbian Convent (National Convention on the European Union-NCEU) and member of EASO (European Asylum Support Office) Consultative Forum since 2016 and member of Advisory Group of the EASO Vulnerability Experts’ Network since 2018.

Main areas of APC/CZA’s work are divided according to the programme areas: I Legal protection (legal aid and representation of asylum seekers/persons granted protection/unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, before asylum instances and in all other administrative proceedings, before magistrate courts, before administrative courts, constitutional court, ECtHR); II Psychological protection (psychological assessment, psychological individual/group/family counselling and therapy, crisis intervention, coordination and assistance in contact with medical services ); III Pedagogical, Social and Integration Protection Sector (pedagogical/workshop assistance, assistance in education, interaction/integration assistance, social assistance, youth work, COI unit, student practices/internships, volunteering, humanitarian work); IV Program Sector (management, fundraising, finances, research, advocacy, media work).

Organizational expertise and experience

APC/CZA has cultivated and maintained good relations with both governmental and non-governmental sector, asylum and other institutions, civil society representatives and members of local communities in all regions with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Serbia.

On European and Regional level: ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles), Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Hungary), The Human Rights League (Slovakia), Organization for Aid to Refugees (Czech Republic), Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland), Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (Macedonia), Civil Rights Program (Kosovo), Centre for Peace Studies (Croatia), Anti-Detention Coalition (U.K), Amnesty International, ICS Ufficio Rifugiati (Italy), Migrants Help Association of Hungary (Hungary), Centre for Democratic Transition (Montenegro), Asylkoordination Osterreich (Austria), Pravno-informacijski center nevladinih organizacij (Slovenia), Greek Council for Refugees (Greece), Interkulturelles Zentrum (Austria), Legal-informational Centre for nongovernmental organizations - Legis (Macedonia), etc.

On Serbian Central level: Ministry of Interior, Border Police, Asylum Office, Asylum Commission, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (KIRS), Reception Centre for Foreigners Padinska Skela, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Work and Social Welfare, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Serbian Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection, Serbian Red Cross, RS Office for Human Rights, RS Office of Trustee for Equality, RS Ombudsperson office, EU Delegation, ICRC, UNICEF, IOM, MDM, MSF, etc.

On Serbian Local level Loznica, Lajkovac, Sjenica, Tutin, Obrenovac, Subotica, Belgrade, Presevo, Vranje, Nis, Sombor, Sid, etc.: Local Authorities, Local Social Welfare Centres, Local Police and inspectors for foreigners, Asylum Centres, Local hospitals and Health Centres, Local schools, Vasa Stajic Centre for Unaccompanied Minors in Belgrade and in Nis, Belgrade University (faculties of Political Sciences, Sociology, Law, Architecture), University of Singidunum, Faculty for Media and Communication, Peace and Conflict Studies in the Balkans SIT Study Abroad, local CSOs (e.g.European Movement, Sandzak Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, Cultural centre Hadzi Ruvim in Lajkovac, Youth centre Lajkovac, EHO Novi Sad, Svetionik from Loznica, Iskra from Loznica, CHRIS Valjevo and Nis, Eco dvoriste Obrenovac, Academic initiative Forum 10, Youth centre Sjenica, Cultural centre Tutin, Youth Initiative for Human Rights from Belgrade and Subotica, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, Belgrade Open School, Info Park, Stav Plus Subotica, Eastern-European Mission Subotica, BETA, Public Policy Research Centre, Samoinicijativa Subotica, Subotica Centar for Local Democracy, Center for Cultural Decontamination, KOMS Umbrella Organization of Youth of Serbia, Jezuit Retreat Centre JRC, Youth Centre Pancevo, European Movement, IAN, Jednakost – Centar za manjine, Da se zna, Lokalna inicijativa za izbeglice Suborica, Centar za zaštitu tražiocima azila Preševo, SHARE, etc.)

Results achieved:

Over the past eleven years, we have legally informed more than 230,000 migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. We legally advised more than 24,000 asylum seekers and represented in asylum and other proceedings, as well as before the Misdemeanour, Administrative, Constitutional Courts and other instances. Our psychologists advised and psychologically empowered more than 10,000 asylum-seekers and refugees who needed help. Through social assistance, we advised more than 4500 asylum seekers. We have held over 937 different workshops (cultural, creative, empowering, health, language, school preparatory, integrational, and psychological) with more than 4000 asylum seekers participating. We have crossed over 440,000 kilometres of roads per country with our mobile teams across Serbia. Our web pages were visited by more than 180,000 different people just in 2017 year alone.

**Bearing in mind APC/CZA previous and on-going experience since 2007, the role of APC/CZA was significant in the first Serbian asylum system’s years, in supporting initial links, connection and cooperation among all system’s actors, coming from different fields of protection, social welfare, healthcare, reception and juvenile protection**. Moreover, **APC/CZA has continued practice of sharing its gained domestic and international asylum experience and practice to the domestic stakeholders until now.**

**Asylum seekers and persons granted asylum (refugee or subsidiary protection) have been provided with APC/CZA direct legal, psychosocial aid before, during and after asylum procedure, preventing mistreatment, human rights violations or abuse in concrete cases since 2008.**

APC/CZA has legally informed more than 110 000 refugees out of whom more than children 31 000 and more than 30 000 women just during the Refugee crisis in 2015. In 2016, APC/CZA has legally informed more than 35 000 refugees out of whom more than 7 500 children and more then 8 000 women.

**APC/CZA legally represented the first and many other persons who were granted subsidiary and refugee protection in Serbia and secured asylum for them**, shaping asylum decision making practice in Serbia

Via continuous legal intervention, APC/CZA **has been improving asylum procedure, asylum legal administrative/court practice and implementation of asylum regulations in Serbia for more then a decade.**

T**hrough legal representation APC/CZA initiatied and secured practice of issuing birth certificates for new-born asylum children in Serbia**, practice of providing **social welfare support to asylum seekers living in private accommodation**, practice of issuing **working licenses for seeking asylum, persons granted asylum (refugee or subsidiary protection),** APC/CZA opened the opportunity for asylum seekers/refugees to acess the labour market and secured futher practice.

**APC/CZA initiated asylum childrens’ school enrolment in Serbia, (in 2012).** APC/CZA was the first to enroll asylum seekers’/refugee’s children in local schools (in 2012) and from then onwards (enrolled more than 100 asylum children into local schools).

**APC/CZA was the first organization to organize first local interaction/interculutural asylum fairs and exhibitions in Serbia, in local communities** of Lajkovac, Banja Koviljaca, Sjenica, Tutin, Obrenovac, Belgrade, and was **the first to organize mutual classes of civil education for asylum and local children together with the local schools** in Lajkovac, Belgrade, Sjenica, Tutin, Obrenovac and Krnjaca, **initiated the first humanitarian actions and exhibitions** in Serbia, e.g. in Belgrade and in other places across Serbia.

**APC/CZA has secured same health care regime for asylum seekers as for Serbian citizens through proper law interpretation and constant asylum seekers’ field legal representation** **and practice**, in public hospitals, health centres and in work with hospital and health centres’ administration since 2008.

Through legal representation before magistrate courts in Serbia, APC/CZA secured rejection of responsibility for illegal border crossings for persons seeking asylum, secured using of interpreters in court proceedings, and prevented possible de facto deportations in case of asylum seekers and refugees.

APC/CZA has provided more than 180 creative, cultural, empowering, hygienic workshops and supported 1 100 children and local children just in 2016.

APC/CZA has been **actively involved in solving communication problems of asylum seekers in local communities, in their social inclusion and eventual integration into local societies**. By building contacts with local authorities and local citizens, and through organization of workshops, meetings, local events with asylum seekers and local citizens, APC/CZA has been trying to meet the challenges of comprehensive protection of refugees within the framework of Serbian socio-legal system, promoting tolerance, breaking prejudice and fears, establishing communication and dialogue among asylum seekers and local citizens in local communities

**During the years of its involvement, APC/CZA has built excellent communication with the media and actively works to combat prejudice and xenophobia in the society,** timely and responsibly informing the public about events, novelties, problems, and statistics in the field of asylum and migration in Serbia.

The APC/CZA's responsible, significant and professional advocating in favour of asylum seekers in the period of rallies and tensions in the Banja Koviljaca and Loznica municipality in the period September-December 2011. and in the period of asylum crisis in Obrenovac, Bogovadja and Mladenovac in late 2013, contributed to the forming of real, unbiased picture in general public about persons seeking asylum and their sensitive position in Serbia.

APC/CZA started advocating in the local community of Lajkovac and Bogovadja for the ambulance working fulltime for asylum seekers and local citizens in village of Bogovadja. This initiative was successful and resulted with Bogovadja ambulance working fulltime for the needs of asylum seekers and local citizens since the end of 2013.

**APC/CZA has built outstanding relation and cooperation with media (local, national, regional, foreign outstanding newspapers and TV stations) since 2008, securing its strong position for conducting asylum/refugee campaigns and advocacy up to now.** E.g. through strong and directed media campaign in last months of 2014, APC/CZA initiated improvements in the capacity and in the efficiency of Asylum Office causing improved and regular field work of Asylum Office, expandure of Asylum Office’s staff, regular Asylum Office visits to asylum camps since January 2015. APC/CZA influenced media and initiated campaign for treating refugees in human manner from the side of the Government. That campaign had resulted with official Government’s position to address issue of refugees coming to Serbia in human and pro asylumly oriented manner in 2015.

**APC/CZA has been recognized by the Serbian TV & Radio Broadcasting Agency, as the most outstanding actor that has marked whole 2015 in Serbia with its contribution to/and protection of refugees, with its positive influence to the public opinion, fighting against prejudices, xenophobia and raising awareness on issues of refugees in public. APC/CZA Executive Director was recognized as one of six individuals as most outstanding and prominent public figures in Serbia in 2015.**

APC/CZA has continued excellent cooperation with local/foreign media and maintained strong media presence in Serbian local and general public.

**APC/CZA has been active in the field of integration**, securing provision of international documents, permits, professional trainings, supporting persons seeking/granted asylum in getting working licences, employment, getting private accommodation, certificates, language courses, for those who receive state protection (refugee/subsidiary protected).

APC started integration of asylum seekers and persons granted asylum (refugees and subsidiary protected) into labor market in Serbia, in 2015 and has been integrating them into labour market eversince. APC secured first working licences for asylum seekers and presons granted asylum in Serbia, deliberathed beneficiaries from the employment taxes, made first legal presedence securing access of asylum seekers and persons granted asylum to Serbian labor market. APC has secured access, presence at labor market, employment, to more then 50 cases of beneficiaries since 2015. APC/CZA has cooperation with more then 20 partners/employers employing asylum seekers and persons granted asylum.

Moreover, through obligatory Political Faculty student practice and other student practices (law students, sociology, media and communication, architecture) and local/international internships (e.g. students from Columbia, Duke Universities, Universidad Europea de Madrid, etc.), **APC/CZA has been the first organization investing in preparing young professionals for their possible future engagement in asylum and migration field in Serbia or abroad.**

**APC/CZA has developed, the first licensed/acredited asylum trainings before Ministry of Education** **and providing first asylum training** for teachers, professors and school professionals in work with migrants, asylum seekers, persons granted asylum children ever in Serbia.

**APC/CZA has developed, the first licensed/acredited asylum trainings before Ministry of Work and Social Welfare** and providing **first asylum training** for professionals from social welfare system and asylum system in work and interviewing techniques with migrants, asylum seekers, persons granted asylum (refugee/subsidiary protection) and their vulnerable groups ever in Serbia.

**APC/CZA developed first smartphone application for asylum seekers and refugees in Balkans and as one of the first in Europe**, in 2015 and started to **develop strong local volunteering network**, that has reached more than 140 local volunteers with potential to grow further and to secure efficient, dynamic, local way of sustainable support to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, as contrubituon to rigid and slow state/international mechanisms of support.

**APC/CZA was the first to nostrify foreign refugee diploma in Serbia and initiated practice in that regard in Serbia.**

**APC/CZA was the first to provide selfemployment to persons granted asylum (refugees and subsidiary protected) and set a practice in that regard for new refugee cases.**

APC/CZA Activities:

Information sharing - informing irregular migrants-potential asylum seekers on /rights/obligations/available procedures, their legal position and potential consequences of their eventual irregular position, on asylum/migrant procedures, system and its functioning, as well as on rights and obligations guaranteed, on procedural steps in asylum, on the possible legal remedies, on possibilities to report abuse, violations, on the possible decisions and possible duration of the asylum/other procedures, throughout the action in the language they understand, adjusted to their age, during the field visits of APC/CZA mobile teams, as well as in APC/CZA premises in South, North and Central Serbia. During the provision of information beneficiaries are informed about the legal aid assistance available under the action and provided with full contact details of APC/CZA lawyers. Moreover, APC smartphone Asylum in Serbia Application has been shared by APC/CZA volunteers, interns, cultural mediators, all APC/CZA mobile teams members, allowing migrants to take advantage of their rights/information and avoid discrimination.Thus, by raising their rights/obligations/system awareness among asylum seekers/migrants, who are often unaware of the asylum/other procedures and rights and obligations in Serbia, who face significant language barriers and are ignored/discriminated by the system, asylum seekers/migrants’ access to asylum and other human rights would be ensured, moreover by knowing their rights and their legal position, being increasingly able to claim their rights and seek support from APC/CZA lawyers/protection officers in the time of need, which further prevents the occurrence of discriminatory practices and enables access to asylum.

Legal aid - representation of asylum seekers/exiles/refugees at all stages of the asylum and all other administrative and judicial (administrative, misdemeanour, constitutional, criminal, etc.) procedures and before all other instances in Serbia, moreover helping them in resolving the current, every day and other problems to which asylum seekers encounter (documents, health care, social services, family reunification, police procedures, guardianship procedures, legal position, education, violation of their rights, discrimination, etc.). Legal aid include legal representation and legal counseling to people who have been granted asylum in Serbia (refugee, subsidiary or other protection) in all types of procedures from registration, obtaining documents, to the exercise of health care, social assistance, access to labor market, right to work, education, integration, nostrifications and more.

Psychological assistance - is implemented through individual and group psychological counseling, crisis intervention and other types of psychological support, with the goal of preventing and eliminating psychological difficulties, empowering asylum seekers/exiles/refugees to overcome existing psychological problems.

Pedagogical/Educational assistance – includes individual and group pedagogical assistance and discussions with beneficiaries in order to identify existing problems and find possible ways to overcome them. It includes educational and pedagogical support to children and yout in the process/on course of school enrollment. Special attention is paid to individual and specific characteristics of beneficiaries, especially children and youth, and their specific vulenrability in Serbia.

Interaction/integration assistance – is realized through assistance in looking for private accommodation, in getting working licences and in getting employment, assistance in getting certificates, in getting documents and permissions, in education process, in interaction with local communities, in participation in local and cultural events, in vocational trainings, cultural mediators’ process.

Work with minors and unaccompanied minors asylum seekers/exiles/refugees is realized through provision of comprehensive legal and psychosocial aid to minors and through workshop type of work that develops self-confidence, communication, expression, creative, interaction and integration capacities.

Work within Centers for Children and Adolescents Belgrade, Nis (ZVDO), is realized through provision of comprehensive legal and psychosocial aid to minors, working closely with same institutions and centres for social work in protecting best interests of the children.

•Supporting enrolment of asylum seeking/refugee children in the education system – through legal support into enrolment process, realization of preparation workshops and language workshops for children, pedagogical support to children on course of education and support to parents, including strengthening capacities of relevant local and central actors in charge/involved in the education of asylum seeking children.

Workshops – include empowering, creative, cultural, integration, adaptive, and health workshops with a specific focus on youth, women and children asylum seekers/exiles/refugees, as a particularly vulnerable groups of beneficiaries.

The Collection, preparation and publication of Stories of Asylum – The authentic journey’s and stories of asylum seekers gathered through the field work of the APC team about the reasons for leaving their countries of origin, their journey, and their expectations for the future are prepared and published in special APC editions of Asylum Stories.

Health care and interpretation support – Includes assisting beneficiaries before hospitals and health centres, ensuring respect of their right to health care services, pyschosocial support, provision of interpreters in cases where they are needed.

The countries of origin research (COI research) and creation of Asylum library, includes conducting COI research and preparing COI reports available on internet as comprehensive source of information for specialists from asylum institutions e.g. asylum centres, police, Asylum Office, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, etc.

Activities in other border towns are reflected through weekly visits to the settlements in which migrants are situated, providing information on their rights and obligations, on the asylum system.

Trainings for representatives of local and state institutions, civil society, activists, young professionals, translators, students – includes provision of trainings on asylum, migraton, asylum laws/human rights, COI research, psychosocial support and legal work with asylum seekers/refugees/migrants, intercultural, integration, interaction and workshop techniques, on work with migrant/refugee children and vulnerable groups, on child educational support. All with the aim of raising capacity of relevant actors in the field of asylum and migration, in work with specific and vulenrable refugee groups, improving asylum and migration laws and practices and psychosocial support to benficiaries, thus improving local asylum/migration system.

APC/CZA local and international student practices provision of internships and practices for local and foreign students (law, political science, sociology, psychology, media and communication, locial work students), organized through fieldwork and office work in APC, with the aim of transferring knowledge, expertise, experience to young or future professionals who will be active in the asylum and other systems of support and work with migrants/asylum seekers/refugees in Serbia or abroad.

Advocacy and public campaigns – undertaking advocacy activities, public and media campaigns, maintaining excellent cooperation with media and buidling upon APC strong media position, in order to raise awareness of the local citizens in the context of asylum and migration, combating prejudice and xenophobia and working actively to strengthen the concept of protecting asylum seekers and refugees in Serbia.

Regional cooperation, exchange of experiences and best practices - includes undertaking of joint projects, cooperation and various joint activities with “sister” organizations, academic institutions and other actors, from the region, Europe or worldwide, sharing information, experiences and practices, working on joint caseload, building networks and initiatives, undertaking joint advocacy campaigns, all in order to respond to new challenges through regional, European or Worldwide initiatives in protecting asylum seekers/refugees/exiles and fighting for rightful, tolerant and inclusive societies.

Activities in local communities (Bogovađa and Lajkovac, Banja Koviljaca and Loznica, Sjenica, Tutin, Subotica, Belgrade, Krnjača, etc.) implemented through joint workshops of local and asylum children, lectures and workshops in local schools, exhibitions of asylum seekers, concerts, street events and fairs, football match between locals and asylum seekers, integrative youth camps for asylum seekers and young people from local communities, through the promotion of traditions from the countries of origin of asylum seekers (traditional cuisine, drawing henna, making kites, making African hairstyles, etc.) all with the goal of establishing intercultural dialogue and building trust and understanding in the local communities between local population and asylum seekers.

Transport and distribution of humanitarian aid, volunteering, and distribution of information leaflets - APC/CZA seriously expanded its volunteering network and daily distributes humanitarian aid to the asylum seekers/refugees who are not accommodated in the asylum centres but in open areas in Belgrade or around asylum centres across Serbia and therefore lack safe shelter, meals, hygienic and other basic products and facilities. Together with its active network of volunteers, APC/CZA team was providing large amounts of humanitarian aid to the areas where beneficiaries were located in 2015, and since then is providing focused humanitarian aid assistance to concrete beneficiaries and just when concrete aid is lacking and is not provided by any of existing humanitarian organizations. Most often APC/CZA has been supplying vulnerable beneficiaries with baby products (diapers, baby soap, baby shampoo, wet tissues etc.), hygienic products (tooth paste, tooth brushes, soaps, shampoos, wet tissues, toilet paper, disinfection gels, etc.), medical products (creams against burns, stings and open wounds, painkillers, medicines against flu and sore throat, bandages, plasters, etc.), food and beverages (sandwiches, fruits, nuts, water, tea, coffee, juices etc.), underwear, sleeping bags, towels, socks, shoes, clothes, etc.