

Save the Children
100 YEARS

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AT THE WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

JANUARY – MARCH 2019

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub
Data and Trends Analysis

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IMPRESSUM

Every child has the right to a future. Save the Children works in North West Balkans and around the world to give children a healthy start in life, and the chance to learn and be safe. We do whatever it takes to get children the things they need – every day and in times of crisis.

Acknowledgements

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Girls in elementary school in Bogovadja

Tell us what you think about our work or ask for more information:

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KEY TRENDS

Mixed migrations flows continue on the Balkans route. About 8,500 refugees and migrants are estimated to have arrived to the Balkans countries during the first quarter of 2019 which makes it the most travelled migration route to Europe

Figures from Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Kosovo*,¹ Romania, North Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina indicate that the Western Balkans was the most travelled migration routes in Europe during the first quarter of the year. During this period, 8,150 new refugees and migrants were registered in Greece, while Save the Children identified 2,113 new arrivals in Serbia, out of which 46 were by plane. During the same period, 360 new refugees and migrants were identified in Bulgaria, 327 were recorded as transiting through North Macedonia, and 349 people applied for international protection in Romania. In addition, 1,997 new arrivals were identified in Albania, 3,570 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 292 in Kosovo*. The fact that many different routes are used and the comparison of demographic data indicate that these figures do not overlap completely. In addition, the available data does not capture all irregular migrants, particularly those who are avoiding police registration. Based on these indicators, we estimate that at least 8,500 refugees and migrants arrived to the region in the period from January to March 2019, compared to about 7,000 new arrivals to Spain and 500 to Italy during the same period.²

January to March is the period of year with the fewest new arrivals

The migration trends to date indicate that the period from January to March tends to be the slowest migration period during a year. However, the data for 2019 shows a noticeable increase when compared to the numbers recorded during the first quarter of 2018 indicating that the migration flows through the Balkans for 2019 might record an overall increase necessitating adequate programming responses.

The route through Bosnia and Herzegovina became the most travelled

Transit corridors from Bulgaria/North Macedonia and Serbia as well as through Albania and Montenegro merge in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The data show that refugees and migrants transiting through the Western Balkans region are moving towards Bosnia and Herzegovina where they try to cross the border with Croatia and continue towards Western European countries.

Children make about one-third of all refugees and migrants transiting through the Balkans with many of them travelling alone

The available data on the number of refugee and migrants transiting through the Balkans show that the proportion of children in the total migrant population fluctuated between 10% and 40%. The percentage of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in the overall number of children varies from country to country, oscillating from 8% in North Macedonia to 90% in Serbia, indicating that some children remain invisible and that there are significant differences in identification procedures. The vast majority of UASC are boys from Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is important to note that reliable data on refugees and migrants disaggregated by age and sex were not available for Albania.

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

KEY TRENDS

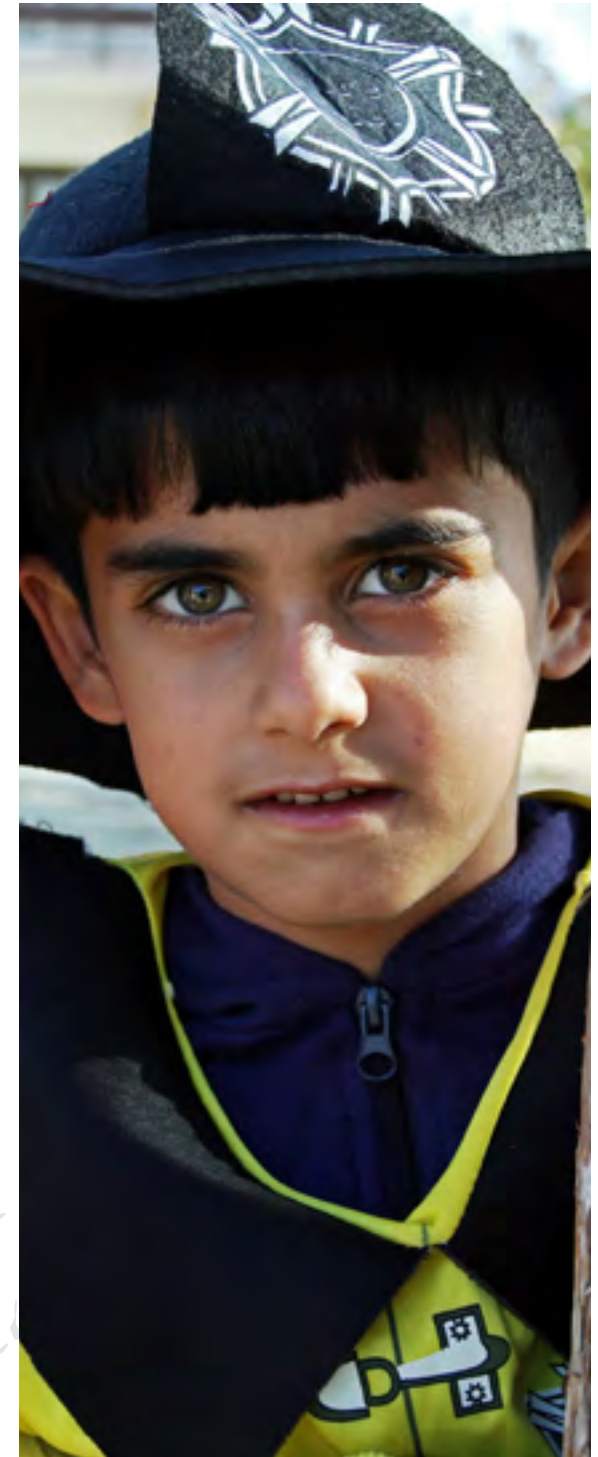


More than 86,500 refugees and migrants are currently present in the Balkans countries

The number of people accommodated in reception centres, at external addresses and unofficial shelters in the Balkans countries is estimated to be around 86,500. Most of them are present in Greece (about 76,000), Bosnia and Herzegovina (about 5,500), Serbia (4,200) and Bulgaria (700), while several hundreds of are accommodated in Romania (300), North Macedonia (63) and Albania.

The Balkans route is the main migration route for refugees and migrants from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan

The demographic data on refugees and migrants in Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, North Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina show that the Balkans route is dominantly travelled by refugees and migrants from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. On the other side, the central and western Mediterranean route is mostly used by refugees and migrants from African countries, and a small fraction of those from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.



MIGRATION ROUTES



About

8,500*

refugees and migrants are estimated to have arrived to the Balkans countries since the beginning of the year which makes it the most traveled migration route to Europe in 2019

* This number includes new arrivals to Greece via sea and land route, to Bulgaria from Turkey and to Serbia by plane.

CONTINUOUS ARRIVALS AND ONWARD MOVEMENT

According to the UNHCR data, 8,150 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece during the first quarter of 2019³ which made the Balkans route the most travelled migration route to Europe in the period from January to March 2019.⁴ The majority of registered refugees and migrants (about 5,250 or 64%) arrived by sea, while about 2,900 refugees and migrants entered Greece by crossing the land border from north-east. This is a noticeable decrease in land arrivals compared to the last quarter of the previous year when 9,100 sea arrivals and 5,800 land arrivals to Greece were recorded. However, compared to the first trimester of 2018 when 7,506 refugees and migrants entered the Greece, including 5,330 by sea and 2,176 via land route, we see overall increase in number of arrivals, especially of land arrivals.

The UNHCR data shows that the number of people of concern in Greece increased from 71,200 recorded at the end of December 2018 to 76,000 at the end of the March 2019.

According to the National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum, over 14,500 of refugees and migrants were present on the islands (report from March 31st), while the total accommodation capacities included about 9,000 places.

8,150
refugees and
migrants arrived in
Greece during the
first quarter of 2019

The situation was especially difficult in the reception and identification centres on Lesbos with the total capacity of 3,100 places but accommodating more than 6,000 people; and on Samos with the total capacity of about 650 places but accommodating more than 3,800 refugees and migrants.⁵



Over 14,500 of refugees and migrants were present on the islands (report from March 31st), while the total accommodation capacities included about 9,000 places

The data shows that there were about 3,800 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Greece at the end of March, with about one-third accommodated in shelters for UASC or Supported Independent Living (SIL) apartments. This left more than 2,500 of UASC in need of adequate shelter. Some of UASC were in protective custody or were placed in safe zones, hotels (emergency accommodation), reception and identification centres or open accommodation facilities, and about 1,000 UASC were reported as living in informal housing arrangements, on the streets (reported as homeless), or with their location unknown.⁶

DEMOGRAPHY

The reports on sea arrivals for the period from January to March 2019, provide an insight on the demography of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece.⁷ Out of 5,241 refugees and migrants arriving by sea, 60% were adults (men 1,971; women 1,184), while 40% were children (boys 1,179; girls 901). About 14% of newly arrived refugee and migrant children travelled alone, mostly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Egypt.

Regarding the country of origin, the trends remain similar to the previous period with the majority of arrivals coming from Afghanistan. During the first quarter of 2019, the sea route was mostly used by refugees and migrants from Afghanistan (47%), Iraq (14%), Syria (12%), Palestine (10%) and Congo (6%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=5,241)

Afghanistan	47%
Iraq	14%
Syria	12%
Palestine	10%
Congo	6%

During the first quarter of 2019, the sea route was mostly used by refugees and migrants from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Congo

As in the previous reporting period, the statistics show that Afghans, Syrians, and Iraqis mostly arrive in Greece in family groups. A similar trend of travelling in family groups was recorded for Syrians and Iraqis in other Balkans countries, but not for Afghans. According to the data from the other countries in the Balkans, refugees and migrants from Afghanistan were dominantly men and teenage boys. Possible explanations of this variance could include different backgrounds of refugees and migrants using the land and sea routes (for example, different provinces of origin, ethnicity, religion, status, wealth); divergent smuggling schemes; a decision to separate the family, with women and children staying Greece, while men continue the journey alone through the Balkans towards western and northern Europe. At this moment, these are only assumptions that would need to be verified or refuted through a detailed research. Meanwhile, Save the Children will systematically monitor this trend and report on it.

MIGRATION ROUTES

Throughout the period from January to March 2019, refugees and migrants used both sea and land routes to enter Greece. The main entry points for the sea route were islands close to the Turkish coast, namely Lesbos, Samos, Chios and the Dodecanese islands.

During this period, 14 persons died or went missing while crossing the sea. This is a significant decrease when compared to 80 refugees and migrants registered during the previous three months as dead or missing while trying to enter Greece by sea.⁸

The main land route used by refugees and migrants is at the north-eastern border with Turkey, crossing the river Evros. Even though this is not a new route, during the 2018 it was increasingly used by refugees and migrants, and the number of new arrivals through the land route greatly outnumbered previous years. According to the available data, 2,900 new crossings were registered during the first quarter of 2019.

2,900
refugees and
migrants entered
the Greece by
crossing the land
border

Even though Greece is an EU country, many refugees and migrants continue their journey towards western and northern Europe. The well-established exit route, extensively travelled since the beginning of the migration crisis, heads north towards North Macedonia and Serbia. The use of other routes also intensified since the beginning of the year. According to data from Bulgaria, there was an increase in entries from Greece compared to previous year. In addition, a new route from Greece, through Albania and Montenegro, towards Bosnia and Herzegovina also emerged in the previous year. Finally, some refugees and migrants use the sea route towards Italy.



REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS ON THE MOVE

During the first three months of 2019, Save the Children and its partners in Serbia identified and supported 2,113 newly arrived refugees and migrants. This represented more than a 40% decrease compared to the period from October to December 2018 when 3,633 new arrivals were identified. Other agencies also noticed a decrease in the number of refugees and migrants during the first trimester of 2019. UNHCR observed 3,546 new arrivals compared to 5,084 observed in last quarter of 2018.⁹ During the same period of time, 1,549 refugees and migrants expressed their intention to seek asylum, which is about 30% decrease compared to the previous quarter.¹⁰ However, comparing these numbers to the first three months of 2018, when Save the Children and its partners registered 1,480 new arrivals, there is a major increase.

Data shows that new arrivals did not increase the number of refugees and migrants present in the country, suggesting that most of them only transit through Serbia. According to UNHCR, the overall number of refugees and migrants present in Serbia decreased by 300 when compared to December 2018 with 4,200 refugees and migrants temporarily residing in the country by the end of March.¹¹

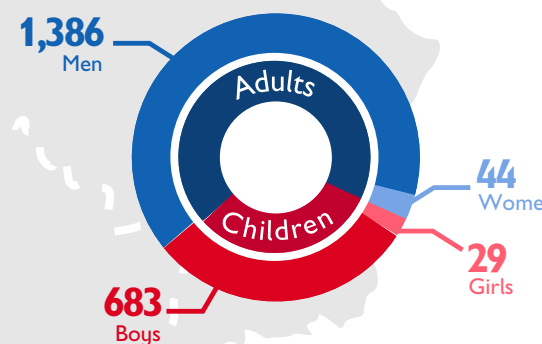
2,113
newly arrived
refugees and
migrants in Serbia
since the beginning
of 2019

During the first three months of the year, 93 refugees and migrants formally applied for international protection. For the same period of time, the Asylum Office granted the protected status to 25 persons which is equal to the total number of persons granted protection during the whole of last year.¹²

DEMOGRAPHY

It should be noted that precise information on the number of refugees and migrants in Serbia is not available and that the nature of migrations makes it difficult to collect exact data on this population. However, for several years already Save the Children has been systematically and regularly collecting data on its beneficiaries providing important insight into the structure and habits of this population.

Between January and March 2019, Save the Children and its partners identified and supported 2,113 new arrivals of which 1,430 (68%) were adults – 1,386 men and 44 women. Children made up 32% of newly arrived migrants and refugees (683) with a roughly similar sex ratio as in the adult population – 654 boys and 29 girls.



97%
of newly identified
refugees and
migrants in
Serbia were adult
men and boys

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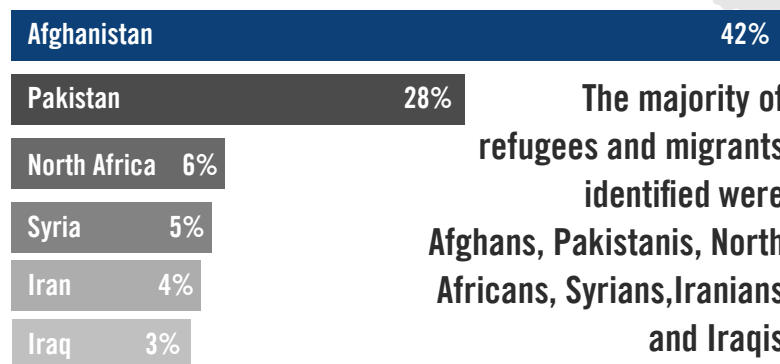
Data and Trends Analysis

During the reporting period the proportion of children traveling alone remained high. According to the Save the Children's data, UASC made as many as 90% (618) of child migrant population identified during the first quarter of 2019. New UASC cases were all boys and they were mostly from Afghanistan (82%) and Pakistan (9%).

90% of identified children were registered as traveling alone

Increased number of UASC influenced the overall composition of the newly arrived refugee and migrant population in Serbia. Afghan refugees and migrants remain the largest group during this period making 42% of all refugees and migrants, followed up by Pakistanis (28%) and small percent of arrivals from North Africa (6%), Syria (5%), Iran (4%) and Iraq (4%). Compared to the previous quarter, the data shows changes in demography, namely a rise in Pakistani arrivals from 11% to 28%, and a decrease among Iraqis (from 12% to 4%) and Iranians (from 22% to 4%)

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=2,113)



The majority of refugees and migrants identified were Afghans, Pakistanis, North Africans, Syrians, Iranians and Iraqis

In addition, our data shows that, like in previous periods, the proportion of women and girls is much higher within refugee and migrant groups from Iraq (28%) and Iran (24%). The number of newly arriving Syrian women and girls decreased the most compared to the previous quarter.

MIGRATION ROUTES

Exit routes from Serbia, similarly to previous year, were going through Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary and Romania. Almost all borders surrounding Serbia were well protected with physical barriers and strong police presence, except the one between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, making it the most likely site for migrants and refugees to try to leave Serbia irregularly.



From Serbia, most of the refugees and migrants are heading west towards Bosnia and Herzegovina

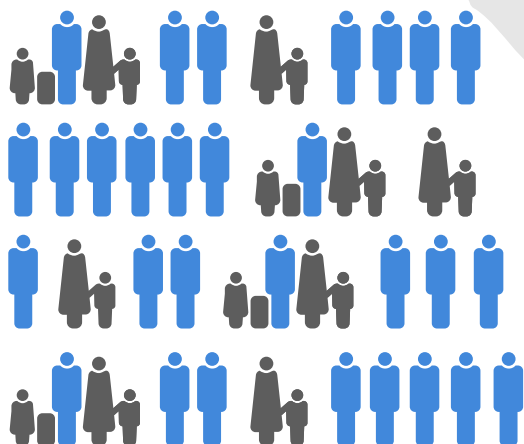
The most widely used route for entering Serbia in the first quarter of 2019 was North Macedonia route (67%) while arrivals from Bulgaria slightly decreased to 21% of all new arrivals.

Plane arrivals made up only 4% of all refugee and migrant arrivals in Serbia during the first quarter of 2019.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

BUSY ROUTE THROUGH BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The migration route through Bosnia and Herzegovina emerged in late 2017 and quickly became one of the main transit corridors in the region. According to the UNCT, 3,570 newly arrived refugees and migrants have been identified during the first quarter of 2019, which is 55% less than during the previous three months¹³ but more than double than the numbers registered during the first three months in 2018 (1,314).



3,570
newly arrived
refugees and
migrants have
been identified
during the first
quarter of 2019

Similar trend was identified in the number of intentions to seek asylum submitted by refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in the number of asylum claims. For January – March 2019, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs issued 3,195 attestations of intention to seek asylum, compared to 7,547 issued during the last quarter of 2019. In addition, during the first quarter of the year, 74 asylum claims were submitted compared to 459 asylum requests during previous three months.

According to the data from the field, it is estimated that most of refugees and migrants who have arrived to Bosnia and Herzegovina since the beginning of the year have already left the country. Those who are still in the country, about 5,500 of them, are mostly accommodated in Una-Sana Canton in the North-West part of the country.

About
5,500
refugees and migrants
were present in Bosnia
and Herzegovina at the
end of March 2019.

DEMOGRAPHY

At the moment, the disaggregated data for the overall population of refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not available. The only available information is on refugees and migrants' country of origin.

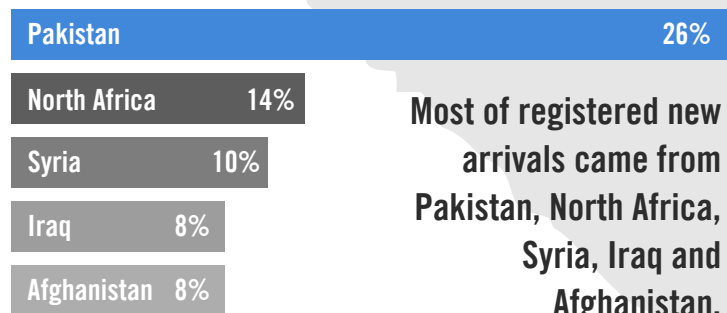
Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

According to that data, most of refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina came from Pakistan (26%), North Africa (14%), Syria (10%), Iraq (8%) and Afghanistan (8%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=3,750)

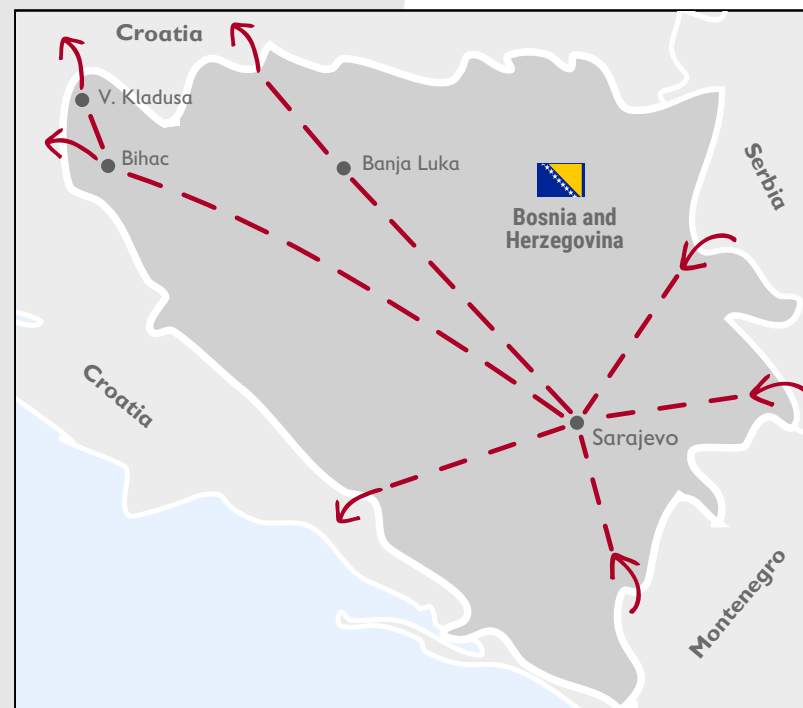


Most of registered new arrivals came from Pakistan, North Africa, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Even though disaggregated data for the whole population are not available, data on refugees and migrants present in Bosnia and Herzegovina during March 2019, could be used as an illustration of demography. According to UNCT data for March, out of 5,384 refugees and migrants present in the country, 85% were adults while 15% were children. Out of 778 children, one-third (258) were unaccompanied and separated children. Vast majority of present refugees and migrants were men and boys (90%), while women and girls made only 10% of the population.

MIGRATION ROUTES

Most of refugees and migrants identified in Bosnia and Herzegovina entered into the country from south or south-east by irregularly crossing the border with Serbia or Montenegro. Entry routes merge in Sarajevo, the country's capital located in the central part of the country or in Tuzla on the north. From there, refugees and migrants head towards Croatia.



The border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia is more than 900 kilometres long. According to the data from the field, the hardest pressure is on the north-west part of the border in the area of Bihac and Velika Kladusa. It is estimated that there are about 4,000 refugees and migrants in that area, many of them in informal settlements waiting to cross the border and continue their journey. Besides these two towns, refugees and migrants were identified in the north (Tuzla and Banja Luka area), and in the south.



TESTIMONIES

THE BORDER GAMES

“I was not afraid!” – 11 years old Selma is adamant while talking about the time her family spent two days in a detention unit of Croatian border police. But she is angry. If she was a police officer, she says, and the persons who detained her came to her, she would return them the favour.*

Selma’s* family left their native Iraq two years ago, looking for a better place for their three daughters to grow up. Selma is the eldest, her sister Hanan* is 8, and Hiba* is 6.

Their life on the route was not without difficulties. In Bosnia and Herzegovina they became stuck in a north-western town of Bihac, in close proximity to border with Croatia, EU member country. This family is desperate to continue their journey. So much that they have tried the so-called “game” 17 times. This game has only one goal for migrants and refugees - to cross the Bosnian-Croatian border and continue journey towards Western European countries. Selma*s family was caught and returned to BIH from the border each of the 17 times.

Thousands of refugees and migrants travelling through the Western Balkans Route testified about irregular push-backs at various borders in the region.

In 2018, Save the Children and local partner, Praxis, doing outreach work and protection monitoring in Serbian capital Belgrade, collected over 6,500 reports from people who claimed that they were returned from the countries along the route without being given an opportunity to seek asylum while, while almost half of the refugees and migrants reported excessive use of force by police and border guards.

“Being family with children, we weren’t exposed to physical violence, but we were returned without our possessions. Without phones, money, even the sleeping bags, they took everything. Once we were detained for two days in a room without any windows, we didn’t know if it was day or night. This was difficult for the kids, my youngest daughter has fear of closed-in spaces, she cried and begged to be let out, but she wasn’t allowed,” tells us Asiya*, the mother.

In first three months of 2019, the trend of irregular, often violent push backs continued – close to 1,500 refugees and migrants travelling through Western Balkans Route testified about irregular push backs at various borders in the region, while more than one third of them testified about border guards using excessive force, pushing and beating people with hands and batons, forcing them to remove their clothes and footwear, using dogs to scare, chase or bite adults and minors. Every fourth case of a violent push back involved children, out of which majority were children travelling alone.

Many minors travelling alone testified about being severely beaten by police in Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three boys from Afghanistan, interviewed by Praxis in Serbia, shared with the team that before arriving in Belgrade they received beatings by older migrants from their group, by a truck driver who discovered them in the back of his truck, and by the Serbian police. One of the boys was referred to a doctor with signs of concussion. A minor from Afghanistan reported that he reached Slovenia, from where he was pushed back to Croatia, and then to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In Bihac, Selma’s family currently stays in reception centre Borici, where Selma and her sister attend activities in a mobile Child Friendly Space run by Save the Children and UNICEF’s. All three girls also attend local school as part of the program for quality education for refugee children supported by Save the Children. Selma says she likes it there.

Nevertheless, this Iraqi family will keep trying to cross the border, as they are not only looking for a safer and better place to live in, but also for a place where Selma’s* sister Hanan* will get medical treatment she needs. “She has a problem with her spine since birth and cannot grow properly,” explains their mother.

Photo credits: Vahid Ponjevic/Save the Children

**Names are changed in order to protect children’s identity*



BULGARIA

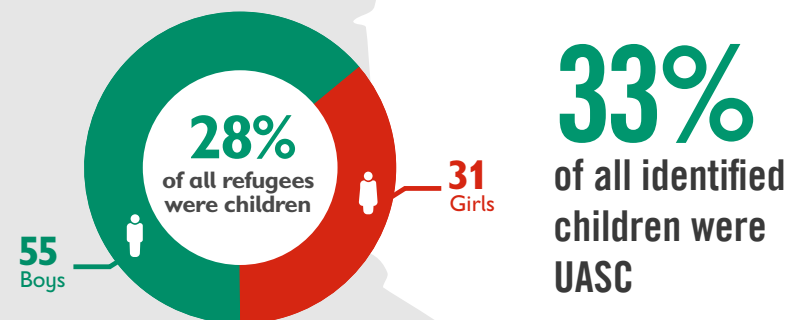
MIGRATION FLOW

During the first quarter of 2019, the Bulgarian police apprehended 360 people that were accused of illegally entering the country.¹⁴ This was a major decrease compared to the previous quarter when the total of 934 refugees and migrants were arrested but almost identical to the numbers for the first quarter in 2018 when 356 persons were apprehended. During the reporting period, the number of refugees and migrants reported to be in official centres or at “external addresses”¹⁵ decreased by about 15% (from 850 reported at the end of 2018 to 711 in March 2019.). The Ministry of Interior further reports that 181 migrants were either deported or they left Bulgaria legally during the first quarter of 2019. For the “missing” 300, we can only assume that they have irregularly continued their journey towards Western Europe.

360
people were
apprehended of
illegally entering the
country

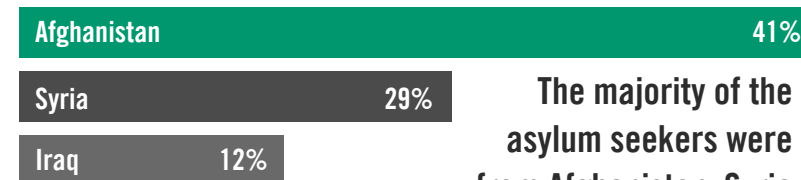
DEMOGRAPHY

For the period January-March 2019, the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees reported that 309 persons applied for international protection. This number includes 223 (72%) adults (men 191; women 32) and 86 (28%) children (boys 55; girls 31). According to the official statistics, 28 (33%) of children who have applied for international protection were traveling alone, most of them from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.



The majority of the asylum seekers were from Afghanistan (41%), Syria (29%) and Iraq (12%). The applicants from Iraq and Syria included a more balanced number of men, women and children indicating that many of them travel in family groups. The applicants from Afghanistan were predominantly men and teenage boys (about 95%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=309)



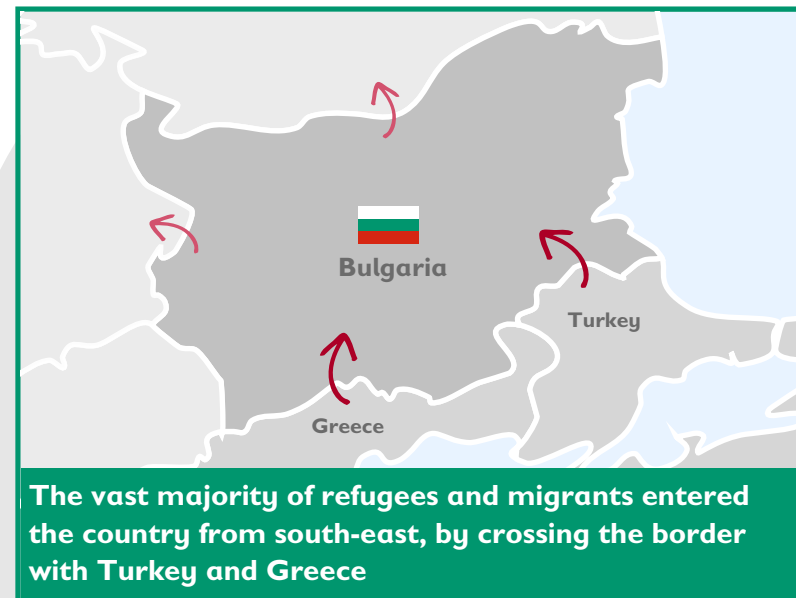
The majority of the
asylum seekers were
from Afghanistan, Syria
and Iraq.

Even though a large percentage of asylum seekers in Bulgaria are Afghans, only a few are granted international protection. Out of 158 persons who were granted international protection during the first quarter, 26 (16%) were from Afghanistan and vast majority of them were children (boys 5; girls 8) and women (10).

MIGRATION ROUTES

The Bulgarian Ministry of Interior also provides data on where irregular migrants were apprehended. The locations are divided into three categories: (1) borders of entry, namely the borders with Turkey and Greece; (2) in-country, meaning that people were arrested somewhere within the country; (3) borders of exit, namely north and west borders with Serbia and Romania. Even though this data does not capture the overall migration flow it gives us clues about cross-border migratory routes.

According to the available data, the vast majority of refugees and migrants entered the country from south-east, namely by crossing the border with Turkey (38%) and Greece (35%). In addition, the data shows that about 23% crossings to Bulgaria were from Serbia, however it is not clear if these were push-backs from Serbian police or a new migratory trend. Save the Children will closely monitor this trend and report on it.



The data also shows a significant pressure on the west and north borders, suggesting that many refugees and migrants continue their journey through Serbia (about 63%) and Romania (about 30%). To enter Serbia from Bulgaria, the vast majority of refugees and migrants use smuggling routes through the mountains, while to enter Romania, refugee and migrants attempt to cross at the official border crossings.

INVISIBLE IRREGULAR FLOW

From January to March 2019, authorities in North Macedonia registered 327¹⁶ newly arrived refugees and migrants. This is a decrease compared to the previous three months when 516 new arrivals were registered but an increase when compared with the numbers for the first quarter in 2018 with 184 persons apprehended by the authorities.¹⁷

Serbia. According to the Save the Children and its partners in Serbia, from January to March 2019 about 1,400 new refugees and migrants were identified as arrivals from North Macedonia, showing that migration flow through this country is much bigger than official records suggests.

According to the available data, there were 63 refugees and migrants accommodated in reception/transit centres and the safe house in North Macedonia at the end of March.

DEMOGRAPHY

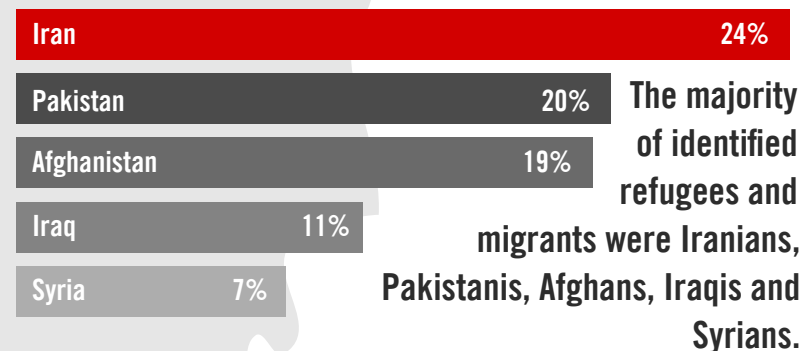
During the first three months of 2019, the authorities registered 327 newly arrived refugees and migrants in North Macedonia, of whom 81% were adults (over three-quarters were men) and 19% were children. The data shows that 8% of registered children travelled alone.

327
newly arrived
refugees and
migrants were
registered

19% of registered refugees and migrants were children

The most of the recorded new arrivals were from Iran (24%) suggesting that the movement from Iran was not only driven by a visa-free regime with Serbia. Besides Iranians, the authorities registered refugees and migrants from Pakistan (20%), Afghanistan (19%), Iraq (11%) and Syria (7%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=327)



MIGRATION ROUTES

The data suggests that the migration route through North Macedonia is mainly used as a corridor between Greece and Serbia. Refugees and migrants enter North Macedonia from Greece and most of them head north trying to cross the border with Serbia.

In addition to the route towards Serbia, some of the refugees and migrants move west using the route through Albania or Kosovo*.

ALBANIA

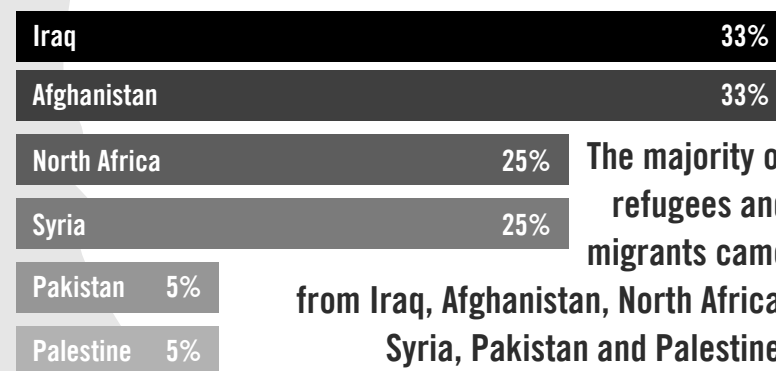
NEW MIGRATION CORRIDOR

The migration route through Albania was one of the most travelled routes in the western Balkans region. According to UNHCR, 1,997 newly arrived refugees and migrants were identified in Albania during the period from January to April 2019. Compared to the last few months of 2018, new arrivals of refugee and migrants remained at about the same level but represented a major increase when compared to the first three months of 2018 when 1,172 refugees and migrants were identified. The proportion of asylum requests among new arrivals was above 85%, matching the second quarter of the year.

1,997
newly arrived
refugees and
migrants were
identified in Albania
during the period
from January to April
2019

Most applications for international protection were made by refugees and migrants from Iraq/Afghanistan (33%), North Africa (25%), Syria (25%), Pakistan (5%) and Palestinians (5%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=1,997)



The majority of refugees and migrants came from Iraq, Afghanistan, North Africa, Syria, Pakistan and Palestine.

DEMOGRAPHY

According to UNHCR, out of 1,997 newly arrived refugees and migrants identified in Albania during the first four months of the year, 75% were adult men, while women and children made 25% of the population.

MIGRATION ROUTES

The migration route through Albania is not a new route, but it started to be more frequently used by refugees and migrants at the beginning of 2018. According to the UNHCR data, vast majority of refugees and migrants enter the country from the south by crossing the border with Greece. Even though more than 85% of the identified new arrivals applied for international protection in Albania, many absconded after some days and tried to continue the journey. They moved north towards Montenegro, most frequently crossing the border in the vicinity of Lake Skadar.

Similar to the other western Balkans countries, Albania is perceived as a transit country. It is part of the migration corridor which goes from Greece, through Albania, Montenegro, reaching Bosnia and Herzegovina from where refugees and migrants try to cross the border with Croatia and continue their journey towards western European countries.



KOSOVO*

IN TRANSIT

Even though Kosovo was never a major part of the Balkans migration corridor, small numbers of refugees and migrants travelled this route since the beginning of the refugee crisis. According to the UNHCR data, 292 persons applied for asylum in Kosovo* during the first three months of 2019. This trend is similar to the situation the last quarter of 2018, when 294 asylum applications were submitted.

292
persons applied for asylum in Kosovo* during the first three months of 2019

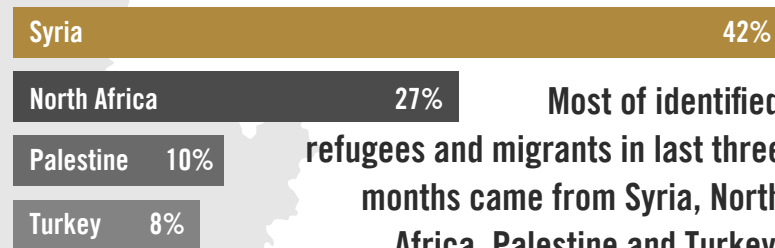
DEMOGRAPHY

The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that most of the refugees and migrants who applied for international protection in Kosovo* during the first quarter of the year were male (89%), while females made only 11% of all applicants.

The same data set shows that applications were predominantly submitted by adults (90%) and only few children (10%).

Most of the refugee and migrants registered in Kosovo* in last three months came from Syria (42%), North Africa (27%), Palestine (10%) and Turkey (8%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=292)



MIGRATION ROUTES

As in other Balkans countries, many refugees and migrants only transit through Kosovo* on their journey towards western and northern Europe. There is no official data on migration routes through Kosovo* or entry and exit points. However, according to the field data, refugees and migrants enter Kosovo* from the east, namely from North Macedonia and move towards Serbia or Montenegro.

TRANSITING THROUGH ROMANIA

From early 2017, Romania became an important transit point of the Balkans migration route. This trend continued in 2018. According to the UNHCR field data, 349 persons applied for international protection during the first quarter of 2019, suggesting that the intensity of migration decreased compared to the previous three months when 605 applications were made but remained comparable with the numbers registered during the first quarter of 2018 (419).

349
persons applied for international protection during the first quarter of 2019

At the end of December, there were 303 migrants and asylum seekers accommodated in state-run reception centres in Romania.¹⁸ This is a 20% decrease compared to the 385 persons reported in Romania at the end of the last quarter of 2018.¹⁹

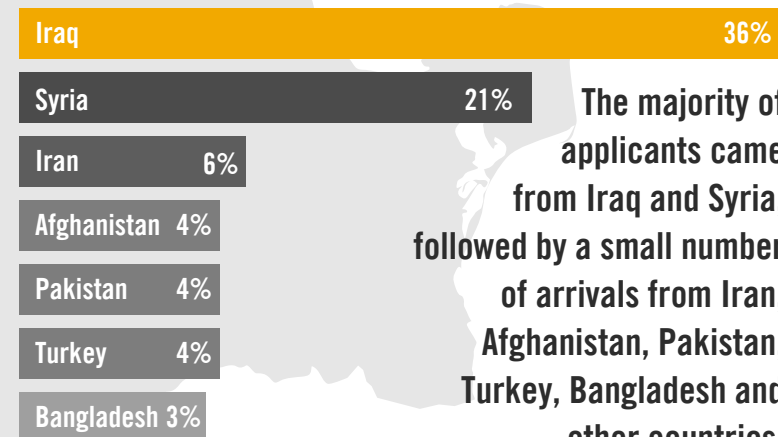
According to the field data, the length of stay in Romania varies. Families choose to stay longer than single adults who, in some cases, leave the country after several weeks. The average length of stay on the Romanian territory for asylum seekers is about 1-3 months and for the beneficiaries of international protection, the lengths of stay varies from 1 to 4 years.

DEMOGRAPHY

During the first quarter of 2019, Romanian officials registered 349 asylum applications. According to the field data, about 17% of applicants were children, while 83% of registered asylum seekers were adults.

The majority of applicants came from Iraq (36%) and Syria (21%), followed by a small number of arrivals from Iran (6%), Afghanistan (4%), Pakistan (4%), Turkey (4%), Bangladesh (3%) and other countries.

Applicants for international protection by country of origin (N=349)



The majority of applicants came from Iraq and Syria, followed by a small number of arrivals from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh and other countries.

Due to the fact that official data on newly arrived refugee and migrant children was not available, figures available to Save the Children Romania office are used to illustrate trends.

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

According to this data, 59 newly arrived refugee and migrant children were identified during the first quarter of 2019, out of which 36 (61%) boys and 23 (39%) girls. Most of them came from Iraq (24%), Iran (15%), Syria (12%), Pakistan (12%) and Afghanistan (7%).

Out of all newly identified children 13 (22%) travelled alone, arriving from Iraq, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iran and Syria.

MIGRATION ROUTES

According to the data from the field, refugees and migrants mostly arrived in Romania from Serbia, while a small number entered from Bulgaria.

As in the other Balkans countries, refugees and migrants see Romania as a transit point on their journey towards Western Europe. According to the recent field data, the length of their stay in Romania varies. Single adults usually have shorter stays and leave the country in several weeks while families stay longer.

The main exit point from the county is its north-west border with Hungary.



Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The official closure of borders, and the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, reduced the number of migrants, but did not stop the migrations through the Balkans. Refugees and migrants have been pushed into the hands of smugglers and traffickers facing heightened protection risks. The national protection systems in countries like Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia are struggling to provide adequate support to new arrivals. There is a lack of reliable data on migration trends and there are many rights violations against migrants and refugees transiting through, or stranded in the Balkans.

Organizations and volunteer groups operating in the Balkans track irregular arrivals, departures, cases of pushbacks, detention, and violence in their own countries, often without clearly defined standards, objectives or consistency. At the current time, there is no unified collection of information or a regional initiative to collate and organize the available information into a clear and concise overview.

International attention remains mostly focused on Greece, while the migration flows through other Balkans countries stay below the radar. The lack of comprehensive data analytics at individual country and regional level increases the vulnerability of refugees and migrants on the move, children in particular, and hinders the development of relevant, evidence-based and responsive policies and programs.

Data and Trend Analysis (DATA) is a project launched by Save the Children's Balkan Migration and Displacement Hub (BMDH). The goal of this initiative is to synthesize valuable information on migration, especially on refugee and migrant children, and

contribute to evidence-based programming and policy-making within the region.

The DATA Project will focus on the following three topics: (1) Main migratory trends: ebbs and flows in migration, changes in demographics, changes in routes, and seasonal changes; (2) Main protection violations: detention rates and conditions, pushbacks, returns, police violence, local acceptance and tensions; (3) Changes in national migration and social protection policies.

Data Sources

Besides primary data collected by Save the Children and its partners, publicly available data from reports, dashboards, publications, policies and articles, and information from other relevant stakeholders will be collected and analyzed. The initiative will remain open and will encourage the exchange of information, cooperation and partnership with all relevant actors.

Data processing will be done in line with national and international regulations and standards on protection of personal data.

Geographical Scope

We will cover the Balkans route which includes the territories of Greece, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Hungary.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

² Source: UNHCR, Europe Monthly Report [March 2019](#)

³ Source: UNHCR, Fact Sheet Greece [March 2019](#)

⁴ Source: UNHCR, Europe Monthly Report [March 2019](#)

⁵ Source: Hellenic Republic Ministry of Interior National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum, [National situational picture regarding the islands at eastern Aegean sea \(31/03/2019\)](#)

⁶ Source: Situation Update: [Unaccompanied Children \(UAC\) in Greece \(March 2019\)](#)

⁷ Source: UNHCR, [Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard March 2019](#)

⁸ Source: UNHCR, Dead and Missing at the Sea [March 2019](#)

⁹ [Source: UNHCR Serbia Statistical Snapshot March 2019](#)

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² [Source: UNHCR Serbia Update March 2019](#)

¹³ Source: UNCT Operational Update for [March 2019](#)

¹⁴ Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, Monthly Information on Migration Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria for [March 2019](#)

¹⁵ Asylum seekers are allowed to reside outside the reception centres at so called “external addresses”. This could be done if asylum seekers submit a formal waiver from their right to accommodation and social assistance, as warranted by law, and declare to cover rent and other related costs at their own expenses. Except those few whose financial condition allows residence outside the reception centres, the other group of people who live at external addresses are usually Dublin returnees, to whom the SAR applies the exclusion from social benefits, including accommodation as a measure of sanction within the jurisdiction for such decision as provided by the law (Law and Asylum and Refugees – article 29)”. Source: [Country Report: Bulgaria](#), p 48, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

¹⁶ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [March 2019](#)

¹⁷ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [December 2018](#)

¹⁸ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [March 2019](#)

¹⁹ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [December 2018](#)



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