



Save the Children
100 YEARS

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AT THE WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2018

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

This report was written by Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub, working within Save the Children North West Balkans Country Office. The report would not have been possible without valuable inputs from Save the Children Romania (<http://salvaticopiii.ro>), Save the Children Albania (<https://albania.savethechildren.net>) and our partners in Serbia, Praxis (<https://www.praxis.org.rs>) and Centre for Youth Integration (<http://cim.org.rs>).

This project was made possible through generous funding by Swiss Solidarity.

Published by:

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Girl and a boy playing in the Asylum Center in Bogovadja

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Mixed migrations flows continue on the Balkans route. About 17,000 refugees and migrants are estimated to have arrived to the Balkans countries during the last quarter of 2018 which makes it the second 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 is one of the most travelled migration routes in Europe. During the last quarter of 2018, 14,882 new refugees and migrants were registered in Greece, while Save the Children identified 3,633 new arrivals in Serbia, out of which 776 arrived by plane. During the same period, 934 new refugees and migrants were identified in Bulgaria, 516 were recorded as transiting through North Macedonia, while 605 people applied for international protection in Romania. In addition, 737 new arrivals were identified in Albania, 7,923 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 294 in Kosovo*. Taking into account that many different routes are used and comparing 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 17,000 refugees and migrants arrived to the region in the period from July to September 2018.

The most travelled route through Bosnia and Herzegovina

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.

More than 81,000 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 81,000. Most of them are present in Greece (about 71,000), Bosnia and Herzegovina (about 4,500), Serbia (4,500) and Bulgaria (850), while several hundreds of are accommodated in Romania (385), North Macedonia (35) and Albania.

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 14% and 45%. 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 74% 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 and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For the first time since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, Syrians do not make the highest proportion of new arrivals to Greece

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, most of the refugees and migrants that arrived to Greece were Syrians. Namely, in 2015 Syrians made 55% of new arrivals to Greece, proportion of Syrians was 47% in 2016, while in 2017 it was 42%. This trend remained stable up until the end of the second quarter of 2018.

According to the UNCHR data, in the period July – December 2018, most of the new arrivals to Greece were of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan (39%), Iraq (15%) and Syria (14%). In addition, Save the Children's data on land route arrivals to Greece shows that most of the refugees and migrants that use this corridor came from Afghanistan (40%) and Pakistan (30%).

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 by smaller numbers of those from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.



MIGRATION ROUTES



More than
56,000*

refugees and migrants are estimated to have arrived to the Balkans countries during the 2018 which makes it the second most traveled migration route to Europe

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

ONGOING ARRIVALS AND ONWARD MOVEMENT

According to the UNHCR data, 14,882 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece during the last quarter of 2018 which made the Balkans route the second most travelled migration route to Europe in the period from October to December 2018.² The majority of registered refugees and migrants (about 9,100 or 61%) arrived by sea, while more than 5,800 refugees and migrants entered Greece by crossing the land border from north-east.

Compared to the previous quarter, the number of sea arrivals remained at the same level, while entries via the land route increased by more than 50%, from 3,850 in the period from July to September to 5,800 in the last three months of the year.

The UNHCR data also shows that number of people of concern in Greece increased from 64,900 recorded at the end of September 2018 to 71,200 at the end of the year.

According to the National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum, over 14,600 of refugees and migrants were present on the Greek islands at the end of December 2018, while the total accommodation capacities included only about 9,000 places. Even though the total number of refugees and migrants on the islands decreased since the end of the third quarter, the situation remained the most difficult in

14,882
refugees and
migrants arrived in
Greece during the
last quarter of 2018

the reception and identification centres on Lesbos with the total capacity of 3,000 places but accommodating about 5,000 people; and on Samos with the total capacity of about 650 places but accommodating more than 3,700 refugees and migrants.³



Over 14,600 of refugees and migrants were present on the islands, while the total accommodation capacities included about 9,000 places

The data show that there were about 3,750 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Greece at the end of December 2018, with about one-third accommodated in shelters for UASC or Supported Independent Living (SIL) apartments. This left more than 2,650 UASC in need of adequate shelter. Some 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.⁴

DEMOGRAPHY

The reports on sea arrivals for the period from October to December 2018, provide an insight on the demography of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece.⁵ Out of 9,075 refugees and migrants arriving by sea, 64% were adults (men 3,768; women 2,031), while 36% were children (boys 1,968; girls 1,308). About 18% of newly arrived refugee and migrant children, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan, travelled alone.

During the last quarter of 2018, the sea route was mostly used by refugees and migrants from Afghanistan (39%), Iraq (14%), Syria (12%) and Congo (9%). As in the previous quarter, the proportion of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan continued to be high. The overall data for 2018 show that the number of newly arrived Afghans increased in the second half of the year. Namely, only 19% of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan arrived on the Greek islands in the period from January to June 2018, while about 80% of them came during the third and the fourth quarter of 2018.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=9,075)

Afghanistan	39%
Iraq	14%
Syria	12%
Congo	9%

During the last quarter of 2018, the sea route was mostly used by refugees and migrants from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq 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.

Due to the fact that the official data on the demography of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece through the land route are not available, Save the Children tried to investigate this trend by collecting the data about Greek land arrivals in Serbia.

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

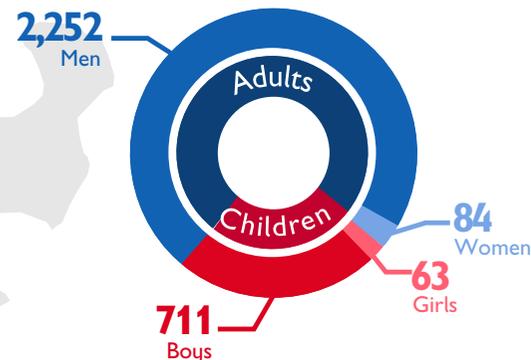
Data and Trends Analysis

In the period from May to November 2018, Save the Children and its partners in Serbia identified 4,493 new arrivals from Greece. Out of that number, 3,110 (69%) reported that they entered Greece by using the land route. Even though this represents only a fraction of refugees and migrants who arrived in Greece via land route, the data collected can be illustrative.



In the period from May to November 2018, Save the Children and its partners in Serbia identified 4,493 new arrivals from Greece. Out of that number, 3,110 (69%) reported that they entered Greece by using the land route.

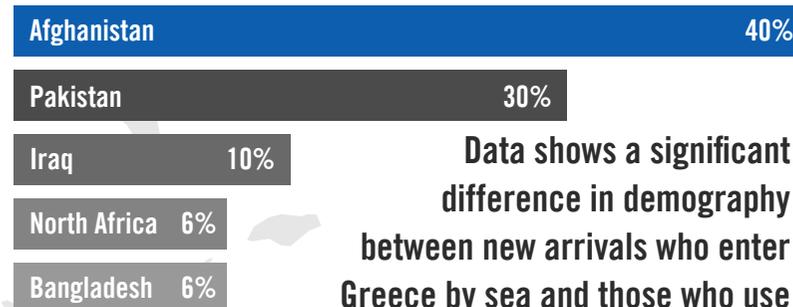
According to the data on those who have used the land route to reach Greece, 75% of new arrivals were adults (male 2,252; female 84), while 25% were children (boys 711; girls 63). About 79% (615) of identified children travelled alone.



79%
of identified children travelled alone.

Most of refugees and migrants who entered Greece through the land route arrived from Afghanistan (40%), Pakistan (30%), Iraq (10%), North Africa (6%) and Bangladesh (6%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=3,110)



Data shows a significant difference in demography between new arrivals who enter Greece by sea and those who use the land route

The data also show that 80% of new arrivals spent less than three months in Greece suggesting that refugees and migrants who use the land route move faster towards the West and North Europe.

This suggests that there is a significant difference in demography between new arrivals who enter Greece by sea and those who use the land route. While the sea route seems to be mostly used by families, the land route seems to be predominantly travelled by single men and boys. In addition, Pakistanis are proportionally more represented at the land route, when compared with the UNHCR data on sea arrivals and the countries of origin of those present at the Greek islands.

MIGRATION ROUTES

Over the period from October to December 2018, refugees and migrants used both the sea and the land route to enter Greece. The main entry points for the sea route were islands close to the Turkish coast, namely Lesvos, Samos, Chios and the Dodecanese islands.

During this period, 80 persons died or went missing while crossing the sea. This is a major increase when compared to 57 refugees and migrants registered as dead or missing in the previous quarter while trying to enter Greece by sea.⁶ In total, 187 persons died or went missing while crossing the sea in 2018, compared to 56 the previous year suggesting that refugees and migrants used less safe boats to cross the sea.

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 2018 it was increasingly used by refugees and migrants, and new arrivals through the land route greatly exceeded the numbers in previous years. According to the available data, 5,807 new crossings were registered during the last three months of 2018, which is about 67% increase compared to the previous quarter.

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 the data from Bulgaria, there was an increase in entries from Greece compared to 2017. In addition, a new route from Greece, through Albania and Montenegro and towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, also emerged in 2018. Finally, some refugees and migrants use the sea route towards Italy.



BULGARIA

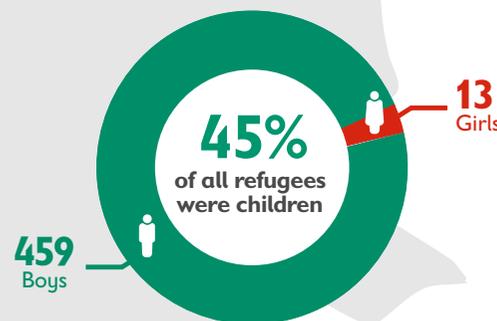
LIMITED IRREGULAR MIGRATION FLOW

During the last quarter of 2018, the Bulgarian police apprehended 934 people that were accused of illegally entering the country.⁷ This is a 20% decrease compared to the period from July to September when the total of 1,199 refugees and migrants were apprehended. This corresponds with the number of refugees and migrants accommodated in Bulgaria. During the reporting period, the number of refugees and migrants reported to be in official centres or at “external addresses”⁸ decreased by about 25% (from 1,169 reported in September to 850 in December). The Ministry of Interior further reports that 248 migrants were either deported or left Bulgaria legally during the last quarter of 2018. For the “missing” 1,000, we can only assume that they have irregularly continued their journey towards Western Europe.

934
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the country

DEMOGRAPHY

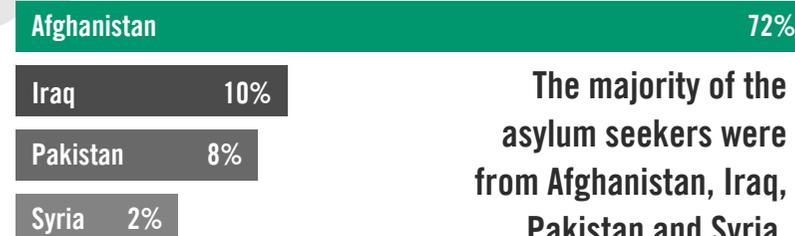
Due to the fact that official data on demography of refugees and migrants transiting through Bulgaria are not available, we used the data collected in Serbia by Save the Children and its partners on new arrivals from Bulgaria. According to this source, out of 1,057 refugees and migrants 585 (55%) were adults (555 men; 30 women) and 472 (45%) children (459 boys; 13 girls). Almost all identified children 451 (96%) travelled alone. Most of them were teenage boys from Afghanistan 435 (96%) and Pakistan 8 (2%). In addition, 8 girls from Iraq were identified as UASC.



96%
of all identified
children were
UASC

The majority of identified new arrivals from Bulgaria were from Afghanistan (72%), Iraq (10%), Pakistan (8%) and Syria (2%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=509)



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

MIGRATION ROUTES

The Bulgarian Ministry of Interior also provides data on where irregular migrants are 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 the data do not capture the overall migration flow it can provide 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 (50%) and Greece (38%). Similar to the previous period, the data show that the pressure on the border between Greece and Bulgaria continued to be high suggesting that this route is still active.



The vast majority of refugees and migrants entered the country from south-east, by crossing the border with Turkey and Greece

The data also show a pressure on the West and North borders, suggesting that many refugees and migrants continue their journey through Serbia (about 88%) and Romania (about 11%). 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.

DECREASED IRREGULAR FLOW

From October to December 2018, authorities in North Macedonia registered 516 newly arrived refugees and migrants. This is a major decrease compared to the previous quarter when the total of 1,518 new arrivals were registered.⁹ The irregular flow through North Macedonia can also be observed from the data collected in Serbia. According to the data collected from October to December 2018 by Save the Children and its partners in Serbia, about 1,400 new refugees and migrants were identified as arrivals from North Macedonia. This suggests that many refugees and migrants transit through North Macedonia without being detected by the authorities.

According to the available data, there were 35 refugees and migrants accommodated in reception/transit centres and the safe house in North Macedonia at the end of the year.

DEMOGRAPHY

During the first nine months of 2018, the authorities registered 3,132 newly arrived refugees and migrants in North Macedonia, of whom 80% were adults (three-quarters were men) and 20% were children. The data showed that 8% of registered children travelled alone.

516
newly arrived
refugees and
migrants were
registered

20% of registered refugees and migrants were children

The majority of the recorded new arrivals were from Iran (53%) suggesting an increased movement from Iran was not only driven by now reversed visa-free regime with Serbia. Besides Iranians, the authorities registered refugees and migrants from Afghanistan (9%), Pakistan (8%) and Iraq (7%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=1,518)



The majority of identified refugees and migrants were Iranians, Afghans, Pakistanis and Iraqis.

MIGRATION ROUTES

The data suggest 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*.

However, the data also indicate some reverse movement. Beside new arrivals coming from the South, some of the refugees and migrants identified in North Macedonia were returning from Serbia and heading South towards Greece.

ALBANIA

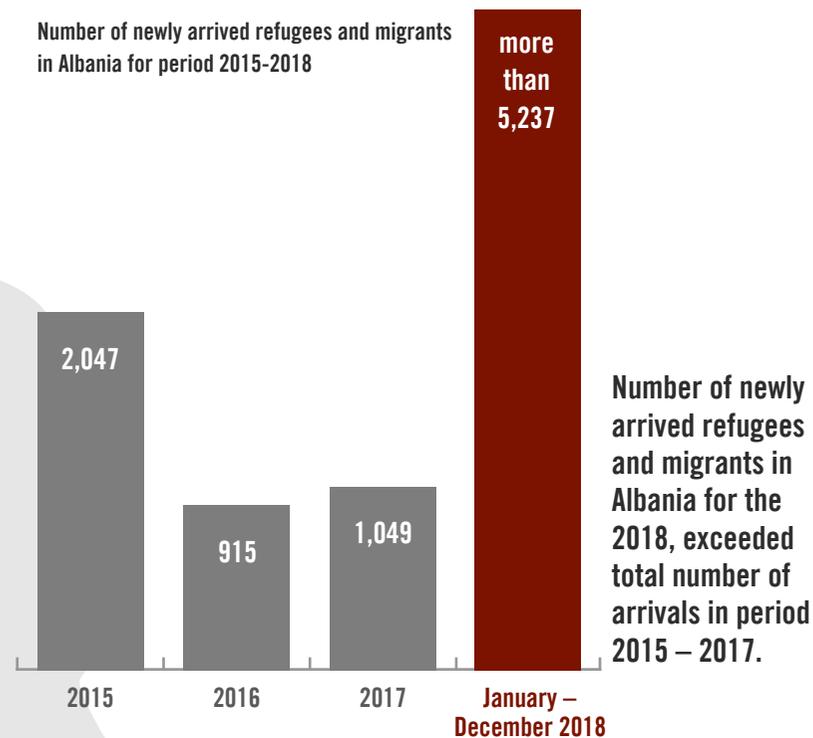
NEW MIGRATION CORRIDOR

The migration route through Albania was still one of the most travelled routes through the Western Balkans region. According to IOM, 737 refugees and migrants were apprehended in Albania during the last quarter of 2018.

737 refugees and migrants were apprehended in Albania during the last quarter of 2018.

It is important to highlight that reporting on new arrivals for Albania is a challenging task. The comparison of data from IOM and UNHCR on new arrivals for the period from January to September 2018 shows that there is a huge discrepancy in numbers. According to UNHCR, about 4,500 new refugees and migrants were identified in first nine months of 2018, while IOM reported only 1,480. Unfortunately, UNHCR data for the last quarter of 2018 were not yet available, but we assume that even in last quarter they registered more than 737 new arrivals reported by IOM.

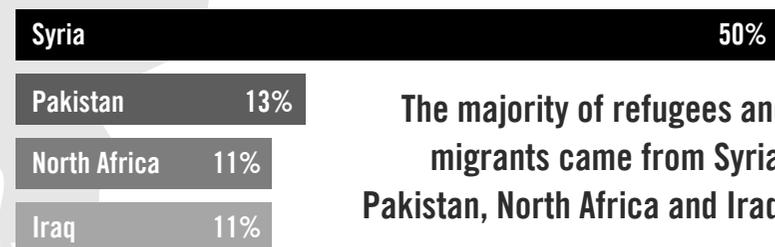
Number of newly arrived refugees and migrants in Albania for period 2015-2018



DEMOGRAPHY

According to IOM data, the majority of newly arrived refugees and migrants came from Syria (50%), Pakistan (13%), North African countries (11%), Iraq (11%). Unfortunately, the available data are not disaggregated by sex and age so we don't know how many new arrivals to Albania were men, women, boys or girls.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=4,500)



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

MIGRATION ROUTES

The migration route through Albania is not a new route, but it started to be used only recently by so many refugees and migrants. According to the available data, vast majority of refugees and migrants enter the country from the South (Gjirokaster region) by crossing the border with Greece. At the end of the year, there were 173 refugees and migrants accommodated in reception facilities in Albania, which suggests that most of the new arrivals do not stay in the country for a long period of time. Most of them move North towards Montenegro, 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 the 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 to continue their journey towards Western European countries.



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, 594 persons applied for asylum in Kosovo* during 2018. This is an increase compared to 2017, when the total of 147 asylum applications were submitted for the whole year.

The data for 2018 also shows that most of asylum applications (294 or 49%) were submitted from October to December.

The corresponding trend was noted by Save the Children and its partners in Serbia. Namely, we identified 271 refugees and migrants that came through Kosovo in 2018, out of which 143 (53%) arrived during the last quarter of 2018.

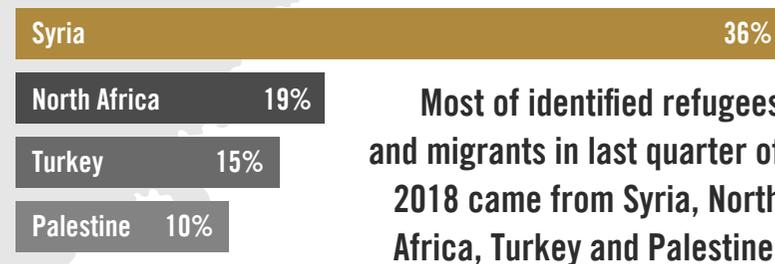
594
persons applied
for asylum in
Kosovo* during
the 2018

DEMOGRAPHY

The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that most of the refugees and migrants who applied for international protection in Kosovo* during the last quarter of 2018 were male (90%), while females made only 10% of all applicants. Applications were predominantly submitted by adults (86%) while children submitted only 14% of all applications. These figures are different from those for the previous quarter when only 5% of applications were submitted by children, suggesting that more families are now using this route.

Most of the refugee and migrants registered in Kosovo* in the last quarter of 2018 came from Syria (36%), North Africa (19%), Turkey (15%), Palestine (10%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=193)



Most of identified refugees and migrants in last quarter of 2018 came from Syria, North Africa, Turkey and Palestine.

MIGRATION ROUTES

As in other Balkans countries, many refugees and migrants only transit through Kosovo* on their journey towards Western and Northern Europe. There are no official data on migration routes through Kosovo* or on entry and exit points. However, according to the field data collected by Save the Children and its partners in Serbia, refugees and migrants enter Kosovo* from North Macedonia in the East and move towards Serbia or Montenegro.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS ON THE MOVE

During the last three months of 2018, Save the Children and its partners in Serbia identified and supported 3,633 newly arrived refugees and migrants. This represented a 27% decrease compared to the period from July to September when 4,949 new arrivals were identified. Other agencies also noticed a decrease in the number of refugees and migrants. UNHCR observed 5,084 new arrivals compared to 6,963 observed in third quarter of 2018.¹⁰ During the same period of time, 2,237 refugees and migrants expressed their intention to seek asylum, which is a 10% decrease compared to the previous trimester, with only 124 formal applications for asylum made.¹¹

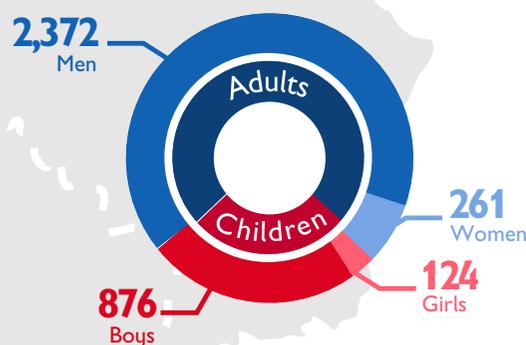
The winter and cold weather increased the number of people in the country but did not stop the transit. According to UNHCR, the overall number of refugees and migrants present in Serbia increased by 600 when compared to September 2018 with 4,500 refugees and migrants temporarily residing in the country at the end of December.¹² Available data show that 155 persons legally crossed the borders while roughly 2,900 refugees and migrants left Serbia by using irregular channels.¹³

3,633
newly arrived
refugees and
migrants during
the last three
months of 2018

DEMOGRAPHY

Precise information on the number of refugees and migrants in Serbia is not available and the nature of migration trends makes it difficult to collect exact data on this population. However, for several years now, Save the Children has been systematically and regularly collecting data on its beneficiaries providing important insight into the structure and movements of this population.

Between October and December 2018, Save the Children and its partners registered 3,633 new arrivals of which 2,633 (73%) were adults – 2,372 men and 261 women. Children made up 27% of newly arrived migrants and refugees (1,000) with a roughly similar sex ratio as in the adult population – 876 boys and 124 girls.



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

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

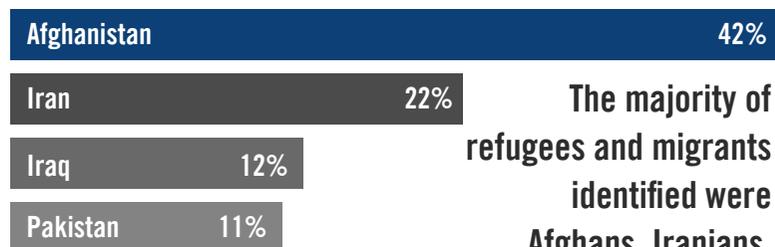
Data and Trends Analysis

During the reporting period the proportion of children traveling alone remained high. According to the Save the Children's data, UASC made as much as 74% (741) of child migrant population identified during the last quarter of 2018, which is similar to the proportion of UASC identified in the period from July till September. New UASC cases were, like in previous periods, almost all boys (728 or 98%) and they were mostly from Afghanistan (85%) and Pakistan (6%).

74% of identified children were registered as traveling alone

The increased number of UASC influenced the overall composition of the newly arrived refugee and migrant population in Serbia. Afghan refugees and migrants were the largest group during this period making 42% of all refugees and migrants which was a rise compared to 35% in the previous quarter. Iranians made up 22%, Iraqis 12% and Pakistanis 11% of new arrivals.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=3,633)



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

Our data show that, like in previous periods, the proportion of women and girls is much higher for refugee and migrant groups from Iraq (33%) and Iran (28%).

MIGRATION ROUTES

Exit routes from Serbia were going towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, in addition to still used routes through Croatia, Hungary and Romania. Almost all borders surrounding Serbia remained 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 routes to Serbia in the fourth quarter of 2018 were through North Macedonia (40%) and Bulgaria (30%).

About 22% of newly arrived refugees and migrants, mostly Iranians, reported that they arrived to Serbia by plane.

TESTIMONIES

AZFAAR'S* STORY

Azfaar, 16-year-old boy from Afghanistan told us his story in a Save the Children's drop in centre Miksaliste in Belgrade. In partnership with local NGO Centre for Youth Integration, we run programmes for refugee and migrant children and families, including unaccompanied and separated children who arrive daily in Serbian capital – a main point of transit on a Western Balkans Route.*

I don't remember much about the day I left home. I packed some clothes, food and water. I had several photos and mementos in my phone, but that phone was taken from me on the way. I knew how the journey was going to look like, my brother told me about it. He said: 'It's difficult, don't come'. The agent said to my father: 'If anything happens, we are not responsible'. My father told me: 'You'll have to walk for kilometres, be without food, the smugglers will be violent and they will put more than 20 people in one car, so you won't be able to breathe. There will be police and thieves on the way.' I felt so afraid hearing this. There were moments when I didn't want to go at all.

I have 4 brothers. The oldest one left Afghanistan 3 years ago and now he's in Paris. The others are still in Afghanistan. I wanted to leave the country together with my brother, but my parents didn't allow me to. So this year I made a decision to leave on my own.



The main reason for me to leave was my future, the future of my younger brothers, my family. Anything could happen to them, because the situation is getting worse in Afghanistan day by day. There are more and more military groups, and they are getting more violent. They kidnap 13-15 years old boys and make them fight for their cause. They know that children can be controlled easily, so they use them for smuggling drugs. Extremists took some boys from my village, and after couple of years, when they returned, these boys themselves became extremists.

My father arranged everything with the smugglers. I left Afghanistan with two of my friends. These boys are now in Turkey. They work in a textile factory. Factories take refugees because Turkish people work for 8 hours and ask for more money. Refugees work 12 hours and take less money. I know that's bad but refugees have to eat...

It's a long journey from Afghanistan to Serbia. On my way to here I first went to Pakistan. From Pakistan we crossed to Iran. From Iran we went to Turkey. There were many bad experiences on the journey. Smuggler can say anything to you but you can't say anything to them, they can do anything to you and you can't do anything to them. They often hit you. Sometimes they have guns. They are driving very fast so traffic accidents happen. They don't explain much. Everything is in their hands. If you want to go to a toilet, you can't go, if you feel hungry you can't eat and if you want water you can't drink. Smugglers, they do anything they want to do. If you talk back to them they will punish you.

On my way from Turkey to Greece I was trying the land route, which included crossing the narrow, but deep river at the border between two countries. My group managed to cross but the police caught us. We spent one night and one day there and then on the second night they deported us to Turkey. A small boat took us to the Turkish side of the border. As the boat approached the shore the policemen took our phones, put them in a plastic bag, and, as they literally kicked us out of the boat, they throw phones on the shore like they were saying "here it is, catch it".

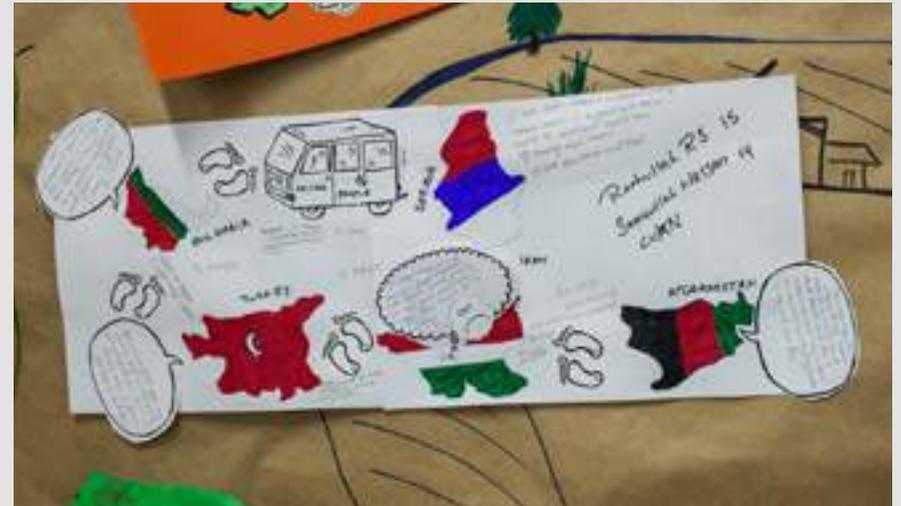
Greek police are not the only police being very strict with refugees. Bulgarian police are very strict as well. They take your clothes, shoes, phones and your money, and send you back to Turkey in your underwear. My brother told me about his experience with Croatian police. If they catch you, they hit you.

My wish is to join my brother in France. The family is very important in Afghanistan, but not for everyone. Some young people start drinking or using drugs and they lose connections with their family. I think this is because they don't have education or friends. That's why I'm going to my brother. Because we can keep an eye on each other.

The most important thing in life for me is to help my family to be happy. My younger brothers are still very small, but I wouldn't want them to set on this journey. We take that risk for them. I also said to my friends not to come, and I would say the same to their parents. Anything can happen on a journey. For example, it happens often in Istanbul that smugglers kidnap you. They call your family and ask for more money.

Anything can happen and you have to take it as it comes.

**the name was changed to protect the identity of the boy*



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, 605 persons applied for international protection during the last quarter of 2018, suggesting that the intensity of migration remained the same compared to the previous three months when 635 refugees and migrants applied for international protection. The data from the General Inspectorate for Immigration show that at the end of December 4,157 beneficiaries of international protection were registered in Romania, all possessing valid residence permits.

605
persons applied for international protection during the last quarter of 2018

In addition, 1,487 asylum seekers were registered as being in the asylum procedure. However, it is thought that not all of them are still in the country. At the end of December, there were 385 migrants and asylum seekers accommodated in state-run reception centres in Romania.¹⁴ This is about 20% decrease compared to the 497 persons reported in Romania at the end of the third quarter.¹⁵

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.

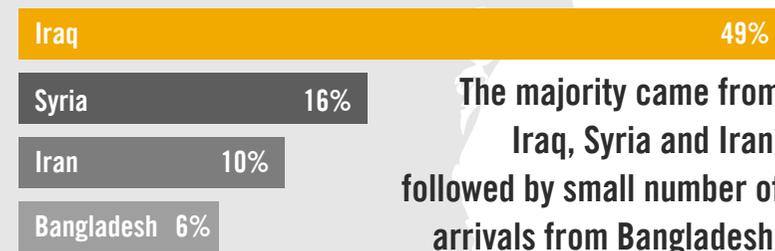
The average length of stay on the Romanian territory for asylum seekers is about 1-3 months and for the beneficiaries of international protection, the lengths of stay varies from 1 to 4 years.

DEMOGRAPHY

During the last quarter of 2018, Romanian officials registered 605 asylum applications. According to the field data, about 20% of applicants were children, while 80% of registered asylum seekers were adults.

The majority of applicants came from Iraq (49%), Syria (16%), Iran (10%), followed by a small number of arrivals from Bangladesh (6%) and other countries.

Applicants for international protection by country of origin (N=605)



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. According to Save the Children, 90 newly arrived refugee and migrant children were identified during the last quarter of 2018, out of which 57 (63%) were boys and 33 (37%) girls.

Most of them came from Iraq (47%) and Syria (34%). Among children, Save the Children teams identified 17 (19%) unaccompanied and separated minors. Most arrived from Iraq (70%) and Bangladesh (30%). Unlike in other countries on the Balkans route, many unaccompanied girls were identified. Namely, 18% of newly arrived unaccompanied minors were girls, almost all of them from Iraq.

MIGRATION ROUTES

According to the data from the field, refugees and migrants 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.

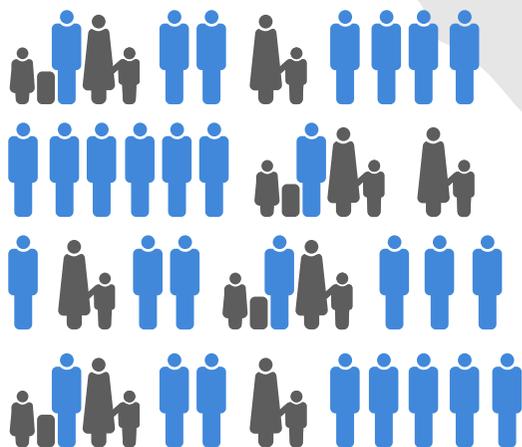
The main exit point from the county is its North-West border with Hungary.



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, 7,923 newly arrived refugees and migrants have been identified during the last quarter of 2018, which is small decrease compared to the previous three months.¹⁶



7,923
newly arrived
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quarter of 2018

Similar trend was identified in the number of intentions to seek asylum submitted by refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For October – December 2018, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs issued 7,547 attestations of intention to seek asylum, compared to 8,089 issued during the second quarter of the year.

During the last quarter of the year 459 people have submitted their asylum claim compared with 424 asylum requests during previous three months.

According to the data from the field, it is estimated that about 80% 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 4,500 of them, are mostly accommodated in the Una-Sana Canton in the North-West part of the country. During the last three months of the year, Bosnia and Herzegovina with the support of international organizations succeeded to increase the number of accommodation facilities. According to the UNCT report, at the end of the year there were more than 4,500 beds available for refugees and migrants compared to 770 reported in September.

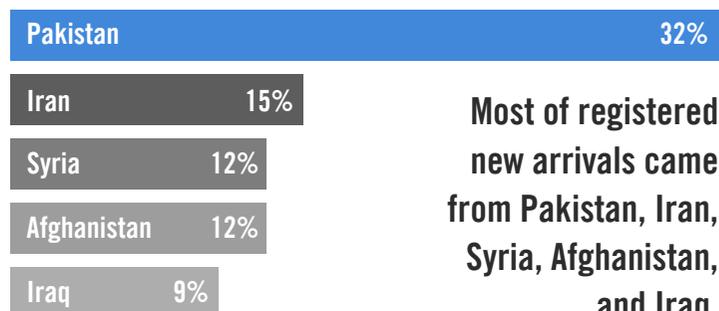
80%
of refugees and
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DEMOGRAPHY

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

According to that data, most of refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina came from Pakistan (32%), Iran (15%), Syria (12%), Afghanistan (12%) and Iraq (9%).

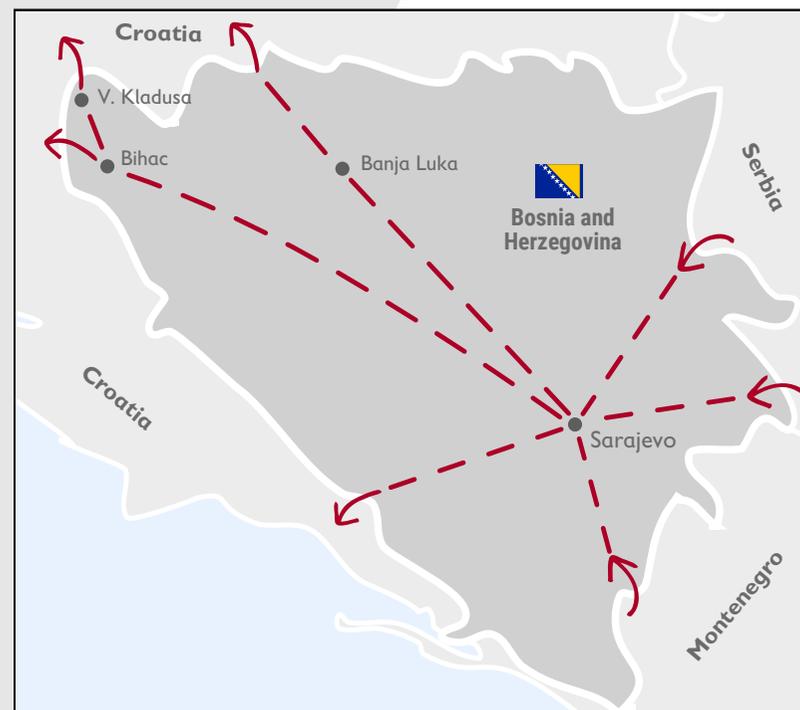
Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=7,923)



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

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 4,500 refugees and migrants in that area waiting to cross the border and continue their journey. Besides these two towns, refugees and migrants were identified in the north (Banja Luka area), and in the south.

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, Fact Sheet Greece [September 2018](#) and [December 2018](#)

³ 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 \(31/12/2018\)](#)

⁴ Source: Situation Update: [Unaccompanied Children \(UAC\) in Greece \(31 December 2018\)](#)

⁵ Source: UNHCR, [Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard December 2018](#)

⁶ Source: UNHCR, Dead and Missing at the Sea [September 2018](#) and [December 2018](#)

⁷ Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, Monthly Information on Migration Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria for [October 2018](#), [November 2018](#) and [December 2018](#)

⁸ “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

⁹ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [December 2018](#)

¹⁰ [Source: UNHCR Inter-agency operational update \(October - December 2018\)](#)

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [December 2018](#)

¹⁵ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [September 2018](#)

¹⁶ Source: UNCT Operational Update for [December 2018](#)



**Save the
Children**
100 YEARS

**Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub
Data and Trends Analysis**