



Save the Children
100 YEARS

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AT THE WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

JULY – SEPTEMBER 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.

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Photo by Nemanja Radovanovic, Save the Children
Girls reading in the child friendly space run by Save the Children and partners in asylum centre in Serbia.

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

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Photo by Nemanja Radovanovic, Save the Children

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KEY REGIONAL TRENDS

The migration route through the Balkan countries was the most travelled route to Europe during the third quarter of the year with at least 27,800¹ newly registered migrants and refugees.

More than 27,700 migrants and refugees have entered Greece during the third quarter of 2019, making it the country with the highest number of new arrivals in Europe. This country recorded almost twice the number of new arrivals than Spain and Italy together (14,937). The increase in new arrivals was visible across the Balkans region. Save the Children registered 5,021 new beneficiaries during this period in Serbia (10,085 were registered by UNHCR), Bulgarian authorities registered 922 people who entered the country illegally, BiH recorded almost 12,000 new arrivals, North Macedonia had 451 new protection applicants (while estimating that more than 9,000 people transited through the country during this period), Kosovo* had twice as many new asylum seekers (495) compared to the previous period, Albanian authorities registered 3,140 new arrivals, and Romania had 619 new asylum applicants. It should be noted that the data on asylum applicants is almost always smaller than the actual number of refugees and migrants entering each country. The number of new arrivals shown here represent a very conservative estimate, mostly relying on recorded arrivals in Greece and plane arrivals in Serbia, in order to avoid possibly overlapping data.

The third quarter of 2019 marked a major increase in new arrivals, when compared with the same period last year.

Although July, August and September are warm months of the year during which many refugees and migrants make their journey, the third quarter of 2019 marked a significant increase in new arrivals when compared with the same period last year (16,000) or when compared with the previous quarter (10,600).

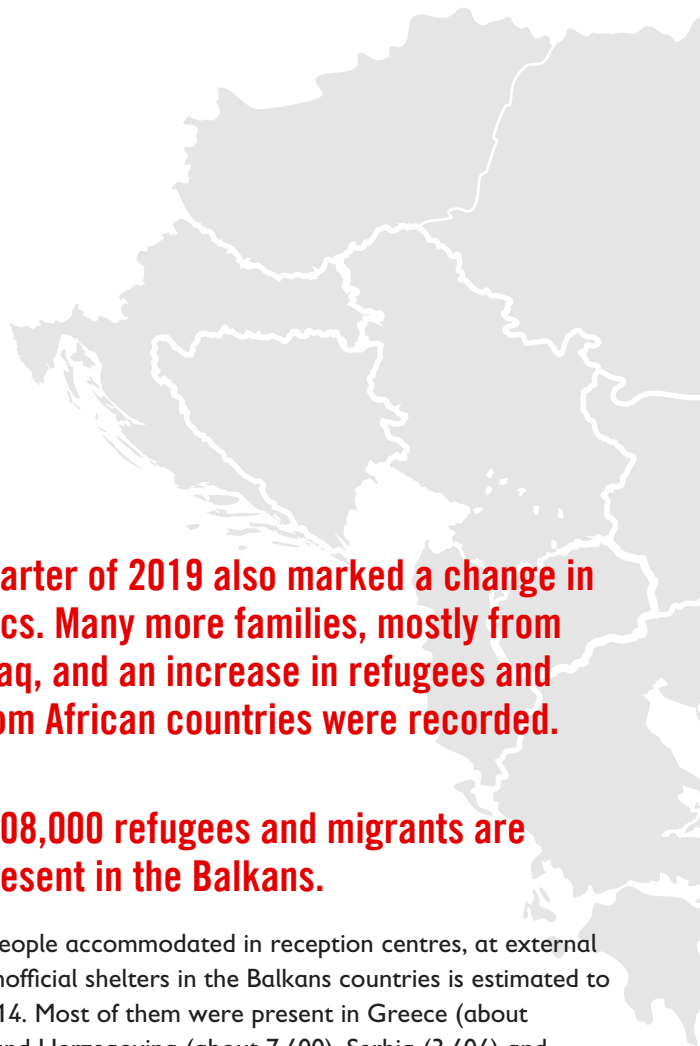
Bosnia and Herzegovina was the main intersection used by refugees and migrants traveling through the Balkans by land.

Transit corridors traversing Bulgaria/North Macedonia/Serbia, Kosovo*/Serbia as well as Albania/Montenegro usually merged in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Although the number of refugees and migrants trying to cross the Hungarian border remains high, and attempts to cross from Serbia to Romania are increasing, the data shows that most refugees and migrants enter the Balkans through Greece and move towards Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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

The available data shows that the proportion of children in the total migrant population fluctuated between 10% and 40%, in which was similar to the previous period. The percentage of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in the overall number of children varies from country to country, with most of them recorded in Serbia (65%), indicating that some children remain invisible and that there are probably significant differences in identification procedures. The vast majority of UASC in all the Balkans countries were 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 some countries in the reporting period.

KEY REGIONAL TRENDS



The third quarter of 2019 also marked a change in demographics. Many more families, mostly from Syria and Iraq, and an increase in refugees and migrants from African countries were recorded.

More than 108,000 refugees and migrants are currently present in the Balkans.

The number of people accommodated in reception centres, at external addresses and unofficial shelters in the Balkans countries is estimated to be around 108,614. Most of them were present in Greece (about 96,500), Bosnia and Herzegovina (about 7,400), Serbia (3,404) and Bulgaria (864), while several hundreds of are accommodated in Romania (341), North Macedonia (105) and Albania.



Photo by Nemanja Radovanovic, Save the Children

MIGRATION ROUTES



The migration route through the Balkan countries was the most travelled route to Europe during the third quarter of the year with at least

27,800*

newly registered migrants and refugees

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

MAJOR INCREASE IN ARRIVALS AND ONWARD MOVEMENT

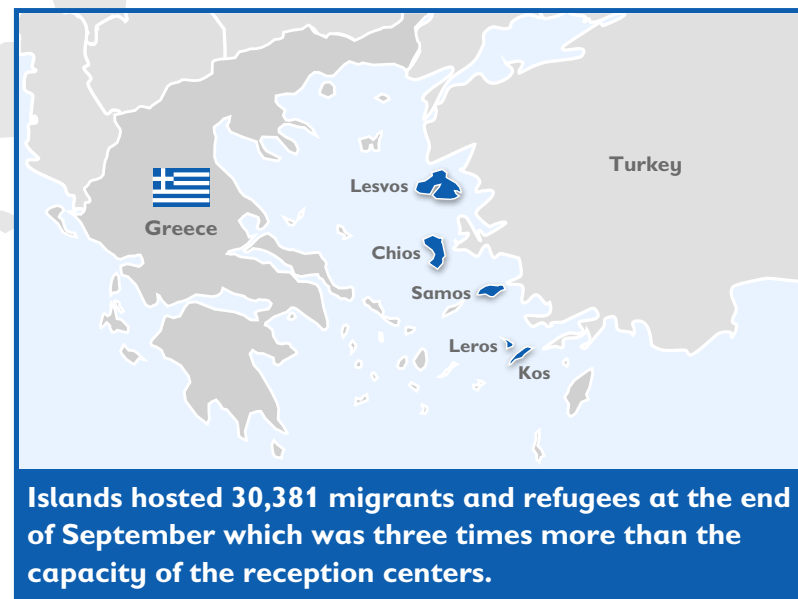
During the third quarter of 2019 UNHCR registered 27,706 new and migrant arrivals, which is almost three times more than in the previous quarter of the year.² This makes the Balkans route by far the most travelled migrant route in Europe during this period. The prevailing majority of refugees and migrants came by sea (84%) or entered Greece crossing the land border from north-east (16%). While land arrivals remained roughly at the level from the third quarter last year, there was a major increase in sea route arrivals.

At the end of June 2019, there were 80,600 refugees and migrants staying in Greece, and this number increased to 96,500 by the end of September.

According to the National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum, in September there were 30,381 refugees and migrants on the Greek islands, with 26,760 persons in the official reception centres and 3,621 in other types of shelter. The numbers are significantly higher than at the end of the last reporting period, completely overwhelming already overcrowded accommodation capacities of around 9,000 places, affecting the islands of Lesbos and Samos the most.³

Accommodation facilities at the island of Lesbos were over-burdened with 12,565 refugees and migrants staying in centres designed for 3,000 people. The facilities on the island of Samos accommodated 5,802 refugees and migrants while the official shelter capacity stood at only 648.

More than
27,700
new arrivals in
Greece during the
third quarter of the
year



At the end of September, there were 4,616 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Greece.⁴

Only one quarter of these children were accommodated in shelters for UASC or in Supported Independent Living apartments while 2,770 children were left without an adequate shelter. As many as 1,169 UASC were reported to be living in informal/insecure housing conditions such as living temporarily in apartments with others, living in squats, being homeless, or moving

frequently between different types of accommodation. During the third quarter, Greek officials registered 4,616 new arrivals of UASC most of whom were boys (94%) from Afghanistan (42%), Pakistan (26%) and Syria (9%).⁵

2,770
UASC children in
Greece are left
without adequate
shelter and are living
in informal/insecure
housing conditions

DEMOGRAPHY

Although there are no comprehensive open data sources on all newly arrived refugees and migrants in Greece disaggregated by demographic categories, reports on sea arrivals are illustrative for the structure of this population. Between July and September 2019 there were 23,271 arrivals by sea in Greece (84% of all arrivals in Greece).⁶ Comparing demographic data with the previous period, no major shifts were recorded. Of new sea arrivals, 64% were adults (9,437 men and 5,457 women) and 36% were children. UASC made 17% of all children arriving by sea mostly coming from Afghanistan, Syria and Congo.

New arrivals during the third quarter mostly came from Afghanistan (40%), Syria (31%), Congo (5%), Iraq (5%) and Palestine (4%). There was a noticeable increase in Syrian and the Afghan arrivals.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=23,271)



Noticeable increase in Syrian and Afghani arrivals, especially those traveling in family groups.

Comparable to the previous period, the majority of arrivals from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq were in family groups.

This is interesting having in mind that although Syrian and Iraqi refugees and migrants are associated with traveling in families in other Balkans countries as well, the same was not true for Afghans (although there was an increase in arrivals of Afghan families in Serbia as well).

There is a possibility that refugees and migrants using the land routes and the sea routes differ (different provinces of origin, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, etc.), with women and children more likely to stay in 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 through a more detailed research.



Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

GREECE

MIGRATION ROUTES

The main entry points for migrants and refugees on the sea route were islands close to the Turkish coast, namely Lesvos, the Dodecanese islands, Samos and Chios.

During the third quarter, 10 persons are known to have died or went missing while crossing the sea. Despite the increase in new arrivals, this number is smaller than for the previous quarter or for the same period last year (83).⁷

The main land route used by refugees and migrants is at the north-eastern border with Turkey, crossing the river Evros. According to the available data, 4,435 new crossings were registered during the third quarter of 2019, which represents an increase compared to the previous quarter but remains at the similar level as the last year's land arrivals.

84%
of new arrivals
came over sea

Many refugees and migrants leave Greece and continue their journey towards western and northern European countries, mostly through North Macedonia and Serbia. The use of other routes also intensified since the beginning of the year, including using the route through Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Data collected in Bulgaria shows that the route through Bulgaria is also increasingly used by refugees and migrants coming from Greece.



Photo by Bosko Djordjevic, Save the Children

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS ON THE MOVE

During July, August and September 2019 there was a major increase in the number of new arrivals of refugees and migrants, and changes in their demographic structure. Save the Children and its partners in Serbia identified and supported 5,021 newly arrived refugees and migrants. The number of new arrivals has increased by more than a third (36%) compared with the previous quarter of the year, but remained roughly similar to the new arrivals recorded at the same period last year (4,949 in third quarter of 2018). According to UNHCR data, 10,085 refugees and migrants entered Serbia in the third quarter of the year which represented more than 50% increase compared to the previous period.⁸ Intentions to seek asylum grew proportionally with the new arrivals with 4,460 persons expressing intent to seek asylum in this quarter⁹.

Although there was a noticeable increase in the number of new arrivals, the number of refugees and migrants present in the country did not increase suggesting that roughly the same number of refugees and migrants left Serbia as they arrived. At the end of September 2019 there were 3,404 refugees and migrants in Serbia, which is a slightly smaller number than at the end of the last quarter.¹⁰ Only 45 refugees and migrants formally applied for international protection between the beginning of July until the end of September, which is two times less than in the previous quarter of the year. There have been 5 positive asylum rulings during this period.¹¹

5,021
new migrants and
refugees recorded
by Save the Children
during July, August
and September

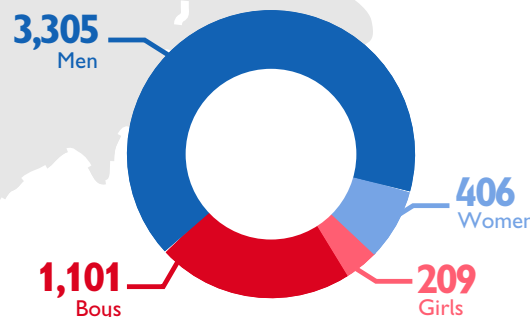
DEMOGRAPHY

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

There were some shifts in the demographic structure of newly arriving refugees and migrants supported by our teams in the third quarter of the year. There was a notable increase in the arrivals of families from Iraq and Syria, increasing the number of children arriving, especially those under the age of 12. Between January and June 2019, the total of 120 families were recorded as new beneficiaries, while 220 new families were recorded only in the third quarter of the year. Arrivals from other countries, not often recorded in Serbia in the past, were increasing as well, including from Somalia, Palestine, India, Egypt and Bangladesh, especially in August and September.

Between July and September 2019, Save the Children and its partners identified and supported 5,021 new arrivals of which 3,711 (74%) were adults – 3,305 men and 406 women. The overall number of our beneficiaries was higher than in the previous quarter of the year, and the highest number of supported beneficiaries in a single trimester since the end of 2016.

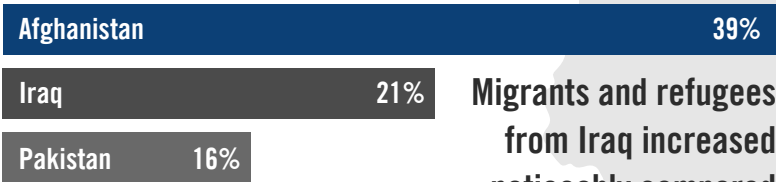
220
new families
recorded
as beneficiaries



94%
of new arrivals
were men and
boys

More than a third of our beneficiaries came from Afghanistan (39%). The proportion of Iraqi arrivals increased from 11% in the last quarter to 21%, while arrivals from Pakistan decreased to 16%.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=5,021)



Migrants and refugees from Iraq increased noticeably compared to previous period

Children made up 26% of newly arrived migrants and refugees (1,310) with 1,101 boys and 209 girls. More than a half of all supported children (57%) were adolescent boys from Afghanistan (92% of children coming from Afghanistan were boys 13 years or older). Iraqi children represented 27% of all children supported by our teams, followed by Pakistan (5%) and Syria (4%).

While most adolescents came from Afghanistan, more than two thirds (68%) of the younger children (12 years or less) came from Iraq, mostly with their families.

Proportion of boys was much greater than of girls. These percentages were similar to the same period last year, with one distinction: during 2018 the majority of children under 13 (especially girls) came from Iran.

As the number of children traveling with their families grew, the number of UASC dropped compared with the previous quarter. 854 UASC children were reported as new beneficiaries during the third quarter or 65% of all newly arrived child beneficiaries. The number of UASC children within our beneficiaries is smaller than in the previous quarter (1,084 in 2018). UASC were mostly from Afghanistan (84%), followed by Pakistan (7%) and Iraq (2%). While there were practically no girls in UASC population during the first half of the year, during the third quarter our teams recorded 12 unaccompanied girls coming from Iraq and Somalia.

65% of registered children were travelling alone, coming mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan

MIGRATION ROUTES

Exit routes from Serbia have not changed and are going mostly 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.



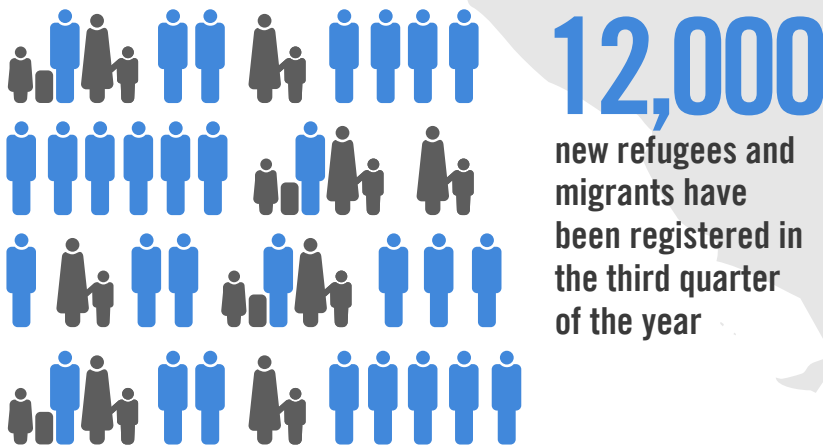
Increasing number of migrants and refugees enters Serbia through Kosovo*

BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA

BUSY ROUTE THROUGH BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA

According to UNCT data¹² after Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) faced the largest numbers of new arrivals of refugees and migrants in the Balkans during the third quarter of the year. BiH also accommodates the highest number of refugees and migrants and after Greece.

The numbers of arrivals and of those staying in BiH have increased in this reporting period. According to UNCT, almost 12,000¹³ newly arrived refugees and migrants have been identified during the third quarter of 2019, which is an increase of 64% compared to the previous quarter of the year¹⁴. These numbers are 41% higher than the figures registered in the same period last year (8,492).

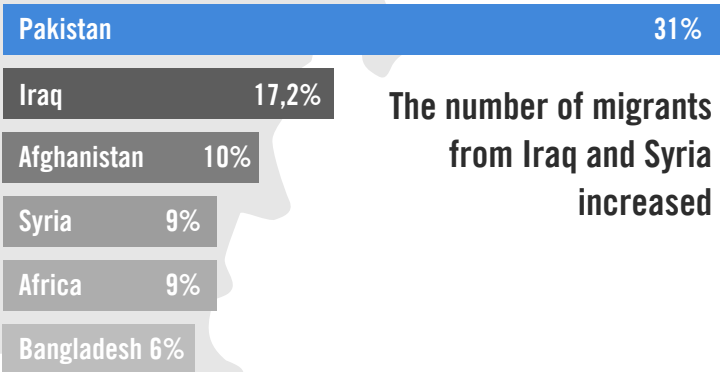


Intentions to seek asylum have increased as well with about 9,500¹⁵ refugees and migrants expressing intention to seek protection, which is 36% higher than in the previous period. The number of actual asylum applications has gone up slightly with 180 persons applying for asylum during this period, compared to 126 in the second quarter of the year.

DEMOGRAPHY

At the moment, the disaggregated data for the overall population of newly arrived refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not available. Even though disaggregated data for the whole population are not available, data on refugees and migrants present in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of September 2019 could be used as an illustration of demography. The majority of 3,595 migrants which were assisted by different organisations in reception centres and in private accommodation/ squatting at the end of September, mostly came from Pakistan (31%), Iraq (17,2%), Afghanistan (10%), Syria (9%), Bangladesh (6%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=3,595)



The number of migrants from Iraq and Syria increased

It is interesting that 9% of all assisted refugees and migrants came from Africa. While refugees and migrants from Morocco were the most numerous amongst those currently staying in the country, there was a noticeable increase in new arrivals from Somalia and Egypt (only for September the number of newly arrived Egyptians almost equalled the number of arrivals for the entire first half of the year). Newly arrived refugees and migrants coming from Egypt were mostly unaccompanied minors and Save the Children teams in the Una-Sana Canton provided the support and will continue to monitor the arrivals.

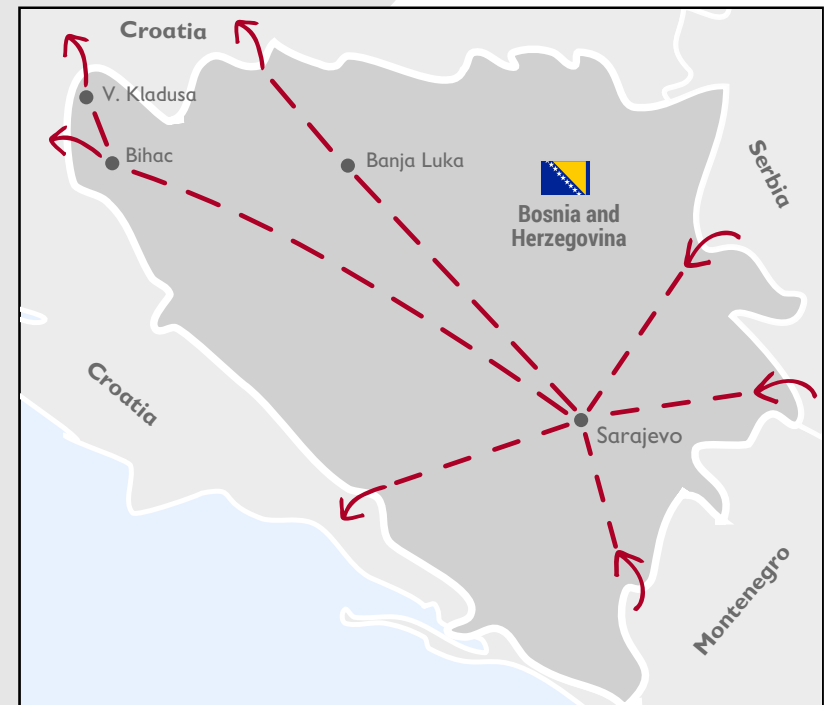
Rising numbers of UASC from Egypt

Although available data on migrants present in the country at any given time cannot be used as a representative sample of all migrants transiting Bosnia and Herzegovina it can provide strong clues about their possible structure. At the end of September, the officials estimated that 7,445 people stayed in the country, mostly in reception centres in the Una-Sana Canton in north-west of the country, close to the Croatian border. Out of 3,595 directly assisted refugees and migrants, 86% were men, 21% were children, out of which around one quarter (23%) were UASC who were all boys.

7,445
migrants and refugees
are temporarily residing
in the country

MIGRATION ROUTES

Most of refugees and migrants identified in Bosnia and Herzegovina entered 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 in the north. From there, refugees and migrants head towards north-west of the country, close to the Croatian border.



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. Besides these two towns, refugees and migrants were identified in the north (Tuzla and Banja Luka area), and in the south.

TESTIMONIES

“I HAVE SEEN A LOT OF DEAD BODIES AND BAD THINGS ON MY WAY HERE”

“I almost died a few times during this journey”, said 15-years-old Sayed from Afghanistan, who has travelled for two months before reaching Serbian capital Belgrade, one of the main transit points on the migration route through the Balkans.*

“Once I was beaten by the smuggler because I could not fit in the car. Other time because the vehicle was so full that I could not breathe. The third time I walked for 24 hours straight in the snow and cold without any food or water”, stated the boy. Similar to thousands of other refugee and migrant boys and adolescents, he decided to leave his home country and embark on a journey hoping that it will take him to a country where he can have better prospects to survive and build his future.

Upon his arrival, the boy was spending time in a park close to the bus station, known as “Afghan” park, which in previous years became a gathering spot for refugees and migrants arriving in Belgrade. He was approached by the outreach protection team run by Save the Children and partnering organization Praxis. The outreach team advised the boy not to stay in the park, offering to accompany him to the nearby refugee aid centre Miksaliste, where he can rest and be referred to registration and accommodation.

“I am my parent’s only son and if I did not have to, I would not have left Afghanistan to come here at this age”, said Sayed, adding that the situation in Afghanistan was pretty bad and that he did not have any future there.

Due to the ongoing conflict that results in lack of security and the deterioration of the society and the economy, Afghanistan is one of the worst countries to be a child according to many experts and humanitarian organizations, including Save the Children. Children are killed or injured almost on a daily basis - the UN highlighted the killing and maiming of over 3,000 children in 2018, more than any other country. Schools are difficult to access due to insecurity and armed groups prevent humanitarian aid from reaching the most vulnerable.

According to data collected by Save the Children, the number of people coming through the Western Balkans Route makes it the first or the second most frequented migration route to Europe. It is estimated that around 30% of the people arriving are children, out of which many are minors similar to Sayed, travelling alone, without a parent or a guardian. Most of them come from Afghanistan, but other countries as well such as Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Iraq and countries of North Africa.

Along the journey, children are establishing and maintaining contacts with smugglers. The smuggling business has flourished since the migration route was closed in 2016 and refugees and migrants, including children, were left with no legal pathways to travel and seek asylum in one of the countries they see as safe and promising or where they have members of family. Despite the police efforts, the smugglers are always present at the places where migrants are gathering, such is the “Afghan” park. Children, wishing to reach their country of destination, risk their lives by traveling with smugglers across the borders, but the places of gathering also present a significant risk, since this is where smugglers recruit people and resolve their disputes over money and “clients”, very often in a violent manner. “There are all kinds of people here. A couple of days ago, two smugglers fought amongst themselves right here and killed each other with knives. I try to stay with my cousins who are the same age as me; we avoid any kinds of a dispute with anyone” said Sayed.

Refugee aid centre Miksaliste has been a safe place for refugee and migrant children and their families since it started operating in 2015 as an aid hub run by local and international NGO’s and volunteering organizations.

Save the Children, partnering with local organization Centre for Youth Integration, has taken a significant role in managing Miksaliste and providing services there, running a child friendly space and a youth corner. The activities in Miksaliste were complemented by the outreach team which monitors the areas where refugees and migrants arrive and spend time, collecting data, referring refugees and minors, particularly children and vulnerable groups to Miksaliste and supporting with registration. In 2019, as a result of advocacy efforts of organizations working in Miksaliste and in effort to secure the sustainability of services for refugees and migrants arriving in Belgrade, the aid centre transferred under the management of Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, a governmental agency in charge of migrations in Serbia. Save the Children and partners remain present, working with families and unaccompanied children, providing psychosocial support and recreational activities, case management, support in identification of vulnerable cases, referrals, cultural mediation. In Miksaliste, boys like Sayed can stay in a safe place and even spend a night while waiting for the accommodation in one of the refugee centre. The psychosocial support activities offered by the team running child friendly space and youth corner enable them to spend time constructively: receive information, become aware of some of the risks on the journey, share their stories and process some of the difficult experiences they had.

Although humanitarian workers encourage children travelling alone to quit attempting to cross the borders and leave Serbia, most of them decide to continue their perilous journey. They hardly ever complain or ask for support. How they feel about the journey and the hardships they experienced becomes visible when they talk about their siblings or other children in the context of the journey, but their self-image and expectations they have of themselves don’t allow them to quit before they reach their destination.

“I am planning on going to continue the journey but the routes from here on are even more dangerous”, shared Sayed with the team. “I have seen a lot of dead bodies and a lot of bad things on my way here. I miss my family. I cannot wait to get to my destination so I can finally tell my parents about all the hardships that I have endured so they call tell others not to send their kids on these dangerous routes.”

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

BULGARIA

MIGRATION FLOW

During the third quarter of 2019, the Bulgarian police apprehended 922 people that were accused of illegally entering the country.¹⁶ As in the other countries in the region, the numbers of new refugees and migrants were noticeably (54%) higher than in the previous quarter of the year, but in Bulgaria the numbers were somewhat lower than in the same quarter of 2018 (1,199). The number of refugees and migrants (864) residing in official centres or at “external addresses”¹⁷ has gone up by 28% since the end of June. According to the Ministry of Interior, 239 persons were either deported or they left Bulgaria legally during the third quarter of 2019. We can assume that the discrepancy between the number of those who officially left the country, the number of new arrivals, and the number of those who stayed in the country, indicates that a number of refugees and migrants possibly left the country irregularly (1,547).

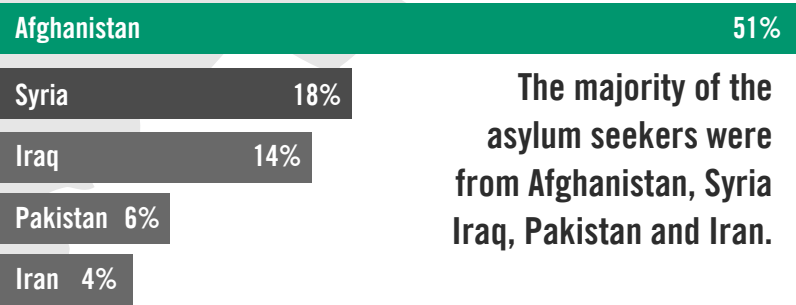
922
people were
apprehended for
illegally entering the
country

DEMOGRAPHY

The official data¹⁸ shows a notable increase in the number of new protection seekers compared to the previous period. The Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees reported that between July and September 857 people applied for asylum, out of whom 86% were male and 14% were female. Adults made 63% of all applicants in this period, most of them men (95% of all adults).

Not much has changed when it comes to countries of origin of new protection seekers. More than a half of all applicants came from Afghanistan (51%), followed by Syria (18%), Iraq (14%), Pakistan (6%) and Iran (4%). As in the previous period, applicants from Iraq and Syria included a more balanced number of men, women and children indicating that many of them travel in family groups.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=857)



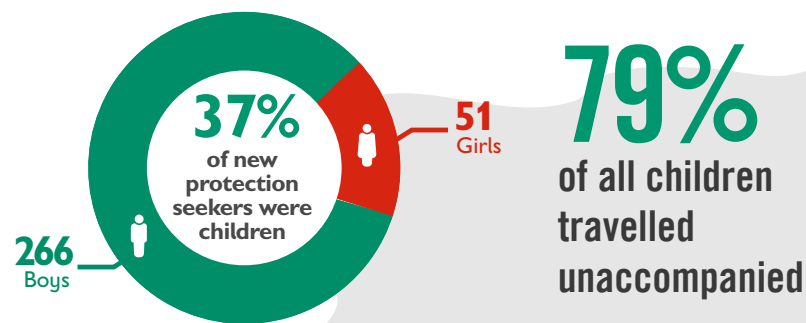
The majority of the
asylum seekers were
from Afghanistan, Syria
Iraq, Pakistan and Iran.

When it comes to children, the number of those seeking protection has gone up since the last reporting period. As in the previous period, most of them were boys (84%), but the percentage of girls has also risen (from 6% in the second quarter to 16% in this one).

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

Unaccompanied minors made 79% of all newly registered children, which is less than in the second quarter of the year. Only one girl was among UASC asylum seekers, and the boys mostly came from Afghanistan (82%), followed by Iraq (8%), Pakistan (4%) and Iran (2%).

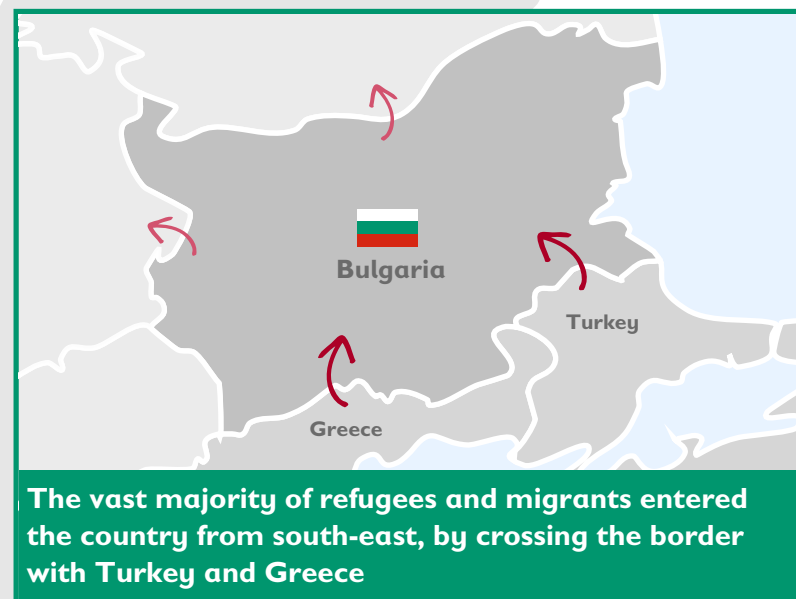


The international protection was granted to 110 refugee and migrants, which is 45% more than in the previous reporting period. That means that not only that the numbers of applicants were higher than in the second quarter 2019, the number of granted protections were higher as well.

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.

Official data on locations in which migrants and refugees have been apprehended while entering the country show that most of the migrants were observed crossing the border with Turkey (49%) or Greece (42%).



Data also suggests that most refugees and migrants continue their journey through Serbia (about 77%) and Romania (about 23%). To enter Serbia from Bulgaria, the vast majority of refugees and migrants used smuggling routes through the mountains, while entering Romania they mostly used the regular border crossings.¹⁹

INVISIBLE IRREGULAR FLOW

Data collected by Save the Children and its partners in Serbia show that more than a half of new beneficiaries came to Serbia from North Macedonia. Between July and September 2019 2,741 of newly recorded beneficiaries came to Serbia from this country.

Official data shows that only 451 refugees and migrants arrived in North Macedonia during this period²⁰. These numbers are higher than in the previous quarter of 2019 (398), but still far lower than what the data collected in Serbia suggests, pointing to a much larger migrant flow than reported by officials. This discrepancy is a long-term trend and a very small number of refugees or migrants actually stay in North Macedonia for longer periods of time.

451
officially
registered new
migrant and
refugee arrivals

Although no official data for July were publicly available, UNHCR reported in a document that they have recorded 9,300 new arrivals in North Macedonia during August and September only.²¹

Not much has changed when it comes to numbers of migrants and refugees staying in reception centres in North Macedonia since June. Official data shows that the number of refugees and migrants accommodated in the reception/ transit centres at the end of September was 105 which almost the same as at the end of our last reporting period (104 in June).²²

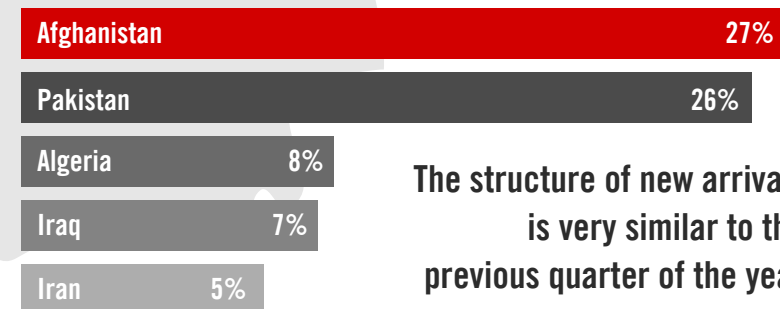
DEMOGRAPHY

The demographic breakdown of newly arrived migrants is very similar to previous reporting period.²³ Out of 451 officially registered new migrants and refugees in North Macedonia, 81% were adults and almost exclusively men (97% of all adult migrants, which is noticeably higher than 87% in the previous quarter) and 19% children. 43% of all children²⁴ arriving in North Macedonia from January to August 2019 were UASC.

19% of registered new arrivals
are children

Most of refugees and migrants registered between January and September came from Afghanistan (27%) Pakistan (26%), Algeria (8%), Iraq (7%) and Iran (5%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=451)



The structure of new arrivals
is very similar to the
previous quarter of the year

MIGRATION ROUTES

The existing data sources²⁵ indicate that North Macedonia is a transit country for refugees and migrants through which they tend to pass relatively quickly. The majority of cases entered the country from Greece, while the most support services international organisations provided to those intending to leave the country were provided at the Serbian border. It should be noted that some of the refugees and migrants use the route through Albania or Kosovo*.

ALBANIA

MIGRATION CORRIDOR GAINING IMPORTANCE

Recent figures show that Albania was amongst the most used migration routes in the western Balkans during the third quarter of 2019. Recent UNHCR data²⁶ shows that 3,140 newly arrived migrants and refugees were detected in this Balkans country. This represents a significant increase compared with 1,981 new arrivals recorded in the second quarter of 2019, or compared with 1,620 arrivals recorded during the third quarter of 2018.

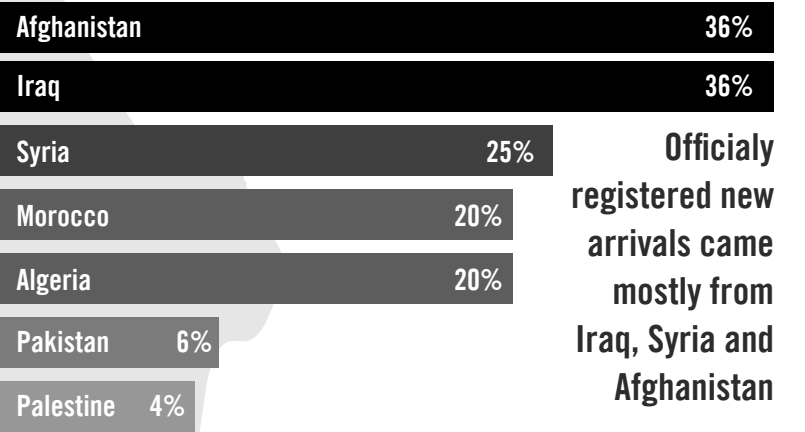
Although there is no available monthly / quarterly demographical data breakdown, the illustrative data since the beginning of the year (N=8,105) shows that most of newly arrived refugees and migrants were men (75%), while women and children made 25% of all new arrivals.

3,140
newly arrived
migrants and
refugees were
detected during the
third quarter of
2019

DEMOGRAPHY

Since the beginning of the year, most refugees and migrants came from Afghanistan and Iraq (36%), followed by Syria (25%), Morocco/ Algeria (20%), Pakistan (6%) and Palestine (4%). Although there is no breakdown available between Afghanistan and Iraq, it is still noticeable that, unlike in other Balkan countries, Afghanistan is probably not the most common country of origin in Albania.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin since the beginning of 2019 (N=8,105)



Although almost two thirds (61%) of the identified new arrivals applied for international protection in Albania since the beginning of the year, most of them do not stay long in this country. The country of origin of asylum applicants is roughly similar to the countries of origin of newly arrived refugees and migrants.

MIGRATION ROUTES

The migration route through Albania is not a new route, but it has been used more frequently since the beginning of 2018. According to the data collected by Save the Children in Serbia but also UNHCR, vast majority of refugees and migrants entered the country from the south by crossing the border with Greece. They mostly moved north towards Montenegro (near Lake Shkodër), but there are indications of more frequent use of Kosovo borders as well.

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, 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

Although Kosovo* has never been major part of the Balkans migration corridor, in the third quarter of 2019 numbers of new migrants and refugees have more than doubled compared with the previous quarter of the year. Although data on new entries in the country is not available, data on asylum applications can be illustrative. During the third quarter of 2019, the Kosovo Ministry of Internal Affairs registered 495 persons who applied for asylum.²⁷

495
officially
registered new
arrivals

DEMOGRAPHY

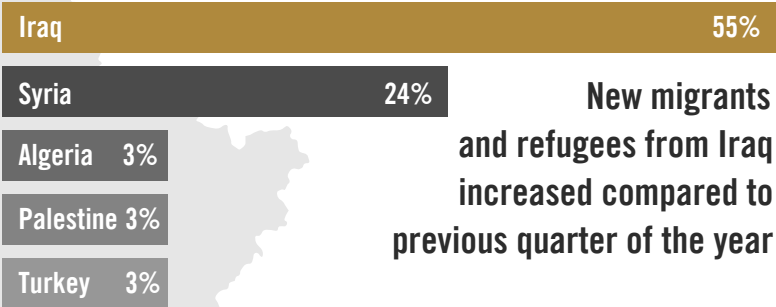
The same source reported that most of the refugees and migrants who applied for international protection in Kosovo* during the third quarter of the year were male (70%), with the number of female applicants rising from 16% in the previous quarter to 30% in this quarter.

Similarly, although the majority of applicants were adults (70%), the number of child asylum applicants (30%) was noticeably higher than in the previous quarter of the year (16%).

These figures could imply that an increased number of families were entering the country, but this presumption should be examined further.

The structure of newly registered refugees and migrants in Kosovo* from July to September somewhat changed compared with the previous period. People coming from Iraq now make more than a half of all applicants (55%), followed by refugees and migrants from Syria (24%), and in smaller numbers from Algeria (3%), Palestine (3%) and Turkey (3%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=495)



New migrants
and refugees from Iraq
increased compared to
previous quarter of the year

MIGRATION ROUTES

As in the other Balkan countries, most 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. Higher numbers of migrants and refugees entering Serbia from Kosovo and Albania in the last quarter could indicate that this route is becoming more prominent.

Kosovo* is becoming
more prominent
transit route

TRANSITING THROUGH ROMANIA

Romania remains an important transit route for refugees and migrants. There has been a noticeable increase in registered new arrivals between July and September 2019, compared to the previous quarter of the year. During this quarter 619 asylum applicants have been registered (40% more than in the previous quarter) which represents 43% of all refugees coming to this country since the beginning of the year. These figures are slightly lower than those collected during the same period last year (635 applicants in Q3 2018).

619
migrants and
refugees applied for
international
protection

Official data²⁸ from the end of September shows that there were 341 refugees and migrants accommodated in reception centres across the country (mostly Bucharest, Radauti and Somcuta Mare, but also Galati, Timisoara and Giurgiu) which is slightly lower than in the last reporting period. These numbers are also lower than in the same period of 2018 when there were 497 migrants and refugees accommodated in Romania.

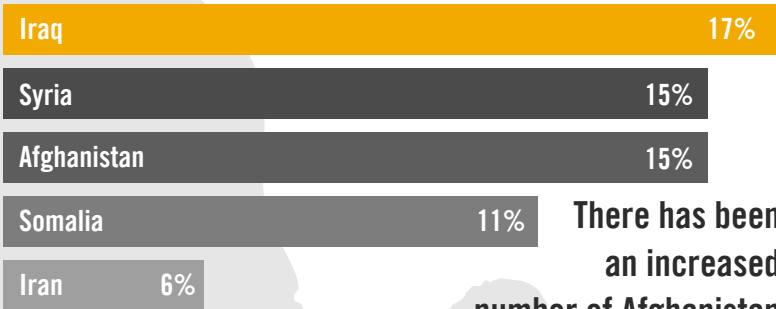
The fact that the numbers of new refugees and migrants have increased, but that numbers of those staying in the country is lower, further reinforces previous assumptions about Romania being perceived as a transit country.

The data collected from the field²⁹ suggests that families stay longer in the country (1-3 months in average) while single adults move on faster. Once refugees and migrants ask for international protection, they tend to stay in Romania between one and four years.

DEMOGRAPHY

Similar to the previous quarter of the year, the majority of new protection applicants were adults (79%), but the countries of origin have changed somewhat. New protection seekers in Romania mostly came from Iraq (17%), Syria (15%) and Afghanistan (15%), followed by Somalia (11%) and Iran (6%).

Applicants for international protection by country of origin (N=619)



**There has been
an increased
number of Afghanistan
UASC coming to Romania**

There was an increased number of UASC coming from Afghanistan and the increase of arrivals of refugees and migrants from Somalia led to 22% of all applicants being from an African country. The applicants from Turkey made 2% of all applications.

22% of new asylum seekers came
from Africa

21% of all new applicants were children and 74% of children were boys, with 52% of all children younger than 15 years. 43% of all newly arrived children were UASC, which is a major increase compared to the 21% in the previous quarter of the year. By the information collected from the field³⁰, mostly Afghan boys contributed to this increase.

21% of all asylum applicants were children

Since no official data on children were available, Save the Children Romania collected data from its refugee and migrant beneficiaries which could give insight in possible structure of children entering the country. According to the beneficiary data, out of 93 children receiving services from Save the Children in the relevant period, 81% were boys and 19% girls. The majority of children came from Afghanistan (40%), followed by Iraq (23%) and Iran (13%).

New arrivals of UASC have noticeably increased with 59% of children supported by Save the Children having travelled unaccompanied, compared with 21% in the previous reporting period. UASC were almost exclusively boys, with the exception of two girls. 62% percent of UASC originated from Afghanistan, followed by Iraq (16%). The rise in Afghan UASC in Romania is a relatively new phenomenon for this year and it will be closely monitored by Save the Children.

MIGRATION ROUTES

The field data suggests that most refugees and migrants arrive into the country from Serbia, but also, to a smaller extent, from Bulgaria. Romania is mostly perceived as a transit country, with a small number of refugees and migrants staying longer than a few weeks - mostly families. The most used exit point from the country is the border with Hungary.



Photo by Velija Hasanbegovic, Save the Children

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 focuses 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, other data used for this purpose includes publicly available data from reports, dashboards, publications, policies and articles, and information from other relevant stakeholders which are collected and analyzed. The initiative is and will remain to be open and encouraging for the exchange of information, cooperation and partnership with all relevant actors.

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

Geographical Scope

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

The Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub (BMDH) has been established in 2018 in Belgrade, Serbia, in order to ensure visibility and continual support for children on the move in the Balkans. Drawing from the experience gained in responding to the refugee and migrant crisis in 2015 and 2016, BMDH documents good practices, improves learning and knowledge sharing and promotes emergency preparedness. The Hub monitors trends in migrations across the Balkans and conducts research in particular issues related to mixed migrations, issuing regular reports. By developing partnerships in countries along the Balkans route and liaising with other stakeholders working with children on the move, BMDH runs and promotes a robust advocacy for children ensuring that their needs are put at the forefront. Together with Save the Children's advocacy offices, BMDH is implementing regional advocacy initiatives targeting EU. The Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub works within Save the Children North West Balkans CO.

Find our Data and Trend Analysis and other reports and publications at:
<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net>
keyword: **BMDH**

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

ENDNOTES

¹ This estimation was based on official data on new entries in Greece, in Bulgaria via Turkish border and in Serbia by plane.

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

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 \(30/9/2019\)](#).

⁴ Source: National Centre for Social Solidarity (E.K.K.A.), [Situation Update: Unaccompanied Children \(UAC\) in Greece \(30/9/2019\)](#).

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Source: UNHCR, [Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard September 2019](#)

⁷ Source: UNHCR, Dead and Missing at the Sea [September 2019](#)

⁸ [Source: UNHCR Serbia Statistical Snapshot September 2019](#)

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

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ [Source: UNHCR Serbia Update September 2019](#)

¹² Source: UNCT Operational Update for [September 2019](#)

¹³ UNCT Operational Update gives only precise information on July (4,465) and August (2,913) arrivals but represents September arrivals only graphically. It can be concluded that no less than 4,500 new migrants and refugees have entered BiH during September, giving the minimal total number of 11,872 new arrivals per quarter.

¹⁴ Source: UNCT Operational Update for [June 2019](#)

¹⁵ Since UNCT Operational Update gives only precise information on July (4,339) and August (2,828) arrivals but represents September intentions only graphically. It can be concluded that no less than 2,400 new migrants and refugees have showed intention to seek asylum, giving the minimal total number of 9,600 intentions.

¹⁶ Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, Monthly Information on Migration Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria for [September 2019](#).

¹⁷ “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

¹⁸ Source: State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers, Актуална информация, [September 2019](#)

¹⁹ Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, Monthly Information on Migration Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria for [September 2019](#).

²⁰ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [September 2019](#)

²¹ Source: Europe Monthly Report, [September 2019](#)

²² Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [September 2019](#)

²³ Having in mind that IOM gender breakdown data for September are not available, only July and August data are represented in the gender component of the report.

²⁴ Having in mind that IOM data on UASC are incomplete in Q3 it is possible only to report about children on the move in the stated period.

²⁵ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [September 2019](#)

²⁶ UNHCR update on asylum in mixed movements, January-September 2018, internal document

²⁷ Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs-Statistical report Q3 2019, DCAM/MIA

²⁸ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [September 2019](#)

²⁹ Unofficial data collected in field by Save the Children Romania (Salvati Copiii) and UNHCR

³⁰ Ibid



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Data and Trends Analysis**