



Save the Children
100 YEARS

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AT THE WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2019

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub
Data and Trends Analysis

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

IMPRESSUM

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

Acknowledgements

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Cover photo:

Velija Hasanbegovic, Save the Children

Five-year-old Firuza* from Iran in a temporary reception centre in Bihac, Una-Sana Canton, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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

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Photo: Nemanja Radovanović, Save the Children

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KEY REGIONAL TRENDS

The migration route through the Balkan countries was by far the most travelled route to Europe during the last quarter of the year with at least 28,725¹ newly registered migrants and refugees.

Almost 29,000 migrants and refugees have entered Greece during the last quarter of 2019, making it the country with the highest number of new arrivals in Europe. During this period UNHCR registered 9,707 new arrivals in Serbia, while Save the Children supported 4,847 new beneficiaries. BiH recorded 7,672 new arrivals, North Macedonia 10,235, while the Albanian authorities registered 3,140, and the Bulgarian authorities registered 304 persons who entered the country illegally. Kosovo* had an increase in new asylum seekers (3,952) compared to the previous period, and Romania had 619 new asylum applicants. The cumulative number of new arrivals shown here represent a very conservative estimate, mostly relying on recorded arrivals in Greece, Bulgaria and plane arrivals in Serbia, in order to avoid possibly overlapping data.

A major increase in new arrivals was recorded in the last quarter of 2019 when compared with the same period last year.

Although the winter months usually see a drop in new arrivals, this quarter with close to 30,000 arrivals marked a significant increase when compared with the same period last year when 17,000 new arrivals were recorded.

More than 128,000 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 128,277. Most of them were present in Greece (about 112,300), Bosnia and Herzegovina (about 8,973), Serbia (5,833), Bulgaria (601), while several hundreds were accommodated in Romania (460), North Macedonia (110) and Albania.

Children still make roughly 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 8% and 40%, which was similar to the previous period. The percentage of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in the overall number of children varied from country to country, with the greatest percentage of UASC recorded in Serbia (69%), indicating that some children remain invisible and that there are probably significant differences in identification procedures. Most of UASC in all the Balkans countries were boys from Afghanistan and Pakistan, with a smaller number of children from African countries emerging as well. 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.

Demographic shifts among refugees and migrants, noticed in the third quarter of 2019, continued this quarter. There were more refugees and migrants from Syria and Iraq traveling with families, and the increase in arrivals from African countries continued.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains the main intersection used by refugees and migrants traveling through the Balkans while Romania becomes an important route.

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



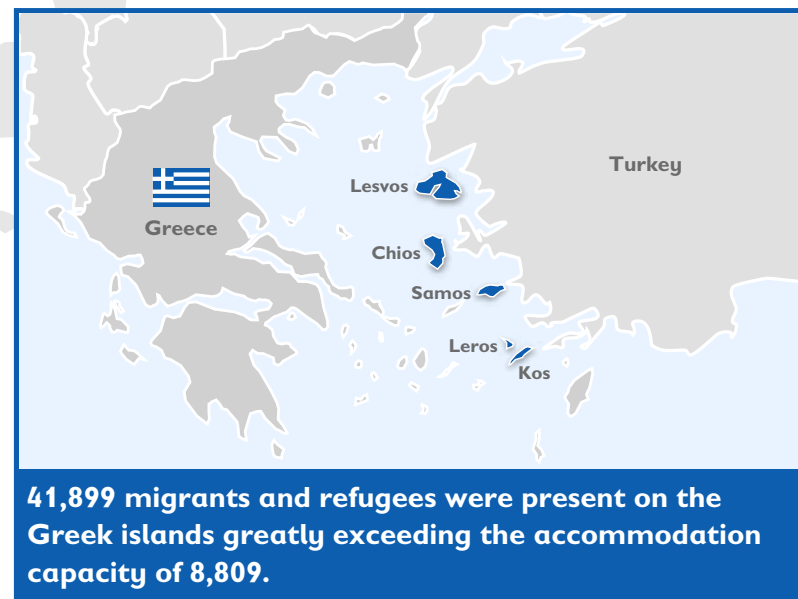
SURGE IN ARRIVALS

According to the UNHCR data,² the number of refugees and migrants entering Europe through Greek borders by far exceeded other routes to Europe in the last quarter of 2019. As many as 28,503 new refugees and migrants entered Greece during this period exceeding the third quarter, although since the monitoring started the third quarters were the periods recording the highest number of arrivals during each year. The majority of new arrivals (about 23,600 or 83%) came by sea, while 4,900 entered Greece by crossing the land border from the north-east of the country. This is more than double compared to 13,221 new arrivals in the same period in 2018.

As many as
28,503
new refugees and migrants entered Greece during this period

According to UNHCR, there were 112,300 refugees and migrants present in Greece, which is a major increase compared to the end of previous quarter (96,500) and the same period last year (71,200). Most of refugees and migrants were located in the mainland (around 71,200) while the rest of them were on the islands (around 41,100)³.

According to the National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum 41,899 migrants and refugees were present on the Greek islands⁴ greatly exceeding the accommodation capacity of 8,809. The island of Lesbos had the highest number of refugees and migrants without access to adequate accommodation – 20,780 refugees and migrants were on Lesbos in December although the island had the capacity to accommodate 2,840 persons.



The island of Samos has the official capacity to accommodate 648 migrants but had almost 12 times more temporary residents (7,765).⁵

At the end of December there were 5,301 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Greece.

Out of this number 1,045 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.⁶ Most of UASC were boys (93%) and 9% were younger than 14 years of age.

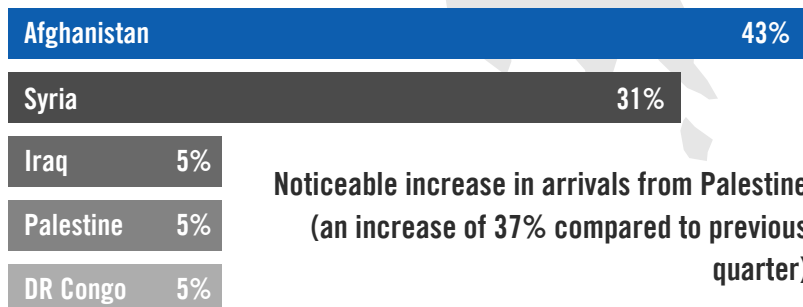
1,045
UASC children in Greece are left without adequate shelter and are living in informal/insecure housing conditions

DEMOGRAPHY

Although there are no official and publicly available data sources covering the whole Greece in the terms of demographic characteristics of new refugees and migrants, information on sea arrivals (which make the most of new arrivals) could provide illustrative and useful information on this population.⁷ From October until December 2019, 23,585 refugees and migrants came to Greece by sea. 8,490 or 36% were children while 64% were adults (10,032 men and 5,063 women). Unaccompanied and separated children made 16% of the children, and they were mostly from Afghanistan, DR Congo and Syria.

The countries of origin remained similar to the previous period, with a noticeable increase in arrivals from Palestine (an increase of 37% compared to previous quarter). During the last quarter of 2019, the sea route was mostly used by refugees and migrants from Afghanistan (43%), and Syria (31%), followed by Iraq (5%), Palestine (5%) and DR Congo (5%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=23,585)



Noticeable increase in arrivals from Palestine
(an increase of 37% compared to previous quarter)

As in the previous reporting period, Afghans, Syrians, and Iraqis mostly arrived in family groups.

MIGRATION ROUTES

During the final quarter of 2019, refugees and migrants mostly used sea routes to enter Greece, arriving to the islands close to the Turkish coast, namely Lesvos, Samos, Chios and the Dodecanese islands. The main land route used by refugees and migrants was at the north-eastern border with Turkey, crossing the river Evros.

83%
of new arrivals
came over sea

During this quarter, 4 persons were reported to have died or went missing while crossing the sea. This is a noticeable decrease compared to the previous periods.⁸

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. According to the data from Albania and Kosovo* the relatively new route from Greece, through Albania and Montenegro, towards Bosnia and Herzegovina became more pronounced in the last months of 2019.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS ON THE MOVE

During the last three months of 2019, Save the Children and its partners in Serbia identified and supported 4,847 newly arrived refugees and migrants. Although these numbers decreased slightly compared to the previous quarter, they exceed the numbers of arrivals (3,633) in the last quarter of 2018 by a third. This is the highest number of new arrivals in the last quarter of a year since 2016.

UNHCR data also show only a slight decrease compared to the previous quarter recording 9,707 new refugees and migrants⁹. Between October and December 3,883 refugees and migrants expressed their intention to seek asylum, which is only a slight decrease compared to the previous quarter.¹⁰

At the end of December 2019 there were 5,833 refugees and migrants estimated as present in the country. This number is 71% larger than at the end of the previous quarter, which is not surprising having in mind that colder months of the year bring a greater need for shelter. These numbers are also higher than during the same time in 2018 (4,468).¹¹

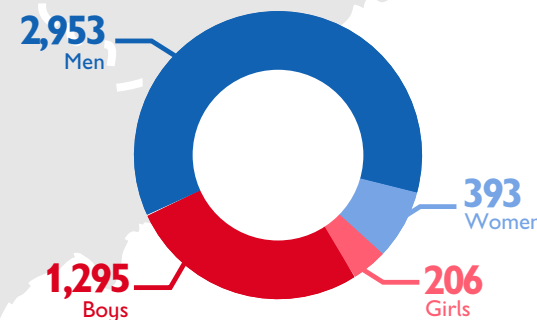
4,847
new migrants and
refugees recorded
by Save the Children
during the last three
months of 2019

Although the numbers of newly arrived refugees and migrants remained high during this quarter, only 23 refugees and migrants formally applied for international protection and the Asylum Office granted the protected status to 3 persons.¹²

DEMOGRAPHY

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

In the last quarter of the year Save the Children and its partners identified and supported 4,847 new arrivals of which 3,346 (69%) were adults – 2,953 men and 393 women. Children made 31% of newly arrived migrants and refugees (1,501) with a roughly similar sex ratio as in the adult population – 1,295 boys and 206 girls. Children under 13 years of age mostly came with their families and were from Iraq and Syria.



88%
of new arrivals
were men and
boys

According to the Save the Children's data, UASC made 69% (1,041) of child arrivals identified during the last quarter of 2019. This shows the continued increase in the number of children traveling with their families. UASC were mostly boys (97%) and they came from Afghanistan (60%), in increasing numbers from Syria (18%) and Pakistan (6%). There was also an increase in UASC coming from different African and Middle East countries, mostly from Egypt and Palestine. Most of the unaccompanied girls came from Iraq.

69% of registered children were travelling alone, coming mostly from Afghanistan and Syria

Although Afghan refugees and migrants remained the largest group during this period making 29% of all refugees and migrants, the number of Syrians noticeably increased to 24%, followed by those from Iraq (16%) and Pakistan (14%).

The proportion of women and girls is highest within refugee and migrant groups from Iraq (33%), followed by Morocco (12%), Syria (11%), Pakistan (11%) and Iran (10%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=4,847)

Afghanistan	29%
Syria	24%
Iraq	16%
Pakistan	14%

Migrants and refugees from Syria increased noticeably compared to previous period

MIGRATION ROUTES

Exit routes from Serbia continued to go through Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary and Romania, with Romanian border crossings intensifying. Almost all borders surrounding Serbia are well protected with physical barriers and strong police presence, except the one between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The most widely used route for Save the Children's beneficiaries to enter was the one from North Macedonia (54%), followed by arrivals from Kosovo/ Albania (24%) and Bulgaria (only 12% of all arrivals in this quarter). Plane arrivals made only 1% of all refugee and migrant arrivals in Serbia during the relevant period.



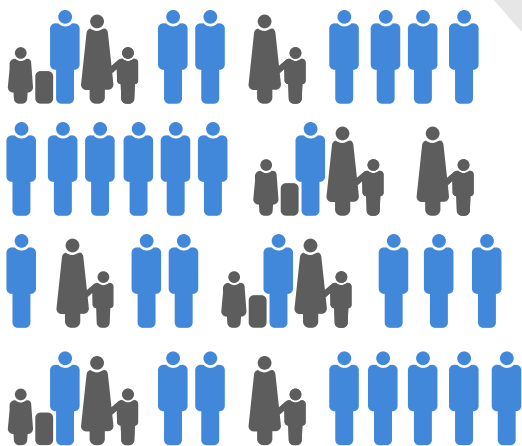
The most widely used route for Save the Children's beneficiaries to enter was the one from North Macedonia

BUSY ROUTE THROUGH BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The migration route through Bosnia and Herzegovina remained one of the main transit corridors in the region. According to UNHCR¹³, 7,672 newly arrived refugees and migrants have been identified during the last quarter of 2019, which is 36% less than during the previous three months but close to the numbers of arrivals in the same period last year (7,923).

During this period there have been 327 asylum applications in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

According to the data from the field, 8,973 refugees and migrants were estimated to be in the country, with 5,873 accommodated in reception centres and shelters, most of them in the Una-Sana Canton in the north-west part of the country.



7,672
newly arrived
refugees and
migrants have
been identified
during the last
quarter of 2019

DEMOGRAPHY

At the moment, only some disaggregated data for the overall population of refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina is available.¹⁴ According to the data on new arrivals, most new refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina came from Afghanistan (24%), Morocco (15%), Pakistan (15%), Syria (10%) and Iraq (9%). There is an overall noticeable increase in new arrivals from North Africa. 209 newly arrived children travelled unaccompanied.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=7,672)

Afghanistan	24%
Morocco	15%
Pakistan	15%
Syria	10%
Iraq	9%

most new refugees and migrants came from Afghanistan, Morocco, Pakistan, Syria and Iraq

According to the estimated data on those accommodated¹⁵ in reception centres and other shelters at the end of 2019, most refugees and migrants were from Pakistan (48%), Afghanistan (18%), Iraq (9%), Egypt (5%) and Syria (4%). This indicates that the border crossing success rate from Bosnia and Herzegovina in part depends on the country of origin, with the countries perceived as not in need of international protection, such as Pakistan, possibly being more likely to be pushed back. This link would need to be further explored to be verified.

Children made close to 20% of those accommodated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, of whom more than 50% were unaccompanied or separated, mostly boys.

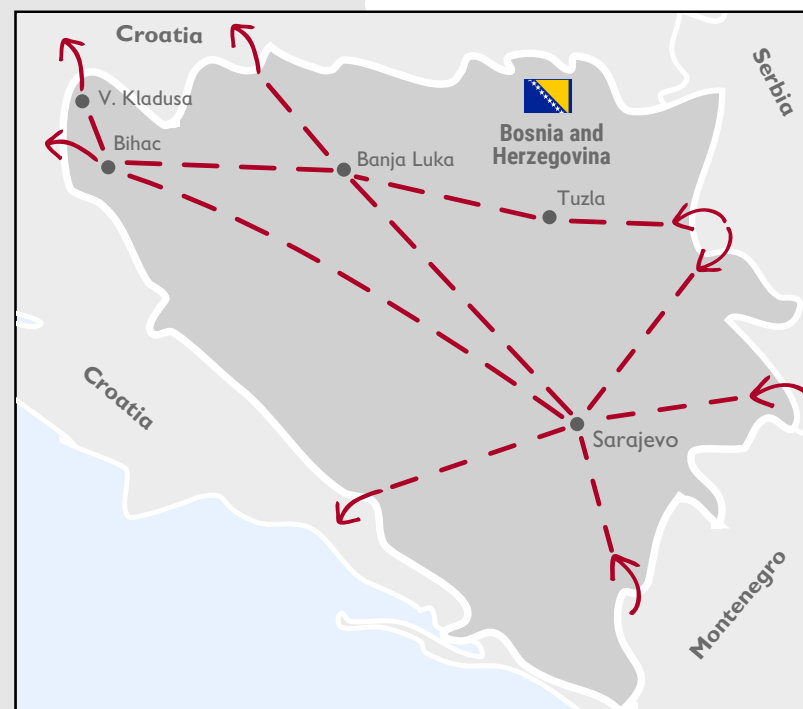
The data on accompanied children also shows the higher prevalence of boys (73%) indicating that a number of unaccompanied and separated children might not be identified, which is further corroborated by the fact that the field workers in the Una Sana Canton have already identified a number of cases of “pretend male families”¹⁶.

50%
of all children were unaccompanied or separated and mostly boys

Save the Children field staff working with unaccompanied and separated children have noticed a surprising increase in the number of unaccompanied boys from Egypt in the last quarter. The Service for Foreign Affairs in BiH registered the arrival of 47 boys from Egypt from January to August, while by November this number grew by 283. Based on the short survey with 50 unaccompanied boys accommodated in the Una Sana Canton and conducted in November, most of the boys (80%) came from the Faiyum region in Egypt. The boys were mostly adolescents, (16 – 18 years old), but there were also much younger boys, including several boys as young as 12. Save the Children will continue monitoring the arrivals and the protection situation for unaccompanied and separated children.

MIGRATION ROUTES

Most of refugees and migrants identified in Bosnia and Herzegovina entered the country from south-east or 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 Croatia. Save the Children field data and experiences suggest that most migrants perceive Bosnia as a transit country.



The border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia is more than 900 kilometres long. According to the data from the field, refugees and migrants attempt to continue their journey through Croatia. The most attempts to cross the Croatian border have been recorded at the north-west part of the border in the area of Bihac and Velika Kladusa.

TESTIMONIES

“KNOWING THAT I HAVE SOMEONE BY MY SIDE HELPED ME NOT TO GIVE UP”

Three years after leaving Afghanistan with her parents and four siblings, 13-year-old Ferhana found herself alone with her mother Madina* in Bihac, a small town in the Una-Sana Canton in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). In a former student dormitory turned to a refugee centre, Ferhana* and her mother share a tiny room with a family from Iran.*

“I miss my father, my brother and my sisters every day. I wish we were all together”, says Ferhana* sadly. Ferhana*'s family arrived in BiH from Serbia, where they spent almost two years. In Serbia, Ferhana* and her siblings were enrolled in a local school with support of Save the Children and partners. “Going to school helped me feel better”, says Ferhana* remembering her days in Serbia, “but the whole family started being very depressed because the time went by and we didn't know what is going to happen to us. That's why we decided to take a risk and go to BiH in the summer of 2018”.

Almost 50,000 refugees and migrants arrived in BiH since the beginning of 2018, hoping to continue their journey towards Western Europe through Croatia. Over 8,000 people remain stranded in BiH, with over 6,000 persons staying in the Una-Sana Canton, situated in the North West of the country at the very border with Croatia. Aiming to ensure that children arriving in BiH are supported, protected and have access to education, Save the Children runs a response programme, in coordination with UNICEF.

Photo: Veljka Hasanbegović, Save the Children

Ferhana* and her school-aged siblings enrolled into a local school in BiH, supported by the education team run by Save the Children and UNICEF. The team escorts children to school, provides school meals, provides interpretation, and helps with school tasks and homework. In parallel, the team works with parents, organizing workshops and occupational activities to help them overcome the challenges of their situation and the stress they experience. Although exhausted, the family could not see themselves starting a new life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As Ferhana* says, they did not know anyone who was seeking asylum in BiH and there were no encouraging stories about refugee families staying in BiH. Therefore, they have decided to try to continue the journey.

“We tried so many times to cross to Croatia”, says Ferhana, “it must be 15, 16 times. We were always turned back by the Croatian police. They never asked if we wanted to seek asylum. Many times the police was violent. They yelled at people, and beat them. They made children undress, women undress, even take off their bras, while searching for telephones and money, which they would take away. Sometimes they broke the telephones.”

“One time a border guard raised his stick to beat us. I yelled at him, saying that it was illegal to beat families and children. He got angry and wanted to hit me. His face was covered with a balaclava, but he had a badge on his shirt with his name on it. ‘I saw your name,’ I said, “and I will tell everyone, the media, and the humanitarian organizations, that it was you who hurt me.’ I think I managed to scare him since he stopped and turned away from me”, says Ferhana*.

During one border crossing attempt, the smugglers separated the family into two cars and the police intercepted the car with Ferhana, her mother, brother, and two younger sisters. Ferhana’s father and two older sisters managed to reach Germany.

“After we returned, my mother became very ill and we could no longer try to cross the border. My 13-year-old brother became very miserable. One morning I realized that he started to cut himself when I accidentally saw his arms, full of new and old scars. He begged my mother to let him go and take the younger children with him. She let him go together with another family. They are in Slovenia now,” says Ferhana*.

The family separation and being left alone with her ill mother, had a detrimental impact on Ferhana*. Once a dedicated student, she seemed to have lost her motivation for school. Feeling that she needs to support her mother, the girl stays in the reception centre, missing classes.

To provide support to Ferhana*, the education team offered to help her mother during the day so Ferhana* could attend classes. The team makes sure that the mother receives lunch, takes her medicine and has someone to talk to.

“Somehow, when I am in school with other children, things get into my head no matter how I feel,” says Ferhana*. Knowing that I have someone by my side helped me not to give up.”

**Names are changed in order to protect the identity of the beneficiaries*

REDUCED MIGRATION FLOW

During the last quarter of 2019, the Bulgarian police had apprehended 304 people accused of illegally entering the country.¹⁷

This was a major decrease compared to the previous quarter when the total of 922 refugees and migrants were arrested, but also compared to the same period last year when 934 new arrivals were recorded, making Bulgaria one of the rare countries with the registered decrease in arrivals of

refugees and migrants in the last quarter of 2019. The number of refugees and migrants in official centres or at “external addresses”¹⁸ also decreased by 30% (from 864 reported at the end of previous quarter to 601 in December 2019.).

According to the Ministry of Interior, 201 migrants were either deported or they left Bulgaria legally during the last quarter of 2019. There remains a 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.

304
people were
apprehended of
illegally entering the
country

DEMOGRAPHY

The Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees reported that 410 persons applied for international protection during the last three months of 2019.¹⁹ This number includes 307 (75%) adults (251 men and 56 women) and 103 children (79 boys and 24 girls).

The majority of the asylum seekers in this period were mostly from Syria (39%) and Iraq (26%). This was a major change from the previous periods when the majority of asylum applicants were from Afghanistan. The applicants from Iraq and Syria traditionally include a more balanced number of men, women and children indicating that they travel in family groups. The applicants from Afghanistan were predominantly men and teenage boys.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=410)



The majority of the asylum seekers in this period were mostly from Syria and Iraq

During this period 137 persons were granted international protection.

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.

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

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 (56%) and Greece (34%).



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

During this period, the majority of migrants and refugees apprehended were trying to leave the country through the Serbian border (82%), followed by the Romanian border. To enter Serbia from Bulgaria, the vast majority of refugees and migrants used smuggling routes through the mountains, while to enter Romania, refugee and migrants attempted to cross at the official border crossings.

BULGARIA



Photo: Nemanja Ratovanović. Save the Children

IRREGULAR FLOW UNDER THE RADAR

The data collected by Save the Children and its partners in Serbia show that at least 2,465 new beneficiaries during the last quarter of the year came from North Macedonia. Although official government institutions, recorded only 615 new asylum applicants in North Macedonia during this period, some other sources suggest that the number of new entries is much larger²⁰. UNHCR published that during this period there have been 10,235 refugee and migrant arrivals,²¹ higher than in the previous reporting period (9,300).

615
officially
registered new
migrant and
refugee arrivals

The official data shows only 110 refugees and migrants staying in reception centres in North Macedonia at the end of December,²² indicating that North Macedonia remained a fast transit country for this population. The number of those accommodated in North Macedonia remained very similar to those from previous months.

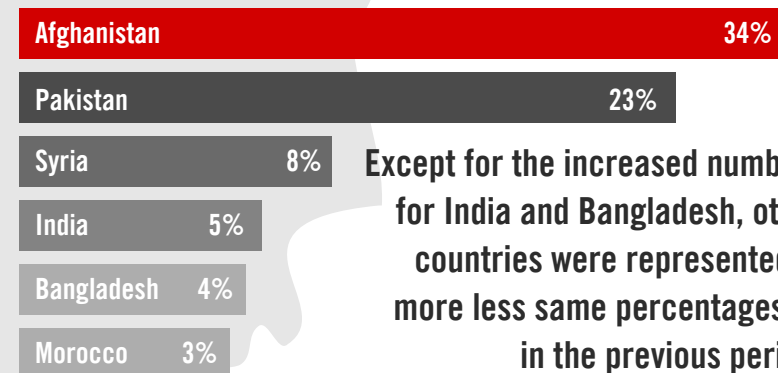
DEMOGRAPHY

According to the UNHCR, during the last three months of the year 98% of newly arrived refugees and migrants were male. Children made only 8% of new arrivals with 778 boys and 47 girls. UASC made 58% of all children entering North Macedonia in this period.²³

58% of all children entering North Macedonia in last three months were UASC

According to UNHCR, most refugees and migrants registered between October and December came from Afghanistan (34%) Pakistan (23%), Syria (8%), India (5%), Bangladesh (4%) and Morocco (3%). Except for the increased numbers for India and Bangladesh, other countries were represented in more less same percentages as in the previous period.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=615)



Except for the increased numbers for India and Bangladesh, other countries were represented in more less same percentages as in the previous period.

MIGRATION ROUTES

The existing data sources²⁴ indicate that North Macedonia is a transit country for refugees and migrants through which they tend to pass relatively quickly. The majority of refugees and migrants entered through Greece (roughly 82%) and most of them continued their journey towards Serbia or using the route through Albania or Kosovo*. The Save the Children data in Serbia shows that North Macedonia is still one of the two most used points of entry to Serbia for refugees and migrants.

EMERGING MIGRATION CORRIDOR

The migration route through Albania was, again, one of the most travelled routes in the western Balkans during the last quarter. According to UNHCR, 3,952 newly arrived refugees and migrants were identified in Albania during the period from October to December 2019. Compared to the previous quarter, this represents an increase of 65%.²⁵

During this period there have been 2,213 new asylum requests.

IOM, on the other hand, registered 664 new migrants and refugees during this period²⁶.

DEMOGRAPHY

According to UNHCR, out of 3,952 newly arrived refugees and migrants identified in Albania during the last three months of the year, women and children made 23% of the population and 77% were adult men.

3,952
newly arrived migrants
and refugees were
detected during the
last quarter of 2019

Most of the newcomers came from Syria (38%), Iraq (25%) and Maghreb countries (22%), keeping Afghan migrants to just 7% unlike in other Balkans countries.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin since the beginning of 2019 (N=3,952)

Syria	38%
Iraq	25%
Maghreb countries	22%
Afghanistan	7%

Officially registered new arrivals came mostly from Syria, Iraq and Maghreb countries



Photo: Velja Hasanbegović, Save the Children

ALBANIA

MIGRATION ROUTES

The migration route through Albania became more important during the last two years. According to the UNHCR data, the vast majority of refugees and migrants enter the country from the south by crossing the border with Greece. Even though a great number of identified new arrivals applied for international protection in Albania, according to field our data, most of them continued the journey relatively fast.

They moved north towards Montenegro, most frequently crossing the border in the vicinity of Lake Skadar, but there are indications from our field data in Serbia that refugees and migrants also travel through Kosovo.



IN TRANSIT

Even though Kosovo was not a major part of the Balkans migration corridor in the past, this has changed in 2019. According to official police data²⁷, 1,059 persons applied for asylum in Kosovo*. Compared to 594 new applicants in the same period 2018 and 495 in the third quarter of 2019, this is a noticeable increase.

1,059
officially
registered new
arrivals

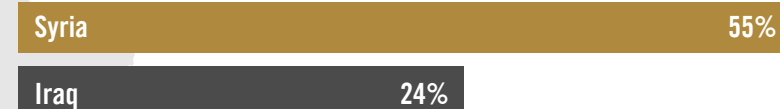
DEMOGRAPHY

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 the year were male (84%), while 16% of all applicants were female, which is roughly the same as in the previous periods. 18% of the applications were submitted by children. Another source suggests that 65% of children entering Kosovo* in this period were boys.²⁸

65% of children entering Kosovo* in last three months were boys

More than a half of the refugee and migrants registered in Kosovo* in last three months came from Syria (55%) and 19% from Iraq.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=1,059)



Most refugee and migrants registered in Kosovo* in last three months came from Syria and Iraq.

MIGRATION ROUTES

Many refugees and migrants only transit through Kosovo* on their journey towards western and northern Europe.

There is no official data on migration routes through Kosovo* or entry and exit points. However, according to the field data from Serbia, refugees and migrants enter Kosovo* from the east, namely from North Macedonia and move towards Serbia or Montenegro. The data from Serbia shows indicates that Kosovo* is becoming one of the two most common routes used by refugees and migrants to enter Serbia.

Kosovo* is becoming one of the two most common routes used by refugees and migrants to enter Serbia.

ROMANIA AS AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

Romania has been an important transit point of the Balkans migration route in the last couple of years facing a limited number of arrivals. This trend has continued, but with a major increase in refugee and migrant arrivals during the last quarter of 2019, unlike any other period in the last several years. According to the UNHCR field data, 1,215 persons applied for international protection during the last quarter of 2019, which almost equals the number of applications during the whole rest of the year. This number of new cases is two times larger than in the same period last (605).²⁹ The largest increase of new arrivals was recorded in December (601).

1,215
migrants and
refugees applied for
international
protection

At the end of December there were 460 migrants and asylum seekers accommodated in state-run reception centres in Romania (mostly Bucharest, Radauti and Somcuta Mare, but also Galati, Timisoara and Giurgiu, with the highest pressure on Timisoara centre because of the proximity of Serbian border and the capacities to accommodate only 50 migrants).³⁰ This is a 19% increase compared to the 385 persons reported in Romania at the end of the last quarter of 2018 and 35% increase compared to September 2019.³¹

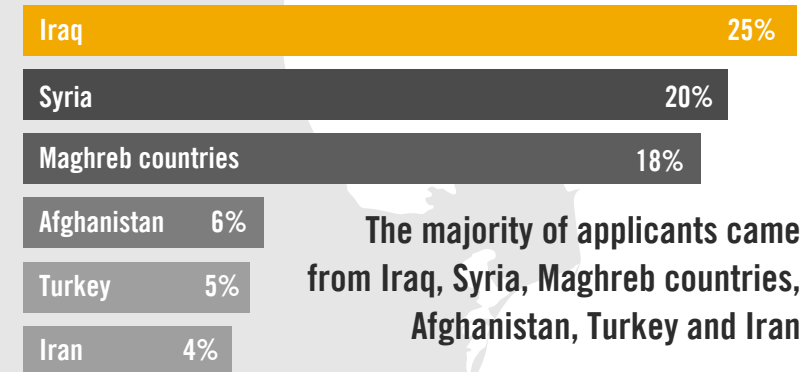
According to the field data and insights from Save the Children field teams, the length of stay in Romania varies, but is the shortest for single man. Families choose to stay longer than single adults who, mostly, leave the country after several days or weeks.

DEMOGRAPHY

During the last quarter of 2019, Romanian officials registered 1,215 asylum applications. According to the data received from the Immigration Office³², 228 were children (19%) which is a similar share compared to the previous periods.

The majority of applicants came from Iraq (25%) and Syria (20%), followed by those from Maghreb countries (18%), Afghanistan (6%), Turkey (5%) and Iran (4%) with no mention of refugees and migrants from Pakistan during this period.

Applicants for international protection by country of origin (N=1,215)



The majority of applicants came from Iraq, Syria, Maghreb countries, Afghanistan, Turkey and Iran

The official Immigration Office data show that children asylum seekers mostly came from Syria (29%), Iraq (28%), Afghanistan (10%), Somalia (6%) and Turkey (5%). Most of them were boys (68%). Out of total number of children, 35% travelled unaccompanied, mostly coming from Iraq and Afghanistan. There were 72 girls who have mostly travelled with their families while 17% of the girls were registered as unaccompanied or separated.

35% of total number of children
travelled unaccompanied

Save the Children Romania field teams have identified and supported 76 newly arrived refugee and migrant children during the last quarter of 2019. Out of that number 53 were boys and 23 girls, most of them coming from Iraq (34%) and Afghanistan (17%), followed by Turkey (9%) and Somalia (9%).

MIGRATION ROUTES

According to the data from the field, the main point of entry for migrants in Romania is the border with Serbia (Moldova Veche, Jimbolia and Moravita points). As in the other Balkans countries, refugees and migrants see Romania as a transit country on their journey towards Western Europe.

The main exit point from the county is its north-west border with Hungary, but, in recent period, the border with Serbia as well. There is some suspicion that these might be cases of pushback but this conclusion would require additional verification.



Photo: Nemanja Radovanović, 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.

The 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: Europe Monthly Report, UNHCR, [December 2019](#)
- ³ Source: UNHCR, Fact Sheet Greece [December 2019](#)
- ⁴ 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 \(31/12/2019\)](#).
- ⁵ Source: Hellenic Republic Ministry of Interior National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum, [National situational picture regarding the islands at eastern Aegean sea \(31/12/2019\)](#).
- ⁶ Source: Situation Update: [Unaccompanied Children \(UAC\) in Greece \(December 2019\)](#).
- ⁷ Source: UNHCR, [Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard December 2019](#)
- ⁸ Source: UNHCR, Dead and Missing at the Sea [December 2019](#)
- ⁹ Source: [UNHCR Serbia Statistical Snapshot December 2019](#).
- ¹⁰ Ibid
- ¹¹ Ibid
- ¹² [Source: UNHCR Serbia Update December 2019](#)
- ¹³ Source: UNHCR, [Western Balkans mixed movements report](#)
- ¹⁴ Source: UNHCR, [Western Balkans mixed movements report](#)
- ¹⁵ Source: UNHCR, Weekly Site Population Data, 22 December 2019
- ¹⁶ Field reports by Save the Children staff
- ¹⁷ Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, Monthly Information on Migration Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria for [December 2019](#).

¹⁸ “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

¹⁹ Source: State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers, Актуална информация, [December 2019](#)

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

²¹ Source: UNHCR, [Western Balkans mixed movements report](#)

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

²³ Source: UNHCR, [Western Balkans mixed movements report](#)

²⁴ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [December 2019](#)

²⁵ UNHCR update on asylum in mixed movements, January-December 2019, internal document

²⁶ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [December 2019](#)

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

²⁸ Source: UNHCR, [Western Balkans mixed movements report](#)

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

³⁰ Unofficial data collected in field by Save the Children Romania (Salvati Copiii) and UNHCR

³¹ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [December 2018](#)

³² Obtained through Save the Children Romania (Salvati Copiii)



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