

## Increase in migrant arrivals

Briefing note – 20 December 2018

Over 22,370 migrants<sup>1</sup> have passed through Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) since the beginning of 2018, compared to 1,166 in 2017. An estimated 5,000–6,000 people are currently in the country, some 3,500–4,000 of whom need assistance. Most are in Una-Sana Canton in the northwest, where they attempt to cross the Croatian border into the EU. Migrants are living in sub-standard conditions ahead of freezing winter temperatures. Shelter and NFIs are the most urgent needs.

### NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



### IMPACT



Location	Name of Centre	Current Occupancy	Potential Capacity
<b>Federation of BiH</b>			
Una-Sana Canton	Borići (Dormitory) - Bihać	Building being repaired	530
	Bira - Bihać	2,000 (including in tents)	1,200
	Miral - Velika Kladuša	300	500
	Hotel Sedra - near Bihać	430	430
Sarajevo Canton	Ušivak	520	800
	House for All - Sarajevo	100	100
	Immigration Centre - Sarajevo	115	115
	Asylum Centre Delijaš	154	154
Herzegovina-Neretva Canton	Refugee Centre - Salakovac	250	250
<b>Republika Srpska</b>	Duje - Doboј East	30	30
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,899</b>	<b>4,109</b>

Source: IFRC 08/12/2018

### Anticipated scope and scale

**Most migrants are in Una-Sana Canton.** Bosnian authorities are trying to prevent more arrivals to the canton and are transporting people to centres in Sarajevo Canton. As weather conditions worsen with the onset of winter arrival numbers will likely stagnate or decrease. At the same time, the average length of stay will likely increase as migrants wait for more favourable conditions to cross the hilly, forested terrain along the border with Croatia. According to the IFRC **a spike in new migrant arrivals to BiH is expected in spring**, potentially doubling the caseload.

### Key priorities



**3,500-4,000 people**  
in need of assistance



**Shelter**  
urgently required before winter



**Protection risks**  
including violence from authorities

### Humanitarian constraints



There is a lack of coordination between regional authorities, particularly between Muslim and Croat controlled regions. Cooperation between local authorities and international and local humanitarian actors is strained. Insecurity due to unrest amongst migrants and tensions with authorities is a constraint. The transitory nature of migrants makes supporting them a challenge.

#### Limitations

Reliable, accurate figures of the numbers of migrants in BiH and their exact locations do not exist, because of the constantly evolving nature of the problem and lack of coordinated efforts or adequate information management. Many migrants are undocumented.

<sup>1</sup> Use of the term 'migrants' includes potential asylum seekers and refugees in mixed flows.

## Crisis impact

In 2015-16, migrants on the Balkan route crossed Bulgaria or Macedonia, then Serbia and Hungary, before heading toward Germany or Austria. After this route was closed in 2016, migrants along the route, particularly in Serbia, became stranded (Human Rights Watch 11/12/2018).

A new route emerged in 2018 from Albania and Montenegro, or Macedonia and Serbia, through Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) toward Croatia, as migrants avoided more heavily guarded routes through the Balkans (CBC News 18/06/2018). The number of people crossing the border into BiH at unofficial border crossing points has significantly increased since the start of 2018. 89% of migrants have entered BiH through unofficial border crossings in 2018 (IOM 09/2018). Many of originate from South and Central Asia and the Middle East (IRIN 31/10/2018). 34% are Pakistani nationals, 16% Iranian, 12% Syrian, 9% Iraqi and the others from over 67 different nationality groups (IOM 09/11/2018).

In May Croatia increased police presence along its border with BiH as the number of migrants using BiH as a transit country began to increase (Balkan Insight 04/06/2018). The tightened border control on the Croatian side of the border has made it more difficult for the migrants to cross, prolonging their stay in BiH (IFRC 27/09/2018). 62% of migrants have stayed in BiH between two weeks and three months (IOM 09/2018). Migrants remain in border areas so they can cross into Croatia when they have an opportunity. Offers of voluntary return to countries of origin have been refused and migrants want to stay near the border (Euro News 30/11/2018; IFRC 08/12/2018).

Over 22,370 migrants have passed through BiH since the beginning of 2018. The number is likely an underestimate as some people are smuggled in and uncounted. The figure has dramatically increased from 1,166 registered as passing through in 2017 (ECHO 06/11/2018; IRIN 31/10/2018). The rate of arrivals per month has also increased over 2018, from 237 in January to over 5,000 by October. The IFRC predicts the number to double in 2019 (IFRC 11/12/2018).

Because an estimated 100–150 migrants enter BiH on average every day and many (around 75%) have been able to exit to Croatia in 2018, it is difficult to verify the current number of migrants in BiH. An estimated 5,000–6,000 migrants are in BiH, of whom 3,500–4,000 are in need of assistance (IRIN 31/10/2018; ECHO 09/11/2018; IFRC 10/12/2018;). As winter sets in and weather conditions worsen, arrival numbers will likely stagnate or decrease. However, the average length of stay will likely increase as people wait for more favourable conditions to cross the hilly, forested terrain along the border with Croatia.

Thousands of people trapped in BiH desperately need humanitarian assistance ahead of freezing winter temperatures (IFRC 10/12/2018). The transitory nature of migrants' presence in BiH makes supporting them effectively a challenge (IFRC 08/12/2018).

## Shelter and NFIs

Accommodation for migrants, as well as winter clothing, tents, sleeping bags, and blankets, are the most urgent needs. There is a gap in terms of both quantity and quality between the accommodation available and people's needs. Migrants in BiH are sheltered in 10 improvised centres across Una-Sana Canton, Sarajevo Canton, Herzegovina Neretva Canton, and the Republika of Srpska (IFRC 08/12/2018). Due to their poor condition, many of the shelters are not suitable for the winter months – many lack heating and are not adequately isolated from cold temperatures. Migrants are being moved from these shelters into temporary accommodation in order to refurbish them for winterisation. Migrants have however refused accommodation due to unsatisfactory conditions and distance from city centres, resulting in a growing number of people, including vulnerable groups, sleeping in open areas or abandoned buildings (UN BiH 05/2018; IFRC 27/09/2018).

Most migrants are in Una-Sana Canton, in the vicinity of the 1000km-border with Croatia, where they are trapped by the terrain and closed border crossings. The humanitarian situation in the Una-Sana Canton remains dire, with many migrants, including families with children and other vulnerable categories, forced to live in sub-standard conditions (ECHO 09/11/2018). Some are living in tents, abandoned buildings, and makeshift camps that offer no protection against winter temperatures that can drop as low as -15°C (UNHCR 31/08/2018; IFRC 10/12/2018). Within Una-Sana Canton, migrants are concentrated in two towns: Bihać and Velika Kladuša. In Bihać, the migrants stay at "The Dormitory", Hotel Sedra and the BIRA Factory.

BiH authorities have begun deterring migrants from Una-Sana Canton to Sarajevo, where there are more resources for the migrants as winter approaches. On October 21 Bihać and Velika Kladuša were closed off to additional migrants (Citizen Truth 05/11/2018). Local police prevent new arrivals to the canton, by searching all modes of transport. As a result, dozens of people are sleeping outside in places like Ključ, caught in the administrative no-man's land between the two devolved regions that make up BiH (The Federation and The Republika Srpska). Local authorities had been reluctant to provide temporary accommodation as they feared doing so may attract more migrants (Private interview 19/12/2018).

## Protection

BiH is not classified as a safe country and does not have a well-functioning asylum system (UNHCR 31/08/2018; Medico International 07/11/2018). The country has only one official reception centre for asylum seekers near Sarajevo, with the capacity to accommodate

around 150 people. Although 90% of migrants expressed their intention to seek asylum in the country, only 6% have been able to register their asylum claims (UNICEF 29/07/2018).

Croatian police are pushing migrants back to BiH, in some cases violently, and without giving them the possibility to seek asylum; 50-100 people are estimated to be pushed back weekly (UNHCR 31/08/2018; The Guardian 14/11/2018; Human Rights Watch 11/12/2018). People have complained of being beaten, having their personal belongings and documents destroyed, and being robbed by Croatian police when they attempt to cross the border; roughly 70% claim to have been beaten (Radio Liberty 23/08/2018; The Guardian 14/11/2018). The Red Cross Society of BiH (RCSBiH) has been treating the injuries of up to 70 migrants per day (IFRC 19/07/2018). Croatia's interior ministry has denied allegations of police brutality (IRIN 31/10/2018). The UNHCR reported 2,500 migrants allegedly pushed back from Croatia to Serbia and BiH. In more than 1,500 cases – 100 of them relating to children – asylum procedures were denied, and over 700 people made allegations of violence or theft (UNHCR 01/08/2018).

Unrest among migrants has become violent at times, with some demonstrators hospitalised and arrested in the camps. Vulnerable groups within the migrant communities are particularly at risk (B92 09/10/2018; IRIN 31/10/2018).

BiH remains landmine-contaminated in some areas, including in areas where border crossings are attempted (UN BiH 05/2018; International Campaign to Ban Landmines 11/2018).

## Health

Migrants cannot access public healthcare unless they register an intention to seek asylum, which is either not suitable or not possible for many. Infants, babies, and pregnant women are exposed to particular health risks due to incomplete and inadequate levels of immunisation and limited access to maternity care (UN BiH 05/2018; UNHCR 31/08/2018).

Exposure to the elements and crowded living conditions can cause or increase the likelihood of a number of serious health conditions and contagious infections and diseases as well as inhibit their treatment (Al Jazeera 24/11/2018). Patients suffering from respiratory infections due to cold weather remain exposed to harsh weather (Al Jazeera 24/11/2018). One case of hypothermia has already been identified and treated (UNHCR 31/08/2018). Skin diseases such as scabies have been reported (UNHCR 31/08/2018; IFRC 27/09/2018). Many male migrants have genital infections due to lack of hygiene. Treating migrants is made more difficult by the fact that none of them have medical records (Radio Velika Kladaša 28/11/2018).

A large number of individuals have experienced traumatizing events during their journey and show signs of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues (UN BiH 05/2018). Some migrants rely on alcohol and drugs to cope.

Migrants are also injured in their attempts to cross the border, often attributed to actions of Croatian authorities. In July the RCSBiH was treating the injuries of up to 70 people per day (IFRC 19/07/2018; The Guardian 14/11/2018).

## WASH

Many migrants are currently housed in shelters that have inadequate sanitation facilities (IFRC 08/12/2018). WASH facilities are insufficient, particularly in Bihać where sanitation is a challenge due to limited toilet and shower facilities (UNHCR 31/08/2018). Washing machines are available, but there are not enough of them. Water access is often an issue for migrants in tented accommodation. Showers and portable toilets are also in short supply (IFRC 27/09/2018).

## Food

The increased number of migrants in need, and staying longer, is exhausting food assistance (UNHCR 31/08/2018). Access to adequate food and nutrition for babies, children, and pregnant women is reportedly insufficient or insecure (UNHCR 31/08/2018).

## Education

There is a lack of comprehensive provision of non-formal education, in particular among new arrivals, to prepare for migrant children's gradual inclusion into the BiH school system, including relevant language courses (UNHCR 31/08/2018). There is also a lack of comprehensively organised and structured activities for adolescent migrants (UNHCR 31/08/2018). Plans to send migrant children to school have failed as local parents threatened to withdraw their own children.

## Vulnerable groups affected

Minor children, unaccompanied and separated children, people with health conditions (including chronic illnesses) or disabilities, elderly individuals and pregnant women are among the most vulnerable population groups (UN BiH 05/2018). IFRC note an increase in families with young children arriving, who are among the most vulnerable (IFRC 07/11/2018). Over 500 children, including 60 unaccompanied, have entered BiH (Info Migrants 05/11/2018). Most women travel together with men, although there have been several cases of women

travelling alone (IFRC 27/09/2018). Specific services for children and mothers, such as child friendly spaces and mother/baby corners are required (UNHCR 31/08/2018).

Migrants outside the main accommodation sites and centres are vulnerable due to the absence of services available to them (IFRC 08/12/2018).

Individuals and families who have been exposed to beatings, robberies and sequestering during the journey to BiH are particularly at risk of becoming victims of violence, exploitation, and abuse (UN BiH 05/2018).

## Humanitarian and operational constraints

Despite a lack of adequate shelter, Una-Sana Canton's government has banned the formation of new migrant centres in the canton as well as all migrant accommodation in private facilities by international organisations without the previous consent from the local authorities (N1 14/11/2018).

Lack of coordination between regional authorities is reported. Migrants being transported have been denied entry as they cross regions. This is particularly the case at the borders between Muslim and Croat controlled regions (Dawn 19/05/2018). On May 18 the Croat-dominated police force of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton intercepted buses from Sarajevo carrying 270 migrants on their way to Salakovac asylum center, near the city of Mostar, defying the national government and blocking their passage, causing a five-hour standoff. The buses eventually made it to their destination, but the incident sparked a small political crisis (Al Jazeera 24/05/2018).

International and local humanitarian actors have complained about the lack of cooperation from local authorities. Insecurity due to unrest amongst migrants and tensions with authorities also presents an operational constraint. (Daily Herald 09/10/2018; Euro News 30/11/2018).

The transitory nature of migrants' presence in BiH makes it challenging to provide effective support, with little opportunity for long term engagement, health or livelihoods assistance, protection, or social integration (IFRC 08/12/2018).

## Aggravating factors

### Winter conditions

With the weather worsening and daytime temperatures falling below 5°C and -15°C at night, tents offer little protection from snow and freezing temperatures (Al Jazeera 24/11/2018; IFRC 08/12/2018). Living conditions remain poor and the risk of hypothermia and frostbite is increasing as cold weather sets in (IFRC 10/12/2018; Al Jazeera 24/11/2018). An

increase in break-ins and squatting has been noted as the weather worsens and the need for warm shelter becomes more urgent. As weather conditions worsen with the onset of winter, the number of arrivals will likely stagnate or decrease, while the average length of stay will likely increase as migrants wait for more favourable conditions to cross the hilly, forested terrain along the Croatian border. According to the IFRC a spike in new migrant arrivals to BiH is expected in spring, potentially doubling the caseload (IFRC 11/12/2018).

## Tension with host population

Tensions between migrants and local communities have been growing, especially since migrants started occupying public spaces in towns (IRIN 31/10/2018; ECHO 09/11/2018). Around 1,000 Bihac locals staged protests from 20-22 October, demanding the relocation of migrants outside the town centre. Protests also took place in Sarajevo against the inaction of the central government (IRIN 31/10/2018). There have been some calls for a local vigilante organisation to be set up to prevent the increase in crimes against property. The theft of shoes has also been reported. On 12 November 50 migrants were evicted from a bus station where they had been staying for two months. Local people were affected by the closure of the border crossing to Croatia for a week in October. Xenophobic sentiments among the host population have also been stoked by hostile media reports (Al Jazeera 24/05/2018).

The harsh response of some local residents may be related to the wider context of the BiH economy (one of the poorest in Europe) still recovering from the Balkan wars of the 1990s and a youth unemployment rate of almost 55% (Jacobin 25/07/2018). The situation is also heightening tensions among the country's Muslim, Serb, and Croat communities and its often fraught tripartite political leadership (IRIN 31/10/2018).

## Unrest between migrants

There are tensions between different rival migrant groups and regular outbreaks of violence have been reported within the migrant communities (IRIN 31/10/2018). Violent individuals have been arrested (Euro News 30/11/2018).

## Contextual information

### Drivers of the current displacement

Some migrants are fleeing conflict and human rights abuses, while others are seeking a better life (Human Rights Watch 24/04/2018; Euro News 30/11/2018). 45% of migrants surveyed by the IOM reported having left their countries of origin or habitual residence due to war or

conflict, while 23% cited economic reasons. Some 11% of respondents reported indiscriminate violence and economic reasons, 9% reported violence only, 4% cited war and indiscriminate violence as reasons for leaving their countries of origin (IOM 09/2018).

## Past displacement

BiH still has some 85,000 IDPs (Bosnian Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks) displaced by inter-ethnic violence, human rights violations, and armed conflict during the 1992-95 war; this diminishes the ability of the authorities to take care of large numbers of migrants (Al Jazeera 24/05/2018). BiH also hosts 5,164 Croatian refugees (as of 2016) and 65 stateless persons (as of 2017) (CIA 10/12/2018).

## International and neighbouring countries' relationship to the population movement

The Balkan route of migration has been active for several years, with one million people using it to reach Western countries (Radio Liberty 23/08/2018). Most travelled through Greece, Macedonia and Serbia and crossed into EU member states, Hungary and Croatia. That part of the route was blocked in February 2016 when the Balkan countries agreed to introduce stricter border controls, with more fences and riot police (Al Jazeera 24/05/2018). In March 2016, the EU promised Turkey 6 billion Euros and visa-free entry for Turkish citizens if Ankara would stop the flow, and Serbia and Macedonia closed their borders. The number of migrants arriving in Greece declined dramatically. According to UNHCR data, in 2015 there were 856,000 sea arrivals; in 2016 the number dropped to 173,450; then to 29,718 in 2017. However, thousands of people are still crossing the Turkish border. From January to November 2018 29,567 sea arrivals have been recorded (UNHCR 11/2018). Syrians, Afghans, Pakistanis, north Africans, and Iraqis are the largest groups. The official numbers do not include all migrants who reach Greece, since Dublin III pushes many to avoid being registered. All of these people soon find themselves travelling across the Balkans (Jacobin 25/07/2018).

BiH was previously not affected much by the migrant influx of 2015 and 2016, as it was not on the typical migrant routes to EU nations (Reuters 01/09/2018). In early 2018, migrants began to appear in BiH, crossing the eastern border from Montenegro or Serbia, and travelling across the country to exit into Croatia and the EU on BiH's northwest border, at the town of Velika Kladuša (IFRC 08/12/2018). Over 22,000 migrants have now entered BiH, of whom 5,000–6,000 are still in the country, the majority in the Una-Sana Canton in the northwest. In May, the Croatian police reinforced their border controls, to prevent people crossing their territory to Slovenia (Balkan Insight 04/06/2018).

## Key characteristics

### Demographic profile, BiH

- Total population: 3,849,891 (CIA 10/12/2018).
- Population breakdown: 0-14 years: 13% (male 263,338/female 246,220), 15-24 years: 11% (male 223,824/female 209,829), 25-54 years: 45% (male 881,331/female 870,601), 55-64 years: 14% (male 278,460/female 297,231), 65 years and over: 15% (male 229,282/female 349,775) (CIA 10/12/2018)
- Urban population: 48%/rural 52% (CIA 10/12/2018)
- Ethnic groups: Bosniak 50%, Serb 31%, Croat 15%, other 3%, not declared/no answer 1% (2013 est.) (CIA 10/12/2018)
- Religion: Muslim 51%, Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, atheist 1%, other 1%, undeclared/no answer 1% (2013 est.) (CIA 10/12/2018)

### Economic

- Unemployment rate: 42% (2007-2018 average) (Trading Economics 09/2018)
- Youth (15-24) unemployment rate: 62% (2015 est.) (CIA 10/12/2018)

### Health statistics

- Life expectancy at birth: 77 (World Bank 18/12/2018)
- Infant mortality rate: 4.9 per 1,000 live births (UNICEF 2017)
- Under-5 mortality rate: 5.7 per 1,000 live births (UNICEF 2017)

### WASH statistics

- Improved drinking water sources: urban: 99%/rural: 100% (2015 est.) (CIA 10/12/2018)
- Improved sanitation facility access: urban: 99%/rural: 92% (2015 est.) (CIA 10/12/2018)

## Response capacity

### Local and national response capacity

With only two official asylum and refugee centres, BiH is struggling to accommodate a growing number of migrants. A new centre is awaiting agreement from the various authorities in the country (Balkan Insight 23/10/2018).

Bosnian citizens and local NGOs are self-organising and providing food and shelter to some of the migrants. (Al Jazeera 24/05/2018). Local organisations include Pomozi.ba providing food assistance in Sarajevo and the city's Ušivak centre, and MFS Emmaus providing food in Velika Kladuša until September 2018 and shelter in Duje. However, local shelters are far from the migration route so options are limited (IFRC 08/12/2018).

The RCSBiH, supported by IFRC and other Societies, was officially requested by the Government to oversee food and hygiene item provision. They have also provided tents, sleeping bags, NFIs, winter clothing, mobile kitchens and information. A 302,500USD IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund aims to support 7,600 migrants every two weeks for a period of 12 months, as well as 1,500 households from local communities for a period of two months (IFRC 08/12/2018). IFRC has requested another 3.3 million CHF (3.3 million USD) in its appeal to provide urgent humanitarian support (IFRC 11/12/2018).<sup>2</sup>

Overall coordination and funding is lacking, and has led to challenges developing a coherent winterisation plan (Al Jazeera 24/05/2018).

### International response capacity

The Government of BiH has accepted humanitarian action from the international humanitarian community, notably the IOM and UNHCR (IFRC 27/09/2018).

IOM is providing shelter for migrants by renting accommodation, as well as supporting food provision implemented by the RCSBiH. Water and sanitation facilities are also provided by IOM in areas where no established infrastructure is available (IFRC 08/12/2018). UNHCR oversees healthcare and is supporting vulnerable groups by providing protection and accommodation in hostels and private accommodation, and supporting the RCSBiH with shelter, NFIs, and logistics (IFRC 08/12/2018).

Danish Refugee Council and MSF are providing healthcare to migrants in Una-Sana Canton. MSF provided a container used by RC first aid teams in Borići (IFRC 08/12/2018). Other organisations responding include World Vision and Save the Children (IFRC 27/09/2018).

<sup>2</sup> An earlier version of this report only mentioned the DREF funding, and did not mention the additional appeal.

The European Commission has allocated an additional 570,000USD to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable migrants in BiH making a total of 2,280,500USD for BiH in 2018 (ECHO 29/11/2018).

## Information gaps and needs

Numbers and locations of migrants in BiH are hard to estimate because of the constantly evolving nature of the situation and lack of coordination. Most data available concerns migrants who have registered and little is known about the situation of unregistered migrants.

There appears to be no central, inter-agency source of information and the overall picture remains hard to follow. An assessment of the priority needs in each location where migrants are accommodated is lacking (Private interview 19/12/2018).

IOM flow monitoring data for BiH is not available yet: Flow Monitoring Europe. DTM flow monitoring data on BiH is however included in the Monthly Compilation Reports: Europe – Mixed Migration Flows To Europe Monthly Overview. The UN Country Team also releases monthly operational updates on the migrant situation: Monthly Operational Updates on Refugee/Migrant Situation.

Information regarding the concerns of the host population is not available as is a government medium-term plan following the end of winter (Private interview 19/12/2018).

Information on child protection and children's needs is lacking. (Private interview 20/12/2018).

Mapping locations where humanitarian actors are present, and their activities, would be beneficial (Private interview 19/12/2018).

# Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Migrant entry and exit points

