



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

A PROBLEM DISPLACED

The smuggling
of migrants through
Bosnia and Herzegovina

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was produced with the financial support of the United Kingdom's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. Its contents are the sole responsibility of The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Kingdom. Special thanks to the valuable contribution of local journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina who helped compile this brief.

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Cover photo: Migrants wait for food and clothing at the Vučjak camp, Bosnia and Herzegovina, June 2019. © Reuters/Antonio Bronic
Photographs of the Bira migrant reception centre (pages 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14) were taken by the authors.

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SUMMARY

In 2015, during the massive flow of migrants and refugees travelling along the so-called Balkan route, almost no one attempted to reach Europe via Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yet, since 2018, around 60 000 refugees and migrants have registered temporarily in the country. Why are so many migrants now being smuggled through Bosnia and

Herzegovina? What has changed in the past five years to bring about this shift? How organized is this criminal activity, who is involved and what are the routes? This brief addresses these questions, and shows that a problem that was supposed to have been 'solved' by the closure of the Balkan route has merely been displaced.

Key points

- Smuggling routes historically used to transport fuel, cigarettes and livestock are today popular paths used by migrants to cross the borders into and out of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Border fences erected in the region (e.g. on the Hungarian–Serbian border) triggered a shift in migrant routes.
- Border police are understaffed and lack the technology needed to secure the border.
- Migrants who end up in Bosnia and Herzegovina find it increasingly difficult to move on, particularly to cross the border into Croatia.
- Conditions in the migrant camps have been poor and overcrowding widespread.
- Vulnerable migrants turn to smugglers to help them continue their journey to the European Union.
- Closing the Balkan route may have reduced the number of refugees and migrants entering the EU, but it is increasing pressure on Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Greater coordination within Bosnia, cooperation between Bosnia and its neighbours, as well as support from the EU and other countries, are badly needed.



AVOIDING BOSNIA

In 2015, hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants surged through the Balkans. Most were fleeing war and poverty in parts of the Middle East and Africa. The main routes taken by these large groups of people on the move went via Turkey and Greece to the Western Balkans, particularly through (what is now) North Macedonia and Serbia, towards Hungary and then further into the European Union (see Figure 1). This collection of routes generally became known as the Balkan route. There is no precise data on the numbers, but it is estimated that around 1.5 million people took this route. Only a few hundred came through Bosnia and Herzegovina. The contrast with the hundreds of thousands of people trying to move via Croatia and Slovenia was so marked that Bosnians (with typical black humour) made jokes to the effect that life in Bosnia was so miserable that even people fleeing humanitarian crises did not want to stay there.

One reason why migrants – at that time mostly Syrians – avoided Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015 was that they tended to move along routes that had been used successfully by others before them. Communicating by mobile phone¹ and using apps like Google Maps, most of them followed a predetermined route according to a plan that they had received from relatives or friends who had gone before.

As a result, they kept to the same well-trodden paths – for example, via Serbia to Hungary or via Croatia to Slovenia – rather than those that may have offered a more direct route to their destination (as indeed Bosnia did).

Large groups of migrants moved through the Balkans during 2015 en route to Western Europe.

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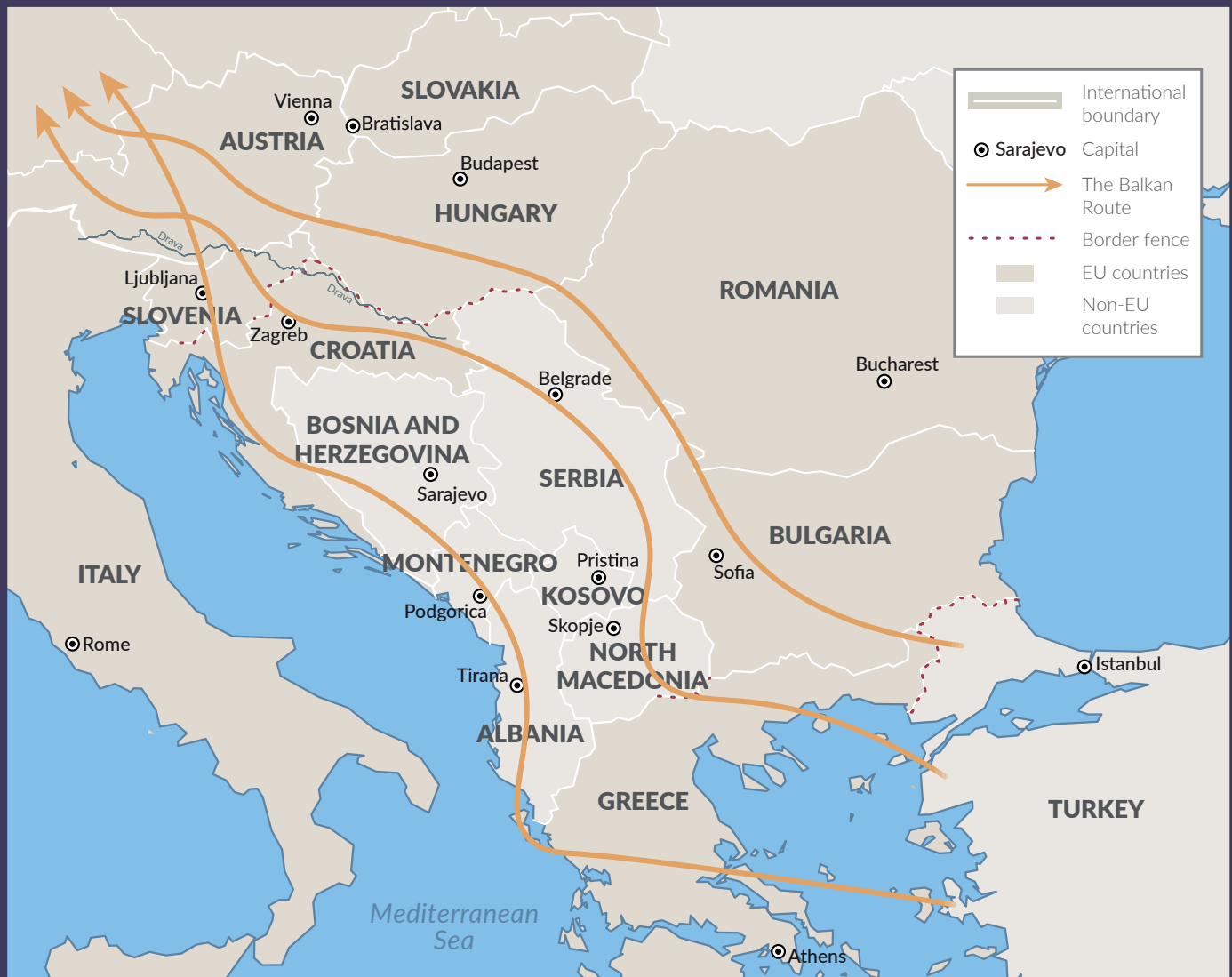


FIGURE 1 The Balkans route

The situation changed when Hungary erected a border barrier with Serbia between July and September 2015. Hungary also completed a fence along its border with Croatia in October 2015. Further south, border controls were tightened in North Macedonia. In November 2015, the Macedonian army started to construct a fence along the border with Greece. This fence is now over 30 kilometres long (Figure 1 shows these border barriers).



A SHIFT IN ROUTES

As a result of these anti-migrant constructions, the flow of migrants and refugees diminished, and was diverted elsewhere – including through Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since the Dayton Peace accords of 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been divided (almost exactly 50:50) into two semi-autonomous entities, namely Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the latter is subdivided into 10 cantons.²

Since 2018, migrants have been following two main routes to enter Bosnia and Herzegovina. One is from the south-east, from Montenegro, across the mountains into Republika Srpska and then north to Sarajevo; the second, from the east, crosses the Drina River, which forms the natural border between Bosnia and Serbia (see Figure 2). In both cases, the final destination is usually Bihać, in the north-west of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From there, the refugees and migrants try to cross into Croatia, and thereby enter the EU.

Hungarian and Polish police officers patrol at the Hungary and Serbia border fence near the village of Asotthalom.

© Reuters/Laszlo Balogh



FIGURE 2 Migrant routes through Bosnia and Herzegovina

Crossing the mountains: From Montenegro to Republika Srpska

The south-eastern route enters Bosnia across rugged mountain ranges that extend along most of the border between Republika Srpska and Montenegro. The terrain is difficult for border management, and advantageous for smuggling. A Bosnian border official admitted, 'We do not have enough people or the techniques to cover that border'. And, as he pointed out, the smuggling routes long pre-date the migrant crisis.³ Indeed, the same mountain trails were apparently used in the early 1990s – during the war in the former Yugoslavia after the declaration of independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina – to smuggle cigarettes, alcohol and various other goods. However, soon those smuggling routes were taken over by drug dealers. 'Heroin, cocaine, but most often weed go that route and it's almost impossible to catch them,' said one police inspector from Republika Srpska.⁴ 'They put their goods on donkeys and head over the mountain,' he said.

Since 2018, those well-established routes for contraband have also been used to smuggle migrants. The smugglers either guide the migrants in person along these paths, or bring them to a certain point, and then show the direction in which the travellers should go.

There is seldom someone waiting for the migrants on the Bosnian side of the border, so once they leave Montenegro they have to fend for themselves.

After crossing into Bosnia, migrants are advised by smugglers to head for Trebinje, the southernmost city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is some 20 kilometres from the border with Montenegro in the east and about the same distance from Dubrovnik, Croatia, to the west.⁵ From there, they try to head north to the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, which is around 200 kilometres away.

Unlike in 2015, migrants now tend to avoid urban areas when travelling. According to migrants interviewed for this report,⁶ it is safer to move through the countryside and sleep in abandoned buildings. The southern part of Republika Srpska is dotted with houses destroyed or abandoned during the war. Some of them are marked by graffiti from migrants who have sought refuge.

The growing influx of migrants in the south-east of the country is causing some anxiety among locals. There are complaints of houses being broken into. For some residents, the sight of groups of young foreign men walking through their village causes fear. In one instance, in the remote village of Vranjska in south-east Bosnia, a migrant from Morocco was shot and killed by a local resident who was alarmed by a group of migrants who had sought refuge in an unoccupied house.

A refugee welcomed by a Bosnian family

Although Bosnia has recently received bad publicity over its handling of the refugee and migrant crisis, there are human-interest stories that also show a positive side.

In 2017, in search of a better life, Adil Amanet (25) decided to leave his native Pakistan. He headed for Greece. After an arduous journey covering thousands of kilometres on foot, he reached Bosnia and Herzegovina two years later, in November 2019.

For the first three weeks of his stay, Adil's home was the cold concrete floor of the bus station in Tuzla. While he was there, he had the good fortune to meet Adira Husić, who was working as a volunteer, assisted by her husband, Jasminko, and children, Ismar and Edita. The Husić family decided to take Adil

into their home. They knew what it was like to be displaced – they had sought refuge in Germany in 1995 during the war in Bosnia.

'God has commanded that we take care of one another, and I am grateful to God for being able to help Adil or anyone else ...'

However, many may not be ready to do what I am, but they can help them in other ways by bringing food and clothing to the bus station. It means a lot to them,' Adira told Bosnian news website Klix.⁷

For Amanet, the Husić family treated him, he said, as if he were a member of them. 'I didn't feel fear at all when I came to their home. I am very grateful and happy, and I view this family as my own,' said Amanet, who plans to continue his journey to Italy next year.

But for others, the flow of foreigners on the move brings out opportunism, as opposed to stirring compassion. In southern Bosnia, as well as in the western part of the country, from where migrants try to enter Croatia, ordinary people who are not part of the criminal milieu are increasingly involved in smuggling. Seeing a chance to make some money, they transport migrants in their own cars, sometimes even in the trunk. Women are often encouraged to take the wheel, to make such journeys look less suspicious. The fees for such 'taxi' services from the south of the country to Sarajevo is said to be between €150 and €200 per person.

From Sarajevo, most migrants buy a train ticket to Bihać, which is close to the border with Croatia. In November 2019, local authorities in Bihać and the Una-Sana canton bordering Croatia, where Bihać is located, demanded that Bosnian authorities suspend the train. There have also been accusations that the state-owned railway company is somehow involved in people smuggling. But the route remains open, and eyewitnesses report that migrants can be seen travelling on the train from Sarajevo to Bihać almost daily.

Crossing the Drina River

The second popular route for smuggling migrants is across the Drina, which used to mark the border between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Serbia.

The border between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is 363 kilometres long, 261 kilometres of which is delineated by the Drina. Part of this riparian area is densely populated and part hidden by lush vegetation. There are 11 official border crossings along the stretch, but the terrain provides many opportunities for illegal crossing; some undertake the journey across the border by swimming.

Although migrants have only recently started using this entry point into the Republika Srpska, it has long been an illegal smuggling route. For centuries, cattle and other goods were smuggled across the river on rafts. During the war in Bosnia, boats were used to smuggle cars, livestock, cigarettes, food and everything else that was in scarce supply in the war-stricken country.

After the war, smuggling continued – mostly of livestock and cigarettes. Sometimes even members of the border police of Bosnia and Herzegovina were involved. For example, in 2013, in a police operation, 25 people, including two border police officers, were arrested for smuggling more than a thousand head of livestock worth around half a million euros. In the same year, eight Bosnian border police officers and four from the Republika Srpska were arrested in an operation to prevent the smuggling of thousands of livestock from Serbia into Bosnia.⁸

Since 2017, the same route and the same modus operandi used to smuggle livestock have been utilized to smuggle migrants⁹ – same people, same boats, same route, just a different load. The smugglers are almost exclusively locals who own boats and know the river.

According to migrants interviewed for this report, the trip across the Drina costs around €500, while the full service from Belgrade to Bihać costs around €1 500.¹⁰

The penalties for smuggling are often negligible, even token. One interviewee, from the border town of Loznica, said that he had been arrested four times. Each time, he was given a suspended sentence and a fine that never exceeded €200.

The chief of Bosnia's border police, Zoran Galić, has warned that his guard cannot contain the migratory pressure along the country's eastern border with Serbia, referring to the work as a 'Sisyphean task'. 'We are in a constant struggle to deter migrants, but they never quit,' said Galić in November 2019. He said the border forces are lacking in officers and modern technology to secure the borders, noting that, currently, the country has only one officer to man every 30 kilometres of border.¹¹

Suggestions to call in the Bosnian military to help fill the gaps have not found political consensus. At a meeting of the Bosnian Presidency in June 2019, Željko Komšić (Croatian Member of the Presidency) and Šefik Džaferović (Bosniak Member of the Presidency) suggested that the Bosnian army be sent to the eastern border or that they should accept an offer put forward by Frontex, the European border and coast guard agency, to bring their forces to the border. However, Milorad Dodik, the Serb member of the Presidency, objected to a 'hardening' of the border or for a military force to separate ethnic Serbs living in Republika Srpska from those in Serbia. Dodik has also recently vetoed signing up to a status agreement with Frontex.¹²

The smugglers are almost exclusively locals who own boats and know the Drina River.

Bihać bottleneck

After crossing the Drina River and entering Bosnia, migrants usually head for Tuzla – unless they have previously arranged onward transport to Bihać or have enough money to cover the journey. Since there are no reception centres for migrants in Tuzla, they are compelled to sleep in tents at the train station.

From Tuzla, migrants move east to the town of Doboj, which is on the train route between Sarajevo and Bihać. The ones with enough money go all the way to Bihać, while those with less money go as far as Banja Luka.

Another option is for migrants to pay locals to transport them to Bihać. According to migrants interviewed for this report, prices range from €150 to €300, depending on how many migrants are transported and the type of vehicle used (e.g. car, van or truck).

It is not clear why migrants head for Bihać rather than cross the border at other points, for example further south. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a 932-kilometre-long border with Croatia – there are plenty of places to cross it. The explanation for migrants converging on Bihać seems to be similar to why migrants stuck to certain well-trodden routes through the Balkans in 2015: namely, word of mouth from acquaintances and others who had managed to migrate before them. Either way, this north-western region of Bosnia has become the new fault line where non-EU Bosnia borders with EU member Croatia, creating a bottleneck on the route to Western Europe.¹³

Upon arrival in Bihać, migrants first try to find accommodation in one of the reception centres. If they fail to do so, they sleep on the street or in the abandoned buildings around the town.

From Bihać, migrants try to cross the Bosnian border into Croatia through difficult forested terrain. In so doing, they often pass close to minefields left behind from the war.

While authorities on the Bosnian side of the border are considered lax, Croatian border police take a heavy-handed approach. Croatia, not least during its Presidency of the EU, wants to demonstrate that it is able to control its borders in order to be able to enter

the Schengen Area. Several migrants interviewed for this report told of how they had tried to cross the border several times, but had been apprehended and sent back by the Croatian authorities every time. Some reported of being beaten, and having their money and mobile phones taken away.

The tactics of the Croatian police caused embarrassment in November 2019 when two Nigerian students taking part in the Zagreb World Intercollegiate Championships were stopped by armed Croatian police officers in the Croatian capital; the students were arrested and taken by van across the border to a forest in the Bihać area. One of the students, Eboh Kenneth Chinedu, explained their ordeal to the Bosnian media: 'Two police officers told us, "You are going to Bosnia". I've never been to Bosnia. I came by plane to Zagreb, I told them I didn't know Bosnia. They told us no, you are going to Bosnia.'¹⁴

The students eventually arrived at the Miral migrant centre. At the end of December 2019, they finally returned home.

Civil society and international organizations have urged the Croatian authorities to moderate such violent pushbacks and mistreatment of migrants at the border. Migrants have voiced their anger and frustration. For example, on 15 February 2020, hundreds of migrants in the Miral camp (10 kilometres from the Croatian border) protested about overcrowding and conditions in the camp, and clashed with Bosnian police, chanting 'give us our money back' and 'stop beating us'.¹⁵

Migrants protest outside the Miral refugee camp, Velika Kladuša, February 2020.

© Reuters/Dado Ruvic





TROUBLE IN THE CAMPS

A number of centres have been created since mid-2018, but conditions in some have been poor, and overcrowding is a problem. As a result of the steady stream of migrants converging on Bihać, who find it increasingly difficult to enter Croatia, the number of migrants in the camps is steadily swelling. So too is the pool of people who become potential targets for smugglers.

Bira migrant reception centre, Bihać.

The Una-Sana canton has found it difficult to cope with the large numbers of migrants entering the region, and those being expelled from Croatia. There has been little support from the state over their plight. In November 2019, several hundreds of residents in Bihać staged a protest against the presence of migrants in their city, warning that the municipality risked becoming a giant migrant centre, and blaming the government and the EU for the situation.¹⁶

Conditions at a camp in Vučjak, close to the Croatian border, which was opened in June 2019, became so bad that there were warnings of a humanitarian disaster. During a cold winter, more than 800 migrants were reportedly without electricity, heating, running water, or proper accommodation.

Upon visiting the Vučjak camp in December 2019, the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatović (herself a Bosnian), reproached the local and national authorities for the situation, warning that unless remedial action was taken quickly, migrants would die. 'This is shameful for Bosnia and Herzegovina. These conditions are inhumane. ... I can't believe that such a thing was formed in Bosnia – not to mention our history and everything we went through as refugees. The camp must be closed, today,' said Mijatović.¹⁷ The authorities later modified the former Blažuj military barracks near Sarajevo and the migrants from Vučjak were transferred there.

Nevertheless, several thousand migrants remain at four reception centres in the vicinity of Bihać: in the former Bira factory, Borici, Miral and the Sedra Hotel.

Bira migrant centre



The Bira migrant centre used to be a refrigeration plant – what was supposed to have been a beacon of post-war development for the Una-Sana canton. The factory is long gone.

In October 2018, the empty 15 000-square-metre factory halls became a temporary centre for the reception of the increasing number of irregular migrants hoping to cross the nearby border into Croatia. It is now the largest migrant centre in Bosnia. About 2 200 migrants have taken refuge in adapted shipping containers and tents in the centre's four cold concrete halls, which are designed to accommodate about 1 500 people. Most of the migrants are from Afghanistan and Pakistan, but there are also people from Iran, Syria and Comoros.

The crowded centre, which has now exceeded its capacity, resembles a small town. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has tried to erect more tents, but these moves have been blocked by the local authorities, who do not want to expand the centre.

Migrants are free to come and go. They have access to wi-fi, medical care (five days a week), as well as support from social workers and psychologists. One tent has been

transformed into a mosque where prayers are held. Local volunteers regularly meet with the refugees and migrants to talk about where they are from, their experiences, and to help them understand the country that they are in.

However, although conditions at the Bira centre are better than at the former Vučjak camp, the situation is bleak for those who are stuck there. Some migrants interviewed for this report said that they feared for their lives because of violent rival gangs of migrants from Afghanistan and Pakistan who fight, and rob and threaten other migrants.

Some of those who have passed through the centre have tried to liven their surroundings by painting murals on the gloomy concrete walls. Some pictures depict nostalgic scenes of migrants' homeland; others are more abstract. The most vibrant are those that are in the area reserved for minors.

The agreement to use the premises as a reception centre expired on 15 November 2019, after which it was supposed to be closed down. But the authorities were unable to find other accommodation for the migrants, so, for now, they remain in Bira. Until when, no one can say.

Assessing the size of the problem

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, there are currently 7 200 migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, of whom 660 are reportedly children (450 of whom are unaccompanied minors).¹⁸ Just over five thousand are accommodated in eight reception centres: Cazin (a camp in the former Hotel Sedra); Ušivak; Bira; Velika Kladuša (Miral); Borici; Balkzuj (close to Sarajevo); Delijas; and Salakovac. Of these, four (as well as the former camp at Vučjak, which, as mentioned, was closed in December 2019), are in Una-Sana and administered by the municipality of Bihać.

It should be kept in mind that the total number of migrants that pass through Bosnia every year is significantly higher than the number of migrants registered in the country at any given time. For example, according to IOM data, in 2018, there were 24 067 migrants registered in Bosnia, of whom only 6 540 were accommodated in official reception centres. In 2019, according to the same source, 29 196 migrants were registered, and 24 078 migrants were accommodated in official reception centres during that year.¹⁹ It is also striking that the number

of migrants is four times higher than the official capacity of all migrant centres in the country (which, collectively, is around 5 500). This would suggest that there is a high turnover in the camps as people move on across the border illegally. It may also suggest that some migrants are finding temporary shelter outside official camps. This may well be corroborated by the fact there are reports of refugees and migrants, including children, squatting on the streets of Bihać, Velika Kladuša, Sarajevo, Bijeljina, Tuzla and Mostar.²⁰ It is also alleged that there are a large number of undocumented migrants.

It is interesting to note that none of the migrant reception centres are located in Republika Srpska – despite the fact that the two main smuggling routes pass through this entity. Calls to open temporary centres in Republika Srpska have been strongly resisted by the semi-autonomous entity's political leadership. According to President Dodik, 'migrant centres won't be built on the territory of Republika Srpska because Republika Srpska shouldn't be collateral damage in all that'.²¹ In other words, not in my backyard.





POLITICAL AND CRIMINAL-JUSTICE RESPONSES

Closing the Balkan route may have reduced the number of refugees and migrants entering the EU, but it has had the effect of increasing pressure on Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of the growing numbers of migrants moving through the country in transit to Western Europe. Generally speaking, Bosnia and Herzegovina has not handled the migrant crisis well.

The lack of consensus on what to do at state level, particularly the refusal by the leadership of Republika Srpska to enhance border management and open humanitarian centres, has placed the main burden of the humanitarian response on the authorities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly the canton of Una-Sana and the city of Bihać. At a press conference in October 2019, Bosnia's disgruntled security minister (at the time), Dragan Mektić, said that whereas Bosnia's neighbours had been able to cope with much bigger flows of refugees and migrants in 2015, 'here in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that represents some kind of unsolvable problem because we are a state which functions based on consensus and coordination'. Mektić bemoaned the lack of centralized bodies in the country to deal with crises.²²

According to the IOM, Bosnia has received €40.9 million in foreign aid over the past two years to resolve the migrant crisis (largely aid from the EU). Different levels of government have squabbled about how this money should be spent. The situation is complicated to some extent by the fact that some of the migrant accommodation

centres are privately owned (and hence some donors will not fund them). In some cases, when authorities have suggested state-owned buildings could be converted into migrant centres, local authorities have vetoed the decision.

Bosnia's understaffed border police have had their hands full. In 2019, they prevented the illegal entry of 13 251 migrants. Most of those turned away were from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Iran.²³

Relations between Bosnia and Croatia have been strained over the issue. Croatia accuses Bosnia of enabling migrants to move close to their border, while Bosnia accuses Croatia of heavy-handed tactics in deporting migrants and refugees.

For its part, Montenegro is stepping up its security along its border with Bosnia. On 20 December 2019, the country's Defense and Security Council, chaired by President Milo Đukanović, decided to engage the Montenegrin army to support police forces in protecting the state border in an effort to help address irregular migration.

This is clearly a humanitarian crisis, but is there a threat posed by organized crime? Thus far, most of the movement across borders and within Bosnia has been facilitated by locals using traditional smuggling routes, or providing their vehicles for transportation. This is hardly serious organized crime. But there are signs of growing sophistication and transnational cooperation among groups, comprising mostly individuals from Bosnia and neighbouring states but also from countries of origin (like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria). For example, on 9 September 2019, in an international police operation code-named River, five Bosnians were arrested for smuggling migrants.²⁴ They were part of a larger chain that smuggled migrants from Serbia, through Bosnia, to Croatia and Slovenia. According to information from the prosecution in the case, the smugglers charged migrants €1 000 each for transport. A total of 315 migrants were transported by the network, according to police.²⁵ On 19 February 2020, the Serb authorities arrested five people (including a Syrian national) suspected of smuggling 140 people across the Drina.²⁶ As the number of people on the move increases, and as border controls become more effective, the incentives for smugglers will increase. There is also a risk that as migrants become increasingly desperate (and run out of money), they could become vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking.

According to the state prosecutor's office, the number of cases pertaining to smuggling of migrants has increased since 2018. Bosnia's state prosecution authority filed nearly 60 indictments against more than 100 people for human smuggling in 2018 and 2019, while the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina pronounced around 60 verdicts, sentencing nearly 80 defendants over the same period.²⁷

Bosnia's criminal-justice system has been under pressure to deal with the heavy case load. Many of those arrested were caught transporting migrants in return for payment. More than half of those sentenced received suspended sentences, and fines of up to €5 000 were imposed. More than 90 per cent of judgments were pronounced on the basis of plea agreements. Sanctions ranged from conditional sentences to three-year prison terms.²⁸ According to the court, the maximum sentence of three years has been imposed on a smuggler, a citizen of Pakistan, Usman-Ali Maqsood Ahmed, who entered into a plea agreement.

The risk of strengthening border control is that it criminalizes refugees and creates a bigger market for smugglers.



The process in such cases involving foreign nationals, however, is often slow and cumbersome because those who are apprehended often do not have valid identification documents and speak a foreign language. It can be time-consuming to establish the perpetrators' identity through international cooperation and to collect the necessary evidence.

As spring arrives in the Balkans and weather conditions improve, and as fighting continues in Syria, it is anticipated that more people will be on the move, trying to enter Bosnia from the south and the east, in an endeavour to migrate west via Croatia. It is quite possible, as Mustafa Ružnić, the Prime Minister of the Una-Sana canton recently warned, that 'the worst is yet to come'.²⁹

In the absence of an international strategy to cope with the crisis, and since EU countries are adamant about keeping the Balkan route closed, the problem will be displaced to countries with weak border control. As one journalist remarked, 'Bosnia risks becoming a parking lot for refugees and migrants'.³⁰

But, as evident from the appalling situation on the border between Greece and Turkey, the risk of strengthening border control is that it criminalizes refugees and creates a bigger market for migrant smugglers.

As a result, what is needed is an international solution to address the roots of the problem; greater solidarity and cooperation between EU and non-EU countries; closer cooperation between Bosnia and its neighbours Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia (with support from EUROPOL); as well as better coordination between the country's own semi-autonomous authorities. Otherwise this will continue to a problem displaced rather than a problem solved.

NOTES

- 1 It is worth noting that the mobile phone was one of the most prized possessions of the refugees and migrants on the move in 2015. According to a journalist at a camp in Sid, when migrants arrived at a camp, they would first look for a mobile phone charger and a Wi-Fi internet passcode, and only afterwards ask for food, water and shelter.
- 2 One of these is the Una-Sana canton in the north-west of the country, which is referred to several times in this brief.
- 3 Interview with a border police officer in Banja Luka, 27 December 2019. (The officer works in Sarajevo at the Bosnian border police headquarters.)
- 4 Interview with a police officer based in Bijeljina, by phone, 15 December 2019.
- 5 It is worth noting that in 2019, most smugglers were discovered in the Trebinje area. See Haris Rovcanin, Bosnia's Courts Convict More Migrant Smugglers, BIRN, 9 January 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/09/bosnias-courts-convict-more-migrant-smugglers/>.
- 6 Including two Pakistani migrants in Bihać, 10 January 2020.
- 7 See <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/porodica-husic-migrantu-dala-topli-dom-pakistanac-adil-uziva-u-tuzli-i-uci-bosanski-jezik/191211142>.
- 8 Center for Investigative Reporting in Sarajevo, Crime without Borders, CIN, 20 September 2013, <https://www.cin.ba/en/kriminal-bez-granica/>.
- 9 Interview with a police officer based in Bijeljina, by phone, 15 December 2019.
- 10 Interviews in Banja Luka and Bihać, December 2019 and January 2020. Smugglers are said to demand between €1 500 and €3 000 for the trip from Sarajevo to Slovenia.
- 11 Eldar Emric, Bosnian border police sound alarm over migration pressure, Associated Press, 12 November 2019, <https://apnews.com/ddca8a10cf8545ec9e-20811598507ab1>.
- 12 Danijel Kovacevic, Dodik stops Bosnia from cooperating with Frontex, BIRN, 20 February 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/20/dodik-stops-bosnia-from-cooperating-with-frontex/>.
- 13 Haris Rovcanin, Bosnia's courts convict more migrant smugglers, BIRN, 9 January 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/09/bosnias-courts-convict-more-migrant-smugglers/>.
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