

# IOM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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UN MIGRATION



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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Cover photo: Marking of the International Migrants Day in Banja Luka with the art performance of No Nation Fashion and artist Jase King together with migrants and artists from Banja Luka. © IOM 2022 / Melisa KLJUČA

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# IOM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA ANNUAL REPORT 2022

# CONTENT

FOREWORD .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	vi
IOM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - STRATEGIC APPROACH (2022-2025) .....	1
 PRIORITY 1. SUPPORTING A LONG-TERM, LOCAL, AND STATE-OWNED RESPONSE FOR PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS .....	 2
Context analysis and trends .....	3
Key achievements .....	5
 PRIORITY 2. BUILDING VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES BY ADDRESSING PROMINENT DRIVERS OF INSTABILITY .....	 7
Context analysis and trends .....	8
Key achievements .....	9
 PRIORITY 3. HELPING MIGRANTS AND SOCIETY THRIVE THROUGH SAFE, ORDERLY, AND REGULAR MOBILITY PATHWAYS .....	 12
Context analysis and trends .....	13
Key achievements .....	14
 PRIORITY 4. LEVERAGING INFORMED AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND DISCOURSES .....	 16
Context analysis and trends .....	17
Key achievements .....	18



## FOREWORD

This report provides a retrospective of the year 2022, including context developments and key achievements of IOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). One of the main features of 2022 pertains to the increase in mixed migration movements, with 27,429 arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers recorded by authorities in BiH - 74 per cent more than the arrivals recorded in 2021. Through continued work with BiH authorities, the response provided was well organized and reception capacities sufficient throughout the year.

In this context, the year 2022 was also crucial in furthering our partnerships with state authorities, to consolidate reception and assistance capacities, and support our partners in the progressive transfer of the response management and coordination to local authorities. To strengthen coordination with local authorities, expand IOM's field presence and ensure that assistance is available to the most vulnerable, IOM opened a third sub-office in Tuzla.



With the inclusion of BiH as candidate to EU accession, alignment to the EU acquis and support by international partners remain critical. Throughout 2022, IOM supported international and BiH partners on thematic areas including justice and fundamental rights, border management, migration statistics, fight against organized crimes, humanitarian assistance, trust and peacebuilding, and prevention of violent extremism. Furthermore, IOM supported BiH in strengthening regional and EU partnerships, most significantly through the Sustainable Migration Governance conference, where the Western Balkan partners signed the Skopje Declaration, committing to comprehensive, sustainable, and solutions-oriented approaches to effectively manage migration in line with their international and EU accession commitments.

BiH was strongly affected by the war in Ukraine and its reverberations on the global economy. The country is facing historic pressures to the cost of living, gas prices, energy and agricultural imports. BiH also experienced a gradual increase in the number of refugees from Ukraine, with over 49,900 Ukrainian nationals having transited through BiH since March 2022, but only a few remaining in the country at the end of the year.

In addition to the political and economic impacts of the war in Ukraine, 2022 was marked by a lengthy political gridlock before and during the general elections held in October. The rise in divisive narratives observed in BiH for the past two years led to many high-level visits centered on truth, justice, peacebuilding and human rights, and further to BiH becoming eligible to the Peacebuilding Fund, a financial instrument of first resort to sustain peace in areas or situations at risk or affected by violent conflict.

The new Strategy of IOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2022-2025 builds upon the work achieved and the collaboration established with local authorities and a wide range of partners. It highlights the challenges and opportunities laying ahead, and reaffirms our commitment to advance positive and sustainable change. The Strategy sets the course for IOM to support BiH in four strategic pillars: (1) protection and humanitarian assistance, (2) community resilience, (3) migration management, and (4) governance.

We hope that the content presented in this annual report will provide a comprehensive picture of the results achieved in 2022, and the central role played by our many partners, including BiH authorities and institutions, BiH communities and civil society, national and international organizations, and so many more.

**Laura LUNGAROTTI**

*Subregional Coordinator for the Western Balkans and  
IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina Chief of Mission*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The successes of IOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2022 were made possible by our partners and stakeholders.

At the state level, IOM thanks the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Security (MoS), as well as agencies of the Ministry, including the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA), the Border Police and the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA). Furthermore, IOM thanks the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR), the Office of State Coordinator for Combatting Human Trafficking and the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

At the entity and Brčko District level, IOM worked closely with the ministries of interior, social welfare, health, and education. At the local level, this included Centres for Social Welfare, primary and secondary health providers, public health institutes, and mental health institutions. IOM also worked with ministries of education, labour, and health. IOM's work on labour migration was also strengthened by the partnerships with chamber of commerce, employers' associations and other academic and private sector partners.

IOM also partnered with civil society organizations such the Red Cross, Pomozi.ba and many other key partners engaged in building community resilience and increasing democratic participation. IOM worked with non-governmental organizations, universities, local communities, unofficial citizens groups, parents, pedagogical experts, recreational and sports clubs, interest groups, influencers, media and community leaders in communities across BiH. Through these engagements at all levels, IOM continued to be recognized as a trusted partner invested in the development and vitality of local communities, for which we are ever grateful.

IOM contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Framework in BiH, working closely with other UN agencies through the UN Country Team (UNCT) mechanisms, the PSEA Task Force and the Mixed Migration Task Force. IOM wishes to thank UN partners involved in Joint Programmes, especially UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, and ILO.

We are also grateful for the support from many IOM colleagues across the world, especially the IOM Regional Offices based in Vienna, Brussels and New York.



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In Bosnia and Herzegovina, IOM, local authorities and humanitarian partners collaborate to organize weekly meetings to discuss inter-agency coordination and assistance to people on the move. Direct feedback from beneficiaries is collected through Community Meetings and other complaints and feedback mechanisms, contributing to continuous improvement of assistance in temporary reception centres (TRC).

# IOM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## STRATEGIC APPROACH (2022-2025)



THE UNSDCF FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IS BUILT AROUND FOUR PRIORITY AREAS



### Priority area 1.

Sustainable, resilient and inclusive growth



### Priority area 2.

Quality, accessible and inclusive education, health and social protection



### Priority area 3.

People centered governance and rule of law



### Priority area 4.

Citizen and community engagement for social cohesion



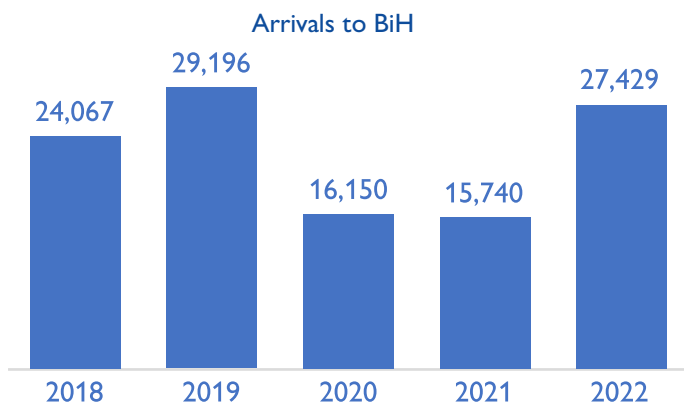
## PRIORITY 1.

SUPPORTING A LONG-TERM, LOCAL, AND STATE-OWNED  
RESPONSE FOR PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN  
ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS





The Western Balkans (WB) route remains an important corridor for migrants aiming to enter the European Union (EU). In 2022, the total number of arrivals recorded in the region increased by almost 60 per cent compared to 2021. In BiH, 27,429<sup>1</sup> arrivals were recorded, representing an increase of 74 per cent compared to the total number of arrivals (15,740) recorded in 2021.



Source: Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Since 2020, the share of Afghanistan nationals among all arrivals in BiH has continually risen, reaching **38 per cent** in 2022. Another noticeable trend in 2022 was the rise in arrivals of people from the African continent, notably Burundians, who represented **15 per cent** of all arrivals in 2022. Visa-free regimes in place in certain WB areas are directly linked to the increase in arrivals of Burundian, Indians, Tunisians and Turkish nationals in the region.<sup>2</sup> The free visa regime that Burundi had with the Republic of Serbia was modified in November 2022 following agreement to align to the European Union visa policy. The number of people arriving to BiH from Burundi significantly plunged afterwards.

In BiH, **49,974 entries and 45,770 exits of Ukrainian nationals** were recorded in 2022, most of which were transiting towards Montenegro. A group of close to 200 persons stayed in private accommodation in the area of Međugorje for three months prior to exiting BiH. In total, 29 Ukrainian nationals applied for asylum in BiH in 2022.

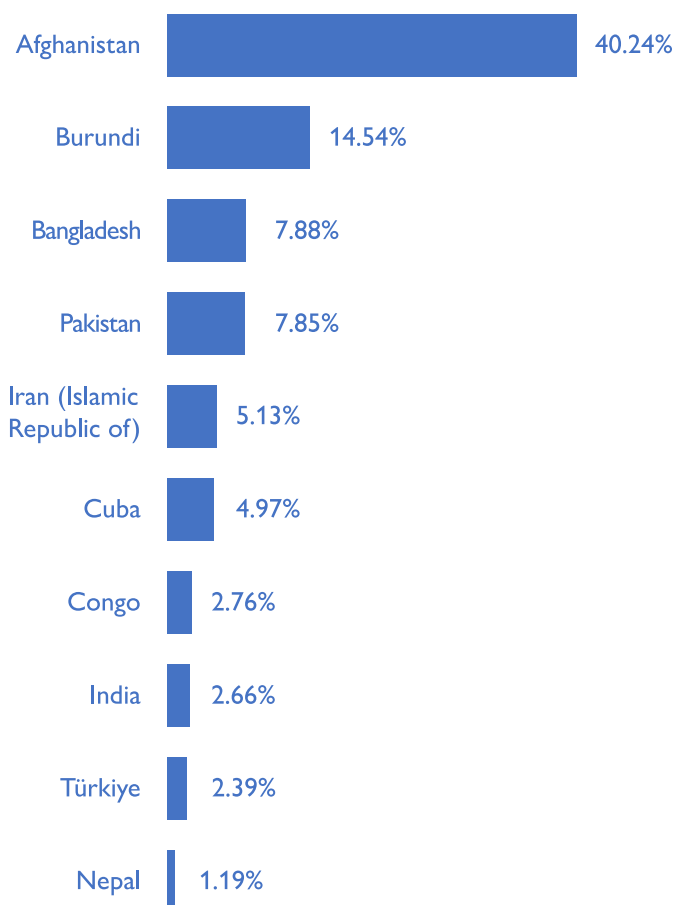
The year was marked by a **rapid turn-over of beneficiaries in reception facilities**, which is well captured by the average stay of 12.3 days for 2022, compared to 61.7 days in 2021. The period between June and October was particularly intense, with **60 per cent of all 2022 arrivals recorded in those five months alone**. As the lead agency for the Inter-Agency Migration Response in BiH and sector lead on Camp Coordination and Camp Management, IOM worked closely with the MoS and the SFA in the management of temporary reception centres (TRCs), while also furthering the plan for a **transition to a state-owned migration response**.

The plan aims to progressively transfer the management of TRCs to the SFA, and has started in 2021 with direct management of TRC Lipa.

To this aim, capacity building and on-the-job trainings were organized with SFA and other key agencies, to strengthen systems for data collection and ensure protection-sensitive assistance.

Another important step on the transition towards a state-owned migration response was made when the **responsibility for safety and security in TRCs was transferred to the Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies (DCPB) in April**. As part of this process, IOM organized trainings on topics including cultural awareness and mediation, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and other UN Security System, for representatives of the DCPB.

#### Top ten Countries of Origin of arrivals in BiH in 2022



Source: Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina

<sup>1</sup> Data provided by the Ministry of Security of BiH.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2022), [EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans](#).

In April 2022, the MoS signed a decision to close TRC Miral, located in Velika Kladuša, near the border with Croatia. The decision was made based on the fact that the capacities to accommodate migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in BiH were largely sufficient since the opening of the new TRC Lipa late in 2021. **This brought the number of TRCs to four, with capacities to host over 4,500 persons at any time.**

The reorganization of reception facilities also entailed efforts to improve the quality of the assistance provided. IOM supported the MoS and the SFA in this process, with a plan to **dedicate each TRC to specific target groups** (e.g., single men, families, unaccompanied or separated children) in order to facilitate the provision of tailored assistance, based on the profiles and needs of the groups accommodated.

IOM provided extensive support to **adapt reception capacities** to new needs and context, and expand or upgrade TRCs through infrastructural work. TRC Borići, in the Una Sana Canton, was renovated and the zone for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) was improved and expanded, with 126 new beds available. TRC Blažuj and TRC Ušivak, in the Sarajevo Canton, also underwent many improvements to **enable COVID-19 preventive measures and address the rapid turnover** experienced in the second half of 2022.

In all TRCs, IOM improved the **systems and procedures related to the registration process**. In TRC Blažuj, which experienced the highest turnover in 2022, IOM introduced a new pre-registration system for beneficiaries who did not undergo a medical examination nor obtained their Attestation of Intention to Seek Asylum on the day of arrival. This enabled **access to services** for all beneficiaries immediately upon arrival at the centre.

Finally, while the number of people transiting through BiH has increased in 2022, **the number of people staying outside of reception centres has significantly decreased**, helping to better assist those in needs, and contributing to further improve relations with host communities.

With the high turnover experienced throughout the year, IOM further developed its partnerships and outreach activities by deploying additional **mobile teams outside reception centres**, and further implementing displacement tracking matrix (DTM) activities jointly with the SFA, thus providing **regular analysis of migration flows and trends in BiH**.



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In 2022, the IOM Mobile Teams visited more than 600 locations in the Federation of BiH (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), providing life-saving assistance and referrals to people on the move, in coordination with local authorities and partners. The Mobile Teams provide information to migrants staying outside of formal reception facilities, and help increase access to assistance.



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Direct Assistance to migrants and asylum-seekers

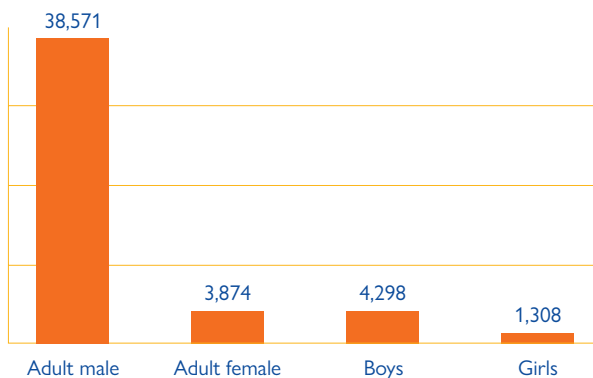


In 2022, IOM assisted **48,051 migrants** in five TRCs (Borići, Blažuj, Miral (now closed), Lipa, Ušivak). Assistance included shelter, food and non-food items (NFIs), access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, health, protection, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as well as access to information, specialized services and recreational and educational activities.



More than **5,513 children** (girls, boys) were assisted, including 3,532 unaccompanied and separated children. In family-oriented centres such as TRC Ušivak, in the Sarajevo Canton, IOM continued to run the Mother and Baby Wash Unit, where 3,177 services were delivered to families during the year.

Gender and Age Breakdown of beneficiaries in five reception centres (Blažuj, Borići, Lipa, Miral, Ušivak)



A total of **1,230,705** meals were distributed in TRCs, with tremendous support of partners including the SFA, Pomozi.ba and the Red Cross of Bihac. IOM also continued to facilitate access to community kitchen in all TRCs, as per suggestion made by residents in the Centres in previous years.



**383,345** non-food items including clothes and hygiene products, tailored to the season and the specific needs of women, men, boys and girls, were distributed, thanks to many generous donators and community members. In addition, 8,820 baby food and composite baby food meals were distributed to children accommodated in TRCs.



**8,415** people received transportation assistance to ease access to assistance in the TRCs. In addition, the **IOM Mobile Teams visited more than 600 locations** in the Federation of BiH (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), providing life-saving assistance and referrals to people on the move, in coordination with the SFA and other partners.

## Protection, Information and Accountability



In 2022, IOM reinforced its Protection and MHPSS interventions in and outside of reception centres, conducting over **24,962** vulnerability screenings, which enabled support to **1,896** people with identified vulnerabilities and risks, as well as **2,221** referrals to specialized medical services. Moreover, **800** psychosocial sessions were organized in TRCs.



In TRC Lipa, IOM contributed to the design of the **new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for protection activities**, which led to the opening of a designated space for the accommodation of **LGBTQIA+ community**.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



**1,488** surveys were conducted in order to better understand the educational and professional backgrounds of the residents.



**17 interactive Legal Aid Information Sessions** were held and benefitted over **100** participants in TRCs. The sessions, which are held in Arabic, Farsi, Pashtu, Urdu and English in all TRCs aim to provide migrants with information regarding their rights and obligations, including information on asylum procedure and assisted voluntary return and reintegration. The sessions are jointly conducted by IOM and UNHCR implementing partner Vaša Prava.



IOM organized **40 Mine Risk Education** sessions for **633** migrants in TRCs, with the aim to inform migrants about antipersonnel mines in BiH, and provide instructions to react adequately to various risks encountered on the route.



**Accountability to affected population** mechanisms were established and/or maintained in all TRCs as an underlying operational principle. Over **200** participatory activities including complaint and feedback sessions as well as community representative meeting were held in all TRCs.



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There are four temporary reception centres (TRCs) providing shelter and assistance to migrants and asylum-seekers in operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two centres are dedicated to families and unaccompanied and separated children. As lead agency on Camp Coordination and Camp Management, IOM works closely with the Ministry of Security and Service for Foreigners Affairs in the management of TRCs.



## PRIORITY 2.

BUILDING VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT  
COMMUNITIES BY ADDRESSING PROMINENT  
DRIVERS OF INSTABILITY





The year 2022 saw many important developments that will impact the trajectory of BiH. In December, the EU decided to **grant candidate status to BiH**, noting that significant reforms were needed to enable citizens to exercise their political rights, and a concerning lack of progress on rule of law and reforms. At the state level, the political gridlock experienced throughout most of the year significantly hindered policymaking and legislative changes, including important laws supporting progress towards EU accession.

Fragmented and polarized, the political structure in BiH often resulted in further **eroding public trust in institutions and preventing cohesive development strategies**. Divisive narratives perpetuated mistrust between communities, and between citizens and elected leaders. According to recent polls, approximately 70 per cent of BiH respondents indicated not trusting institutions such as courts and judiciary, parliament, government and local authorities.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, both BiH and its neighbours in the region have seen a hardening of positions across communities, with **radicalisation** of far-right nationalist rhetoric by political elites, and the rise of grass-root far-right and other extremist groups and organizations.<sup>4</sup> Some of these groups openly engage in violent political acts or **recruit persons to commit violence**, including by sending them to foreign battlefields.

**Hate crimes** have been reported as increasing throughout 2022<sup>5</sup> and discrimination, prejudice and other human rights violations based on gender and identity continue to be prevalent. Progress in addressing **gender-based violence** is hindered by many issues, including ineffective coordination among judiciary, law enforcement, and centers for social work.

Social cohesion is also being brought in focus in communities hosting migrants. While the reception conditions for migrants have improved in recent years, helping to decrease the number of people staying in abandoned buildings and other locations, **communities hosting migrants continue to need support** and resources to provide and maintain access to quality health and social services.

In recent years, the combined political, social and economic challenges have **led an increasing number of BiH citizens to leave BiH**. While the diaspora living abroad engages and contributes to the development of the country, a growing percentage of women and youth – 39 per cent in 2022 – indicate they are seriously considering living and working abroad.<sup>6</sup> Economic development, unemployment, corruption, brain drain/emigration and crime continue to be the main challenges identified by citizens in BiH.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the resilience of communities in BiH is also tested by their exposure to multiple risks and natural hazards, most notably floods, landslides, earthquakes, droughts and forest fires. **BiH is ranked among the most disaster-vulnerable countries in Europe**<sup>8</sup> the majority of people in BiH (71%) is preoccupied by the impact of climate change. The negative impacts of natural disasters have been severe in recent years, leading to temporary and permanent displacement, and affecting peoples' livelihoods.



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In Bosnia and Herzegovina, IOM addresses factors exacerbating vulnerabilities or undermining the sense of wellbeing of communities by exploring the environment, social cohesion, and youth emigration nexus. In 2022, a training to develop skills to write environment-focused project proposals was conducted in Vlačić.

<sup>3</sup> [Balkan Barometer](#) (2022).

<sup>4</sup> Vlado Azinović, Extremism Research Forum (2018), [Understanding Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans](#).

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch (2022), [World Report 2022](#).

<sup>6</sup> [Balkan Barometer](#) (2022).

<sup>7</sup> [Balkan Barometer](#) (2022), [Balkan Public Sentiment Index \(BPSI\)](#).

<sup>8</sup> Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft (2021), [World Risk Report 2021](#).

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

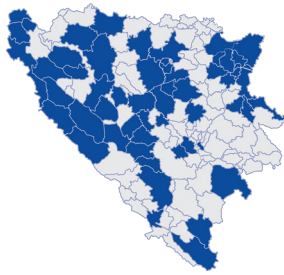


Figure 1 Municipalities with IOM Social Cohesion programme

To increase social cohesion IOM engaged with over **100 public institutions, 30 civil society organizations and over 3,500 youth** who took part in implementation of different activities in **48 municipalities from FBiH, RS and Brčko District**.

## Youth activism



Over **1,000 youth** have been engaged in **117 critical thinking workshops** (45 MovEQ workshops, 23 SMART'Y workshops, 33 Toxic Masculinity, 14 Mediality workshops, and two ecological workshops) discussing a variety of optics and ideological narratives and messages.



IOM supported BiH Youth associations implement **61 youth-led community initiatives** including advocating municipal budget lines or spaces for youth, cleaning illegal waste disposal sites, conducting awareness raising, street actions and media campaigns, leading IT and eco-education projects or ECO UP Start up weekends, etc.



IOM engaged youth from 72 municipalities/cities across BiH and supported more than 250 youth-focused activities, plus **23 ecological and humanitarian initiatives** in RS and Tuzla Canton, in partnerships with local NGOs, volunteers, Red Cross and local population.



Members of **8 parents associations** were supported to further develop leadership capacities, assess community needs, propose solutions and advocate for community resources.



IOM helped **Youth Councils from FBiH, RS and Brčko District** reinvigorate discussions about the establishment of the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH, reviewing existing resolution and providing feedback to the Ministry of Civil Affairs. IOM also supported regional networking between youth umbrella organizations from BiH and the region, where the Youth Network from Croatia participated in the event organized by the three umbrella BiH organizations for the first time, offering their support to advocate for their membership at the European Youth Council.

Number of participants	Male	Female	Total
# of direct beneficiaries	1587	2022	3609
# of youth participating in networking events	84	109	193
# of youth participating in critical thinking workshops	413	646	1059
# of youth activists trained	69	63	132
Number of events			Total
# of subgrants implemented with civil society organizations			34
# of meetings between youth and community stakeholders			35
# of capacity building activities for youth			86
# of community dialogues			18
# of community initiatives organized by youth			61
# of networking events organized			14

Table 1 Number of participants and events supported by IOM during 2022

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



To increase youth engagement with positive narratives or narratives capable of depicting nationalistic and divisive rhetoric, **7 social media campaigns** were implemented in cooperation with youth participating in other project activities.



Over **1,000 positive stories** were produced and distributed through online and social medias, reaching over 10 million of viewers and engaging 400,000 BiH citizens.

# of media features produced	1.042
# of social media and web posts	2.046
# of podcasts	9
# of video stories produced	65
Total reach on social media	10.019.288
Total engagement on social media	315.906
# of people started watching video	417.529
# of people watching video for at least 30s	66.811

### Social Cohesion



To measure the effect of projects on social cohesion, IOM initiated **four surveys measuring the change in social cohesion and youth activism** as a result of project activities. The data collected shows that the level of social cohesion is closely related to the ongoing political and security context. During the national elections, there was overall decrease in social cohesion, but the decrease was higher in communities without IOM activities.



More than 60 per cent of beneficiaries declared feeling they had **become agents of change** in their communities and 70 per cent of beneficiaries felt more **empowered to express themselves**. Male and female participants had similar response rates, but female participants felt greater increase in recognition as a change agent in the community.



In total, **1,680 migrants and BiH residents** from local communities participated in community initiatives contributing to migrant inclusion. Based on the surveys conducted in 2022, **social cohesion toward migrants** has increased over time, most significantly in communities where IOM conducts regular social cohesion activities to connect community members with migrants.

### Climate Change Adaptation



IOM supported young people, with a particular focus on empowering women and girls, to engage in environmental protection and improvement practices. During the **Environment Innovation Start-up Weekends** in three municipalities, youth discussed innovative approaches to environmental protection and the emigration of young people as a result of climate changes.



IOM provided technical assistance to the Municipality of Bihać, the University of Bihać, the public utility company of Bihać and groups of students in conducting analysis of **water quality** of Una river that will support cleaning measures.



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Institutional Developments



IOM supported the development of the **Repatriation Plan** and the Programme for Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Re-socialisation of nationals of BiH returning from conflict areas in Syria and Iraq that was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2022.



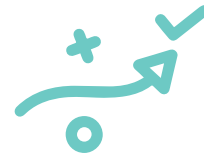
IOM developed the **Methodology for Development of Local Coordination Mechanism** in Brčko District, stipulating the need for multisectoral referral mechanisms and actions to ensure appropriate and timely response to prevent acts of violent extremism



IOM provided support to the Ministry of family, youth and sports in Republika Srpska to develop the new Youth Policy for 2022 – 2027.



Through the work of the Youth Council in the Una-Sana Canton, IOM supported research on the needs of youth and developed “**Measures to improve services for youth**”, a document adopted by the Government of the Una-Sana Canton and now with the Cantonal Assembly for budgeting.



IOM supported the Brčko District Government and NGO Kult to design a **Strategy for Youth 2022-2026**. The Strategy was developed, submitted to the Government, and adopted in January 2023.



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Youth can become agents of change and significantly contribute to the resilience of communities. As part of the campaign 12 Days of Peace, youth from various communities came together to fight against hate speech. In 2022, IOM engaged more than 2,200 youth in 72 municipalities across Bosnia and Herzegovina.



## PRIORITY 3.

HELPING MIGRANTS AND SOCIETY THRIVE  
THROUGH SAFE, ORDERLY, AND REGULAR  
MOBILITY PATHWAYS





In BiH, the mixed migration flows have underscored the need for functional, effective, and integrated border management systems. The **Strategy for Integrated Border Management in BiH** for the period 2019-2023 set objectives to strengthen identity management, registration, and screening. For BiH and other partners in the WVB, migration management remains an important priority to pave the way for accession to the EU, with **border management, asylum, reception, counter-trafficking and counter-smuggling, as well as safe return and readmission**, figuring high in the agenda of the WVB and the EU. Regional cooperation and coordination on migration can help **address and mitigate the risks to which migrants are exposed** and strengthen the integrity of existing mechanisms.

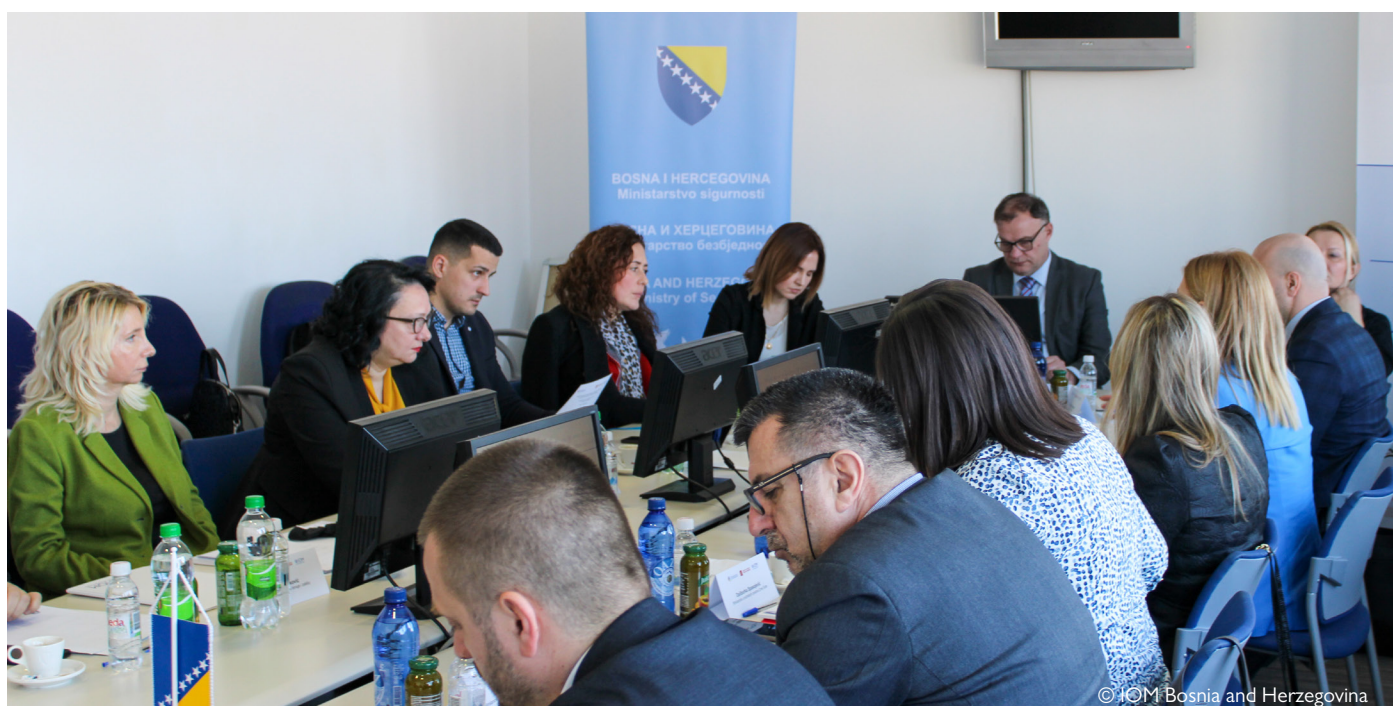
BiH is a country of origin, transit, and destination for men, women and children who fall victim to human trafficking. BiH citizens and foreigners, including **migrants, are trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation, forced begging, and marriage. In general, migrants, women, children, and other vulnerable groups, such as the Roma people, are more susceptible to become victims of trafficking.** Based on data from IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) collected in 2022, over 20 per cent of migrants declare they have experienced at least one form of violence, exploitation or abuse while migrating on the Eastern Mediterranean Route.

In 2022, BiH achieved progress regarding its anti-trafficking capacity, as demonstrated through increased prosecution and sentencing issued by judges, including the initiation of specialized department within the State Prosecutor's Office. Recently, the country also updated standard operating procedures (SOPs) **to improve the identification of victims in various contexts including the mixed migration flows, and enable more victim-centered procedures.**

Countering serious crimes such as migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (THB) requires **expertise and operational capacity of law enforcement, including digital response capacities.** The transnational and ever more sophisticated nature of these crimes also call for a vigilant society, responsive government authorities, expert agencies, up to date tools and adaptive legislation. Joint transborder initiatives to detect and investigate trafficking cases, combined with judicial cooperation, are essential to improve the effectiveness of prosecution and convictions of smuggling and trafficking in persons across the region.

Regional coordination is also central for effective return systems to and from the WVB. Strengthening cooperation between countries of origin and transit/destination to facilitate the return of migrants to their countries of origin emerges as a key area to establish comprehensive migration management systems. **Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR)** is one of the few legal pathways available to migrants travelling irregularly. Since 2016, IOM has helped over **2,700 migrants** return voluntarily to their countries of origin from the WVB region.

While socio-economic reintegration is an important incentive for migrants to return voluntarily, the programmes are less effective in the absence of functioning readmission mechanisms, where decisions on returns are issued but not enforced. In recent years, many efforts have been made to formalize and operationalize state-led return programmes in BiH and the region. Some agreements have been signed with key countries of origin, and other partnerships have been explored to facilitate readmissions.



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IOM works with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans, on a range of aspects of the counter-trafficking response, including prevention, protection, prosecution and cooperation. In 2022, IOM supported the Bosnia and Herzegovina Anti-Trafficking Coordinator's Office, within the Ministry of Security, on strengthening the national referral mechanism structures.



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Immigration and Border Management



IOM facilitated the **Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) Working Group** meetings and led the legislative/technical analysis of API System feasibility. Internal working procedures have been adopted and a substantial step forward was achieved with planning of study visits to two EU countries.

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IOM organized **trainings of the BiH Border Police officers** and other agencies participating in the Risk Analysis Centre at the local and regional level. Through this engagement, IOM facilitated a full **operationalisation of the Joint Centre for State Border Risk Analysis (JCRA)** in accordance with the Frontex methodology and with support of relevant partners.

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IOM worked with key partners, including the Border Police of BiH and Montenegro, to develop **standards for Humanitarian Border Management**, by contributing to further inter-agency coordination and capacities, as well as equipping new border crossings with specialized equipment.

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**Partnerships with key counterparts**, Partnerships with key counterparts, including the MoS State Coordinator for IBM and BiH Border Police, the Agency for Education and Professional Training (AEPTM) and the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, and at the regional level, the Centre of International Legal Cooperation (CILC) were strengthened. As a result, **70 professionals** completed the border management-related trainings organized by IOM.

## Migrants smuggling and human trafficking



IOM developed **innovative digital tools for monitoring human trafficking**, including a new statistical database, an e-Learning platform/resource centre, a mobile application/website for screening and identification of P/VoTs, and an online tool to monitor the BiH Counter Trafficking Strategy.

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In partnership with the Centres for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors (CEST) from the FBIH and RS, IOM organized **two simulation-based trainings for practitioners** from the law enforcement sector, judges, prosecutors, and police officers from different jurisdictions. Moreover, the curriculum on trafficking in human beings for police officers in BiH was revised, followed by a training of trainers that led to **93 other police officers being trained**. In total, IOM organized **11 trainings that benefitted 400 counter-trafficking practitioners in 2022**.

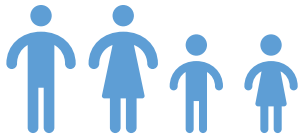
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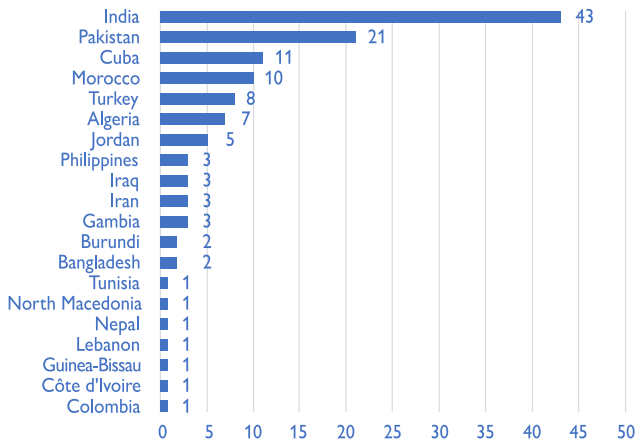
At the request of the MoS and following a joint investigation by the Prosecutor's Office of BiH and the Border Police of BiH, IOM supported the referral and accommodation of **five identified minors to a safe house** in Zenica. IOM facilitated protection assistance by supporting the provision of hygiene items, daily meals, individual counselling, medical services, occupational therapy, recreational activities, and cultural mediation.

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Return, Reintegration and Readmission



IOM helped **128 migrants** (15% female and 85% male, of which 2% were children) to voluntarily return to 20 countries of origin, including India (34%), Pakistan (16%) and Cuba (8%).



To promote safe and dignified returns, IOM provided support in areas such as medical and psychosocial assistance, childcare, accommodation, and financial service. All migrants assisted to return received individual counselling and devise their own reintegration plan.



To help migrants make informed decisions, IOM organized **1,265 counselling sessions** on return and reintegration and conducted over **2,000 group information sessions**. As a result, 271 migrants expressed an intention to proceed to an interview for AVRR.



**107 reintegration grants** supporting small businesses and housing also contributed to help migrants sustainably reintegrate in countries of origin.

## AVRR

The IOM AVRR team also provided information outside reception, reaching more than **11,000 migrants in 15 municipalities**, and more than 500 different locations.



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In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme provides tailored assistance, including counselling, consular support, as well as travel and reintegration assistance, to migrants who decide to return home. In 2022, IOM organized more than 2,000 information sessions to help migrants make informed decisions and access AVRR assistance.



## PRIORITY 4.

### LEVERAGING INFORMED AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND DISCOURSES





The European Council granted **candidate status to BiH in December 2022** on the understanding that the steps to strengthen the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organized crime, migration management and fundamental rights will be taken promptly. As per the 2022 European Commission Report on BiH, the country has achieved some level of preparation to implement the EU acquis on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights (Chapter 23) and Justice, Freedom and Security (Chapter 24).<sup>9</sup>

Overall, the BiH general elections held in October 2022 were well organized and competitive. Nevertheless, the blockade of the state-level legislative and executive institutions experienced in the first half of the year led to a political impasse and an **almost complete standstill in reforms** during that period.<sup>10</sup>

BiH continued to mainstream the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) objectives in key migration policy processes. At the end of 2022, the Government adopted the Migration and Asylum Strategy 2021-2025, elaborated in consultation with IOM. Within the GCM framework, a high-level **delegation from BiH participated in the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in New York**. In preparation for the IMRF, the country participated in several meetings, including the IMRF Dialogue Series, IMRF Technical briefing to government representatives, as well as the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

IOM presented its new country strategy 2022-2025 building on the work achieved and the collaboration established with national and local authorities.<sup>11</sup> The Strategy is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and SDGs Framework in BiH.

During the reporting period, inter-agency coordination as well as Delivering as One was ensured through IOM's active participation in the UN Country Team (UNCT) and other UN coordination mechanisms including the Results Groups and Programme Management Team.

IOM continued to provide regular updates on mixed migration flows and analysis through the DTM exercises, conducted in partnership with BiH authorities and other VWB partners. In 2022, regular and reliable collection, analysis and dissemination of data and research on migration remained at the centre of the support and the capacity-building activities implemented with State partners. IOM expanded its **Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)**<sup>12</sup> activities to disseminate critical, multi-layered information on the mobility, vulnerabilities, and needs of displaced and mobile populations. The presence of IOM in an increasing number of locations throughout the country also contributed to a more **balanced distribution of assistance across the country**.

In 2022, the decrease in migrants' presence outside of TRCs and sustained work **building linkages between migrants and BiH communities**, has been conducive to more positive public opinions about migration. However, more than 25 years after the end of the war, BiH continues to face unresolved war legacies, with divisive narratives and hate speech continuing to rise in public discourses. The general elections held in October 2022 gave way to increased political tensions, but irregular **migration did not appear as a major topic of discussion of the political campaigns**.



In the course of the two-day conference "Sustainable Migration Governance in the Western Balkans", Ministers of Interior from the Western Balkans, representatives of neighboring EU Member States, relevant EU institutions, international organizations, and academia gathered with the objective of identifying comprehensive, sustainable, and solutions-oriented approaches to effectively manage migration in the Western Balkans.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission (2022), [Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 Report](#).

<sup>10</sup> International Election Observation Mission Bosnia and Herzegovina - General Elections (2022), [Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions](#).

<sup>11</sup> IOM (2022), [IOM Strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina \(2022–2025\)](#).

<sup>12</sup> DTM Reports, [Bosnia & Herzegovina](#).

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Effective migration governance



IOM supported BiH authorities during the **review of various strategies and policies**, notably the Migration and Asylum Strategy for 2021-2025 and the BiH Migration Profile, the Strategy for Integrated Border Management in BiH and its Framework Action Plan (2019-2023) and the Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (2019-2023). IOM also conducted a Legal Review of the draft amendments to the Law on Foreigners.



IOM remained committed to supporting BiH in the implementation of the GCM objectives and SGD Goals. In 2022, IOM organized a **roundtable discussion on the GCM** embracing a whole-of-society perspective with 48 representatives of national and local authorities, civil society, communities, migrants, diaspora, academia, media, and the private sector.



Regional cooperation was critical for sustainable migration governance. At the **Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Migration Governance in the WB facilitated by IOM in Skopje** and co-hosted by North Macedonia and Czechia, WB partners agreed to further strengthen cooperation to address smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings; increase access to legal pathways; and work towards a holistic return management approach.



In the framework of the UN Joint Work Plan for BiH, **IOM chaired the Result Group 4: Social Cohesion** as well as the PSEA Task Force and co-chaired the Mixed Migration Task Force together with UNHCR. In 2022, IOM was the second largest UN agency in BiH in terms of resources mobilization (16% of the collective UNCT resources available in BiH in 2022), behind UNDP.

## Evidence-based migration policy and dialogues

### DTM

In 2022, IOM published **nine DTM reports** on Migrants' Presence in BiH and **seven DTM Flow Monitoring Surveys** in BiH and the WB. To help monitor the presence of Ukrainians in the WB, **five DTM Rapid Assessments** were completed in 2022.



**All DTM migrants' presence exercises were conducted jointly with the SFA.** IOM organised a two-day workshop for 46 officers of the SFA and other partners, to present the DTM methodology and tools, and help authorities strengthen data collection and analysis mechanisms.



Exploring emigration and its impact on the economy of BiH, IOM published a **Study on Emigration of Health and ICT Professionals from BiH**.



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Public access to well-balanced information about migration



IOM supported initiatives that strengthen social cohesion in migrant hosting communities. In 2022, IOM conducted **two Pulse Surveys** about the perception of migrants by the local population in target municipalities. The data collected shows that in municipalities in which social cohesion project activities are implemented, the Social Cohesion Index has significantly increased.



NO NATION FASHION

IOM continued to foster migrants' inclusion and creativity through activities of the **No Nation Fashion (NNF) brand**. In 2022, two creative corners were established in TRC Ušivak and in TRC Lipa, with regular activities and workshops.



IOM promoted constructive dialogues on a range of topics related to reconciliation, diversity, inclusion and migration. In 2022, IOM participated in the **I Am a Migrant campaign** promoting a well-informed, balanced image of migrants and migration. IOM launched the **Migrants Talk to Migrants awareness campaign** on the risks of irregular migration, which has reached over 15,000 users on the website, and over 1.9 million on the campaign YouTube channel.



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On the International Migrants Day, 17 December 2022, an art performance of the No Nation Fashion initiative and artist Jase King was organised in Banja Luka. It was followed by a panel discussion on the "Economic potential of migrants", underscoring the importance of harnessing the potential of migrants and their contribution to host societies.





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