

Irregular Migration Situation Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Facts & Figures

Number of irregular arrivals of migrants 2018-2025: 173'216

Swiss funds allocated 2018/25:
CHF 5'139'639

Activities of Switzerland

- Financial contribution to local CSO's providing basic services to migrants.
- Mandate to a local organisation for the construction of a water supply system providing clean drinking water to migrants and the local population.
- Financial contribution to UNHCR providing health care to migrants.
- Secondment of a Swiss child protection expert to UNICEF.
- Financial contributions to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) providing humanitarian aid and health care to migrants.
- Financial contribution to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Financial contribution to the Swiss Red Cross providing humanitarian aid to migrants.
- Financial contribution to Caritas Switzerland to implement specific COVID-19 related hygienic measures.
- Donation of the personal protective equipment protecting medical staff, local population and migrants.



The Red Cross of the Federation of BiH, partner of the Danish Refugee Council, provides First Aid to migrants

Context

Over 170,000 migrants have arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) since 2018. BiH has been a bottleneck for migrants, as many got stuck, unable to cross the protected border into Croatia. Una-Sana Canton and Sarajevo Canton have been exposed to the highest numbers of migrants; thus 4 temporary reception centres (TRC) have been built in these 2 cantons. The number of migrants who are staying in BiH is constantly changing (the highest number was around 10,000). Since 2023, migrants started spending less time in BiH and managed to cross further to Europe. Although this caused lower number of days of average stay of migrants in BiH and accordingly lower occupancy of TRCs, the number of arrivals has been significantly higher than in any of the previous years. This situation further burdened service providers in and outside of TRCs, which are run by the state but still dependant on external support. Due to their travels and life circumstances, migrants are exposed to multiple social and protection risks. This specifically poses a challenge for the local underfunded and understaffed health system and other service providers.

Switzerland's response

Based on the needs communicated by the BiH authorities, the Swiss Government has supported several humanitarian projects targeting the stranded migrants as well as the local population. The projects have been financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).

Provision of basic services, food assistance, child protection and winter support,

The Red Cross of the Federation of BiH and the NGO Pomozi.ba provided food, clothing and other supplies to migrants, while a Swiss expert strengthened UNICEF's Country Team which provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week, protection to migrant children. When accommodation situation for migrants in BiH was not solved, migrants were left in harsh weather conditions without access to basic assistance. To avoid humanitarian disaster and to save lives, immediate emergency aid was provided to 2000 migrants. It included life-preserving and winterization items. After the fire in Lipa reception center in December 2020, the Red Cross of the Canton of Una-Sana took over the food supply for the migrants. Switzerland supported the Red Cross in providing 2500-3000 meals per day for 800 – 1000 migrants in August 2021.

Construction of water supply system

More than 400 families with children accommodated in Hotel Sedra in the Ostrožac na Uni settlement and 113 local residents had no access to safe drinking water. The project conducted by Una Consulting and City of Cazin aimed to reduce water related health risks and provided

- Financial contribution to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) providing emergency winter support.
- Financial contribution to the IOM/Service of Foreigner's Affairs for the operationalization of the LIPA migration camp.
- Financial contribution to the Red Cross of Una-Sana Canton for providing meals to migrants.
- Financial contribution to the safe house for vulnerable minor migrants in Sarajevo (through Caritas Switzerland)
- Financial contribution to the Service for Foreigner's Affairs/IOM for Blažuj migrant camp infrastructural upgrades.

Contribution to partners 2018-2025

Organisations	Amount (in CHF)
NGO Pomozi.ba	15'000
Red Cross of the Federation of BiH	25'000
Una Consulting/ City of Cazin	200'000
UNHCR	200'000
UNICEF	104'200
DRC/RCFBiH	422'000
DRC	650'000
Swiss Red Cross	390'000
Caritas Switzerland	149'000
DRC/RCFBiH	160'500
DRC/RCFBiH	685'000
DRC	250'000
DRC	240'000
IOM	508'796
Red Cross Una-Sana	43'143
IOM	300'000
Caritas Switzerland	550'000
IOM	247'000

Further information

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drinking water. Migrant families and residents of the host community gained access to fresh and clean water in 2021.

Health care for refugees and migrants

The vast majority of the migrants is not entitled to get any primary health care services, although their journeys are most often perilous and cause serious health conditions. Switzerland's contribution to organizations providing healthcare assistance to migrants as well as to local healthcare institutions has been continuous.: from provision of medical equipment and medicines, providing healthcare services, including psycho-social support to capacity building. These engagements have helped save lives and improve health of migrants, reduced risks of spreading diseases and enabled public health institutions to provide better health care to both migrants and local population.

Response to the COVID -19 pandemic

Migrants residing inside and outside reception centers were under high risks of a COVID-19 infection. Access to health information, diagnostic testing and medical care were vital to save lives and to alleviate health effects of the pandemic. Switzerland supported infrastructural upgrade of health care facilities and the provision of special medical equipment for diagnostic and emergency treatment of patients infected with COVID-19. Caritas Switzerland provided laundry services in two reception centers and mobile laundry service and handwashing stations covering a range of locations. To protect medical staff and patients in health structures and in migrant's reception centers from getting infected, Switzerland donated 30'250 sets of personal protection equipment to eight primary health care centers and nine reception centers through the ongoing partnership with the Danish Refugee Council and the Red Cross of the Federation of BiH.

Swiss Red Cross's humanitarian response

Thousands of migrants in transit through the country lack access to water, food, shelter, basic first aid as well as other services. Swiss Red Cross supported the Red Cross of BiH to continue to assist migrants along the migration route.

Support in the management of the camp Lipa

Through the International Organization for Migration, Switzerland directly contributed to the operations of the temporary camp Lipa, which has a capacity to accommodate 1500 migrants, complementing international efforts to support the BiH government in providing decent reception capacities. The Service of Foreigner's Affairs has been supported in the management and smooth operation of the temporary camp Lipa by covering the personal costs of field assistants and maintenance staff. In addition, electricity installations which enable functioning of the temporary reception centre are connected to the municipal power grid and critical sections of the internal road network that enable the supply of the centre are asphalted.

Support to vulnerable minor migrants

Through Caritas Switzerland support has been provided for the functioning of the only safe house for vulnerable minor migrants who are unaccompanied. They benefited from comprehensive support, including access to healthcare services with a special focus on basic healthcare, mental health and psychosocial support, as well as adequate daily provisions such as food, clothing, and hygiene items. Safe accommodations, such as this centre, with trained staff, further ensured stability and security for this vulnerable group, while their integration into local systems has been facilitated.

Infrastructural upgrade of Blažuj camp

Continued challenges posed by the increasing turnover rates of migrants and necessity to ensure that the camp remains a secure and safe location for migrants residing there, as well as services providers and people who work there, have been expressed by relevant BiH authorities. Thus, this project is strengthening the overall security environment within Blažuj camp, enabling the respective authorities to sustainably manage their security requirements by being better able to protect migrants and workers against criminal behaviours including theft, extortion and the recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal activities; monitoring the movements of vulnerable migrants to-from-within the camp and protecting against public health risks by ensuring that access controls and migrant registration protocols are followed.