Save the Children North West Balkans publishes report highlighting underreported Balkan transit and growing service gaps

Save the Children North West Balkans has published the report "Refugees and Migrants on the Balkans Route: Overview of the Data on Arrivals in 2025", highlighting that transit through the Balkans is not fully captured by official statistics.

According to figures released by Frontex for 2025, irregular crossings along the Western Balkans route decreased by 42% compared with 2024, amounting to just over 12,500 recorded crossings. Save the Children notes that available data shows significant numbers of refugees and migrants continue to reach Europe through the Balkans, often by using more dangerous routes and relying on smuggling networks. The report stresses that an increasing number of children remain invisible in official data, while resources dedicated to protecting them continue to decline.

The study notes that the officially registered number of new arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2025 reached almost 14,000, exceeding Frontex estimates. Official data on asylum applications in Croatia also suggest that the number of people transiting the Western Balkans was higher than what Frontex reports. In 2025, approximately 15,000 people applied for international protection in Croatia, while Slovenia, the next country on the route, recorded slightly over 24,000 cases of "illegal border crossings" from Croatia.

Echoing findings from another study based on 2025 data, Save the Children also highlights significant reductions in funding and operational capacity among organisations assisting refugees and migrants in the region. The organisation concludes that, as a result, gaps in essential services have widened, including in reception and asylum centres, legal aid, and guardianship.

Source(s)

- Save the Children (30 April, 2026), [Official migration data may be significantly undercounting the number of people travelling on the Balkans route, putting thousands of children at greater risk of abuse and exploitation without systems to protect them, according to Save the Children report],

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https://www.savethechildren.net/news/children-disappearing-migration-data-face-increased-danger-balkans-route-save-children

Related development(s)

Save the Children published a Spotlight document on pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina

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