

## PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA- MIGRATION MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN SOCIETY RECOVERING FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### **Miodrag N. Simović, PhD, Academic, Professor**

Vice President of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Full Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Bihać and Full Member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of R.Dz. Causevica 6/III, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
vlado\_s@blic.net

### **Jelena Kuprešanin, MA**

Social Welfare and Criminalistics Expert,  
Master of Social Work, Criminal Investigation Specialist  
jelenakupresanin@yahoo.com

### **ABSTRACT**

*Migration management, among others, is one of the challenges Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkan countries have faced in recent years. The uncertain and complex situation has been exacerbated by the corona virus pandemic, and existing material and human resources are now focused on repairing its consequences. The end of the pandemic remains uncertain, social problems are becoming more complex, and systemic support is needed for a growing number of different vulnerable categories in the country. The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is imperative, especially in times of crisis. Although significant activities have been implemented, they are still insufficient to adequately respond to migration management. The support of the international community remains necessary. Multisectoral action, coordination and sharing of experiences should be intensified.*

*The European Commission's 2021 Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina pointed to very limited progress in migration and asylum management and the need to significantly improve this area, ensure effective coordination and provide sufficient and adequate accommodation capacity. The response to the crisis during the outbreak of COVID-19 was assessed as satisfactory by the European community, and greater spread and more severe consequences for the migrant population were prevented. According to some reports, the rights of minorities and asylum seekers continue to be a serious concern for human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unaccompa-*

*nied children face specific challenges and vulnerabilities, and their protection and adequate response to their needs is one of the priorities for future action.*

*Media coverage of migrants needs to be reviewed and directed in a way that is in line with the human rights of vulnerable categories and advocating the necessity of their protection. The media is one of the key links in monitoring the protection of human rights, but also in focusing on areas that require urgent action. Preventive activities should become an integral part of the strategic directions of local and national governments, and the support of the international community, cooperation, adequate assessment and protection of the best interests of all citizens are a prerequisite for social security in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

**Keywords:** *Bosnia and Herzegovina, migration management, COVID-19, future, human rights, recovery*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the refugees and migrants identified in Bosnia and Herzegovina entered the country from the southeast or east by crossing the border with Serbia or Montenegro irregularly. Despite the reduced number of newcomers and the continuation of movement through the region and towards Western and Central Europe, at the end of 2020, there were about 140,000 refugees and migrants in the countries along the route. Children make up approximately one third of all refugees and migrants passing through the Balkans, and most of them are unaccompanied and separated children. Among other events, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the dynamics of migration in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a country in transition, with existing economic problems and inability to respond to the needs of its citizens, is facing the situation that there are individuals and families on its territory who also need to provide all possible assistance and support in exercising basic human rights. The large number of competencies, unclear procedures and lack of resources pose a major challenge for the future, especially at a time of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, whose real consequences are not yet visible.

The Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina is responsible for the protection of international borders, internal border crossings and traffic regulation at border crossings of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regulates procedures and organization of services related to the movement and stay of foreigners in Bosnia and Herzegovina creating and implementing immigration and asylum policy in country. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina is responsible for the care (provides accommodation, the right to health and social

---

<sup>1</sup> Save the Children, *Refugees and Migrants at the Western Balkans Route*, Regional Overview, Serbia, 2020. p.2

protection, education...) of foreign nationals to whom the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina recognizes refugee status or subsidiary protection.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. MIGRATION CHALLENGES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

According to the latest World Migration Report, some 4.1 million people have sought international protection and are awaiting refugee status asylum seekers. In 2020, the global number of first-instance asylum applications was 1.1 million. At the end of 2020, under-18s made up about 38 percent of the refugee population (8 million of the 20.7 million refugees under the UNHCR mandate). Unaccompanied and separated children submitted about 21,000 individual asylum applications in 2020, down from 25,000 the previous year. Most of the migrants arriving in Bosnia and Herzegovina were single, although they included unaccompanied and separated children and families with children.<sup>3</sup>

Key indicators in the field of migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>4</sup> at the end of January 2022 indicate that 5,160 migrants and asylum seekers entered the country illegally in January 2022, an increase of 54% compared to December 2021, and an increase of 23 % compared to January 2021. A total of 383 people (74%) who entered the country in January expressed their intention to seek asylum, with the majority saying they came from Afghanistan (30%), Pakistan (13%) and Cuba (8%). A total of 153 registered asylum seekers are awaiting processing and a decision, 41 are awaiting registration of their asylum application with UNHCR / Vaša prava BiH, 69 are under subsidiary protection in BiH, and UNHCR and partners are assisting 98 stateless and stateless persons.

In the field of migration, the support of international organizations is especially important, as well as local civil society organizations that provide social services to the vulnerable. The International Organization for Migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina provides great support to the migration management process, and the term migrant is defined as any person who moves or crosses an international border, or leaves his usual place of residence within his country, regardless of legal status, whether the movement is voluntary or forced, the causes of the movement and the length of stay.<sup>5</sup> Based on the signed Protocol with the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Association Vaša prava BiH, based in Sarajevo,

<sup>2</sup> Official website of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina [<http://mhrr.gov.ba/>], Accessed 3 March 2022

<sup>3</sup> IOM UN Migration, *World Migration Report 2022*, p. 96

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Operational update - January 2022*

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, IOM., *Migration and refugee reporting*, 2021, p. 2

provides free legal aid to victims of trafficking, asylum seekers and other persons under international protection in the country.<sup>6</sup>

Centers for Social Work have a key role in the official plan of assistance to migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and unaccompanied children or children separated from parents or guardians, as they are responsible for providing family law protection, child protection, social protection and protection of families from violence and juvenile delinquency, as regulated by the relevant social protection laws. The lack of clear protocols or standard operating procedures to help vulnerable migrants and refugees means that Centers for Social Work cannot provide effective assistance to this population. The Centers for Social Work in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have enough human and financial resources even before the influx of migrants and refugees into the country, and now they especially do not have them to address efficiently the issues of this population group. NGOs are currently the main providers of direct humanitarian assistance to migrants and refugees across the country. This has been recognized by all actors such as the Service for Foreigners, police bodies and international organizations, which consistently refer migrants to NGOs which are engaged throughout the country, in reception centers, as well as in places with the highest number of migrants and refugees.<sup>7</sup>

Since the beginning of 2018, the number of migrants and refugees entering BiH has increased dramatically, which poses a challenge to the human and financial resources of responsible institutions and has led to rising tensions in society and growing discrimination against migrants. A survey conducted in 2019 among 1001 people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of collecting data on the extent of discrimination in the country and personal exposure to discrimination, showed that 72.9% of respondents confirmed that discrimination against migrants is widespread in the country, 78.1% respondents said they did not want migrants to settle in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which showed a discrepancy between the perception of discrimination against respondents and their personal attitude towards the group.<sup>8</sup> According to some reports, the rights of minorities and asylum seekers remain a serious concern for human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>9</sup> In November 2021, the temporary reception center Lipa near Bihać was opened, in cooperation with the Ministry of Security, the Service for Foreigners and the IOM of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the financial support of the European Union in

<sup>6</sup> Official page of Organization Vaša prava BiH, [<https://pravnapomoc.app/ba>], Accessed 3 March 2022

<sup>7</sup> OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Assessment of the Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Review of the Activities of Key Actors in the Field*, 2018, p. 29

<sup>8</sup> OSCE Mission to BiH, *Discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Perceptions, Attitudes and Experiences of the Public*, 2019, p. 43

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021*, New York, p. 100

Bosnia and Herzegovina and other partners, as an important step in establishing an efficient migration management system. The accommodation capacity of the temporary reception center Lipa is up to 1,500 migrants, including families with children, unaccompanied children and single people.<sup>10</sup>

As stated in the European Commission's 2021 Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>11</sup>, Chapter 23 - Justice and Fundamental Rights, unaccompanied migrant children face specific challenges, such as access to safe accommodation and asylum procedures. In 2020, 351 unaccompanied migrant children were identified (533 in 2019, 324 in 2018). The law appointed 987 guardians (304 in 2019, 29 in 2018). It was stated that it is necessary to find alternatives to the detention of families of irregular migrants with children, and to ensure the registration of the birth of undocumented migrant children. It was also pointed out that the state should provide adequate humanitarian aid and protection (including shelter, food and medical aid) and an efficient approach to the asylum procedure for asylum seekers and migrants who have been present on its territory since 2018. Regarding Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security, the Report states that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a certain level of preparedness for the implementation of the EU acquis in this area, that very limited progress has been made in the management of migration and asylum, and that is needed in next year to significantly improve migration management and the asylum system, ensure effective coordination, ensure sufficient and adequate accommodation capacity, equitably distributed among all entities and cantons, ensure access to asylum procedures, increase border controls, including human resources and equipment, and improve the legal framework and capacity for voluntary and forced return. The report also pointed to the need to adopt a new Strategy and Action Plan on Migration and Asylum 2021-2025, which is under development, insufficient reception centers that would provide shelter and protection to all who need it, insufficient staff and operational capacity of relevant agencies, institutional and coordination weaknesses in the management of migration and asylum, the need to improve the protection of human rights, the need to adopt contingency plans, and the fact that the rights of asylum seekers are not guaranteed evenly throughout the country, because their access to services varies depending on the location of reception centers. The response to the crisis during the outbreak of COVID-19 was assessed as satisfactory, preventing greater spread and more severe consequences for the migrant population, and great assistance was provided by humanitarian partners. The Ministry of Security has stepped up efforts to improve coordination between the state and local levels

<sup>10</sup> Press release of the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina dated 19 November 2021, [<http://www.msb.gov.ba/vijesti/saopstenja/default.aspx?id=21052&langTag=bs-BA>], Accessed 5 March 2022

<sup>11</sup> European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010 Report*, Strasbourg, 19 October 2021, p. 15, 33

and take responsibility for migration management, which should be supported by all levels of government. Mechanisms for the collection, exchange and analysis of migration statistics in the Migration Information System have been improved.<sup>12</sup>

In November 2021, a regional conference “Sarajevo Migration Dialogue” was held in Sarajevo, where ministers of the region, representatives of the EU and international organizations exchanged information and experiences, which are crucial for effective migration management, and the discussion was conducted through three panels: migration management, border control and management and future trends and challenges in migration. It was pointed out that Bosnia and Herzegovina has launched activities to strengthen the country’s capacity to respond to the pressure of the migrant crisis through more efficient management of migrant flows, strengthening coordination of institutions at all levels of government, increased state border control and improved cooperation with international partners and civil society which resulted in a calmer migration situation.<sup>13</sup> The key challenges in migration management in Bosnia and Herzegovina relate to the necessary political consensus on the management of illegal migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, coordination of different levels of government and lack of financial, human and technical capacity in all institutions and agencies.<sup>14</sup>

In accordance with the prepared Strategy in the field of migration and asylum and the action plan for the period 2021-2025, the construction of the migration and asylum management system in Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a long-term development process, within which the existing legal, institutional and other necessary capacities are continuously upgraded and new structures are established as part of that system. There are very good assumptions that in the coming period all necessary mechanisms will be further strengthened and special attention will be paid to building stable and sustainable mechanisms of coordination and inter-institutional cooperation of competent institutions at all levels of government, especially in circumstances of intensified and unusual migration the result of broader regional and pan-European trends in human migration.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Press release of the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina dated 19 November 2021, *op. cit.*, note 10

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Migration Profile of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2020, p. 84

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Migration and Asylum Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025), p. 8

### 3. COVID- 19 PANDEMIC AND SOCIAL PROCESSES

According to the assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the relaxation of administrative measures taken in response to the pandemic meant greater access to institutions, public services and everyday life structures, but access to institutions is still limited. The results of the survey showed that, according to respondents experience, access to schools (18%), primary health care (general practitioners) (14%) and hospitals (10%) was most often limited. The results of the research showed that 13.5% of the respondents were faced with limitations in achieving access to health care at the primary level. The younger population (15%) was more often unable to access primary health care (general practitioners).<sup>16</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the health and well-being of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are particularly affected by poor access to health services and limited access to adequate sanitation, hygiene facilities and personal protective equipment. Accommodation in reception centers is further complicated by the need to ensure compliance with COVID-19 mitigation and prevention measures such as maintaining physical distance and providing quarantine space, due to concerns about the health implications of increasing center overcrowding.<sup>17</sup> Generally speaking, vulnerable categories in Bosnia and Herzegovina often face the impossibility of providing certain social services, often because they are not available to them, are not adequate or do not even exist in accordance with their needs. The provision of social services implies strong capacities of the providers of these services who are often unable to provide support to everyone who needs it due to limited financial resources and the lack of mutual coordination with public institutions.

The European Union has allocated another 2.5m euros in humanitarian aid to support vulnerable refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on basic needs, such as primary and secondary health care, limiting the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and providing mental health assistance and psychosocial support. Assistance is also provided in the form of protection, such as identification, case management and referral, support for unaccompanied children and

<sup>16</sup> UNICEF, UNDP. *Assessment of the Consequences of COVID-19 on Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Second Household Survey*, 2021, p. 27

<sup>17</sup> IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina Crisis Response plan 2021, p. 4, [[https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/default/files/appeal/pdf/2021\\_Bosnia\\_and\\_Herzegovina\\_Crisis\\_Response\\_Plan\\_2021.pdf](https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/default/files/appeal/pdf/2021_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_Crisis_Response_Plan_2021.pdf)], Accessed 9 March 2022

survival assistance for people outdoors, including warm clothing, sleeping bags and food.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. CHILDREN ON THE MOVE - SAFETY AND RISKS

Widespread unemployment and lack of sustainable economic opportunities leave large numbers of people without a job or a sustainable livelihood. At the same time, the growing demand for cheap labor, combined with the often ubiquitous corrupt practices, has led to increasing tolerance for the exploitation of economically disadvantaged people in the form of dangerous and degrading work. This demand, in the context of the evolving crisis, is actually contributing to migratory flows, increasing the vulnerability of vulnerable populations, providing new, lucrative opportunities for criminal networks and ensuring a continuous cycle of exploitation.<sup>19</sup>

A major problem is the fact that migrants, especially children, are at risk of being trafficked or abused in any other way that puts them at risk. Also, they are often invisible to the system due to the inability to identify and navigate inaccessible routes. An investigation<sup>20</sup> conducted by the Guardian and the cross-border journalist collective Lost in Europe revealed that 18,292 unaccompanied migrant children went missing in Europe between January 2018 and December 2020, equivalent to almost 17 children a day. In 2020 alone, 5,768 children went missing in 13 European countries.

With the support of UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Security has developed a Manual for the Involvement of Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Children in the Education Process, as the first institutional response of the education authorities to the needs of children in asylum seekers and migrants. The handbook provides guidelines and suggestions for concrete steps to include children of asylum seekers / refugees and migrants in the educational process in

---

<sup>18</sup> Aljazeera, The EU is allocating another 2.5m euros to support refugees and migrants in BiH [<https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2021/12/3/eu-izdvaja-jos-25-miliona-eura-za-podrsku-izbjeglicama-i-migrantima-u-bih>], Accessed 9 March 2022

<sup>19</sup> Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, *From Reception to Recognition: Identifying and Protecting Victims of Trafficking in Mixed Migration Flows Focus on facilities for the first identification and reception of refugees and migrants in the OSCE region*, 2017, p. 15

<sup>20</sup> Einashe, I.; Homolova, A., *Nearly 17 child migrants a day vanished in Europe since 2018*, The Guardian, [<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/21/nearly-17-child-migrants-a-day-vanished-in-europe-since-2018>], Accessed 10 March 2022



Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>21</sup> In accordance with the Strategy of Integrated Border Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2019-2023, protection and respect for human rights of all persons crossing the state border or caught illegally crossing the state border is a priority of the Border Police of Bosnia and Herzegovina with special attention to vulnerable categories, especially unaccompanied minors, persons suspected of being victims of violence and sexual abuse or trafficking. Accordingly, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the field of recognizing persons entitled to international protection, the necessary legal assistance, speeding up legal processes, as well as the effective return of persons who do not meet the requirements for international protection.<sup>22</sup>

During 2020, the Human Rights Ombudsmen in Bosnia and Herzegovina registered a total of 20 cases related to asylum and migration. The submitted complaints referred to the legal status of migrants, the conditions of their accommodation, the dissatisfaction of citizens with the accommodation of migrants in their environment and the procedure for asylum applications. The Ombudsmen received a submission regarding the protection of unaccompanied minors from international and domestic NGOs and competent authorities, indicating the stay of 352 unaccompanied minors in the temporary reception center Bira in Bihać and pointing out the problem of false families, which represents exposure and increased risk of various abuses.<sup>23</sup> Individual complaints received by the Ombudsmen of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past indicate that there are categories of children with parents or guardians, but in practice they are placed in an immigration center because the identity of the guardian cannot be established, especially if it is a person who is an irregular migrant who does not carry an identification document. The second group are children who are on the move in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, without parents or guardians.<sup>24</sup>

The Ombudsman for Children of South East Europe believe that it is necessary to establish a comprehensive and effective system of protection for children on the move in each Member State, which will guarantee their protection and full

---

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNICEF in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Handbook for the Inclusion of Refugee Children, Asylum Seekers and Migrants in the Educational Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2020

<sup>22</sup> Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Strategy for Integrated Border Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2019-2023*, p. 18

<sup>23</sup> Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Annual Report on the results of activities for 2020*, p. 120

<sup>24</sup> Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Special Report on the Situation in the Field of Migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2018, p. 57

enjoyment of their rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that it is needed to create mechanisms for cross-sectoral cooperation and to adopt protocols of action of competent authorities for “child friendly” reception of “children on the move”, that it is necessary to establish effective national systems for collecting and exchanging data on “children on the move”, ensure continuous and comprehensive training of professionals involved in the adoption and implementation of measures for the protection of “children on the move”, that in each Member State criteria for appointing a guardian for “children on the move” should be established and that guardianship should be organized appointed to the child as soon as possible.<sup>25</sup> The Institution of the Ombudsman for Children of the Republic of Srpska, based on research on sexual exploitation of children and child begging, pointed out, among other things, the lack of real indicators of the presence of vulnerable children on this basis, the lack of systematic measures and activities, both in prevention and psychosocial support, and insufficient cooperation of competent services and institutions, which results in inadequate access to child support, because a multidisciplinary approach in child protection is not provided.<sup>26</sup>

Children on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not recognized as a special category in the legislative and institutional legal framework, but certain legal and strategic documents address issues of certain groups of children who are considered “children on the move” and affect their protection and rights. What is common to all groups of children on the move is the fact that their current living conditions and the causes that led to migration were unfavorable for their optimal psychophysical development, whether it was poverty, life-threatening armed conflict, marginalization and discrimination, violence or other forms of exploitation. Migrations further aggravate their situation and increase the degree of vulnerability. Given that children on the move belong to different social, cultural and social categories, they are often victims of inhuman treatment due to the specific circumstances in which they move and live, which requires special access and care, and the establishment of an independent monitoring and evaluation mechanism.<sup>27</sup>

Research on the phenomenon of child trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina has found that Roma and migrant children, especially unaccompanied migrant children, are the most vulnerable to human trafficking. It is estimated that there

---

<sup>25</sup> Save the Children, Republic of Croatia, Ombudsman for Children, *Children on the Move: Proceedings of the thematic meeting of the Network of Ombudsmen for Children of Southeast Europe*. 2014, p. 43

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Project “Protection of children on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, *Report on the position of children on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina “I want to be like other children”*, Zdravo da ste, Banja Luka, 2016, p. 10

are about 500 to 600 refugee children and unaccompanied or separated migrant children in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A large number of these children live in overcrowded reception facilities, some sleep in places with poor conditions and with little or no access to support. Civil services are overburdened and unable to adequately respond to growing needs. The structure of the migrant population has changed in favor of a significant increase in the share of vulnerable groups in the migrant population, especially unaccompanied asylum seekers, children victims of sexual, domestic and other forms of violence, as well as children victims of trafficking.<sup>28</sup>

## 5. MIGRATION AND MEDIA

In recent years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has seen a significant increase in mixed migration movements, with more than 70,000 people entering the country since 2017, with over 4,000 people currently housed in official reception centers and about 1,700 people living outside these facilities. In violation of the ban on collective expulsions, rejections of migrants leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina, including families with children, are regularly reported. In 2020, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants expressed deep concern over the ‘repeated and persistent disproportionate use of force against migrants in repulsion operations’.<sup>29</sup> In February 2022, the tenth joint data collection exercise was held by the IOM of Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with the Service for Foreigners and Support of the Red Cross of the Federation of BiH and Republic of Srpska to collect data on the number of migrants and asylum seekers present in the country and who were not housed or registered in temporary reception centers. The total number of migrants observed at the covered locations is 386. Gender and age data show that the majority of migrants outside the reception centers are adult men (319), representing 83% of the total identified migrant population, followed by boys (28), adult women (22) and girls (16).<sup>30</sup>

With the introduction of protection measures against the COVID-19 virus, almost 6,000 people have been forcibly imprisoned in unsanitary centers where they do not have enough food, where access to water is limited and they cannot

<sup>28</sup> Dottridge, M., *et al.*, *The Phenomenon of Child Trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Council of Europe 2021, p. 19

<sup>29</sup> Official website of the United Nations for Bosnia and Herzegovina, *UN in Bosnia and Herzegovina concerned about forced return of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees at borders*, [<https://bosniaherzegovina.un.org/bhs/123914-un-u-bosni-i-hercegovini-zabrinute-zbog-nasilnog-vracanja-migranata-trazilaca-azila-i>] Accessed 13 March 2022

<sup>30</sup> IOM. *Migrant Presence Outside Temporary Reception Centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Round 10*, February 2022

maintain personal hygiene, and health care is only basic. In some of these centers, such as Borići, Sedra and Salakovac, only families and vulnerable categories live, including victims of violence, torture and even human trafficking. Where there are no families, there are often minors, boys who travel alone and who are easy targets and often victims of smugglers, but also other people.<sup>31</sup> Certain reports point out that tensions with migrants are rising in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the situation is further aggravated by the media, which sensationally report on migrants' attacks on people. The situation is very bad, because the migrant group is placed in a context in which antagonism, fear, danger among citizens and prejudice develop, and this further contributes to the spread of panic and hatred. It emphasizes the need to end the myth of the criminalization of the migrant population and points to respect for the human rights of all people.<sup>32</sup>

Analyzes were made of the way migrants are described in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the extent to which their reporting affects the public perception and actual tolerance of refugees and migrants. Analyzing media announcements in the last three years, it was concluded that the largest number of announcements refer to the behavior of migrants to the detriment of individual and social values. Negative contents of the publications were recorded in slightly more than a third of the analyzed publications, and included deviant behaviors of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also accompanying socially harmful phenomena, such as organized crime, human trafficking and disturbing public order.<sup>33</sup>

A survey conducted in 2019, which analyzed hundreds of texts from 14 media from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina (three print media, five electronic and six online media), showed that migrants and refugees were reported in a very unprofessional way, out of half of the analyzed texts, migrants and refugees were mentioned as dangerous to the citizens, and already in the titles there was an attempt to spread panic, while in the contents the authors used assumptions and unverified information. Reports of migrants are divided into five categories: stigmatization of migrants and refugees, migrants and refugees as criminals, migrants and refugees are dangerous to citizens, empathetic reporting in which these people are presented as victims and sensationalist reporting.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ahmetašević, N., *People in the movement without human rights - refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina without human rights*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2020, p. 2

<sup>32</sup> Kolašinac, A., *Hate speech towards migrants*, Global Analitika, [<https://globalanalitika.com/gov-or-mrnje-prema-migrantima/>], Accessed 14 March 2022

<sup>33</sup> Kržalić, A.; Kobajica, S.: *Migrants in the public discourse of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Police security, Zagreb, Vol. 30., No. 2, 2021, p. 233 - 244

<sup>34</sup> Adilagić, R., *Reporting on the Migrant and Refugee Crisis in BiH: Insinuations, Racism and Xenophobia*, Association of Journalists of BiH Journalists, [<https://www.diskriminacija.ba teme/izvje%C5%A1t->

## 6. CONCLUSION REMARKS

Given the time we live in and changes that happen every day, it is certain that the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina will have to adapt in the future and face many challenges in various fields. The COVID-19 virus pandemic has affected society in a variety of ways, most notably vulnerable categories. It is necessary to make additional efforts to protect all those who need support, especially children and adults, who due to various causes are in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and face uncertainty. It is necessary for policy makers to point out the need to define clear mechanisms for responding to migration. Unaccompanied children are a priority, and their identification for the purpose of monitoring and protection is necessary in order to avoid abuse of their position.

The role of the media is of great importance in directing public opinion on the needs of the vulnerable, especially migrants, who are often presented in the media as a danger to the local population. In this context, additional training of journalists is needed in order to adequately report on this topic and to provide the public with quality, realistic and detailed information. In this context, it is necessary to work on cooperation between policy makers and journalists, not only in the field of migration reporting, but in all areas of social life and action.

On the path of European integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina faces numerous tasks, and guaranteeing basic human rights to citizens and all those who are on its territory is imperative.

## REFERENCES

### BOOKS AND ARTICLES

1. Ahmetašević, N., *People on the move without human rights - refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina without human rights*. Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2020
2. Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Strategy for Integrated Border Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2019-2023*
3. Dottridge, M., et al., *The phenomenon of child trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Council of Europe, 2021
4. Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Annual Report on the results of activities for 2020*
5. Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Special Report on the Situation in the Field of Migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2018

---

avanje-o-migrantskoj-i-izbjegli%C4%8Dkoj-krizi-u-bih-insinuacije-rasizam-i-ksenofobija], Accessed 15 March 2022

6. Kržalić, A.; Kobajica, S., *Migrants in the public discourse of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Police and Security, Zagreb, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2021, p. 233 - 244
7. Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Migration Profile of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2020*
8. Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Migration and Asylum Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025)*
9. Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNICEF in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Handbook for the Inclusion of Refugee Children, Asylum Seekers and Migrants in the Educational Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2020
10. Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, *From Reception to Recognition: Identification and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Mixed Migration Flows, Focus on Facilities for First Identification and Reception of Refugees and Migrants in the OSCE Region*, 2017
11. OSCE Mission to BiH, *Discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Perceptions, Attitudes and Experiences of the Public*, 2019
12. OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Assessment of the Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Review of the Activities of Key Actors in the Field*, 2018
13. Project "Protection of children on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Report on the position of children on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina "I want to be like other children"*, Zdravo Da Ste, Banja Luka, 2016
14. Save the Children, *Refugees and Migrants at the Western Balkans Route*, Regional Overview, Serbia, 2020
15. Save the Children, Republic of Croatia, Ombudsman for Children, *Children on the Move: Proceedings of the thematic meeting of the Network of Ombudsmen for Children of Southeast Europe*, 2014
16. UNICEF, UNDP, *Assessment of the Consequences of COVID-19 on Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Second Household Survey*, 2021

## WEBSITE REFERENCES

1. Aljazeera, *The EU is allocating another 2.5m euros to support refugees and migrants in BiH*, [<https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2021/12/3/eu-izdvaja-jos-25-miliona-eura-zapodrsku-izbjeglicama-i-migrantima-u-bih>], Accessed 9 March 2022
2. Official website of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, [<http://mhrr.gov.ba/>], Accessed 3 March 2022
3. Official website of Organization Vaša prava BiH, [<https://pravnapomoc.app/ba>], Accessed 3 March 2022
4. Press release of the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 19.11.2021., [<http://www.msb.gov.ba/vijesti/saopstenja/default.aspx?id=21052&langTag=bs-BA>], Accessed 5 March 2022
5. IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina *Crisis Response plan 2021*, [[https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/default/files/appeal/pdf/2021\\_Bosnia\\_and\\_Herzegovina\\_Crisis\\_Response\\_Plan\\_2021.pdf](https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/default/files/appeal/pdf/2021_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_Crisis_Response_Plan_2021.pdf)], Accessed 9 March 2022

6. Einashe, I.; Homolova, A., *Nearly 17 child migrants a day vanished in Europe since 2018*, The Guardian, [https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/21/nearly-17-child-migrants-a-day-vanished-in-europe-since-2018], Accessed 10 March 2022
7. Official website of the United Nations for Bosnia and Herzegovina, *UN in Bosnia and Herzegovina concerned about the forced return of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees at the borders*, [https://bosniaherzegovina.un.org/bhs/123914-un-u-bosni-i-hercegovini-zabrinute-zbog-nasilnog-vracanja-migranata-trazilaca-azila-i], Accessed 13 March 2022
8. Kolašinac, A., *Hate speech towards migrants*, Global Analitika, [https://globalanalitika.com/govor-mrznje-prema-migrantima/], Accessed 14 March 2022
9. Adilagić, R., *Reporting on the Migrant and Refugee Crisis in BiH: Insinuations, Racism and Xenophobia*, Association of Journalists of BiH Journalists, [https://www.diskriminacija.ba teme/izvje%C5%A1tavanje-o-migrantskoj-i-izbjegli%C4%8Dkoj-krizi-u-bih-insinuacije-rasizam-i-ksenofobija], Accessed 15 March 2022
10. IOM UN Migration, World Migration Report 2022
11. UNHCR Bosnia and Herzegovina, Operational update- January 2022
12. UNHCR, IOM., Reporting on Migration and Refugees, 2021
13. Human Rights Watch, World Report 2021, New York
14. IOM. *Migrant Presence Outside Temporary Reception Centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Round 10*, February 2022
15. European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010 Report, Strasbourg, 19 October 2021