

# Western Balkans

## Situation in 2022

The Western Balkan route has been one of the main migratory paths into Europe, reflected the influx on the Eastern Mediterranean route. After the record number of arrivals in the European Union in 2015, the number of irregular migrants choosing this route fell steadily for a few years and has started to pick up again from 2019 onwards.

In 2022, there were 145 600 irregular border crossings reported on the Western Balkans route, 136% more than in 2021. This is the highest number of crossings reported on this route since 2015 and about half of all reported irregular entries in 2022.

Citizens of Syria, Afghanistan and Türkiye accounted for the largest number of detections. Nationalities that previously had been little on this route were also reported, such as Tunisians, Indians and Burundis.

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## Situation in 2021

The Western Balkan route was the second most-used path to Europe as the detections of illegal border crossings more than doubled in 2021 to a total of 61 735.

As with the previous year, the majority of illegal border crossings can be attributed to migrants who have been in the Western Balkan region for some time and repeatedly try to reach their target country in the EU. As in previous years, non-regional migrants continued to attempt to enter the Western Balkans across the southern common borders with Greece and Bulgaria before heading north and trying to exit the region largely at the northern common borders of Hungary, Romania Croatia or with Serbia.

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## Situation in 2020

26 969 irregular migrants were detected in the Western Balkans region in 2020, over a three-quarters increase compared with 2019.

While migrants already in the Western Balkans were likely the main contributors to the rising number of attempts on the region's northern borders, there were also new arrivals, as reflected by the significant

pressure on entry to the region from the south. As such, non-regional migration in the region continued to be strongly connected to the Eastern Mediterranean migrant flow.

Syrians represented the largest share of migrants on this path, but arrivals from all the Northwest African countries also increased markedly.

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## **Situation in 2019**

In 2019, the number of irregular migrants on this route almost tripled to 15 152. Illegal border crossings particularly increased towards the end of the year, and in fact, almost half of all detections on this route were recorded in the last quarter of the year

Two thirds of migrants detected came from Afghanistan and Syria. Iraqis, Iranians and Turkish were also among the top five detected nationalities using this path to the EU.

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## **Situation in 2018**

The number of irregular migrants detected on the Western Balkan route to Europe halved from the previous year to 5 869.

The top nationalities detected transiting the region were Afghans and Pakistanis, similarly to those reported on the Eastern Mediterranean route. Iranians were also among the most detected nationalities.

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## **Situation in 2017 and before**

The total number of irregular crossings stood at 12 179 in 2017. The flow of migrants across the Western Balkans reflected the influx on the Eastern Mediterranean route, yet at a lower level compared with previous years given the continuing efforts made on the route to curb the number of irregular crossings.

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In 2016, the number of detected illegal border crossings between border crossing points associated with non-regional migrants amounted to 130 325.

Following the coordinated restriction measures implemented throughout the region, in destination countries and the Aegean Sea, the non-regional flow transiting the Western Balkans considerably subsided, declining almost every month, from 67 000 illegal border-crossings in January down to roughly 1 400 in December 2016.

In 2015, the region recorded 764 033 detections of illegal border crossings by migrants, a 16-fold rise from 2014.

The record number of migrants arriving in Greece had a direct knock-on effect on the Western Balkan route, as the people who entered the EU in Greece tried to make their way via the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia into Hungary and Croatia and then towards western Europe. This led to unprecedented numbers of migrants seeking to re-enter the EU through Hungary's borders with Serbia. The top-ranking nationality was Syrian, followed by Iraqis and Afghans.



## More information

For more information about this route, see Frontex's [annual risk analysis reports](#).



**Illegal border crossings on the Western Balkans route in numbers.**

