In support of the Red Cross National Societies of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Republic of North Macedonia

People to be reached

- **15,000** Ongoing emergency operations
- **117,000** Climate and environment
- **121,000** Disasters and crises
- **210,000** Health and wellbeing
- **35,000** Migration and displacement
- **149,000** Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

**Longer term needs**
- early warning and disaster risk reduction
- climate change adaptation • health needs
  - migration-related needs
  - inclusion of vulnerable groups

**Capacity development**
- sustainable resource mobilization and fundraising
  - partnerships • financial management
  - branch development • communications
  - planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Key country data

- **Albania** 2.8M
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** 3.3M
- **Montenegro** 620,000
- **Republic of North Macedonia** 2.1M

IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for Central and South-Eastern Europe, Sarajevo
This document details IFRC network-wide figures and actions in areas agreed with the country National Society. For additional information, see last page of this plan. * National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in the past two years.

Ongoing emergencies

**MGR65002**

- Republic of North Macedonia and Montenegro
- Part of the Ukraine and impacted countries crisis

Participating National Societies

- Austrian Red Cross*
- British Red Cross*
- Bulgarian Red Cross*
- Danish Red Cross*
- Italian Red Cross
- Japanese Red Cross Society*
- Norwegian Red Cross*
- Qatar Red Crescent Society
- Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates
- Swiss Red Cross
- The Canadian Red Cross Society*
- The Netherlands Red Cross*
- Turkish Red Crescent Society

Hazards

- Floods
- Drought
- Extreme heat
- Extreme cold
- Forest fires
- Earthquakes

Funding requirements

- Total 11.2M CHF

Through the IFRC

- 5.4M CHF

Through Participating National Societies

- 2M CHF

Host National Society

- 3.8M CHF

IFRC Breakdown

Longer term needs

- 565,000 CHF
  Climate and environment

- 959,000 CHF
  Disasters and crises

- 405,000 CHF
  Health and wellbeing

- 2.4M CHF
  Migration and displacement

- 795,000 CHF
  Values, power and inclusion

- 270,000 CHF
  Enabling local actors

Hazards

- Floods
- Drought
- Extreme heat
- Extreme cold
- Forest fires
- Earthquakes
NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILES

The Albanian Red Cross, the oldest humanitarian organization in Albania, was founded in 1921. In 1923, it was admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). With commendable activities before and after World War II, the National Society created its own profile as a modern National Red Cross Society, thanks to regular communications with the most developed Red Cross Societies of that time.

After the war, the state gradually detracted a major part of the National Society’s activities and reduced its operational capacities. As a consequence, it lost its identity. An arbitrary decision in 1969 finally officially suspended the National Society, and it ceased to exist for more than 20 years. At the beginning of the 1990s, the National Society resumed its activity by building a legal basis and organizational structure, which has constantly been consolidated ever since. The National Society was recognized in law by the Albanian Parliament as an independent volunteer humanitarian organization in 1994.

The National Society is an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field across Albania, demonstrating its capacity to organize humanitarian aid operations during crisis and disasters. Through its developing programmes, the National Society is active in providing social and health assistance to communities in need, contributing to reducing vulnerability. It is also engaged in conveying the concerns and interests of vulnerable people to the decision-making authorities.

The National Society’s main programmes are disaster preparedness response and first aid, social welfare, health, and youth and humanitarian education.

The relevant provisions of the law and its statutes define the National Society as a humanitarian organization of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, recognized and authorized to pursue humanitarian goals, tasks and public authority. It carries out these responsibilities in health education activities, social protection, tracing services and other programme activities in peacetime. It also does it during natural and other disasters and emergency situations, in accordance with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

The National Society is the only Red Cross organization which is operational throughout the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is composed of the Red Cross Societies of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and the Brcko District. The National Society has modern, widely recognized and accepted programmes. With its single network of Red Cross organizations and volunteers (which represent the foundation of the organization), the National Society, independently or in partnership with governmental institutions or other non-governmental humanitarian organizations, has initiated and conducted a series of activities in response to the needs of the most vulnerable people in the country.

The Red Cross of Montenegro was founded in 1875 in Cetinje, as the first national Red Cross Society in the Balkans and the 22nd in the world. It was internationally recognized in November of the same year. After the restoration of the sovereignty of the state of Montenegro in 2006, the Red Cross of Montenegro renewed the status of an independent National Society in 2006. In 2007, it renewed its full membership of the IFRC.

While carrying out its tasks of public interest assigned by law, and implementing programmes and activities within its humanitarian mission, the Red Cross of Montenegro seeks to provide an adequate humanitarian response to all vulnerable individuals and families. It responds to the humanitarian needs of people in a state of social vulnerability—especially the Roma and Egyptian communities—older and single people, children and young people with special needs, homeless people, those affected by disasters and crises, victims of violence, displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, and other vulnerable groups.
Within the framework of its humanitarian mandate, the Red Cross of Montenegro has been recognized by the state as an important and reliable partner in the implementation of numerous strategies aimed at improving and protecting the lives of target groups facing humanitarian problems and vulnerability.

The Red Cross of Montenegro was recognized as an implementation partner within various national strategies, including those on:

- Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians (until 2020)
- Disaster Risk Reduction (2018–2023)
- Integration of Persons with Disabilities (until 2020)
- Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (2017–2021)
- Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings (2019–2024)
- Integrated Migration Management

The National Society has special obligations in the areas of the dissemination of international humanitarian law, health services, and preparedness for response in circumstances of mass disasters and crises. It focuses on the global humanitarian problems of reducing the risks of the effects of climate change, protecting victims of violence, and promoting non-discrimination and non-violence.

The National Society is an active member of the Centre for Cooperation in the Mediterranean. Since 2008, it has been a full member of the International Life Saving Federation and the only organization in the country that is licensed to conduct training courses for lifeguards on water.

The Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia was founded in 1945 within the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia. After the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1992, the organization operated as an independent National Society and became a full-fledged member of the IFRC in 1995.

The work of the National Society is regulated by a special law on the Red Cross. The organization consists of 33 branches and the City Red Cross of Skopje. Its programmes are implemented with the support of 12,000 members, 2,400 active volunteers and 200 members of staff. The role of the Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia is to nurture the power of humanity, to be where it is needed, and to provide support for various target groups in the population.

It performs an auxiliary role and supports state authorities with carrying out various humanitarian tasks, in accordance with the needs of the population. In cooperation with institutions and partners, it works on disease prevention, improving health and alleviating human suffering through its own programmes in the field of education, health and social care. It provides humanitarian assistance in emergencies, works to disseminate international humanitarian law, and shares and promotes the principles and ideals of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It also raises awareness about the protection of the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems.

**IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023**

**Joint situational analysis**

**Economic**

Overall, the economic context in the Central and South-Eastern Europe region continues to be dominated by post-COVID-19 recovery. Global recession, high unemployment and ongoing shocks related to extreme winter weather and energy prices have stalled any economic recovery and led to increasing poverty rates. An increasingly wide span of communities are now identified as economically at risk.

**Albania**

In November 2019, not long before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Albanian economy was hit by an earthquake that killed 51 people and caused substantial economic damage, estimated at about 6.7 per cent of the country's GDP. These two shocks caused the first recession in Albania in more than two decades, with the economy contracting by 3.4 per cent, compared with a pre-pandemic predicted growth rate of 3.5 per cent.
Albania’s poverty rate is one of the highest in the Western Balkans, and its social protection coverage is among the lowest. Economic growth is expected to decelerate to 3.2 per cent in 2022 under the baseline scenario. The inclusion of vulnerable people in the labour market is also a significant challenge – more than half of the poor population is inactive, unemployed or not in education, and people living in remote areas are often completely excluded. The employment rate in 2019 among people aged between 15 and 64 years was 60.1 per cent for men and 46.9 per cent for women. However, only 25.5 per cent of women were employed in paid positions, while 14 per cent were in unpaid work in family businesses and over-represented in the informal labour sector. Climate change is expected to have the most significant impact on the country’s main sectors, its economy and population.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a small country with a population of only 3.8 million people. It has also been experiencing a significant rise in poverty rates. Approximately 18.6 per cent of the population (640,000 people) live in absolute poverty and about half the population are vulnerable to becoming poor due to a lack of education, economic opportunity and recovery after the war. There is a discrepancy between poverty rates in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, 19 per cent of citizens live in poverty, compared with nine per cent in urban areas. Despite higher poverty rates and lower wages, 60 per cent of people continue to live in rural areas. This is largely due to the agricultural safety net of higher social protection payments, a healthier environment and more overall job security than in cities.

The country is prone to natural hazards including floods, landslides and extreme weather conditions that have a critical impact on the country’s economy and population. According to the Recovery Needs Assessment conducted after the May 2014 floods, 81 local government areas were affected, and 75 per cent of the damages and losses were borne directly by families, businesses and agricultural producers – including several vulnerable population groups. Subsequently, one of the underlying recommendations of the assessment was to strengthen resilience at the local level through disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. Out of 145 local government areas in the country, 91 are considered at very significant risk from floods and landslides, and 27 are at high risk. Over the last 12 years, there have been six years of very dry to extremely dry weather.

In 2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina marked the 25th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement and the end of the 1992–1995 conflict, which left the country with devastating consequences.

**Montenegro**

Montenegro has an upper-middle-income economy and remains extremely vulnerable due to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite attempts to strengthen Montenegro’s economy by increasing the minimum wage in the framework of the Europa Now programme, and eliminate undocumented work to decrease unemployed rates, the total number of unemployed persons was 46,159 (19.90 per cent) at the end of June 2022. The country’s efforts have been thwarted by the effects of the global recession, as well as external shocks, as the country relies largely on capital inflows from overseas to fuel its development. The significance of sustaining macroeconomic stability was emphasized in the most recent European Commission Progress Report on Montenegro. The country’s fast-expanding public debt and significant fiscal deficits, as well as high external imbalances and high unemployment, are of particular concern. As a highly import-dependent country that relies heavily on tourism, leading Montenegrin economists are pessimistic about the upcoming winter, as increasing energy prices have led to a new decline in living standards and an increase in national debt.

**The Republic of North Macedonia**

As its economy continues to recover from shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Republic of North Macedonia’s GDP has grown 2.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2022. The country is highly prone and vulnerable to natural hazards such as floods, droughts, extreme temperatures, forest fires and earthquakes.

**Demographic**

Demographic trends in the Central and South-Eastern Europe region are largely defined by an ageing population and their associated care needs. Young and working-age people often leave the region in search of stronger employment options and economic stability, leading to high levels of out-migration and low population replacement rates.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** experienced a natural population increase of 8,289 people last year. Although there is no precise data on the number of people immigrating to and emigrating from the country, more than half a million people have moved away in the last six years. A recent UN study found that nearly 24,000 people aged between 18 and 29 years are likely to leave the country in 2023.
Montenegro is a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic country with a high human development score of 0.829 (2019) according to the Human Development Index. Between 1990 and 2019, the country’s life expectancy at birth increased by 2.3 years, average years of schooling increased by one year, and the expected time children spend in school increased by 1.8 years.

The Republic of North Macedonia has a population of 1.8 million, and a population density of 78.7 people per square kilometre. The majority of people identify as ethnic Macedonians, while there is a significant community of Albanians and smaller minorities of Turkish, Roma, Serbian, Bosniak and Vlach communities.

Social

Although there is a strong institutional gender equality framework across much of the Central and South-Eastern Europe region, women continue to have limited access to assets, markets, resources and decision-making processes. Gaps in wages and workforce participation also persist. Women continue to face discrimination in the form of an unfair hierarchical status between men and women, as well as exposure to violence, abuse and exploitation. For example, Albania is party to nine international human rights instruments, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. However, progress in building legal frameworks for the protection of human rights and gender equality needs to be accompanied by efforts to strengthen national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, and the practical implementation of norms and standards. There is a need to follow the legislative work with consistent implementation through institutionalized practices, effective accountability mechanisms and independent monitoring.

Political

There have been frequent changes of people in decision-making roles, and this has put much of the Central and South-Eastern Europe region in a very delicate political and economic situation. A lack of consistency in policy and decision-making affects vulnerable communities and the consistency of social services. For example, the Government of Montenegro has a technical mandate and a limited jurisdiction, and there are frequent changes of people in decision-making positions in ministries, directorates, state agencies and institutions. Respecting the electoral legislation by scheduling new parliamentary and local elections for October 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare – as well as other economic and political entities – has suspended one-time financial support for socially vulnerable citizens, because they are concerned about an economically difficult autumn and winter. The private sector is also reluctant to expand business and create new jobs. The banking sector, aware of the long-term economic crisis and the existing indebtedness of citizens and the economy, has tightened the criteria for obtaining loans.

Ongoing emergency response

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page Europe.

In early 2022, the IFRC launched the Ukraine and impacted countries crisis Emergency Appeal (https://go.ifrc.org/emergencies/5854) to assist more than 3.6 million people affected by the conflict in Ukraine. Due to the changing needs in the region and additional requests for support by other National Societies, the IFRC has been scaling up its response within Ukraine as well as in neighbouring countries and revising the Appeal to include a total of 17 National Societies. These now include the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, Belarus Red Cross, Bulgarian Red Cross, Croatian Red Cross, Estonian Red Cross, Red Cross Society of Georgia, Hellenic Red Cross, Hungarian Red Cross, Lithuanian Red Cross Society, Red Cross Society of the Republic of Moldova, Red Cross of Montenegro, Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia, Polish Red Cross, Romanian Red Cross, the Russian Red Cross, Slovak Red Cross and Turkish Red Crescent Society, while coordinating with participating National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The dynamic and protracted nature of the conflict and the ongoing displacement of people from Ukraine make it likely that additional National Societies will request IFRC support during the timeframe of implementation.

The timeframe of the operation will be extended to 31 December 2025, with a transition to country planning covering the operations of all National Societies after the revised Emergency Appeal has ended.
Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Central and South-Eastern European countries are severely affected by climate change, which is creating critical situations requiring humanitarian action. The region is prone to various natural hazards exacerbated by climate change, such as floods, droughts, landslides, and extreme weather conditions throughout the year.

In Albania, climate change is causing increasingly frequent extreme weather events and temperature variation. These are expected to have the most significant impacts to the country’s key sectors, economy and population. Increased vulnerability is expected due to infrastructure needs and poverty in rural areas, and natural hazards have the potential to adversely affect crop and livestock production. Albania's hydrographic profile makes riverine flooding highly dangerous and damaging. The country has a long history of flooding, specifically in its western lowlands. Historical records show that flooding has occurred in all major catchment basins of the country.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, climate change policy is less of a priority, as addressing the issue of the lack of basic needs of the population takes precedence. However, the majority of the country's citizens agree that climate change has a negative impact on the quality of life of children (40.4 per cent say it is very negative, 36.8 per cent mainly negative). Young people are more aware of the challenges and risks from the climate crisis and the possibility of achieving sustainable development.

Main actions and areas of support

The Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina National Societies are part of the IFRC’s Global Climate Resilience Programme, which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The National Societies in Central and South-Eastern Europe plan to do the following:

**Albanian Red Cross**
- Strengthening communities in resilience to climate change
- Climate change mitigation through the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices
- Advocacy to ensure that policy, strategy and action plans reflect a community-level orientation in the implementation of flood resilience

**The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- Integrating climate change adaptation into disaster risk reduction
- Adopting environmentally sustainable practices to contribute to climate change mitigation
- Implementing environmentally sustainable solutions within National Society offices to lower the National Society carbon footprint

**Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia**
- Raising public awareness on the adaptation to climate change and early warning of possible risks and disasters through the establishment of a Centre for Climate Change
- Reducing the impact of climate change on the health and population
- Conducting workshops and activities on recycling, afforestation and rationalization of energy use for young people
- Informative and educational workshops on prevention measures
- Producing promotional materials on the impact of climate change
- Prevention campaigns

**Red Cross of Montenegro**
- Raising public awareness and knowledge of climate related risks through disaster preparedness and response training in local communities
- Collaborating with development partners and incorporating capacity strengthening on climate change in partnership agreements, with a focus on the National Society branches
- Reducing the impact of climate change and degradation of the environment through climate campaigns and activities focused on behaviour change, including plastic reduction and clean-up

Disasters and crises

The region is prone to numerous natural hazards, including hydrometeorological hazards (floods, droughts, forest fires and landslides) geophysical disasters (earthquakes), biological and ecological hazards, industrial hazards and food insecurity. Priorities of the region include improving community resilience, sustainable development, early warning and preparedness, and post-disaster coordination.

A vulnerability assessment in Bosnia and Herzegovina also shows that the country is threatened by infectious diseases of animals, plant health, and the pollution of agricultural land. The assessment further highlights that the country is at a higher cumulative risk of hazards than neighbouring countries. In the last 20 years, the country has been affected by numerous localized but devastating natural hazards – mainly floods, droughts and earthquakes – which cause an average annual economic loss of an estimated one per cent of GDP.

About 2,500km² of the country is subject to a high risk of flooding, especially from the Sava River, a transnational river with a basin of 97,713km². In May 2014, the country was hit with the heaviest rainfall in 120 years, which triggered the sudden overflow of several rivers – the Bosna, Drina, Una, Sava, Sana, Vrbas rivers and their tributaries – and numerous landslides. The total economic impact was estimated at more than €2.04 billion or 15 per cent of the country’s total GDP in 2014. The damage from the floods could have been reduced if the preparation and response to natural hazards had been more functional and efficient. Despite international and state efforts to reduce damage, and investments in the field of protection and rescue, the issue remains under-emphasized at the local level.

An analysis by the Center for Civil Initiatives shows that little progress has been made since the floods of 2014. The protection and rescue system cannot adequately respond to needs in the event of natural hazards and other disasters, it does not provide security for the lives of the population, or their property. In addition to the necessary capacity building, it should be emphasized that there is a significant lack of interdepartmental, regional and inter-entity coordination and cooperation of all protection and rescue actors.

In Montenegro, over the last 13 years, nine disaster events have happened every year, damaging or destroying approximately 800 houses on average per year. This shows that local communities are not familiar with or prepared enough to respond to and mitigate disasters.

The 2021 National Disaster Risk Assessment, created in accordance with EU Risk Assessment and Mapping Guidelines for Disaster Management, assesses key risks that could have significant human, economic, environmental, political, social and cross-border impacts. The assessment includes scenarios of nine risks, including forest fires, climate change, earthquakes and floods, and eight multi-hazards, and determines the risk levels for every individual risk within the country. The categories are:

- **Very high**: epidemics, nuclear incidents, maritime traffic incidents
- **High**: earthquakes, droughts, cold waves, fires, radiation accidents, air traffic incidents, sea traffic incidents
- **Moderate**: earthquakes, landslides, storms, severe weather events, droughts, cold waves, fires, plant diseases, animal diseases, interruption in electricity supply, air and rail traffic incidents, electronic communication network incidents
- **Low**: landslides, animal diseases, technical and technological incidents, radiation incidents, interruption in electricity supply, railway and road traffic incidents, electronic communication network incidents.

Main actions and areas of support

There is a strong need within the region to enable the National Societies, with the support of the IFRC network and other partners, to build disaster resilience and safe communities, and to deliver appropriate and timely response in disasters and crises. As a result of climate change, National Societies will face more and larger operations and disasters of a different nature, adding up to greater demands on their capacities. Risk reduction activities and early-warning procedures need to be adapted to the changing hazards, including the need to communicate them effectively to the people at risk of more frequent, intense or unfamiliar disasters.
The National Societies in Central and South-Eastern Europe plan to do the following:

**Albanian Red Cross**
- Community resilience strengthening through national and local interventions
- Ensuring timely, adequate and flexible access to humanitarian assistance
- Effectively responding to evolving crises and disasters
- Awareness raising and educating on disaster law
- Strengthening volunteers and its services to the public and partnerships in the field of first aid and disaster preparedness

**The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- Strengthening anticipatory action and disaster response and recovery
- Effectively responding to evolving crises and disasters
- Working towards adapting to the rising and evolving risks from the climate and environmental crises
- Raising awareness and resilience of communities to disasters and climate change

**Red Cross of Montenegro**
- Strengthening the National Society human and material capacities
- Strengthening the capacities of the local communities who are most affected
- Prioritize people most vulnerable to disaster risks due to their social status, age, gender, or health condition
- Working with schoolchildren who are both vulnerable to disaster risks and capable of becoming agents of change by bringing knowledge and skills back home and to their communities

**Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia**
- Risk reduction capacity building
- Early warning and crisis responses through established local structures and capacities for disaster preparedness and response
- Restructuring and improving the operational and logistical capacities for disaster preparedness and response
- Strengthening partnerships in disaster preparedness and response
- Introducing and connecting advanced digital technologies for disaster preparedness and response
- Running national courses for water safety instructions
- The formation of a working group for drafting regulations and reforming National Society water safety activities

**Health and well-being**

Health and well-being trends in the Central and South-Eastern European region are predominantly tied to the demographics of an ageing population, the need to respond to health needs of migrants as a key transit region, and ensuring preparedness for crisis-based health needs, including pandemic preparedness, first aid and blood donation.

**Elderly care**

Eurostat statistics indicate an increasing proportion of older people in the population. This number has been progressively increasing. The middle variant of the UN population projections predicts that in 2050, the proportion of older people in the population will reach approximately a third, of which 40 per cent are likely to be over 80 years old. Central and South-Eastern Europe follow similar trends where vital statistics show that the number of older people has nearly doubled in the past three decades, with life expectancy rates growing in parallel. Demand for health and social services for people in need of care and assistance while living in their own homes has increased significantly in recent years across Europe.

Addressing the needs of the increasingly ageing population is also an area where further policy interventions are required. Most evidence so far indicates increased needs for health care for the elderly. This will require investment in tertiary care. In Central and South-Eastern Europe, families – in particular female family members – have traditionally been the main provider of social care for the elderly. However, the high level of emigration and decreasing fertility rates mean that other means of support, i.e., social care services, will be needed in the near future, and immediate attention on this issue is required. Extreme weather events, air quality and communicable diseases are identified as priority health risks under a changing climate. Heat-related deaths, especially among the elderly, present the most immediate threat for the Balkans, with some countries presenting a higher vulnerability to climate-health impacts due to underdeveloped public health systems.
Blood donation and first aid
Voluntary blood donation and first aid training remain key priorities of the Central and South-Eastern European region. The COVID-19 pandemic affected voluntary blood donation and first aid training by reducing the percentage of voluntary blood donors, due to reduced numbers of donors visiting health institutions because of the risk of infection, and the ability to host first aid training courses. Renewed efforts to raise these figures will take place over the coming year.

Health needs of migrants and refugees
The war in Ukraine has resulted in the destruction and disruption of health services and logistical supply chains that hundreds of thousands of people living with and affected by various illnesses depend on for survival. Since the sub-region has seen a growing number of refugees arriving from Ukraine, there may be a need for more health services and activities related to disease awareness and prevention to mitigate an increased risk of viral transmission.

Main actions and areas of support
Central and South-Eastern European National Societies have prioritized activities related to vulnerable communities, with particular focus on the elderly, youth, and migrant communities. Addressing mental health and psychosocial support needs, as well as emergency health, also remains a key area of focus.

The National Societies in Central and South-Eastern Europe plan to do the following:

**Albanian Red Cross**
- Increasing community access to affordable, appropriate and environmentally sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services
- Increasing access to affordable, appropriate and environmentally sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services in communities at risk from pandemics and epidemics
- Promoting health and care in a changing environment

**The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- Working with local authorities and contributing to the development of a national strategy on reproductive health for youth, and tackling tuberculosis
- Combine home visits for elderly people by trained volunteers with household chores such as cleaning and meal preparation, including providers who are qualified to perform some medical tasks (during the activities in the home, volunteers can detect health problems of older people and identify hazards in households)
- Providing communities with services to identify and reduce health risks related to tuberculosis, and supporting communities to effectively detect and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including immunization

**Red Cross of Montenegro**
- Leveraging a programmatic connection between medical institutions and refugees living with HIV/AIDS by organizing information sessions
- Holding focal group discussions and campaigns for refugees living with HIV/AIDS, as well as the domestic population

**Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia**
- Community-building activities to promote positive mental health and well-being and reduce loneliness, as well as providing psychosocial support, particularly in vulnerable communities
- Providing services for the elderly and people living with disabilities at home, through the use of an emergency call button
- Organizing training for caregivers on the care and assistance of the elderly and people living with disabilities, and for palliative caregivers of frail people at home
- Organizing training for personal care for people living with disabilities
- Organizing training for the care assistants of people with Alzheimer's disease
- Establishing a centre for social medical services for the elderly, provided under grants for 10 citizen associations, to implement projects aimed to improve the social inclusion of the elderly
- Establishing an expert first aid centre that will contribute to the provision of safe and healthy communities, by preventing and reducing risks in everyday accidents and disasters
- Conducting verified training programmes for the caregivers of elderly people, and those living with disabilities
• Strengthening the capacities of the National Society in the area of mental health, through the establishment of a centre for psychological first aid and psychosocial support aimed at employees and volunteers in the National Society and the community

Migration and displacement

As a perceived gateway to Europe, Central and South-Eastern European countries experience high volumes of migration and displaced persons. Many of them make up a significant portion of the world’s most significant migrant corridors. Additionally, these countries are also affected by mixed population flows, caused not only by socio-economic conditions but additionally the effects of various conflicts taking place globally.

Categories of foreigners arriving in the country include refugees and asylum seekers, migrants, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated minors and stateless persons. During their journey, these people are at continued risk of human rights violation, violence, stigma, xenophobia and marginalization. Despite restrictive immigration measures and border closures, the region continues to experience a growing influx of irregular migrants, mostly from Greece on the way to other EU countries.

The number of irregular migrants entering Central and South-Eastern European countries is increasing every year, while there is generally an insufficient number of border and migration officers, reception centre personnel and asylum officials to cope with the increased number of arrivals and asylum requests in recent years. These migration flows have been further affected by the Ukraine and Afghanistan crises, increasing overall volumes of migration and complexity of the policies related to migrant streams.

Strict border controls between Croatia and neighbouring countries have also slowed down movement along the migration route, further worsening conditions on the ground during winter periods. The situation especially deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic, with restrictive measures that exacerbated the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants and affected the socially vulnerable local population. As was the case in previous years, during the winter months numbers of arrivals are generally smaller, while warmer weather sees the number of migrants grow, along with the need for services in these communities.

Main actions and areas of support

The Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Republic of North Macedonia National Societies are part of the IFRC three-year Global Route-Based Migration Programme, which aims to improve the safety and dignity of people on the move along deadly and dangerous land and sea-based migration routes across Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East and North Africa. The programme aims to support 4.7 million people on the move and people in host communities annually through three operational pillars: (1) improving access to assistance and protection, including through humanitarian service points; (2) strengthening National Society capacities; and (3) local to global humanitarian diplomacy.

The National Societies in Central and South-Eastern Europe plan to do the following:

**Albanian Red Cross**
Migrants and displaced persons will be able to access humanitarian assistance and protection at key points along migratory routes, with additional access to durable solutions when appropriate.

**The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina**
A route-based approach aims to provide humanitarian assistance and protection for migrants on the move and host communities, at key locations along migratory routes.

**Red Cross of Montenegro**
The National Society will provide psychosocial support to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, who will be supported to increase resilience to risks in the areas of health, mental health, integration and inclusion.

Humanitarian service points will open and be equipped with pre-positioned stocks and staff. The National Society will build the capacity of staff and volunteers in community-based health and first aid, community engagement and accountability, first aid training, psychosocial support and cultural mediation.

**Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia**
The National Society will promote the protection of migrants and asylum seekers, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups such as women, children and people living with disabilities. Special emphasis will be given to people with deteriorating health conditions, through access to medical facilities.
Values, power and inclusion

Central and South-Eastern European National Societies work in cooperation with relevant local authorities and line ministries, to implement various projects and activities that promote humanitarian values and contribute to the inclusion of various marginalized groups. The Roma and Egyptian populations remain a targeted marginalized group throughout the region. They are recognized as the largest, most neglected and most vulnerable minority in the region, and the conditions in which most Roma families live can be characterized as a state of chronic, multidimensional poverty. The gap between the Roma and the majority of the population, in terms of housing, employment, education and health care, is considerable, and Roma women are in a particularly difficult situation. Key indicators for Roma children show that they are three times more likely to live in poverty than their non-Roma peers, five times more likely to be malnourished and twice as likely to be behind in growth. The enrolment rate in primary school is lower by one-third than among the non-Roma population, and the rate of immunization is tiny compared with the majority of the population.

In order to properly support the integration of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, according to the National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2016–2020 (created by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights), the following priorities need to be addressed: housing, education, health protection, employment, legal status, social status and family protection, cultural identity and information.

Post-conflict impact mitigation also remains a key concern for many of the Central and South-Eastern European National Societies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the 1992–1995 conflict left more than 100,000 people dead and tens of thousands went missing as a result of the war. More than 7,000 people are still unaccounted for. In Montenegro, the position of internally displaced persons living in different municipalities has been improved after many years of assistance provided by international organizations, government and non-governmental organizations.

The number of elderly people suffering from chronic, non-communicable diseases is constantly increasing. Older people often experience limited mobility because of health conditions or fear of injury. They often stay at home and spend their time alone or with neighbours. There are great differences in the living conditions of different categories of older people in the region, therefore different support systems should be developed in accordance with their needs. The biggest problems older people face are loneliness, poverty, health problems and a lack of support. Many of them, especially those who live in rural areas, have limited access to medical services because health centres are far away, infrastructure in villages is poor, and there is no public transport or social services transport. Visiting villages requires a lot of financial investment due to fuel consumption and time spent travelling. Because of this, services provided by local authorities and civil society organizations are concentrated on urban areas, while the National Societies try to cover rural areas. The majority of elderly people have very low incomes and need financial support for basic food, hygiene and medication.

Main actions and areas of support

The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Red Cross's tracing service is an integral part of the Red Cross Red Crescent Restoring Family Links network. The National Society, in cooperation with the ICRC, supports the families of missing people and other actors involved in the process of clarifying the fate of people unaccounted for. Additionally, the National Society and its tracing service are key partners to the authorities in responding to the migration situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Restoring family links mobile teams have been established in Una-Sana Canton, Sarajevo Canton and Tuzla Canton for providing services to migrants. In the Lipa and Blažuj camps, stations have been installed for the restoration of family links, and this greatly facilitates the work of the mobile teams.

The National Society also conducts educational and community dialogue programmes to raise awareness on humanitarian challenges, cultivate humanitarian values and develop relevant interpersonal skills. Cash and voucher assistance will be provided for the Roma population, and psychosocial support will be offered to the families of missing persons.

Red Cross of Montenegro

The Montenegro Red Cross has been promoting humanitarian values as part of its education outreach. This takes place in the form of training for peer educators, and directly with children in schools. Six modules tackle various ways of preventing different forms of violence, including gender-based violence, promoting tolerance and intercultural understanding.

The National Society has been working towards improving the position and inclusion of the population of Roma and Egyptians, people living with disabilities, and elderly people.
Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia

The National Society will promote the Red Cross in Action Humanitarian Values programme with 100 projects implemented annually to promote community well-being. It will provide support to 2,500 people on an annual basis. It will hold meetings for the Club of Disseminators for International Humanitarian Law and the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law. It will also organize a national Moot Court competition on International Humanitarian Law.

Enabling local actors

The four National Societies are committed to pursuing institutional strengthening and are engaged in the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process. They are all at the workplan phase. The PER Approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps of its preparedness and response mechanism, and ultimately take necessary action to improve it.

The Albanian Red Cross has carried out the self-assessment part of the Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2015, and the Republic of North Macedonia Red Cross in 2011. The self-assessment part of the OCAC process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities.

The IFRC network is committed to supporting the National Societies in their development in line with the priorities they have defined. National Society strategic plans have made it a priority to develop their human resources and contribute towards building stronger National Societies that can deliver humanitarian service in a sustainable manner. Priorities of the National Society include ensuring a sustainable quality service delivery that has a lasting impact on the individuals and communities they serve and includes institutional development; sustainable resource mobilization and fundraising; financial management, branch development; increasing communication capacities; establishing strong planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems; and reinforcing cooperation on domestic and international levels.

Accountable

The National Societies of the Central and South-Eastern Europe region will continue to invest in creating an investment and support strategy through mobilization and financing approaches and strengthened financial and programme management and accountability. They will achieve this through diversity of partnerships and raising funds through innovative business models and new financial mechanisms. Development of new tools to improve financial stability through project operations and asset mobilization, and the establishment of an efficient, sustainable system for mobilizing funds at national and local level, will improve financial accountability. It will provide opportunities to improve the implementation of the organization’s programmes and effective financial operations at the local level.

Through accountability for spent funds, the National Societies will have a clear insight into whether their work is being carried out as planned, and whether it is in accordance with the established material and financial standards of the IFRC. The established criteria of donors and supporters who provide support for their programmes will also be considered throughout spending, to enable a better understanding of the work, create an openness to criticism, and instill a desire to learn from experience and adapt to changing needs.
Trusted
The National Societies of the Central and South-Eastern Europe region are committed to building trust with the people and communities they serve, their donors, the public and Movement partners. They aim to continuously invest in strengthening transparency, reinforcing support systems and integrity, and building a culture of ethical practice. The National Societies of the region will use innovative and transformational approaches to strengthen trust, transparency and accountability and maintain the integrity of the organization.

The National Societies of the region are dedicated to motivating volunteering using more flexible, open and complementary approaches which create a more efficient network of humanitarian workers, working for the common good in local communities. The National Societies are committed to strengthening volunteer management, providing a participatory work model. They will pay special attention to reducing barriers to volunteering and providing greater volunteer engagement for the elderly, intergenerational cooperation and inclusion of people living with disabilities, and other marginalized people who may not have been able to join the Red Cross before.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC
The IFRC provides support to the four National Societies through its country cluster delegation located in Sarajevo, as well as from its regional office for Europe, based in Budapest, Hungary. The IFRC’s support to the National Societies centres on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development, and humanitarian diplomacy, including in strengthening its auxiliary role. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

In recent years, the IFRC has supported the four National Societies through DREF operations in relation to population movement, floods and landslides, earthquakes, wildfires, and extreme winter conditions. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC, through its global appeal, has supported the National Societies in their COVID-19 response. The IFRC’s technical support aligns with the needs of National Societies:

Albanian Red Cross
The IFRC provides continuing technical guidance and financial support in implementation of several projects related to risk reduction, support for the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency response, climate change and recovery, and health in emergency, through its regional office for Europe.

The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina
The IFRC’s primary support is in response to migration, disaster response and National Society development.

Red Cross of Montenegro
Partnerships have been critical in growing the National Society’s reach and establishing key programmes.

Red cross of The Republic of North Macedonia
The IFRC is providing support for the process of COVID-19 vaccinations, health in crisis situations, healthy ageing, activities to preserve mental health, and capacity building for psychosocial response in crises, preparedness activities and disaster response, and migration activities.

IFRC membership coordination
The IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; co-developing common strategies to address issues, such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, development assistance, and reinforcing the auxiliary role of National Societies in their respective countries.

The Central and South-Eastern Europe National Societies are part of various groups, such as the Neighbours Help First network which brings together the National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC. The National Societies all share a common background and face similar challenges, and there has been strong regional cooperation.
in many areas, especially in connection with various emergencies. The Red Cross of Montenegro is also a member of the network of National Societies from small European countries, including those of Andorra, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta and Monaco. It is involved in thematic groups such as the European Red Cross/Red Crescent Network on HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, the European Red Cross/Red Crescent Network for Psychosocial Support, and the Platform for European Red Cross-Red Crescent Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants.

The IFRC membership works extensively with the National Societies of Central and South-Eastern Europe:

The Albanian Red Cross has developed strong relationships and projects with the Austrian Red Cross, Italian Red Cross and Qatar Red Crescent Society.

The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina has partnerships with the Italian Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross, the Turkish Red Crescent Society and the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates.

The Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia has well-established long-term cooperation with the Austrian Red Cross and enjoys partnerships with the Italian Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross.

The Red Cross of Montenegro is supported by the Austrian Red Cross, the Italian Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross.

Support provided by participating National Societies includes:

Austrian Red Cross

The Austrian Red Cross has been working with the Albanian Red Cross for many years but would like to intensify its cooperation. The Austrian Red Cross has previously supported the National Society in Albania in developing its first aid system and with the recent earthquake response. Since 2021, the Albanian Red Cross and Austrian Red Cross are collaborating on the Strengthening Volunteering in First Aid and Disaster Preparedness project for three years. This aims to contribute to strengthening the capacities of civil society organizations, volunteering, and disaster preparedness in Albania.

The outcomes of this project would be:

• Albanian Red Cross disaster response teams being ready to respond to disasters and deliver first aid and psychological first aid

• Albanian Red Cross volunteers being trained to provide first aid in non-emergency situations on a regular basis. Through the identification of new areas in which first aid services are needed in the country (for example at large events, such as concerts, or in tourist areas) and the development of new partnerships with private and public stakeholders, trained first aid volunteers will be able to practice their skills and support people in need. By offering these services, the National Society in Albania could also develop potential new sources of income to ensure the sustainability of these services and trainings

• The strengthening of the relationship between the Government and civil society, recognizing the added value of volunteer-based engagement in Albanian society

In addition, the Austrian Red Cross provided technical support and expertise on cash grant distribution carried out in Albania in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for older people and people living with disabilities in 2022.

In Montenegro, the Austrian Red Cross focuses on support with health and social services for older people, disaster preparedness and National Society development. In view of strengthening the National Society in its programmes and services for older people, the Austrian Red Cross is committed to furthering its domestic competencies in health and social services and providing technical expertise, including through the ongoing innovative community care centres and CONEX Balkan projects.

The Austrian Red Cross will continue to support the National Society in Montenegro in further positioning it as a service provider and offering support through the REDpreneur Programme, following the introduction of fee-based services in Montenegro. Collaboration on disaster preparedness and response will be continued by strengthening the capacities of the National Society as an integral part of the state system, focusing on institutional preparedness through the X-STOCK project. Additional important aspects are further strengthening of the disaster response teams in the country and supporting improved rescue and protection systems at ski slopes and in water rescue.
In coordination with the IFRC, the Austrian Red Cross will the implementation of the preparedness for effective response action plan through the ENSURE project, as well as continuing to support cash preparedness. Based on the preparedness for effective response plan, the development of a resource mobilization strategy has been highlighted as one of the core priorities. The Austrian Red Cross will continue its support in this area by providing technical expertise and knowledge sharing on institutional funding possibilities.

**Italian Red Cross**
The National Societies of Italy and Albania have benefitted from a good working relationship for some time. On several occasions before 2019, the Italian Red Cross supported the Albanian Red Cross in implementing its main programmes: empowering women, first aid training, and responding to IFRC emergency operations. At the end of 2018, the cooperation between the two National Societies was considerably strengthened by the launch of two projects which were carried out between 2019 and 2022. The Home Care project was conducted multilaterally with the Montenegro National Society, and a second project on empowering women had already been supported in 2011–2012. In addition to this, the Italian Red Cross made its contribution to support the Albanian Red Cross and the IFRC emergency operation following the earthquake which occurred in Albania in November 2019. On this occasion, the Italian Red Cross, within the Italian Civil Protection framework, deployed its technical personnel to support rescue and relief operations, and it provided support in psychosocial support programme development.

The National Societies of Italy and Montenegro are longstanding partners which have been collaborating on several international projects in Montenegro for several years, pre-dating the opening of the Italian Red Cross delegation in Podgorica. The Italian Red Cross is the only partner National Society present in the country with its own office and representative. It has enhanced the organizational development of the Montenegro National Society through resource mobilization and advocacy, and by providing technical support. The Red Cross of Montenegro is supported by the Italian Red Cross in programming related to Roma, home care, migration, resource mobilization, and staff on loan.

Within Bosnia and Herzegovina, the primary contribution of the Italian National Society is in response to migration, social and health projects, disaster response and National Society development.

**Qatar Red Crescent Society**
The Qatar Red Crescent Society has provided financial support to the Albanian Red Cross in provision of relief support to vulnerable families to meet their basic needs with food packages and other support since 2018. So far, 5,000 families have been assisted through this support. The Qatar Red Crescent has also supported the Albanian Red Cross in the emergency field operation following the earthquake which occurred in Albania in November 2019.

**Swiss Red Cross**
The Red Cross of Montenegro initiated cooperation with the Swiss Red Cross in 2020 for support in the response in migration. The cooperation has been agreed on a yearly basis and has supported several projects since 2020.

The Swiss Red Cross office is in Tuzla in Bosnia and Herzegovina, though plans are to move the office to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Red Cross headquarters building in Sarajevo. Primary contribution of the Swiss Red Cross is in response to migration, social and health projects, disaster response and National Society development.

**Turkish Red Crescent Society**
The Turkish Red Crescent office is Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The primary contribution of the Turkish Red Crescent is in social projects such as the Qurbani project, disaster response and National Society development.

**Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates**
The Emirates Red Crescent office is in Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its primary contribution is in social projects, including support to orphans and people in rural areas, and infrastructural projects. Currently, the Emirates Red Crescent implements projects directly with limited and ad hoc cooperation with the National Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Movement partners.
Movement coordination

As part of the Movement, National Societies enjoy close relations and ensure tripartite coordination with the IFRC and the ICRC as situations require. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted Seville Agreement 2.0.

Coordination is also maintained to ensure well-aligned support to the National Societies between all Movement partners.

Within Albania, the ICRC provides ongoing support in protection and restoring family links programmes by providing training and workshops in these areas.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the ICRC delegation in Sarajevo primarily contributes to tracing services and restoring family links, mine risk education, first aid and mental health and psychosocial support, dissemination of Red Cross values, and National Society development.

The Red Cross of Montenegro enjoys a productive cooperation with the regional delegation of the ICRC, located in Belgrade, Serbia. A partnership framework agreement defines the cooperation in the fields of capacity building and joint operations in Montenegro. This cooperation is mainly related to the promotion of international humanitarian law, including training staff and volunteers, and organization of round tables with relevant stakeholders, support in the Safer Access Framework approach, and restoring family links activities.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, the ICRC provides support in training for general dissemination and disseminators for international humanitarian law, and activities for establishing family ties, and provides a workshop with media representatives. The activities are aimed at spreading the idea, vision and mission of the Movement.

Coordination with other actors

The National Societies are part of the authorities’ emergency management systems in their countries, in line with their auxiliary roles. According to the National Plan of Civil Protection, the Albanian Red Cross is a member of the Albanian disaster management structure at local, regional and national level. The National Societies also enjoy productive cooperation with a range of national and international partners.

Within Albania, the EU and ADA-Europe1 are co-funding the implementation of Albanian Red Cross projects, strengthening volunteering in first aid and disaster preparedness, and strengthening resilience of older people and those living with disabilities during COVID-19 and future disasters.

In line with its mission, the Red Cross of Montenegro is committed to developing and expanding its cooperation with other international humanitarian organizations. The National Society of Montenegro cooperates with the diplomatic-consular sector in Montenegro, as well as with many international organizations, including the EU delegation, the UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, IOM, WHO, the United States Agency for International Development and a variety of international networks.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans
- Subscribe for updates
- Donor response on IFRC website
- Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) data
- Operational information: IFRC GO platform
- National Society data: IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 14 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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